

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!



Back Benn and Heffer!

# SUPPORT

# SOLIDARNOSĆ

Despite the brutal eviction by police of strikers at Nowa Huta steelworks last week, the Polish strikes go on.

In Gdansk, workers are still occupying the Lenin shipyard where Solidarnosc was born in the summer of 1980. Among the workers is Lech Walesa, who has declared that he will be the last to be dragged out.

At the huge Ursus tractor factory on the outskirts of Warsaw, 6000 workers struck on Monday 9 May.

They too were demanding recognition for Solidarnosc, which was banned after General Jaruzelski's coup in December 1981. The strike was called off late Monday night after the management promised the strikers safety.

Geoffrey Howe, the Foreign Secretary, made clear last week the Tories' real sympathies in the Polish crisis. According to the *Sunday Times* (8 May) he believes that General Jaruzelski should be seen as a patriot, safeguarding Poland from Russian intervention, and that

the strikers' demands are unrealistic.

Those in the British labour movement who oppose Solidarnosc because the Tories 'support' it should remember that.

Maybe the strike wave will subside. But only temporarily. The economic crisis in Poland requires 'reforms' — under the supervision of the IMF — that will make the working class suffer. And the workers have shown that they are not prepared to take this lying down.

We are witnessing no more than the opening sallies of a renewed Polish class war. Solidarnosc is on the verge of a major revival. The implications of that revival — in the Eastern Europe of Mikhail Gorbachev — will be even greater than in 1980-81.

**The British labour movement must support Solidarnosc!**

**More on Solidarnosc: see centre pages**

**Defend workers' rights in Poland  
Picket the Polish embassy!**

47 Portland Place W 1  
5.30-6.30 pm  
Thursday 19th May



Inside the Lenin shipyard Gdansk 1980

# Free trade unions East and West!



# Aberdeen seafarers join the strike

Socialist Organiser spoke to John Sutherland, a member of the NUS National Executive and Leith NUS Strike Committee, about recent developments in the dispute in Scotland.

Is it true that the English court order sequestrating the NUS funds does not apply in Scotland?

So we are led to believe. The Glasgow NUS office, for example, is still functioning, but we heard today that the NUS office in Aberdeen has been closed down, though this is still to be confirmed. The Stirling Shipping Company was granted court orders yesterday, telling the union to withdraw official recognition of the strike by NUS members on offshore supply boats in the North East. The affair is being dealt with by our lawyers.

Are the Aberdeen members still on strike?

Yes. The strike affects 14 ships, with 4 or 5 members on each ship, so you're talking about at least 70 men. Other companies own ships there apart from Stirling Shipping, but none of them have been back to court. They are probably waiting to hear the result of the Stirling action.

Crews on Caledonia MacBrayne vessels, which serve the Western Isles, staged a 24-hour strike yesterday, and there is a possibility of this being extended into indefinite action according to press reports. Do you know what the present situation is with the Calmac crews, or the crews on vessels serving the Orkney and Shetland Isles?

Not right now. The Calmac crews are holding meetings this afternoon to decide on whether or not to return to work. The Orkney and Shetland ferries which are owned by P&O are still running, but will be meeting at a later date to decide on whether or not to join the action.

What about the crew of the 'St. Sunniva' in Glasgow, who have refused orders from P&O to sail out the vessel? And the situation in Leith itself?

All members of the St Sunniva crew were sacked last night, though they are still on the vessel. We're not clear about the legal position — they may have squatters' rights and the company might need the law to get them off the vessel. In Leith, things are quiet. Most of the lads from Leith are away in various ports. Things will start moving here once they arrive back.

What support are you looking for from the broader labour movement?

We've not had a meeting yet with Scottish TUC, though we will be contacting them. Support is now starting to come in.

We have had a £200 donation from the Leith dockers who are members of the TGWU and one or two other smaller donations as well, such as from the NUPE branch at the Astley Ainslie Hospital. A press conference with the Edinburgh trades council is being held on Monday morning (9 May) at which they will be handing over a donation to us, and I'll be speaking at the Trades Council meeting the next day.

At present we are first looking for financial donations but any donations made through cheques to the NUS would end up in the hands of the sequestrators.

Donations to the NUS in Edinburgh should be taken in cash to the NUS, East Old Dock, Leith Docks (031-554-6835).



Photo: Andrew Wiard

## Solidarity is the way to win

By Geoff Williams

The seafarers' union is really up against the wall.

Sealink has had the funds of the union sequestrated, P&O has been allowed to operate a non-union service from the ferry ports, and the leaders of the union are trying to appease the ship owners.

Despite all the rhetoric about action by the whole union membership, home and abroad, and talks with seafarers unions abroad, NUS leaders have failed to link up with other seafarers in the NUR and T&G who still operate ferry services from Britain. It has been left to rank and file action to spread action.

The mass pickets have been a great lift to the Dover strikers. The union leaders need to be taken to task for their actions. They haven't organised action throughout the NUS; in fact they have run away from taking on any other ship owner. This attitude is leading to the sell out of P&O and Sealink strikers in Dover.

What the leadership want is an easy time with the employers.

This dispute with P&O upset the appeacart because the Dover seafarers are not in any mood to accept redundancies, even if they had already been agreed between the NUS leaders and the ferry operators.

What NUS rank and file members need to do now in the Dover ferry area is spread the strike, to involve other seafaring unions, and then to ensure that the deep sea seafarers are also pulled out. Full-time officials must be encouraged to attend meetings of the crews when ships dock.

Unless the strike is spread and won, the only alternative will be a sell out by the leadership which will leave the door open for more job losses on ferry routes, and also job losses in the deep sea sector.

Support committees should be set

up throughout the labour movement and support should be organised through the Dover seafarers' office at Labour Party Headquarters, Dover. Money will be needed urgently to pay for buses to get pickets down to Dover.

Activists throughout the labour movement must take up the seafarers' struggle. Pickets from Dover must also be sent to all UK ports to argue for solidarity action by deep sea seafarers when they dock.



Betty, Jane and Karen from the Women's Support Group spoke to SO.

Betty: We've been going since the second week of the strike. That's, 12 weeks.

Jane: There are 7 feeding centres, each with its own women's group attached, and they all meet up once a week. There are two in Dover and one each in Folkestone, Deal, Ramsgate, Aylesham and Canterbury.

## No sell-out!

### Lesbian and gay support

Mark and Chris were among a delegation from 'Trade Unionists against Clause 28', who visited the picket on Friday.

Mark: The only way we can defeat section 28, as the anti-lesbian/gay clause of the Local Government Act is now called, is defiance by workers in areas like local government. We can't do it without general trade union support, which is precisely what we're trying to get.

Coming down here is connected with the work that we did with the miners and with the printworkers — trying to build support for lesbian and gay rights as an issue within the labour

movement goes beyond the question of Clause 28.

Chris: We decided to set up Lesbian and Gays Support the Seafarers after we met two gay men who were involved in the strike committee. We wanted to make political contacts and raise the issue of Clause 28.

Most people took leaflets. There was some humour, as there always is, but we explained the practical solidarity we've done, raising £300 to bring down.

We want to orientate towards workers not only around Clause 28 but around their own struggles and try to build common links.

## This strike is the lynchpin

Brian Chazzell and Phil Hutchinson from the Sealink and P&O Dover Port Committees spoke to Socialist Organiser about the dispute.

Phil: Since sequestration they've moved into our local office in Dover and we've had to take over the Labour Party's house. Every time we've ever asked the Labour Party for anything they've always been very forthcoming.

Brian: With the courts ordering the union to be shut down, the men in Dover have got their backs against the wall and will fight till the end. This dispute is for the survival of the seafarers not only in Dover but throughout Britain.

Norman Willis wants to pull his finger out and he wants to get hold of the TUC Executive Council and start shaking them. People like Ron Todd want to start pulling their

fingers out and quick.

Because if this is going to happen to the NUS in Dover, what on earth are they going to do next to the other trade unionists?

Phil: Personally I would like to see a general strike, but there is no way the TUC is going to call its 9 million members out. This attack here in Dover affects every worker in Britain and to my mind they should all be standing up for their rights.

The time has gone for messing about with legalities, and the time has come when everyone is going to have to stand up and say enough is enough.

There's more of us than there is of them, and if 9 million workers walk out of work they aren't going to sack them all.

The Labour Party has got to get

its act together. It is trying, but there's an awful lot of people messing about sitting on the fence who don't seem to know which way they're going.

They've got to realise that they are there to represent the working class in England. We need a solid leadership which we haven't got at the moment.

I think one of the best things that could happen to the Labour Party is for Benn to succeed. We want to see a Labour Party that stands up for the working class like Thatcher stands up for hers.

This strike is the lynchpin for the labour movement in Britain. If this fails through the lack of trade union support, then we might as well all give up and just lie on our backs and send our children back up the chimneys.



# Labour and the law

P R E S S  
**GANG**

## Mirror image

**Q: What is a tabloid?**

**A: A tabloid is a newspaper that measures 38½ x 30 cms, as opposed to broadsheets, which measure 60 x 39 cms.**

But surely, there's more to it than that? After all, the term "tabloid" has become a byword for sensationalism, trivialisation, smut, character assassination and — sometimes — downright lies.

That is why the editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Richard Stott, has been getting upset lately. He objects to the blanket use of the term "tabloid" pointing out (in an irate letter to the *Independent*) that "there are seven national daily tabloid newspapers and five tabloid Sundays. Each has a different character, different readership and a largely different set of values and standards. To lump us all together is absurd and trite".

Obviously, Stott has a point. For a start, two of the "tabloids" the *Mail* and the *Express* — are not really tabloids at all but bonzai broadsheets. *Today*, launched three years ago by Eddie Shah in an attempt to produce a 'decent' middle market paper in tabloid form, is not (yet) a real tabloid, despite being dragged down-market by Rupert Murdoch.

The essential point about real tabloids is that they are aimed at the working class — specifically, the male working class. We're talking about the *Sun*, the *Star* the *Mirror* and their Sunday equivalents.

Stott's basic case is that his publication has qualitatively higher standards than the immediate competition; the *Mirror* does not make up stories or invent quotes; feminists will be pleased to hear that "we will print topless pictures but not posed Page Three". It is says Stott, "the best of popular aggressive journalism."

In one obvious respect the *Mirror* can be set apart from the *Sun* and the *Star* — and come to that, from every other national daily as well. It supports Labour. Thursday's 'Mirror Comment' pulled no punches: "If the Tories win many seats tonight, Mrs Thatcher will proclaim it as a victory. A victory for the cuts in social security benefits. For collapsing welfare services. For crumbling, bookless schools, for closing hospital wards, for all the homes councils aren't allowed to build. Above all, a victory for her poll tax, the tax to be imposed on people just for being alive."

The *Sun* didn't mention the local elections, despite its strident loyalty to Mrs Thatcher. Thursday's front page lead was "Where bra they now?" (a story about Samantha Fox's breasts) and the editorial was an attack on an industrial tribunal that went in favour of a sacked worker. The *Star's* front page and editorial concerned the destruction of four Shetland ponies and five pedigree dogs.

This would seem to be fairly conclusive evidence in favour of Mr Stott's case. But why didn't the *Mirror* come out fighting over the seafarer's dispute? After the Zeebrugge tragedy, the *Mirror* ran some powerful front-page indictments of P&O management by Paul Foot who'd clearly done his homework on the matter. Now would be the time for a paper purporting to offer "the best of popular aggressive journalism" to go for the jugular, exposing Sir Jeffery Sterling and his cronies as the money-grubbing criminals they are.

But no. Throughout the week, the *Mirror* scarcely touched on the dispute. Even Paul Foot's page made no mention of P&O and the strike. Richard Stott may claim that his paper "lays bare injustice and inadequacy time and time again" (letter to the *Independent*, 14.4.88.) but it seems that actually supporting workers in struggle against injustice and inadequacy would be asking too much of this great Labour publication!

## EDITORIAL

The seafarers' dispute has shown that effective strike action is almost impossible without breaking the law. 'Secondary' picketing — picketing any workplace other than your own — is unlawful. Mass pickets — that is, anything bigger than six! — are unlawful. Strikes without prior ballots of all those potentially involved are unlawful. Most of the healthworkers' strikes, and the strikes in support of the healthworkers, broke the law.

It is not legal, to take sudden, quick-response strike action. And it is not legal to show solidarity with other workers.

Every single step taken by Polish workers in the summer of 1980 to establish Solidarnosc

would have broken British trade union law. So much for the Tories claim to believe in free trade unions!

Solidarnosc defeated the Polish government in 1980. There were few attempts to use the law against healthworkers and their supporters. The Tories' Industrial Relations Act of 1971 was made unworkable by mass strike action. Anti-union laws can be defeated.

Of course 1988 is not 1972. We are not as strong now as we were then; but we are by no means as weak as many trade union leaders seem to imagine. The seafarers' dispute is a clear

case where widespread solidarity strike action could smash the anti-union laws.

The Labour Party should be committed to a bill of positive rights for workers and trade unionists.

There should be a legally recognised right to strike, to picket — effectively, and in however many numbers we choose — and to take other industrial action. There should be legally enforceable rights for unions to get access to workplaces to organise, for workers to join unions, and for unions to gain recognition. Legislation to prevent discrimination should be ex-

tended.

It is important to keep the law out of the internal workings of the labour movement. Unions should be self-regulating: the internal democracy and accountability of each union should be determined by its members, not by the courts. No positive rights should be accompanied by deals relinquishing up other rights.

But a campaign for positive rights could help unite the labour movement. Strong unions could act in unison with weaker ones.

Such a campaign obviously has to start from struggles like the seafarers', that are up against the law. And it could help strengthen the trade unions for the battles that are to come.



Photo: Andrew Wiard

## The seafarers can win!

From page 12

- Organise for solidarity action in their own union;
- Step up support for the Dover picket;
- Organise seafarers' support committees along the lines of the

- miners' support committees, raising financial support and arguing for industrial action;
- Send money to the Seafarers Hardship Fund, c/o Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1 and local support committees.
- Aylesham Support Group, 61

- Castle Drive, Whitfield, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0263 840202.
- Canterbury Support Group, 75 Tenterden Drive, Canterbury, Kent. Tel: 0227 66768.
- Deal Support Group, Magness House, Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. Tel: 0304 367840.

- Dover Support Group, 210 London Road, Dover, Kent. Tel: 0304 214113.
- Folkestone Support Group, 7 Tennyson Place, Folkestone, Kent. Tel: 0303 51997.
- Thanet Support Group, 147 High St., Ramsgate, Kent. Tel: 0843 587990.
- The London support group can be contacted at 33 Acton High St. or at the Hackney Trade Union Support Centre. Tel: 01-249 8086.

### Benn-Heffer campaign backs seafarers

"Islington for Benn and Heffer" was launched on 27 April. It's not only got ambitious plans for the next few months, it's started to do things now!

Even before the launch meeting the campaign was started with a sponsorship drive that got over half the delegates to North Islington Labour Party giving their support. A similar drive in local trade unions has won the support of local TGWU, CoHSE, NALGO and NUPE stewards.

The first meeting of the campaign agreed that the most important way of showing the difference between the present Labour leadership and the Benn/Heffer challenge was the left's support for workers who fight back — especially the P&O strikers.

So the campaign's first step has been to organise a public meeting "Support the P&O strikers — save

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Back Benn and Heffer!

jobs, save lives" on 10 May at the Red Rose Club in Islington...as well as circulating collection sheets around ward parties.

The future plans include: special meetings 'Women for Benn and Heffer', a meeting for black and ethnic minority organisations, and a large rally in September.

Inside the Labour Party the local campaign plans to mail each individual party member with material about the campaign as well as pressing for special meetings to discuss how to vote at ward and constituency level.

Special leaflets for the different affiliated unions are also being prepared.

committee's statement of its demands.

An editorial and a survey article cover the rise of fascism in France. Clive Bradley discusses the Gulf War.

Martin Thomas looks back at the events of May '68 in France, analysing the greatest general strike in history and drawing out the political lessons for today.

In a thoroughly researched feature, Stan Crooke examines the anti-Zionist campaign in the USSR in the 1970s, demonstrating conclusively both its anti-semitic content and the fact that much avowedly Trotskyist anti-Zionism today, such as Jim Allen's 'Perdition', draws its essential themes from the Kremlin's campaign.

*Workers' Liberty* always tries to act as a forum for debate. In this issue discussion continues on the Middle East and modern films, and Sean Matgamna replies to Geoff Bell on Ireland.

*Workers' Liberty* is available from PO Box 823, London SE15, price 95p plus 35p postage.

**WORKERS' LIBERTY**

The resurgence of independent militant trade unionism in Poland is one of the central themes of the latest issue of *Workers' Liberty* magazine.

Zbigniew Kowalewski, an exiled leader of Solidarnosc, has contributed a report on the present strike wave, and the magazine carries a translation of the account in his book 'Rendez-nous nos usines' of the fight for workers' self-management in 1980-1. Also in *Workers' Liberty* is a translation of the Nowa Huta steelworkers' strike



# GRAFFITI



## Apartheid wages

UK based companies operating in South Africa are still paying many black workers poverty wages and only a minority recognise a trade union, according to a survey in the current issue of Labour Research.

The survey of 118 British firms found that:

- 25 pay at least 1,916 black African employees less than the minimum wages recommended by an EEC Code of Conduct, already criticised by South African trade unionists as being too low;
- Seven of these companies actually pay below "subsistence level" wages to at least 321 black workers (BETEC, William Collins, FKI Babcock, Frank Fehr, Hall Engineering, Lonhro and the Union In-

ternational); and

- Only 51 of the 118 recognise trade unions, and 16 have been in dispute with unions in South Africa in the last 18 months including Shell, Pilkington, Plessey and BP.

## Directorships

The number of Conservative MPs holding company directorships and consultancies has increased over the last two years, according to an investigation in the current issue of Labour Research magazine.

168 (58%) Conservative backbenchers now hold company directorships compared with 155 (51%) two years ago. 148 MPs (51%) hold consultancies, compared with 118 (39%)

## Political funds

Two more unions have voted to establish political funds.

Local government officers, NALGO, Britain's fourth largest union, voted 77.4% to 22.5% in a 67% turnout for a fund. And the 90,820-strong Institution of Professional Civil Servants voted by 37,957 (81.7%) in favour and 8,391 (18%) against to set up a fund. Turnout was 51.2%.

NALGO's annual conference called for the ballot after a £1m publicity campaign against cuts and privatisation, "Make People Matter", was stopped by a high court injunction in June 1987 because the union had no political fund.

before.

Labour Research also found that ex-government ministers are particularly popular in boardrooms, with 27 out of 40 former Thatcher-government members holding a total of 67 directorships.

Seven ex-cabinet ministers — Brittan, Heseltine, Tebbit, Biffen, Gilmour, Howell and Jopling have found at least one boardroom seat each to keep warm.

## Anti-imperialism?

"In Northern Ireland there is a war between the IRA and British imperialism. You must support the IRA".

Such is the basic argument of many on the

British left. Some figures published last week show why it is only a half-truth.

The IRA has killed six times as many people from the local Ulster Defence Regiment and

Royal Ulster Constabulary as from the British Army. In other words: its war is as much, or more, with the armed forces of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland as with the British Army.

The long-oppressed Northern Ireland Catholics have a right to defend themselves against sectarian attacks by Protestants. But a war of attrition, designed to force those Protestants to submit to Dublin rule (or to force Britain to force them) is a different matter.

## Pro-imperialist?

"The only course open to us is to prepare for a long war against imperialism", says a recent manifesto from a group in Northern Ireland, calling for an "all-embracing politico-military strategy".

Only this is the Protes-

tant Ulster Defence Association, calling for a "war against Irish imperialism". It is another reminder that the simple slogan "anti-imperialism" provides no answers for Northern Ireland.

## Stars in the White House

Ronald Reagan did not move very far when he switched from being an actor to being a politician.

According to the memoirs of Reagan's ex-chief-of-staff Don Regan, "Every moment of every public appearance was scripted; every word was scripted".

Regan claims that he never had a single serious discussion on economic policy with the President: the President's job was to read the scripts, not write them.

All that Reagan has brought to the working-out of policy, apparently, is the fads and whims of Nancy Reagan's astrologer, who is allowed to decide the dates and times of the President's schedule!

How long can it be before the modern capitalist drive for rationalisation and 'flexible workers' hits on the idea of merging US politics — the public, elected part of



it, at least — into the Hollywood film industry?

Actors could then transfer to politics in their prime, rather than when old age is slowing them down. When politicians like Gary Hart suffer from scandals or defeats in elections, then instead of being left idle they could be put on the

screen, where the scandals would positively increase their box-office appeal.

Further savings could be made by merging elections into the annual Oscar ceremonies. And the bankers, businessmen and bureaucrats who run the country anyway could get on with it with fewer overhead expenses.

# The uprising continues

At the end of April, Israeli military sources were reporting that the Palestinian uprising had exhausted itself. But renewed fighting broke out in the first weekend of May, and spurred on further in response to the Israeli 'incursion' into southern Lebanon.

For sure the uprising has reached a critical moment. An intense level of mobilisation has been maintained since early December — and such intensity is obviously difficult to maintain.

A high point over recent weeks followed the brutal murder in Tunis of Abu Jihad, the PLO's senior military commander, by Israeli secret service commandos.

The assassination was probably a provocation. Israel hopes that a PLO 'outrage' in retaliation will dampen down international support for them, and prevent the possibility of a softening of American attitudes — although in fact US recognition of the PLO is a very long way off.

Whatever the precise reason for Israel's action, the depth of Palestinian feeling about Abu Jihad's murder indicates the support the PLO enjoys.

The most tangible result of the assassination has been a rapprochement between the PLO and Syria — whose break in 1983 led to Arafat's expulsion from Damascus.

Nearly 200 Palestinians have died as a result of Israeli repression since the uprising, or *intifada* began; some Palestinian sources say more. In addition to shootings and government-urged 'beatings' (leading to televised incidents that have shocked the world), Israel has employed other tactics to put down the revolt.

Telephone lines in the occupied territories have been cut. The biggest fruit and vegetable markets in the West Bank, in Jenin and Jericho, have been forced to close. Fuel supplies have been banned (except to hospitals). And wider restrictions have been applied to people who refuse to pay value added taxes.

The Israeli authorities have forged literature to confuse Palestinians. They have tried to break the back of the resistance by forcing shops to open when they intend to close, and to close when they intend to open. Extensive curfews have been imposed. According to Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Defence Minister, 3,000 Palestinians have been arrested since the start of the uprising. Israel has admitted to holding without trial and for six month periods 300 West Bank activists and 100 from Gaza.

On the whole these methods have failed. Forged literature is quickly spotted; telephones inside the 'green line' (the 1967 border) can easily be used; fuel can be bought in Israel. Moreover the repression itself has utterly failed to intimidate the Palestinian movement.

The Palestinians are experiencing extremely high levels of popular mobilisation. Although it is the youth — most of whom were born since Israeli occupation began in 1967 — who have spearheaded the rebellion, virtually the whole of society has been involved. Workers have been on strike, businesses have closed down, and more recently have observed very specific hours of opening in a running battle with the authorities. Arab policemen have been resigning on mass, partly

## Clive Bradley reports on the struggles in the West Bank and Gaza

in response to threats from militants, in a move which symbolically at least is damaging to Israel.

Local committees have been established to organise distribution of food, and to relieve victims of curfew and Israeli-imposed boycotts. Various grass-roots organisations have flowered, especially the Shabibaya Social Action Committees — youth groups linked to Fatah. The Unified Command has given direction to all these activities.

The Command of course supports the PLO, and is largely composed of PLO groups (although it includes Islamic fundamentalists). But there do seem to be tensions between it and the exile leadership.

Leaflet no. 10 called for the resignation of all Palestinian members of the Jordanian Parliament, a highly significant effort to involve Jordanian Palestinians — who according to popular belief are a majority of the population — in the uprising. The PLO representatives in Jordan denied that the leaflet expressed PLO-endorsed views.

There is speculation that the offending paragraph was a factional gambit by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and that it was not supported by the rest of the command. Whatever, so far there have not been significant moves within Jordan against King Hussein.

Within Israel, the effects of the uprising have been immense. Israeli Arabs, of course, have been united and militant in their support for it. 'Land Day' — 30 March — was a huge success involving Arabs on both sides of the green line, despite Israeli efforts to prevent any Palestinian coordination.

Israelis, too, have mobilised against the occupation. There have been joint Arab-Israeli demonstrations, as well as mainly Jewish events. 'End the occupation' committees have been formed (and have had violent clashes with far right groups).

But a 'lynch mob' mentality — a move to the right — has also developed. When a young Jewish girl was killed near the Arab village of Beita, near Nablus, right-wingers called for "revenge" and for "wiping Beita off the map."

It turned out in fact that the girl had been shot accidentally by an Israeli. But that didn't stop the authorities dynamiting 17 homes and rounding up all the men in the village for questioning.

The West Bank settlers continue to bay for blood. And the view that the 'solution' to the current crisis is to 'transfer' — i.e. deport — all Arabs out of the occupied territories is increasingly held by high-ranking Israelis.

How this growing polarisation in Israel will be expressed in this year's general election is not clear. The Labour Party is in a bad position — the further right it moves to woo Jewish votes the more Arab votes it will lose. Probably the right will win; possibly there will be a continuation of the last four years' stalemate. Even if Labour were to win, no just political settlement

would be forthcoming.

What perspectives are there for the uprising? Can the uprising succeed in forcing Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza?

It is highly significant that among West Bank and Gaza Arabs there is widespread recognition of the national rights of Israeli Jews, and that the PLO itself has now made more explicit its support for the 'two states' programme. Recognition of each other's national rights is the precondition for a democratic solution.

But this has to be a policy directed primarily at ordinary Israelis, rather than at the government. And it needs to be combined with other policies. Working class Jews form the base of Shamir's Likud Group; the Israeli left (which is generally very middle class) needs to address itself to the question of winning away this base. For that a social programme is needed that goes beyond the usual romantic 'kibbutz socialism' of the Zionist left.

# Israel:

Israel's 40th birthday sees the Jewish state in its most profound crisis ever. For many Israelis and supporters of Israel, it is now a state of 'shattered dreams', as a film recently shown on TV put it.

Israel's violence in Lebanon in 1982, and in the West Bank and Gaza now, shows it as an aggressive sub-imperialist military power, not a haven from oppression.

In fact, the violence is not new — although many of the psychological attitudes may be. Today's Israeli soldiers are used to power, accustomed to being part of one of the world's most effective armies. Their predecessors, even in 1967, may have had a less arrogant outlook on the world. But the fact remains that violence against the Palestinian Arabs has been a characteristic of Israeli life since the state's foundation.

From the late 19th century the Zionist movement looked to the creation of a Jewish state as the



Jewish refugees





Palestinian protester dragged away by Israeli troops.

# 40 years of shattered dreams

By Gerry Bates

answer to the virulent anti-semitism unleashed in Europe, which was to reach its climax with Hitlerism. For many Zionists, this search for a nation state was bound up with socialist aspirations (although we might question what they understood by socialism).

Until the 1930s and '40s the project of building a settler state in distant and underdeveloped Palestine, surrounded by hostile and suspicious Arabs, seemed crazy to most Jews. But after the attempted genocide of world Jewry by the Nazis and the callous indifference to the Jews' plight of the other big powers, the Zionist case appeared to have been vindicated. Now they would put trust only in their own, Jewish, people and deal with other peoples in a ruthless and 'realistic' spirit.

The Allied governments told Europe's surviving Jews to stay in their 'own' countries — in countries

like Poland, where there were pogroms after the end of the war. Those same governments had closed their doors to Jewish refugees in the '30s and '40s as Nazi persecution escalated. The Jewish survivors reacted with bitter, desperate fury.

Unfortunately that fury vented itself not on the ruling classes who deserved it, but on the Palestinian Arabs. The Jews, the most terribly oppressed people in the world, created an oppressor nation.

Britain ruled Palestine at that time. Zionist immigration since the late 19th century, and especially since the 1930s, had built up the Jewish population to one-third of the total.

The Jews, however, were more powerful than the more numerous Palestinian Arabs. They had developed a more-or-less autonomous Jewish economy — a modern capitalist economy, while the Arab economy was still semi-feudal — and a Jewish proto-state within the framework of the British colonial administration.

Over the decades, the Palestinian Arabs had become fiercely hostile to the Jewish immigrants. A large proportion of the Arab peasants had been driven off their land and become paupers. In truth, the people mainly responsible for this were Arab landlords, rather than the Jews, who had bought only 6% of Palestine's land, paying the landlords well for it.

But the landlords directed the peasants' fury against the Jews; and indeed the Arabs saw themselves refused jobs in industry and capitalist agriculture because of the 'Jewish-labour-only' policy, and often treated with racist contempt. As they saw it, the Zionists were taking over Palestine, bit by bit, to create a Jewish state in which there would be no place for the Arabs.

In 1936-8 the Arabs rebelled, but were defeated by joint action of the British and the Jews. By 1945-8 they were exhausted and disorganised.

Zionist groups started guerilla war against the British authorities. In 1947 Britain threw its hand in and passed the issue to the United Nations. The UN recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish.

Most Zionists accepted this partition plan. The Palestinian Arabs did not, and neither did the neighbouring Arab states. Jordan, Iraq and Egypt were still semi-colonies of Britain, but Britain decided that it must let their governments act Arab-nationalist on this issue.

British troops started to withdraw from Palestine. Arab guerillas attacked Jews. Full-scale war developed. The British troops stood by. The Zionists got arms from Russian-controlled Czechoslovakia; Stalin reckoned that they could be a useful lever against the British Empire. Better motivated, organised, and armed than the Arabs, the Jews prevailed.

There were atrocities. In April 1948 Zionist right-wingers massacred 250 non-combatant Arabs in the village of Deir Yassin. The mainstream Zionists condemned the killing, though in fact they had provided military cover.

By the time the state of Israel was declared in May, 300,000 Arabs were already in flight. Then the neighbouring Arab states declared war, claiming that they would 'drive the Jews into the sea'. The Zionists' citizen army, well-disciplined and utterly convinced of its cause, routed the Arab armies, drawn from corrupt, landlord-dominated societies. The most effective force on the Arab side was Jordan's British-officered Arab Legion.

Israel established itself on far greater territories than originally proposed. The UN's proposed Palestinian Arab state disappeared: Jordan took the West Bank, and Egypt took the Gaza Strip. Both these territories were later seized by Israel in 1967.

By the end of the 1948 war, some 700,00 Palestinian Arabs had fled what became Israel. The new Jewish state refused to allow the refugees to return. Talks about letting some of them back in the early '50s came to nothing.

The Arabs who remained in Israel were put under military administration. By one means and another, a large part of their land was stolen from them. In place of the Arabs who had fled or been dispossessed, Israel settled large numbers of Jewish immigrants, from Europe and from the Arab countries, where the 1948 war had triggered a wave of anti-semitism.

Israel, then as now, was not much like the generous dreams of the socialist Zionists. The impulse for its creation came not from any great advance for the Jews, but from the horrors of the Holocaust; it was never an alternative to those horrors, but a result of them. In a socialist world it might have been possible to create a Jewish state peacefully, generously, without injustice; in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism, only the most extreme fury and desperation could provide the necessary drive.

And no nation that oppresses another can itself be free: the last 40 years have given the Israeli Jews much proof of this, as their society has become more militaristic and

racist.

Nationalism, even the nationalism of the oppressed, is a blind alley. But it is no good doing as many on the left do, and rejecting Israeli-Jewish nationalism only to embrace the opposed Arab nationalism, or pretending that Israeli-Jewish nationalism belongs to a special category, more vicious than any other nationalism. Nor is it much good saying that Israel should not have been created: today we have two nations, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, the great majority of whom had not been born in 1948.

Many argue that the creation of Israel was a deliberate plan by 'imperialism': Israel was intended to be a 'watchdog' for western interests. In fact the Zionists wanted a state for their own reasons — which were utterly understandable, after the Holocaust and the world's reaction, without any reference to imperialism. They were successful as a result of their own efforts. They were at war with the dominant imperialism in the region, Britain. And the 'special relationship' Israel now has with the United States did not develop until 1967.

The creation of a Jewish state had never been the essential socialist answer to the 'Jewish problem'. But the socialists were defeated in the first half of this century. Hitler triumphed. Six million Jews were massacred. The survivors had to make their way in a racist, dog-eat-dog, imperialist world. They did so, creating a new problem, that of the dispersed and oppressed Palestinians.

Socialist policy must look for a way forward, not backwards.

Among Israelis today there is a lot of soul-searching. Many question what successive governments have done to defend Israel's 'security'. Israel has had bigger demonstrations against its government's war — in proportion to population — than any other country ever. Out of these protests a new, socialist movement can emerge, one that recognises the rights of the Palestinians and builds Jewish-Arab workers' unity.





# Solidarnosc and t

**Alan Johnson argues that socialists need to understand what drives Polish workers to identify with the Catholic Church.**

Many socialists in Britain are hesitant about supporting Solidarnosc because of the visible strong influence within it of the Catholic Church. But why is it that the Church has that influence?

Let's start with Father Jozef Tichner who preached at Solidarity's first national congress. His book "The Ethics of Solidarity" clearly supports workers taking strike action: "Senseless work is the most extreme form of the exploitation of man by man. It is a direct insult to the human dignity of the worker. When work becomes senseless, the strike is the only kind of behaviour which makes sense".

Tichner is not opposed to socialism. He merely distinguishes between 'Closed Socialism' (Stalinism) and 'Open Socialism'. 'Closed Socialism', "allows of only one possible form of exploitation — that which is the result of private ownership of the means of production. When, therefore, after the abolition of private property, the workers come to the conclusion that they are being exploited, closed socialism concludes that they have fallen victim to an illusion."

Or take Father Jerzy Popieluzko, the priest murdered by the Polish security forces in October 1984. After martial law of 1981, when many steelworkers in Warsaw were being arrested and jailed, beaten and attacked, Popieluzko declared "The duty of a priest is to be with the people when they need him most, when they are wronged, degraded and maltreated."

He sat with the steelworkers in court, he worked tirelessly to raise money, food, clothing for the jailed workers families. And, yes, he preached against the authorities as well. For that he was killed, his finger-nails ripped off, his body

black and blue, his tongue ripped out.

Again in May 1977, in Krakow, a leading KOR (Workers' Defence Committee) sympathiser, Stanislaw Pyjas, a student, was killed. His funeral was attended by 2,000 students. Violence was feared. Who supported the students and appealed to the workers of Krakow to act to ensure they didn't get hurt? Cardinal Wojtyla.

When 14 people began a hunger-strike against the arrest of KOR members in 1977, where did they find sanctuary? In St. Martin's Church in Warsaw.

The church is one of the precious few places where Poles can escape the tyranny of the state. Before the rise of Solidarnosc, it was the only major institution in Poland autonomous from the state. The Catholicism of a Polish worker fighting for his or her class, or of a priest closely linked with such workers, is different from the Catholicism of the Vatican.

Here is a scene: 31st August 1985, the 5th anniversary of the founding of Solidarnosc. Workers, farmers, old, young are attending church for a 'birthday mass'. Posters, produced by the underground, are displayed. One shows a large fist crushing a prison. Another, a defiant 5-year old to represent Solidarnosc.

Hymns are sung, but hymns with words like "Oh my country, how long have you been suffering! How deep your wounds today!" An observer is "reduced to helpless tears by the passion in their voices". As the 'birthday mass' ends a powerful voice comes through the loudspeakers "Let us swear to make Solidarnosc live".

Thousands of fists shoot into the air, and thousands of voices shout as one "We swear it". And outside a group of Silesian miners — no doubt remembering their comrades killed in December 1981 — lay a

wreath over the grave of Verzy Popieluzko. Where else, under martial law can workers gather like this, feel their unity like this, express their opposition like this?

Now to understand all this does not mean you have to support it. It doesn't mean we can forget the church has its own interests, its own goals, its own ideas — often bitterly opposed to what we stand for as socialists. It doesn't mean we stop proposing and fighting for secular, rational, human, workers' solidarity. But it does mean we can never support the bureaucrats on the grounds that their 'Marxist-Leninist' mumbo-jumbo is somehow better than the workers' Catholicism.

Indeed, the most important thing to be said against the Polish Catholic Church is that its hierarchy has been one of the most important props of the Polish state!

It constantly preached 'moderation' and 'compromise' to Solidarnosc from August 1980 to December 1981.

Take for example the Bydgoszcz crisis of March 1981. According to Timothy Garton-Ash in his book 'The Polish Revolution', the "workers would never again approach the extraordinary degree of mass mobilization, popular resolution and preparation which they achieved on 30 March" as they prepared to launch a general strike. At the eleventh hour Lech Walesa called it off. Walesa said: "The Pope wrote to us and the Primate pleading with us for reason and reflection".

And Jaruselski was happy to broadcast Archbishop Glemp's message the day after martial law, which said: "The authorities consider that the exceptional nature of martial law is dictated by a higher necessity. It is the choice of a lesser rather than a greater evil. Assuming the correctness of such reasoning the man in the street will subordinate himself to the new situation."

To refuse our support for Solidarnosc is to strengthen the church. Can't you hear the bishops? "Look at these western socialists. They watch you beaten bloody with truncheons and thrown in jails for defending your rights. And what do they do? They do nothing. Come to us..."

## Pravda attacks Solidarnosc

Pravda's recent coverage of working class unrest in Poland certainly won't be winning it any awards for investigative journalism.

Steel workers at Nowa Huta went on strike on 26 April. By the end of April, five days later, workers at the Stalowa Wola steelworks and the Bochia plant near Warsaw were on strike as well, and three leading figures in Solidarnosc had been arrested.

In that five-day period, however, Pravda carried just one — short and typically evasive — article on the unrest, beneath the pedestrian headline "On the Events in Nowa Huta".

According to the article, "forces in the West hostile to socialism" had whipped up a campaign in the media in order to "aggravate the situation in Poland, stop the reforms and weaken the authority of Poland".

The strike organisers were attacked for "consciously breaking legal norms" by calling the strike instead of pursuing negotiations. For the

By Stan Crooke

"instigators of the protest" the most important thing was "not an improvement in material conditions but pumping up the tension on the eve of 1st May".

"Representatives of different underground groupings", the article continued, "are trying to exaggerate and exploit the incidents for clearly propagandistic and provocative goals. Thus the former representative of 'Solidarnosc' Y. Rulevsky, attempted to join the strike committee, but the workers themselves rejected his proposition."

The following day's Pravda carried extracts from the Polish Communist Party's paper "People's Tribune" — on the state of Polish fisheries!

Pravda also had much to say about the official May Day celebrations, reporting both the eve-of-May-Day speech of General Jaruzelski ("... underlined the significance of self-sacrificing labour in a period of profound

changes occurring in Poland...") and also the General's May Day speech ("... expressed support for socialist renewal, for reforms, for a rational and economic Poland, opposed conservatism, negligence, and everything which holds the country back...").

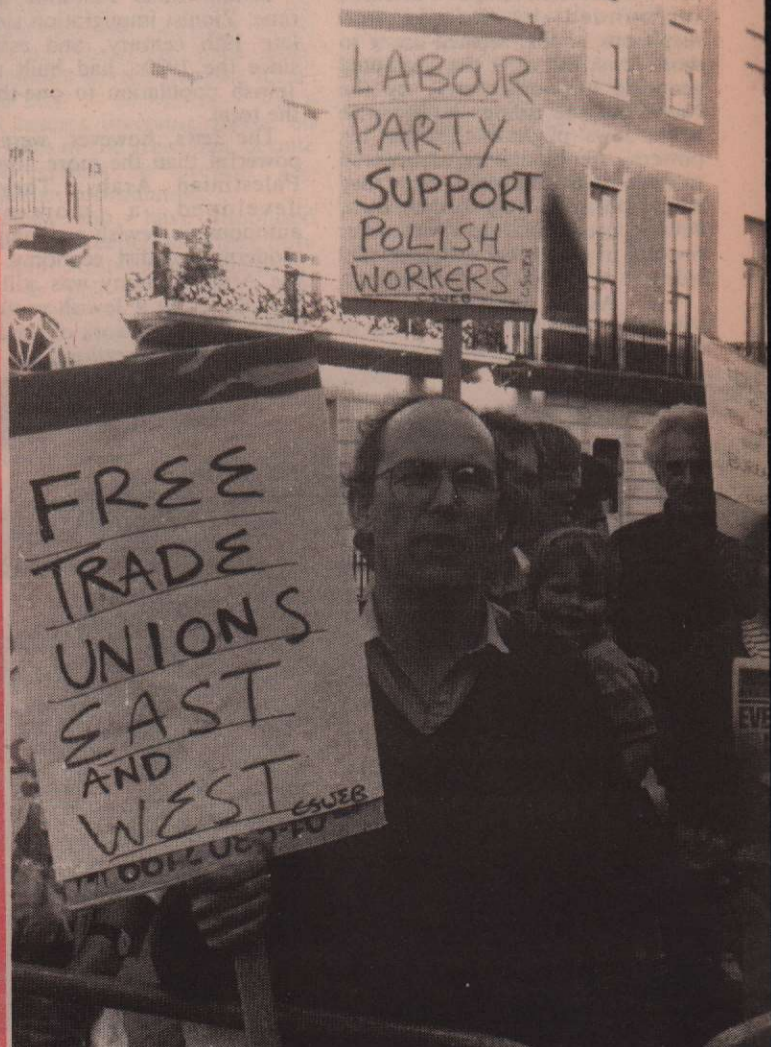
On 3 May beneath the headline "Provocateurs Rebuffed", Pravda declared that "oppositional calls for a boycott of the (official) demonstrations were unsuccessful, attempts to organise counter-demonstrations took place; they all began at churches after religious services, in spite of the reasonable position taken by the Church, which has called for calm... In the country as a whole about 12,000 people participated in these demonstrations."

Thus the article concluded, "the increased political agitation, the leaflets, and the appeals did not in practice have any great effect. The population did not support the appeals of the provocateurs."

All this no doubt, is further evidence of Gorbachev's policies of 'glasnost' (openness) in practice.



Inside the Gdansk shipyard



Picket of Polish Embassy called by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc. CSWEB can be contacted c/o 54A Peckham Rye, London SE15. Photo Tim Anderson.



# he Church



## USSR accepts Afghan defeat

By Colin Foster

Gorbachev has accepted the fact that the USSR has been defeated by the peoples of Afghanistan. In April, the US, Pakistan, the USSR, and the Soviet-supported Afghan government in Kabul signed an agreement committing the USSR to withdraw from Afghanistan.

All the 115,000 troops must leave by 15 February 1989, and half of them by 15 August 1988. A separate deal allows both the US and the USSR to provide aid to their Afghan allies if either does, but there is reason to suppose that this will not lead to a full-scale proxy war. In over eight years of war the USSR has been able to get control of only a few major cities and highways. It seems certain that the Islamic rebels will now win, and equally certain that their loose alliance, of seven parties based in exile and numerous armed groups within the country linked only vaguely to the exile leaders, will collapse into bloody feuding.

However bloody the feuding, and however medieval the new regime that emerges from it, the Soviet withdrawal is good news. It is good news for the 15 million people of Afghanistan, and for the five million who have been made refugees by the war. According to some estimates, one million Afghans have been killed. Some would-be Trotskyists supported the Soviet invasion in 1979 on the ground that it was 'aid to a revolution' and would help bring medieval Afghanistan into the modern world. In fact Afghanistan has been bombed and naplamed back into a sort of Dark Ages. The nearest parallel to what the Russians have done in Afghanistan is what the Americans did in Cambodia in the early '70s.

The withdrawal is also good news for the people of the USSR. Some 12,000 of their young men have been killed, and many more maimed, in Afghanistan, and the war has also cost a lot economically. The other reason cited by leftists in 1979 for supporting the USSR troops in Afghanistan was 'defence of the nationalised property in the USSR'; but clearly the war has been far more harmful for the USSR's economy than the most fanatically hostile government in a weak neighbouring country like Afghanistan could ever be.

The withdrawal does have implications for the USSR's position in world politics, and for the internal affairs of the USSR. Will defeat in Afghanistan have the same effect on the USSR as defeat in Vietnam had on the US? Or defeat in the Suez invasion of 1956 for Britain? Or defeat in Indochina in 1954 for France? Is this the beginning of the end of the Kremlin's empire? More dramatically, could the eight years' unsuccessful war have an effect on the Kremlin dictatorship similar to that which long unsuccessful colonial wars had on Portugal's dictatorship, leading to its downfall in April 1974.

The USSR withdrew its army from Austria in 1955, and in the early 1950s it seriously considered



Soviet tanks

withdrawing from East Germany in return for a deal with the western powers. But those were calculated steps in diplomacy, not a matter of scuttling after military defeat. Notice has been served on the USSR's allies in countries like Ethiopia that they cannot rely on the Kremlin if the going gets tough.

It may be that influential people in the Kremlin regard such countries as 'millstones round their necks'; it was thus that many British leaders of the 19th century regarded most of Britain's colonies other than India. What about the USSR's 'India', the jewel in its crown — Eastern Europe? It is difficult to say. The example of Afghanistan will make the Polish people more willing to envisage successful resistance to a USSR invasion, but the cases are dissimilar. The USSR could rely on a much bigger base of support in Poland than it ever could in Afghanistan, and the Poles would have nowhere to provide the friendly hinterland which Pakistan has given to the Afghan rebels.

The USSR's military effort in Afghanistan has been much smaller than the US's in Vietnam — the US sent half a million troops at the peak of the war — and, of course, much less publicised to the people at home. Those are factors reducing the war's impact on internal politics. On the other hand, a totalitarian regime can less easily afford and accommodate admitted defeats than the US's more flexible system.

In the leading circles of the USSR, some people are now saying that they opposed the invasion of Afghanistan all along. It is probably true. Some years ago there were reports that the KGB wanted out. Despite *glasnost*, there is no whisper of dissent at the top from the view that the war in Afghanistan was costing too much and promised no success at all.

Yet if a serious conservative faction emerges trying to oust Gorbachev — remember, Gorbachev has no economic achievements of substance to show yet, and the events in Armenia and Azerbaijan have warned every cautious bureaucrat of the dangers of loosening the screws on the USSR even a little bit — then defeat in Afghanistan is a ready-made item for any list of indictment against the reformers.

At the very least, the withdrawal from Afghanistan adds a new element of movement to already increasing fluidity in the USSR.

## Poland 1939-81: a chronology

1939	Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia sign a pact. They conquer and partition Poland.		
1945	Nazis driven out of Poland. Russian army occupies Eastern Europe.		
1948	Poland becomes a fully 'Communist'-dominated state.		
1956	Strikes and riots against the rising cost of living and Russian 'exploitation', which help trigger the Hungarian revolution. Reforms promised under new boss Gomulka.		
1970	More strikes and riots following a sharp rise in food prices. Gomulka replaced by Edward Gierek.		
1976	Another attempt to raise prices drastically is stopped by strikes and rioting. But fierce repression follows. Committee for Workers' Defence (KOR) formed to help those victimised.		
1976-80	1,000 strikes occur. Illegal literature circulates widely.		
1980: 1 July	Government announces price rises. Three departments of the Ursus tractor factory in Warsaw go on strike. Strikers spread to Huta-Warszawa steelworks and other workplaces across the country, including the Gdansk shipyards.		
July-August	Strikes spread. Government offers big pay rises,		
August	but this only encourages more strikes. KOR is active around these strikes. A KOR activist in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, Anna Walentynowicz, is sacked. On Thursday 14 August, the yard is occupied in protest. A strike committee is elected. It includes Walentynowicz and another sacked militant, Lech Walesa.		
15 Aug	Strikes spread throughout Gdansk-Gdynia area. Strike committees establish liaison.		
16 Aug	22 striking workplaces form the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee, MKS.		
Aug-Sep	Strikes continue, with workers winning demands.		
17 Sep	35 MKSs meet in Gdansk and decide to form a federation — a national trade union. They call it the Independent Self-Governing Union Solidarity — NSZZ Solidarnosc.		
3 Oct	First nationally-coordinated strike.		
Oct-Nov	Government tries to obstruct legal recognition of Solidarnosc. Solidarnosc threatens a strike on 12 November. Local strikes continue.		
10 Nov	Solidarnosc's statutes accepted.		
Nov-Jan	Disputes continue, for example over Saturday working. By 30 January the regime is forced to negotiate a compromise on		
Aug		Feb	Supreme Court rules against Rural Solidarnosc constituting itself as a union. General Jaruzelski, already Defence Minister, becomes Prime Minister.
		19 Mar	Solidarnosc activists in Bydgoszcz beaten by security police in their local office. Solidarnosc threatens a general strike, demanding that those responsible be brought to justice, that Rural Solidarnosc be legalised, and all political prisoners be released.
		27 Mar	Four-hour warning strike hugely successful.
		Mar-Apr	General strike planned — but then suddenly called off. The Walesa leadership had accepted a compromise. Demobilisation follows.
		Apr-Oct	Regime paralysed, but Solidarnosc fails to take the initiative.
		Sep-Oct	Solidarnosc congress adopts the programme of a 'Self-Managing Republic'.
		Oct-Nov	The regime is obviously planning drastic action. But the national warning strike on 28 October is not as united as hoped.
		12-13 Dec	General Jaruzelski seizes power in a military coup. Solidarnosc driven underground.



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# Forward from Alton

**By Michele Carlisle  
(NAC Student  
Organiser, in personal  
capacity)**

The Alton Bill is finished, but the campaign goes on. That has to be the message after the Bill, to ban abortion after 18 weeks, ran out of Parliamentary time last week.

Alton and his supporters vow to continue their fight to outlaw abortion completely, but the campaign for abortion rights will also fight on, until we achieve a real choice for all women to control their bodies.

Alton's campaign, well-financed, well-prayed-for, and one of the tightest ever, has put the question of abortion firmly back on the political agenda, and his pious and sanctimonious attitude seems to have badly misfired. A recent opinion poll, stifled by the press, shows that 80% of those asked not only support abortion after 18 weeks, but are in favour of abortion on request up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. This is the highest ever support for a woman's right to choose.

Alton has made people worried about late abortions — which we all want to reduce — but has helped us to reaffirm the priority of women over foetuses in the minds of the general public.

We have to build on the campaign against the Alton Bill, which has fallen away in recent months. That means taking up serious educational work on the issue of abortion and contraception — the anti-abortionists have peddled

many lies which have now been accepted as truth. We have to put the record straight.

We have to get into schools, talk to young people, organise speaking tours through the FE colleges and launch a massive campaign to get SUs and trade unions to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign.

We can learn many lessons from the Fight Alton's Bill (FAB) Campaign. Firstly, a broad-based single-issue campaign can win mass support — sectarian infighting alienates people and puts them off.

It is possible, and essential to run a radical, active campaign which includes lobbying MPs, because we have to remember that it is the MPs, in the final analysis who vote on the issue. Getting thousands on the streets does not, in itself, change laws. Only idiots, people from Mars, and sectarians think otherwise.

We need a vigorous campaign in the Labour Party for affiliation to NAC, pro-choice policy, active campaigns to fight for abortion rights, abortion facilities, funding for family planning clinics and for Labour MPs to vote according to Labour Party policy in the Commons.

The fight for reproductive rights would have received a massive boost if we had defeated the Bill on a vote. We did not, and Alton is claiming a 'moral victory'.

He and his supporters have lied and cheated in this campaign. They have been building for 20 years for this Bill, they have millionaires on their side, they were forced to make compromises and they still lost. The 1967 Act is still intact.

We can move forward from here. We must build a massive movement for abortion rights and women's rights as a whole.



## WOMAN'S EYE

### Equal pay: a long way to go

By Cathy Nugent

The recent decision by the Law Lords to uphold Julie Hayward's claim for Equal Pay is an important precedent, broadening the scope of sex discrimination legislation.

Julie Hayward is employed as a cook at Cammel Lairds shipyard in Birkenhead. The work she did was compared to that of three male craftsmen, employed in different jobs in the same workplace, and was found to be of 'equal value' — ie, requiring comparable skills and effort.

Up until now such a comparison could not have been made. The 1970 Equal Pay Act allowed women to apply for equal pay only when they did exactly the same job as a male worker in the same workplace or company.

The Government was forced to amend the Act in line with EEC statutes in 1984, to legislate for pay for women doing different but comparable jobs. Then it took Julie Hayward four years and innumerable hearings and court cases to win what are apparently her rights.

Now Julie's union, the GMB — who helped Julie bring her case to court — have said that they will not be supporting any more legal cases, but will be using the precedent "to help in collective bargaining". The GMB like other unions is very interested in recruiting women members in this period of membership decline. However, in the climate of new realism — where union leaders are willing to accept any kind of scabby deal from the bosses — "collective bargaining" by those leaders holds out limited hope for low-paid women workers. Only rank-and-file action will bring real gains.

Part of the reason that it has taken Julie Hayward so long to win her case has been the complete mess and confusion over what Equal Pay legislation actually means. Even now, the process involved in women bringing equal pay cases to tribunals or to court will remain longwinded and laborious, with or without the backing of their union. The Equal Opportunities Commission — one filing cabinet and an answering machine — is a joke. So why bother?

Even with the "equal value" clause, the present legal framework is quite limited. There is no provision in all-women or mainly-women workforces, eg textiles and shops. There can still be no comparisons made across companies and industries.

Should we be in favour of this? Some feminists have argued that this is the only way to combat low pay for women workers. Sometimes this is couched in terms of a redivision of the bosses' miserable cake — ie that men should be prepared to accept wage cuts!

But women do get the worst deal both on wages and on conditions. Women's work is often part-time. All of this means that women are more exploited.

We should be in favour of better Equal Pay and sex-discrimination legislation. Julie Hayward's victory should be used by the unions to fight for that. And the unions should be fighting to improve all aspects of women's work. The only way they will do this is through the mass involvement of women workers on a rank-and-file basis in their unions. We have a long way to go.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

### Tuesday 10 May.

Leeds SO meeting: 'Support Benn and Heffer!'. Speaker: John O' Mahony. 7.30, Coburg, off Woodhouse Lane.

### Wednesday 11 May.

Newcastle Poly Labour Club meeting: debate between Socialist Organiser (Ruth Cockcroft) and Militant (Paul Morris) on the Middle East.

### Thursday 12 May.

Oxford SO meeting: 'Ireland: what's the answer?' Speaker: John O'

### Mahony. 7.30pm

### Friday 13 May.

North London SO Quiz Night. 7.30 at the Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker St, WC1.

### Saturday 14 May

Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CADFU). Conference to discuss NUT reorganisation. Leicester.

### Saturday-Sunday 14-15 May.

Socialist/Green conference, at Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth St, London WC1. Queries: 734 8501.

### Wednesday 18 May.

Newcastle Poly Labour Club meeting: debate between Socialist Organiser and Militant on Lesbian and Gay liberation.

### Thursday 19 May

'Defend Workers' Rights in Poland!' Picket of the Polish Embassy, 47

### Portland Place, London W1.

5.30-6.30pm. Called by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

### Sunday 22 May.

Leeds SO educational: Reform and Revolution. 5pm at Leeds University Student Union.

### Saturday 21-Monday 23 May.

Lutte Ouvriere fete, at Presles, near Paris. Socialist Organiser will have a stall at this fete, and a number of supporters will be going.

### Monday 23 May.

'Defend free comment in the left press!' A meeting to celebrate Socialist Organiser's victory over the libel cases brought by Vanessa Redgrave. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

### Tuesday 24 May.

Northampton SO meeting: 'Where we stand'. Speaker: Simon Pot-

### tinger. 7.30pm.

### Saturday 28 May.

'Viraj Mendis will stay! No to deportations!' National demonstration, 12 noon from Albert Square, Manchester. Queries: 061-234 3168.

### Sunday 5 June.

Leeds SO educational: The politics of racism. 5pm at Leeds University Student Union.

### Saturday-Sunday 11-12 June

Second 'Chesterfield' Socialist Conference, at Chesterfield Technical College. Queries: c/o Socialist Society, 9 Poland St, London W1.

### Friday-Sunday 1-3 July:

Workers' Liberty 88 Summer School, at Sir William Collins School, London NW1.

### Friday-Sunday 8-10 July.

Conference of Socialist Economists 1988, at Sheffield Poly. Queries CSE, 25 Horsell Rd., London N5.

## WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own

### anti-socialist bureaucracies.

#### We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and

### gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.



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Photo: Kaveh Golestan

# Iran: the struggle today

**It seems that the American presence in the Gulf, despite the initial reaction of Khomeini's supporters, has been minimal. We thought a section of the masses would go once more behind the regime, but that hasn't really happened.**

The 'war of the cities' has created more open opposition to the continuation of the war. Three weeks or so ago there was an anti-regime demonstration of 10-15,000 in the south of Tehran in the working-class district. Workers can't leave the city but the rich have gone off to villas in the north, by the sea. It is the working class areas that have been hit the worst.

The missile attacks have also brought opposition to the war within the regime itself out into the open.

More significantly, it has had a profound effect on the election. We don't know the results yet, but from initial information it seems it has messed up the government's plans. In the major cities, people were not there to vote, and so the balance of power in Parliament is not what they expected.

It's likely that the next parliament will have a lot of factional infighting. Rafsanjani's faction hasn't achieved its total domination. There is also a sort of petty-bourgeois radical faction — not radical in a social sense, but advocating export of the 'Islamic revolution'. This faction has nobody within the ruling clique, but it seems they've got a few more members elected to parliament. Their base is in the Pasdaran (revolutionary guards). The top echelons of the government, however, are dominated by Rafsanjani.

The only way the Iranians can score a decisive victory in the war is to conquer Basra in southern Iraq. But essentially they have now abandoned the southern front and concentrated all their forces in the north. In the mountains in the north, even without an air force, you can go into Iraq a little bit, especially since the Kurdish opposition there would provide help. But as soon as they come out of the mountainous areas they have the same difficulty.

They recently scored a victory in

northern Iraq. The only way they can advance, however, is to destroy the dam on the river — which they could do; but that would kill half the population of Kurdistan, which the Iranians can't afford politically. Even if they do that, they might cause a lot of damage, but that's not a military victory.

The Iranian army understands this, militarily. But it has been purged and its structure shattered. The Pasdaran army does most of the fighting and is of similar size. So the army is in no position to play any role in Iranian politics.

Over the recent period the Iranians seemed to have the upper hand, so the West had to intervene. If the Iranians get desperate because they need a real victory, they might do all sorts of things. So the West had to intervene to contain the situation.

That analysis has proven to be right.

## Fleet

The American fleet has been there for a year now. The Iranians make a lot of claims that the Americans have helped the Iraqis — but this is to fool the Iranian masses. There is no truth in it.

The Americans — or the British for that matter — don't have any interest in creating a situation in which Khomeini's regime can topple. They cannot replace him with anyone of their choice. Most likely, if Khomeini is overthrown, a more anti-Western grouping would fill the vacuum — the worst 'nut cases' in the regime itself, the more fundamentalist and uncontrollable elements.

If not, it could create a situation in which the Soviet Union could intervene. The Tudeh Party (Communist Party) still has a lot of influence within various state institutions; they act as if they are no longer Tudeh Party members. Before they were suppressed, most of the nationalised industry was run by Tudeh Party managers. Most of the regime's propaganda machine was run by Tudeh Party members — artists, intellectuals. Even the jails were run by many Tudeh 'experts' (on how to handle the left). Four or five years ago, the interrogations were really led by the Tudeh Party. And they still have quite a lot of influential figures.

## A supporter of the Iranian Marxist group 'Socialism and Revolution' spoke to Socialist Organiser.

Before the coup in 1953, the Tudeh Party was the largest single party in Iran. All the intelligentsia, all the technocrats were members. After the coup, some of them went over to the Shah.

So the Tudeh Party can always play a significant role. There are rumours that it might be permitted to have legal activity again. They have dropped the slogan for the overthrow of Khomeini from the bottom of their paper.

The alternatives the US could look for? The monarchists? But they are just a joke. They cannot return; despite the opposition to Khomeini, there is no popular support for a return of the monarchy. And the monarchists are no longer a viable force politically — they have disintegrated.

The Mujahedin is also a joke. The popular base they had has completely vanished because of their links with the Iraqi regime. They cannot be an alternative.

Right now the only alternative could come from within the regime itself. That's absolutely certain. The West's attitude is to put pressure, to push the regime so that it's more and more dependent, and would have to bend to accommodate Western interests — which is what has been happening for the last 6 or 7 years. The West wants a gradual normalisation from within the regime itself.

The ruling faction has recognised that the only way they can keep in power is somehow to accommodate Western interests, not to go beyond a certain limit. The Americans obviously know that. All this time they have been secretly negotiating. There are many reports of meetings between Rafsanjani's representatives and Reagan's in Switzerland, and here and there.

British attitudes are the same. Western policy is to try to gradually contain the situation, and to show the regime that the only way it can

stabilise itself in power is by lining up with the West somehow or other.

If the Americans and British wanted to, they could cause tremendous damage in the Gulf. They could step up the military intervention. They could easily take over the ports and Iran could not resist. That would easily stop any threat the Iranians pose to shipping. But they haven't done that.

After the recent flare-up, the British decided 'not to be there' for a while until things cool down.

The West has no plan, and has never had a plan, for the overthrow of Khomeini. They don't like him, but he's the only choice they have. Their alternatives are worse.

There is a 'radical' faction probably responsible for the recent hijacking — two days before the election. Rafsanjani denounced it as the work of the Great Satan. Obviously a group was trying to embarrass them.

## Election

This election is going to play a key role, because in the next four years Khomeini will probably die. Who will be chief mullah? Who will be president? How will the regime dominate state institutions? These are crucial issues, so the competition has been intense.

The Iraqi missile attacks, it seems, are not unrelated. Within the election campaign one of the major criticisms raised against the top mullahs was 'look they are not even in Tehran, how can we vote for them?'. The result for sure will have Rafsanjani dominant, but with more uncontrollable elements present — the group who think even Khomeini is a communist, and the more pro-terrorist, pro-Lebanese Hezbollah faction, both these factions have strengthened their position.

The military struggle of the Iranian Kurds is basically finished. They were restricted to one small area in Iraq, but now that has been taken over by the Iranian army. The fact that the two main groups in Iraqi Kurdistan have now linked up with the Iranian regime obviously hasn't helped. A major split has taken place in the Kurdish Democratic Party which will weaken them drastically.

The population of Iranian Kur-

distan is tired. There seems no end to the war and no prospect of victory. So the Kurdish bourgeoisie would rather reconcile their differences with Tehran. There are tendencies within KDP to negotiate, and other tendencies to line up with the USSR.

The operation of Komaleh (the radical Kurdish group) inside Kurdistan is finished. Most of their supporters are abroad. So the Kurdish opposition is in a very bad state.

The radical Iranian left has been destroyed. Nothing has come out of Paykar (a Maoist group) yet; the Fedayin have split again. This has allowed the Tudeh Party to consolidate its forces, on the line that now the revolution has been defeated we should try a legal framework of opposition — trade unions, cooperatives.

The Tudeh Party has now engulfed the Iranian left. Many of the groups are now moving towards Tudeh positions. Now one of the major groups of the Fedayin has proposed unity between all these pro-Moscow tendencies.

So the Tudeh Party has rebuilt. They have managed to win over a lot of the ex-Fedayin, to their positions at least, if not to their group.

No other left alternative has yet emerged. That could change a lot if there is some further move within the working class, and that's a possibility. The working class is hardest hit by the economic and political crisis, and the regime itself has had to back down. The war is complicating the situation.

For the last two years there has been a downturn in the working-class struggle. Partly the reason for this is that there has been so much fighting within the regime. There has been an air of expectation: "let's wait and see".

Now we are predicting, on the basis of reports we have, that in the next period we'll see a new wave of strikes and struggles. The regime had to retreat on a number of issues — on the labour code — which will give further confidence to the workers.

That will help us a lot, but even that is not going to change fundamentally the composition of the left. All the popular base the left had, it has lost, because of all the crazy positions it took during the revolution. Organisationally, the Tudeh Party can win hands down.



# The human face of cuts

**Belinda Weaver**  
reviews 'Broadcast News'

'Broadcast News' is probably the best movie in town just now. It didn't win any Oscars, but 'Broadcast News' can make it on its own. It's really funny.

A few reviewers have said it's like a TV show. But TV is rarely this funny, this witty. If the TV soundtracks of so-called comedies didn't also have laughter tracks, we might mistake them for drama.

Where 'Broadcast News' is a little like TV is in its shrinking away from any real conclusions, as if doing so would spoil it. This is a little disappointing, as serious themes have been raised. But here they are secondary to what is basically a romantic comedy.

The big theme is of course the ethics of TV news. What should the networks cover, how should they do it, and how far should they go to get a story? Reporter Aaron Altman puts some of the team through their paces. 'Would they tell a contact they loved him just to get his story? Would they film a guy in the electric chair as the current is switched on?' He gets a unanimous yes to both questions. No soul searching here.

The only person really searching her soul is Jane Craig, Aaron's best friend, and a producer of news. She's concerned about the networks' increasing use of Barbie-and-Ken doll newreaders and the reporting of soft, 'human-interest' stories rather than the real news.

Aaron, who's a solid hard-working reporter, gets no real credit for what he does. The networks favour people with the glitzy charisma, who can pump up the ratings.

Such a man is Tom Grunick, played as spectacularly self-absorbed by William Hurt. Hurt knows his limitations, but they don't really bother him. When he gets a job on Jane's network and watches her in action with Aaron on the rest of the team, he phones his father exultantly.

'I really think I can do this job!' Of course he can — by using the brains and skills of the others to make him look good.

A crucial test comes up when Libyan planes attack a US air base in the Mediterranean. Tom is to read the story, but he hasn't the background to interview anyone credibly. Instead of getting himself



**William Hurt**

briefed by Aaron, an expert on Libya. Tom frets over whether to wear a navy or red tie with his crisp, freshly laundered shirt. Once he's done up, he feels ready. Like a baby, he waits to be spoon-fed the lines he'll need to say.

## Handsome

Jane can't resist Tom, despite his dimness and shallowness. His stupidity only makes him more alluring. Who hasn't looked at someone impossibly handsome and been convinced they can't really be

as thick as all that.

Tom has authentic glamour, so Jane gets all tangled up, helping him look good. Her head-over-heels manner softens her. Even the network boss thinks she is becoming more flexible.

Which is lucky for her when the networks start to cut back. Staff must go, so the expendable ones get the axe. Tom isn't surprised, he says. 'This has happened at every station I've gone to'. This may well be the most significant line in the picture.

The forward and onward march of the Toms is just the flipside of

the cuts. After all, if the networks can get away with reporting trivia with dumb clucks to read it, why have reporters slogging away in faraway places at huge expense?

Tom is the future. Stunts, scandals and crime can fill up the gaps where politics and real news have drained away.

Jane professes not to like that future, but in falling for Tom, and sticking with the network, she's given herself up to that future. Jane huffs and puffs a lot about integrity and the rest, but she's going along with the system all the same.

In one ironic scene, when she and

Aaron are shooting footage of the Contras fighting the Sandinistas, she forbids the cameramen to stage any news artificially. What she forgets is how much of a puppet show the Contras really are — a creation of Washington. This dimension doesn't enter her thinking. Her view of 'the news' is not much purer or clearer than Tom's. He's just more honest about it.

What Jane and Tom's differences amount to really is a matter of personal taste. It's not really about journalistic ethics or anything so grandiose but about small personal matters. He accepts schmaltz, she doesn't.

'Broadcast News' doesn't really tackle the big issues of journalism at all. They are just used as spice and seasoning for the romantic comedy. But in this film, you do get a sense of what the work is, and how it's done. It's nice to see a film about people at work that isn't a cop show.

## Science and life after death

Belief in life after death, in the independent survival of the "soul" or "spirit", is widespread. Many believers freely admit their beliefs to be unsupported by evidence, that they depend on faith. Others are keen to find evidence that stands up to scientific investigation.

Just such evidence is to be found in accounts of "out of body" experiences (OOBEs) by a few people who have been close to death but have recovered. A recent TV programme and an article in New Scientist, by brain researcher Dr Susan Blackmore, reviewed these experiences.

A survey of 102 near death experiences found that they seem to involve: feelings of peace; freedom from pain; a feeling of separation of mind from body; entering darkness or a dark tunnel; seeing light; entering the light.

The feelings were experienced in this order, with the first ones being most common, suggesting an unfolding "ready-made" experience as death approaches.

In the separation stage, people reported looking down at their bodies from above. Some described the medical procedures being carried out to resuscitate them as if seen from above. Others described things supposed to be invisible from where they were lying (but not from where their astral selves were hovering!)

Dr Blackmore quoted from a woman



who had written to her of an OOBE she had had after she went into shock, following an emergency operation:

"Although thought to be unconscious, I remembered the entire, detailed conversation between the surgeon and anaesthetist. I was lying above my own body, totally free of pain, and looking down at my own self with compassion for the agony I could see on the face; I was floating peacefully. Then I was going elsewhere, floating towards a dark but not frightening, curtain-like area... then I felt total peace.

Suddenly it all changed — I was slammed back into my body again, very much aware of the agony again."

Many near-death survivors spoke of meeting a "person of light". The identity of this person varied according to the religious background of the survivor. Christians tended to meet Jesus, Gabriel or St. Peter! Survivors felt they were passing into a world of joy, love and peace. Though strongly attracted by this other world, some survivors claimed to make a conscious decision to return to their bodies and resume their earthly

duties.

OOBEs are intensely real to those who experience them. They are convinced their spirits left their bodies and often felt less materialistic and more grateful for the gift of life.

Alternately claimed as evidence of the spirit world or dismissed as "just hallucinations, OOBEs may have sound physiological and psychological bases according to Dr. Blackmore. Their very similarity argues for a common cause — the response of the brain to lack of oxygen and glucose, build-up of carbon dioxide and often waste products, as well as a sudden loss of inputs from the sense organs.

The vision of the tunnel with the light can also occur in epilepsy, migraine, meditation, falling asleep, pressure on the eyes or with hallucinogenic drugs. Dr. Blackmore explains this by a sudden failure of inhibition of nerve cells in the visual cortex (the "sight-brain"). The visual cortex becomes highly excitable and stripes of activity pass through it.

Because of the way the retina is connected to the visual cortex, a stripe of activity is perceived by the brain as rings or spirals of light or tunnels. Movement of the stripe gives the appearance of growth or shrinking to the shapes.

But why do these shapes seem so real? Dr. Blackmore argues that we view reality through the construction of models in our brains. The brain does the best it can with the available information, mixing in information from the memory.

In the dying system, sensory inputs are lacking and brain cells are free from the inhibition that usually controls them. The brain seizes on the vivid imagery from the visual cortex as the most real, and therefore best available, model. It tries to make sense of this 'reality' by bringing out its memories.

Now it seems that many memories are stored in a bird's eye view form. Dr. Blackmore suggests that such memory models could build up a vivid bird's eye view of the dying self. Residual hearing could fill in some of the details of the mental picture, 'real' because no other plausible model is available.

Dr. Blackmore's explanations help re-establish the materialist idea of mental activity as the result of the operation of the brain, not something that occupies it temporarily, having an independent existence.

This is not to say the mind is "nothing but" the operation of the brain's cells, any more than Shakespeare's works are just a collection of letters of the alphabet. A dialectical materialist understanding of the human brain and mind has some way to go but insights such as Dr. Blackmore's are immensely helpful.

Perhaps another line of research might be into why people seem to need to believe so many impossible things — virgin birth, spirits that never say anything interesting, remote stars influencing our destiny, a God that makes us what we are and then wonders at our behaviour!

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# Setbacks in CPSA

The Broad Left has already suffered a number of defeats at this year's CPSA Conference in Bournemouth.

The DHSS Section Executive Committee elections went badly. The 'moderate 84' group won 22 seats and the Broad Left (BL) 8, 5 of whom are Socialist Caucus supporters.

A 'moderate 84' leadership comes at the worst possible time. 1988/9 will be a crucial year in terms of Tory attacks on our jobs, pay, conditions and service. 'Moderate 84' leaders will undoubtedly back down in the face of these attacks.

In fact they are doing so already. At DHSS Section Conference they supported a motion calling for a redundancy agreement, thus tacitly accepting that there will be redundancies in the DHSS. One of their motley crew made the comment: "We can't achieve the utopia of no

By Trudy Saunders

job losses". Thankfully for us the motion was defeated.

A 'moderate 84' leadership undoubtedly opens the floodgates for the Tories to bring in all sorts of measures which threaten members, such as YTS, Limited Period Appointments, the Ibbs report and the Muller report.

At National Conference a number of particularly worrying motions from 'moderate 84' have been carried. One, which transfers decisions on pay from Special Pay Conference to the NEC, is a blow against democracy in our union. Another, which accepts the inevitability of local pay additions gives into a particularly pernicious Tory move which threatens our jobs and attempts to divide workers and weaken our union.

The defeat of the Broad Left in

the DHSS is partly explained by an alliance between the moderates and the misnamed Broad Left '84. But Militant supporters on the DHSS Section Executive Committee last year must also take some share of the blame.

By not fighting the Fowler Review and by not balloting for all-out strike action over Limited Period Appointments, they paved the way for the current attacks on us and demoralised activists.

Increasingly the Broad Left has become an electoral machine. Campaigning for Broad Left policies among the rank and file has been left out over the last few years.

We must do what the Socialist Caucus (the left within the Broad Left, including Socialist Organiser supporters) has always argued for: we must build a campaigning, fighting rank and file Broad Left which when in power gives a strong lead to members in the fightback against the Tories.



Broad left supporters must go back to their branches and campaign for the Broad Left motions which have been passed at this

year's Section Conference. We must build a fighting rank and file who will not allow the right wing to sell our jobs.

## Teachers

# Left must mobilise rank and file

By Liam Conway

The last few weeks have revealed the utter political bankruptcy of the leadership of the National Union of Teachers (NUT). On the pretext of a financial crisis and the fears of

losing members they have attacked union democracy and simultaneously caved in to Tory proposals on pay and education.

But events could still turn against the NUT leaders. This year's executive elections saw a small, but significant shift to the left. Left

strength has risen from 6 to 11 seats on the executive. Only 19 are required for an outright majority. These new executive members must be used as part of a widespread campaign against the defeatism and undemocratic habits of the right wing executive majority.

This campaign must be mounted now in the run up to the Special

Conference on Union Democracy (18 June) forced on the executive by Annual Conference earlier this April. Such a campaign must involve more than just defending the current status quo.

Indeed the left should go on the offensive. We should argue for the election of all union officials at regular intervals and solve the so-called financial crisis by cutting the wages (General Secretary £42,000) and 1st class expenses of the union fat cats.

These changes should, of course, be linked to a clear political message — membership will only increase and the union become stronger if we stand firm in defence of pay, conditions and state education. The left must learn that increased union democracy and defeating the new realism of the executive are part of the same struggle.

The same argument applies to the leadership's strategy for 'taking on' the Tories' Education Reform Bill (GERBILL) when it becomes law. They aim to form alliances with local ecclesiastics, industrialists and 'sympathetic' councils. These same industrialists and councillors will be in 'alliance' with the NUT at one and the same time as they are either hiring and firing staff as school governors or carrying out Tory cuts.

The alliance we need is with cleaners, caterers, office workers, technicians, caretakers, gardeners and libraries — any workers affected by education cuts and privatisation. And this must be an alliance in action.

But again, such an alliance is more, not less, likely if the union becomes more democratic. And the

same applies to the issue of pay. The Government have offered teachers 4¼% with extra for those on incentive allowances. As usual those on the lowest pay will be the hardest hit. The Executive have condemned the offer but they intend to do nothing about it.

The left can do little about it either unless sufficient forces inside the union can be persuaded to take on the union leadership. A fight for greater union democracy could help break down the apathy of the membership.

The low-paid classroom teachers stand to lose most as a result of government policy. A successful fight on union democracy could help create the climate of confidence and anger necessary to reverse the 'new realist' direction of the union.

So, the message is clear. The STA and other forces on the left must play more than a negative role. We need a fully discussed and worked out programme of increased union democracy linked with political demands to reverse union policy on pay conditions and education.

We need to remember that their are no short cuts to victory — at least none that by pass the mass of NUT members. **Over 140 delegates attended an excellent conference on 7 May called by Coventry NUT to prepare for the union's special conference. Amendments worked out by the Socialist Teachers Alliance were discussed in workshops; and invariably came out of the workshops more radical than they went in.**

## Health Service

# Ranks that divide

By Jenny Endicott

The Health Service has an almost medieval hierarchy, from consultants at the top down to ancillary workers at the bottom.

Petty jealousies prevent unity in action. From the District General Manager to the lowliest domestic assistant the line of seniority is like the pyramid from monarch to lord to serf.

The easiest way of seeing the hierarchy is to look at staff eating arrangements.

In Islington's largest District Hospital there are two staff canteens — one for the doctors, one for the rest. I eat with the rest.

Domestics, people generally agree, are the pits — manual workers, and female too. As a rule they don't even rate as one of 'the rest' and are hardly ever seen in the canteen. Only Assistant Domestic Managers can be seen in the canteen, always sitting huddled together.

Next porters. They are roughly on a par with drivers, kitchen staff and works department staff (works staff maintain buildings, equipment, machinery and range from engineers to brickies). Normally they don't eat with the rest either but, occasionally they can be seen in a corner, plates piled high with mash, out of the way.

Next come the lowest administrative staff, like me. We are mostly female — secretaries and clerical officers.

We sit quietly in corners in pairs. Most of us don't seem to eat much, but talk practically exclusively about food.

The next grade up the hierarchy is middle management. These are people like personnel officers and various assistants. They take the greatest care with their seating arrangements and often spend some time ensuring that their management position is mirrored in their



Health workers unite: Manchester, 19 February. Photo: Ian Swindale.

eating place — somewhere in the centre of the canteen, but never occupying more than half a table at a time.

They tend to eat a lot, and generally gossip the most.

Senior managers are the only non-medical group to be graced with the privilege of being able to eat with medical staff. Mind you, they can only sit with their equivalent nurse manager. Heaven forbid if one of them was seen eating with a student nurse!

This lot always take up a whole table for themselves. They also seem to take pride in parading their low-fat yogurt and rabbit food in line with Islington's Healthy Eating Policy. The 'no drinking at work' policy they ignore.

Medical staff as a rule do not eat with administrative staff. Staff nurses seem to have the shortest lunches, senior management easily the longest. State Enrolled Nurses, State Registered Nurses and Stu-

dent Nurses normally sit separately. Hierarchy is destructive and huge barrier to united action. It also establishes a ranking order for areas of the NHS.

Geriatric medicine is ranked pretty low. Until a few years ago in Islington, most of the geriatric wards were put right next to Highgate cemetery. Nice if you like gazing at Marx's grave...

Take a look at any large district hospital. Spot the most ugly building, hidden away, with the oldest wards. You can bet it's the Psychiatric wing.

No wonder the health service unions are in such a mess. No wonder it's so hard to organise united action.

Everything in the NHS is designed to be compartmentalised and exclusive. That way a million hierarchies can flourish, to give each petty manager the chance to look down on at least one person and eat with another.

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# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## The issue is union or non-union labour

WHETTON'S WEEK 

Contrary to what some people are arguing, the issue in the seafarers' dispute is not whether ships are crewed by people who come from Britain or some other country. Where they come from is immaterial — the issue is whether they are crewed by union or non-union labour.

And it is not just a dispute about ferries, but about shipping in general. Will there, for example, still be an NUS when they try to massively increase the shipment of cheap coal from abroad to coincide with the privatisation of the electricity industry?

The government and the employers learnt very well the lessons from the miners' strike and the dispute at Wapping. They have pushed through even more anti-trade union legislation to make it even harder for workers to fight. They know that if P&O win at Dover, then it will not only threaten the existence of the NUS, but also weaken and demoralise other trade unions. We have to be as good at drawing the lessons out of the miners' strike as the other side is.

Already we have seen the establishment of women's support groups, soup kitchens for the strikers, and calls for setting up support groups throughout the country. That is right, but it is very important to ensure that that aspect of the strike should not take precedence over the central issue — keeping the basic union organisation going despite the sequestrators and winning the dispute. Above all organising the pickets and trying to win solidarity action.

The NUS's case is clearly very strong, particularly after the Zeebrugge disaster. There is an obvious link here between the defence of jobs and safety. It is difficult for me to judge some of the other arguments the union is using because I am not a seaman, and would be very interested to hear the rank and file's comments on them first.

But I view with great suspicion the tactic of trying to do a deal with Sealink and play them off against P&O. The fact is that they are both bosses, both employers who are after the same thing — maximisation of profit by taking ships from one side of the Channel to the other. And central to that is screwing the workers.

In our corner of Notts — Bassetlaw — the UDM stood two candidates as a simple wrecking tactic against Labour. They got 28 votes! But the key thing was the return to the Tory fold of a significant proportion of the old SDP's votes at the last election. The Tories won.

The Tories and Margaret Thatcher have made great play over the last weeks about 'law and order', 'terrorism' and so forth. They tried to stop the television showing the films investigating the Gibraltar shootings. Now they say 'trial by television' is wrong.

But what happened to all the pickets during the miners' strike if that was not 'trial by television'? And then there is the hypocrisy of their attitude to the strikes in Poland, where they want to pat strikers on the back and condemn the police force for excessive force!

Whenever workers, east or west, decide to take up the cudgels, then the authorities, east and west, follow the same path — repression. I believe the rank and file workers in Poland have got a just case and deserve to be supported.

My concern is still, however, with the role of the Catholic Church and people like Lech Walesa, who seems to be somebody like Roy Lynk. Perhaps that is being unfair on Walesa, but one of the problems is that I have never had contact with workers in Poland. It is a tragedy as well as being a problem.



Police attack Dover picket. Photo Andrew Wiard

# NO SELL OUT!

By John Bloxam

As we go to press, the seafarers' national ferry ports committee is still meeting at the TUC.

Apparently some members want to step up the action by spreading the strike: others including the union's national leaders, want to call off most action and just leave a few hundred on strike in Dover. The union leaders say that this retreat can save the jobs of 150 NUS members sacked for taking solidarity action and protect the union from a further avalanche of writs.

The Dover strikers are opposing the retreat. In fact it would do little to 'save' the union. The ferry bosses are out to crush the union, attack seafarers wages and conditions, and disregard safety on the boats. Where P&O go, the other ferry companies will follow.

The union's failure to spread the dispute over the last week has encouraged the ferry bosses to take a hard line. Solidarity action is still confined to the ferry fleet and only one-third of the union's membership. The union leaders have made it clear they want a sell-out deal with the Sealink bosses.

The other ferry and oil supply bosses must have calculated that if they sacked NUS members, brought in foreign scab crews to move strike-bound ships, and threatened over 20 more writs against the union, they would get a climbdown rather than a backlash.

The Sealink deal cobbled together by NUS leaders and the TUC is a disgrace. The union has offered to give up the main weapon it has for winning the dispute, —

## The seafarers can win!

solidarity action. In return Sealink will get the sequestration lifted and offer temporary, summer jobs for some of the P&O strikers on two extra ships it will run while P&O is still strike-bound.

If implemented, the deal would divide the Dover strikers down the middle and leave the hundreds of P&O strikers who do not get the 450 temporary Sealink jobs isolated and demoralised. That is why the Dover strikers rejected it last Saturday 7th.

The seafarers can still win. They have won the propaganda war hands-down. The P&O bosses have been branded as playing fast and loose with people's safety in their greedy scramble for profit. They have also been branded as high-handed, arrogant and unreasonable. The union is willing to negotiate and accept arbitration; P&O isn't. The union has widespread support from the labour movement and the public.

Even after 14½ weeks, the strike at Dover is still basically solid. P&O have been able to get only a few scabs. And added pressure is now being put on the bosses by the lorry drivers' blockade.

The NUS leaders have said that they have no alternative but to spread the action and defy the law. They have publicly called for other NUS members to take solidarity action. On Monday 9th Sam McCluskie spoke in Portsmouth and urged ferry workers there to stay out in solidarity with Dover. But the NUS leaders have always stopped short of a serious campaign.

The union sent out telexes to the deep-sea members to inform them of what was happening, but not to instruct them to strike when the ship berthed. On the QE2 last week there was no union recommendation, let alone instruction, to come out; so the vote was lost. In these circumstances it was inevitable that the magnificent world-wide response to the union's sequestration, stopping ships as far away as New Zealand, would begin to falter.

Also missing was any vigorous pressure on other unions to take solidarity action. The worst example is the TGWU and the Dover dockers, who are still handling P&O strike-breaking ferries. Their ballot on taking sympathy action remains uncounted. Neither here nor in any of the other ports has the TGWU taken a lead.

But the TGWU must know that a defeat for the seafarers would bring nearer a serious assault on the National Dock Labour Board Scheme, on which the Dover dockers are a part.

Today very few groups of workers can win on their own. Solidarity action is a necessary part of winning, and that means almost certain legal action against unions. **The only possible defence against this is to make the solidarity action sufficiently widespread and powerful to stay the bosses' hands.**

On Monday 9th the Merseyside dockers called for a national docks strike. Tied to an all-out seafarers strike, this would have a rapid ef-

fect on the British economy and put immense pressure on P&O and the other ferry bosses to settle. It would also make much more likely solidarity action from continental port and seafaring workers.

A glimpse of the possibilities was seen on Monday when Southampton dockers delayed the departure of P&O's Canberra while they checked that the NUS members on board were prepared to sail.

Those on the national ferry ports committee arguing for an all-out strike and rejection of the sell-out are 100% right. If that is carried at the meeting, the call should go out to all NUS members and be backed up by NUS members being sent to all the ports to organise to stop all union ships.

There should also be an immediate approach to the TGWU and NUR to pull out their members in the ports.

Both P&O European Ferries and Sealink are part of immensely powerful capitalist firms. At the same time as complaining badly about the threat of Channel Tunnel competition, they have detailed plans — **including collaboration with the Channel Tunnel bosses** — to secure the profits they make from the ferry operations. The strikers should start demanding access to all the books of these Companies to expose what is really happening.

Other trades unionists and labour movement activists should:

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