

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

Where is  
Poland  
going?

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# The great poll tax robbery

**A** leaked Department of Social Security document reveals just how far the Tories are prepared to go to extract poll tax payments from the poorest people in Britain.

The DSS is being instructed to stop payments for poll tax from claimants' benefits, should they fall into arrears. The official figures are £1.75 a week for single people, and £2.75 a week for couples.

But some claimants, who already have deductions made for fuel, water and housing costs, will be left with a mere 10p a week to live on.

The DSS reckon that local authorities will apply for court orders for deductions in 750,000 cases. Of these, they estimate that 600,000 will be successful.

If the Tories are miserly and penny pinching in insisting on driving claimants further into poverty through the poll tax, they are sparing no expense in setting up administrative procedures to chase those who cannot pay.

600 new jobs will be created to harass non-payers. It is estimated that it will cost £15.6 million a year to administer the deduction scheme.

600 jobs which could have been used to speed up DSS claims. £15.6 million which could have been spent on increasing benefits rather than increasing poverty.

The poll tax is a blatant piece of class law — making the poorest in society subsidise the



luxurious lifestyle of Thatcher's friends with their mansions and big cars.

Under Thatcher, claimants and the low paid have been forced into an ever increasing

spiral of debt, the main beneficiaries being shady loan sharks.

The poll tax will only serve to make matters worse.

The Tories cannot be allowed

to get away with it. Already over half a million people are not paying the poll tax in Scotland. The councils, knee deep in administrative chaos, have taken no action against

non-payers, but the crunch will come soon.

Labour councils must refuse to chase non-payers and must refuse to act as debt collectors for Thatcher.

# Botha fouls his own nest

By Ann Mack

**S**uddenly, the South African regime is no longer looking so secure.

The final resignation of PW Botha could just push the National Party government back into the kind of crisis that South Africa's rulers believed they had overcome following the collapse of the 1984-6 township revolt.

Botha's rambling resignation speech, which denounced his successor FW De Klerk for talking to Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda in preparation for possible negotiations with the ANC, can only help to damage his party's electoral chances and boost those of the right-wing Conservative Party.

It would be ironic, to say the least, for Botha to close his political career by preparing the way for his own party to be outflanked from the right. For Botha began his career as an Afrikaner nationalist militant in the NP when it was attempting to dislodge the ruling United Party.

Botha knows as well as anyone else that in the history of South Africa governing parties have always been replaced by parties to their right, never their left.

Whoever wins next month's parliamentary elections — in which the vast majority of the population are denied a say — will face major problems.

The National Party will probably pick up the largest single share of the vote but could face big internal problems constructing a stable majority. NP 'reformers' will be pulled towards the Democratic Party and towards a position of opening up negotiations with the ANC. NP

hardliners on the other hand could find themselves more attracted by the Conservative Party, which tries to present itself as the true guardian of Afrikanerdom.

The party leaders around De Klerk are more technocratic modernisers than real reformers. They will almost certainly work to avoid at all costs any bloc with the Conservative Party. They would definitely be tempted by the prospect of some kind of temporary and partial deal with the outlawed ANC — legalisation of the organisation in return for a suspension of the armed struggle — which would take a lot of international pressure off their backs.

The problem for De Klerk is that the townships are waking up. "Unrest reports" have multiplied six-fold and most days see street battles between black youth and the police, particularly in Cape Town's coloured ghettos.

Extensive TV coverage of events in China and the USSR has not had the intended effect. The message from state TV was that "Communism is bad" but South Africa's black youth and workers have been inspired by the sight of workers and youth fighting for democratic rights.

Even the South African Communist Party, the most slavish of pro-Moscow parties outside the Soviet bloc, has been forced to support the upsurge in the Eastern bloc. After all when the 'line' is glasnost, you have to support 'glasnost'.

After a period of retreat and quiet the South African working class, which was never decisively defeated in the period 1984-7 is beginning to wake up.

Let's hope Botha's senile spluttering will help that process.



Youth on the streets of Cape Town

## Release the victims of these crooked cops!

**T**he entire West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad has been disbanded, and all its 50 police officers moved to desk jobs.

According to West Midlands police chief Geoffrey Dear, "the documentary evidence" prepared by this squad "was not as right as it should have been, it was not correct". In

other words, the squad was faking confessions.

Dear has promised an "outside investigation" into every case handled by the squad in the last three years. But there are other cases which need not just a new investigation by different police, but the release of those jailed and new trials.

In one such case, Martin Foran has been in jail for five years after being convicted solely on the evidence of an alleged confession produced by the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad. Never ceasing to protest his innocence, he has been consistently ill-treated in prison, and is now seriously ill.

In another, the 'Birmingham Six' are still being held in jail for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, on the sole evidence of confessions gained by the squad. Two of the officers now being shifted to desk jobs were among those who interrogated the Birmingham 6.

Contact the Martin Foran Defence Campaign at BM Foran, London WC1N 3XX.

## Peruvian miners fight back

**7**0,000 miners in Peru began a strike this Monday, 14 August, against the appalling conditions and low pay in their industry.

Peruvian miners often earn less than \$2 a week — about £1.25. But zinc, copper and lead production accounts for about half the value of the country's exports.

Miners went on strike twice last year, and this year their demands are basically the same. Their conditions have deteriorated since then.

The government and the mining employers (who include some of Peru's top capitalists) expect the miners' strike to cause them big problems.

Peru, like other South American countries, is in deep economic difficulties made worse by a foreign debt and, in this case, a long-standing civil war with the Maoist guerrillas of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) who control parts of

the countryside. The poor, like the miners, have to bear the brunt of the crisis.

Peru is also a country with a rich tradition of working-class struggle. In the first half of this year — as wages fell in real terms by 25% — there have been many violent clashes with police.

The populist-nationalist government of Alan Garcia accepts the miners' demands on principle, but says it has no money. It fears a growing right-wing backlash (fronted by a world-famous novelist, Vargas Llosa) caused by its disastrous economic policies.

Other strikes have recently been held by doctors, refuse workers, and bank workers, and other strikes are looming.

## Even Tories reckon NHS changes will harm patients

**A** Tory-dominated Commons committee has sharply criticised the government schedule for NHS 'reforms'.

The social services committee said in a report published on 10 August that the breakneck speed of Tory NHS changes could seriously jeopardise standards of patient care.

The committee (which contains a dissident pro-Thatcher minority) is opposed not to the NHS reform, but the speed with which the government wants to implement it.

But it shows what problems the government now has. The British

Medical Association says Tory health service changes would "irretrievably alter the NHS". Very many people no longer trust what the Tories say about the NHS, and are extremely dubious that it is "safe in their hands".

And so they should be. Thatcherite ideology, although they never admit this to the wider public, opposes the very idea of the NHS, as a socialist impediment to economic growth. The NHS reforms are designed gradually to whittle the service away.

Tory MPs can't stop that — only labour movement action can. But the more the Tories fall out about it, the better.

## China offers slave labour to capitalists

### WORLD BRIEFS

**T**he Chinese government seems to have decided that foreign capitalists

now need some extra inducement to keep them investing in China.

They are offering prison labour to the multinationals, at £62 a month, half the going rate for ordinary Chinese labour, with security guards thrown in.

The Swedish car firm Volvo, apparently the first multinational to be approached, has rejected the offer. Volvo bosses say that "the overtones of slave labour are revolting"; perhaps they are also mindful of the fact that forced labour has a very low productivity, especially on relatively high-tech jobs.

Volvo's rejection, however, does

not mean that Western capitalists are uniformly horrified. The approach to Volvo was made not directly by the Chinese government but by a Belgian firm acting on its behalf, which will doubtless now approach other possible clients.

**A**s we go to press, the prospect of a Solidarnosc-led government in Poland under President Jaruzelski is fading.

The Peasants' Party, long a stooge of the ruling bureaucracy but now trying to recover some independence as the regime decays, had talked about collaborating with Solidarnosc rather than the ruling party, but has now fallen back into line.

Meanwhile, the Solidarnosc leadership has broken its no-strike policy by calling a one-hour protest strike on 11 August against big

price rises recently decreed by the government. Nominally the Solidarnosc leadership is committed to the same market-economy policies as the regime, and thus also to price rises and unemployment; but the Solidarnosc leaders also have to take account of pressure from their working class base.

**T**he secret clauses to the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 have at long last been published in the USSR's official press.

Those clauses defined spheres of influence for Germany and the USSR in Eastern Europe, paving the way for Stalin's annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940. Publication of the clauses has been one of the main demands of the resurgent nationalist movement in those Baltic states.

### Labour's Socialist Alternative Pre-Conference Rally

Friday 15 September 1989 7.30pm

Sheffield City Polytechnic Totley Hall Lane Sheffield

Speakers: Alice Mahon Audrey Wise Tony Benn Eric Heffer

(others invited from NEC left slate)

The Rally is organised by the North West Campaign for Socialism and the CLPs Conference and supported by the Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

For further information, more leaflets or to book accommodation and transport contact: John Nicholson, 33 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ — 061 225 5356 or Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG — 051 638 1338

North West Campaign for Socialism, CLPs Conference, Campaign Group of MPs, CLPD and the Socialist Movement

### Pre-Conference Briefing The Socialist Alternative to the Policy Reviews

Saturday 16 September 1989 10.30am to 4.30pm Sheffield City Polytechnic Totley Hall Lane Sheffield

For further information contact: John Nicholson, 33 Birch Hall Lane, Manchester M13 0XJ — 061 225 5356 or Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG — 051 638 1338

### Next issue

Next week Socialist Organiser will take a break for the August bank holiday. No. 413 will be out on 31 August.

# How to unite workers in the USSR

## EDITORIAL

The authorities of the Soviet Republic of Estonia last week banned strikes, following strikes by tens of thousands of Russian workers which have shut down about 30 factories. The Russians are protesting against a new law which effectively takes away their right to vote.

The new law set a minimum residence requirement of two years in the Republic for voters in the local elections, and five years for candidates. It is a clear infringement of the rights of 300,000 Russians who live in Estonia.

Around 20,000 workers in factories in Tallinn, a big industrial town, began strikes last Wednesday, 9 August. Last month, Russian workers struck against various concessions made by Moscow to Estonian nationalism.

Despite the ban on strikes, they are continuing, and spreading. Ethnic tension in Estonia is increasing daily. What is a socialist response?

The almost innumerable national and ethnic conflicts in the USSR are in large part the responsibility of the Kremlin, whose Russian chauvinist policies have made local nationalisms flourish and fester under a lid of repression.

Some of the nationalities in the USSR are brutally oppressed. All of them suffer disadvantages in comparison to Russians. Recent nationalist unrest in the Baltic states has tended to focus around demands for autonomy; in southern states like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, local ethnic rivalries have predominated.

The only answer is to find an arrangement that does as much justice as possible to everyone. Oppressed



Russian workers vote to stay out

nations have the right to self-determination, which is to say autonomy, or independence if they want it.

Estonia has this right. But that does not mean that the Estonian majority has the right to mistreat its own minorities.

40% of the population of Estonia are non-Estonians (Russians, Ukrainians, etc). Russian speakers form part of the dominant, 'op-

pressor nation' in the USSR as a whole. But the rights of individual Russians living in Estonia should not be confused with the rights of the Kremlin to dictate to Estonia.

The huge numbers of Russians living in Estonia have every right to vote, speak their own language or whatever else.

So socialists should support the strikes, while insisting that Estonia

has national rights which the Kremlin, and Russian workers in Estonia, must respect.

The socialist approach is best called **consistent democracy** — no concessions to the dominant power, no concessions to the current underdog to dominate in the future. We are for the democratic rights of nations and of individuals; but support the nationalism of neither side.

# Women in pop music

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

Watching 'Top of the Pops' has been marginally less unpleasant over the last few weeks.

Bros seem to be on their way out, everyone's favourite boy next door Jason Donovan is no longer number one. But, more importantly, an ever increasing number of female acts are in evidence — and not just your Stock, Aitken & Waterman puppets either.

This strikes me as a good thing. For too long pop music has been dominated by men, with women figuring as cutesy singers or passive consumers. Pop music has provided figures for young women to swoon over, but not, sadly, to identify with.

This has been changing gradually — most notably through figures like Annie Lennox, who not only sings extremely well and writes very good songs, but projects an image of women which is strong and positive. Eddie Reader, who fronts Fairground Attraction, and young black acts like Salt 'n' Pepa and Yazzy also put forward images of women in pop which are far removed from the traditional.

But, as usual, things aren't so straightforward. For me, anyway, the real joker in the pack is Wendy James, singer with the fantastically popular Transvision Vamp.

James is an odd one. She makes frequent statements against rape. When sexist interviewers question her about her image (which, for those of you not in the know, is blonde, pinky-pouting, and involves showing lots of leg and midriff) she tells them to 'shove it'. She dresses for herself, not for men. She also wishes to be taken seriously as 'an artist'.

All well and good. After all, for years we've been saying we have the right to dress as 'sexily' as we please without being taken for brainless sex-objects and I certainly do not think that women musicians should be obliged to crop their hair and don dungarees in the interests of ideological correctness.

But — there's something not quite right about all this, something that doesn't ring true. For what exactly are Transvision Vamp?

Their music consists of stolen power-pop riffs, their lyrics combine excruciating banality with the worst kind of cliched pretentiousness. Wendy James has, to put it mildly, a weak voice.

So what? There are plenty of pop groups whose stock in trade is second rate rock rip-offs. Why should TV and poor old Wendy by singled out?

Because, it seems to me, that all Vamp are left with, the recipe of their success, is the sex appeal of Wendy James. Despite her protestations, what comes across is that James and Vamp have done their market research.

Vamp mainly appeals to young men from mid-teens to mid-20s. James' stage persona appears as specifically manufactured to exploit this market. Vamp exist by selling Wendy James — and very nicely they seem to be doing from it.

Now, I suppose to criticise James for being a hard-headed businesswoman who is making a living from her looks seems a bit mean. But there is a level of bare-faced hypocrisy about it that I find utterly distasteful.

To distort an old feminist saying, women need Wendy James like a fish needs a bicycle!

# Short memories

## TV

By Vicki Morris

As part of the 20th anniversary retrospective on British troops going onto the streets of Ulster, BBC1 are screening a new three-part biographical series called 'Families at War' (Mondays, 9.30pm).

The programmes provide some background to what, to most British people, must seem an unexplainable and insoluble mess...an impression the British media has until now done little to counter.

With few exceptions, they have failed to adequately represent the experience of the Northern Irish people, whilst pretending a morbid

concern for their welfare.

They have also failed most British people, large numbers of whom, I am sure, would like to understand and see an end to the fighting in Northern Ireland, not just out of a desire to bring the boys home, but because they are genuinely disturbed by the Troubles.

Some of the programming of recent weeks has reflected that concern and hurriedly tried to fill in the gaps left by TV companies' own neglect.

In the first programme of this series, reporter Peter Taylor told the story of Shane Paul O'Doherty, a name infamous at the time for masterminding the British mainland letter bomb campaign of 1973-4, and for planting a bomb at Baker Street tube station, but largely forgotten over the course of the years and the events which have followed.

If you ever wondered what happened to people like O'Doherty who are caught by the state, the programme filled in the details of a

fairly typical experience: to date, 13 years of 30 life sentences served in prison on the mainland, 14 months of them spent in solitary confinement. Less typical is the outcome of O'Doherty's story: a conversion to Christian pacifism and return to a Northern Ireland gaol, plus the likelihood of his release as a reformed character.

Probably because of its format, the programme sadly provided inadequate comparison of O'Doherty's personal experience with that of others who joined the IRA.

For instance, O'Doherty came from a middle-class family in Derry who were horrified when they discovered his involvement, and even more horrified when they discovered its extent.

He thought, in retrospect, that he first joined the IRA for personal reasons — in order to feel indispensable and to impress acquaintances. We were left guessing as to whether his motivation was typical. By implication it was not.

O'Doherty developed a genuine commitment to the organisation after witnessing the events of Bloody Sunday. Unlike the majority of those unrepentant members, O'Doherty's final analysis of his and their actions is: "the fruits of 20 years of violence have put off the very ideas we sought to serve — and will do so for a long time."

The main failing of the programme, as far as I could see, was that it sought to endorse this wholly negative assessment without drawing out O'Doherty's ideas about what should have and now can be

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

Karl Marx

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## The Tories are very, very sorry

### GRAFFITI

**Y**TS trainees and their parents will be relieved to learn that the Department of Employment has finally acted over the large numbers of YTS trainees who are killed on the job. Are the DE insisting on enforcement of health and safety standards? Are they introducing rigorous monitoring of workplaces? Surprise, surprise, no.

In some would say characteristic style, the DE has come up with something rather more ghoulish. From now on, bereaved parents will be the fortunate recipients of a *pro forma* letter of condolence courtesy of the Training Agency (the body in charge of government training schemes).

The letter reads: "I was very sorry to hear of the death of your son/daughter ..... whilst receiving training on YTS. I am writing on behalf of all the staff of the Training Agency to send our condolences. ....'s death on the very threshold of adult life is tragic for the family. It is also greatly saddening to all the friends and colleagues with whom s/he was pursuing his/her programme of training. "With deepest sympathy."

If only such a scheme had been introduced earlier! Surely it would have lessened the grief of the parents of the 21 teenagers who died on YTS in 1986-7 and the 19 in 1987-8.

The minister responsible for the idea, John Cope, was moved from the DE in last month's reshuffle, to the Northern Ireland office.

Perhaps he's considering drawing up a similarly tactful and sensitive letter for the bereaved families of victims of public bullets?

**7**7 per cent of people think that British troops should pull out of Northern Ireland.

A telephone poll, conducted by TV-AM asked the question "After

20 years, is it time to pull the troops out of Northern Ireland?" and some 5,000 people responded.

**T**hatcher's big business pals will be celebrating this weekend.

The Bank of England reports that profits last year surged to 18% of national income — their highest level since 1951.

Of course, the bosses make their profits by keeping our wages down and making us work harder.

It's up to us to wipe the smirk off the Champagne Charlies' faces.

**W**ho's paying for the Tory government's ludicrous effort to advertise water as a build-up to selling off the water companies?

You are. According to an estimate in the *Sunday Times*, the advertising campaign has cost an extra £1 on every water bill.

A final phase of the advertising campaign, yet to come, will cost almost as much again. You'll pay for that through taxes rather than through your water bill.

**R**acial attacks in London are on the increase, according to figures issued by Scotland Yard.

The first six months of this year saw a 60% increase in serious racial attacks against the 1988 figures.

The figures point to the failure of a £400,000 police publicity campaign against racial harassment. The campaign, intended to target 17 out of the 32 London boroughs, consisted of leaflets and booklets to be distributed to households.

But in the end the highest proportion of pamphlets distributed was in Lambeth, with 43%. In Hounslow none were delivered at all. On average, around 10% of the literature actually reached its destination.

Scotland Yard blame the private firm to which they gave the printing and distribution contract. Its name? — Saatchi and Saatchi.



The socialist answer to Stalinism. 80p plus 32p post from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

# Socialist Worker and 'troops out'

By John O'Mahony

**T**wenty years after British troops were put on the streets in Northern Ireland, the political atmosphere on the left in Britain is still dominated by thoughtless slogan-shouting.

Much of the left shouts 'Troops Out Now' — and never mind if Belfast and Derry go the way of Beirut, as a result of 'troops out' without a new political settlement of the relations between the two communities in Ireland and between Britain and Ireland as a whole.

In this atmosphere, one of the main tasks of a Marxist paper like *Socialist Worker* is to convince the left that it should not just shout slogans, but first study the situation and discuss the possibilities.

*Discussion* on Ireland is a difficult thing to organise on the British left, though things have improved a bit lately with the setting up of 'Time To Go'.

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is the biggest single force on the left which works against rational discussion about Ireland — as also about Israel/Palestine, where the relations between Arab and Jew have much in common with Catholic-Protestant relations in north-east Ireland.

The SWP insist on reducing everything to slogans and, against those on the left who question their sloganising, to abuse. They denounce *Socialist Worker* as 'Unionist', 'pro-imperialist', 'Zionist' and so on, and so on. Implicitly they insist that certain peoples — the Israeli Jews, the Northern Ireland Protestant/Unionists — are bad peoples, and that the solution to the conflicts is for the collective identity of the 'bad' peoples, Jews and Protestants, to be obliterated as thoroughly as the conquering Romans of old obliterated their rival, Carthage.

They sometimes come close to openly advocating the 'Cartagean' solution for Israel. They are more circumspect about the Northern Ireland Unionists, but the logic of what they say is unmistakable in both cases. For Ireland they talk about a 'socialist solution' which would include Protestant/Unionist workers shorn of their present identity as a distinct community or Irish national minority; but this talk has no grip on reality. The Protestant Irish working class has demonstrated again and again that it will defend its distinct identity in every way necessary.

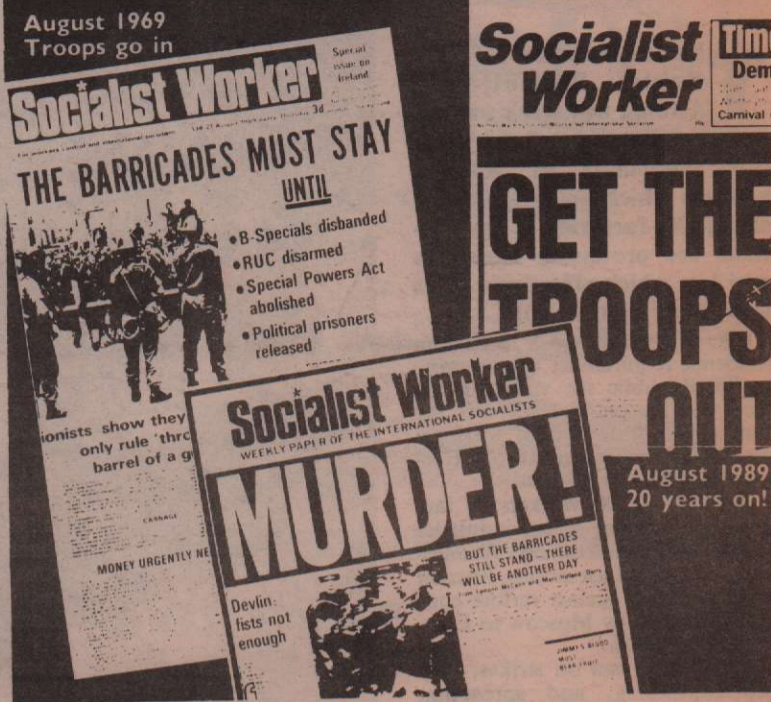
The SWP's policy of conquest of the 'bad' peoples is anti-socialist and anti-working-class; but many young people are drawn towards it by sympathy with the oppressed Northern Ireland Catholics and the oppressed Palestinian Arabs. They are then convinced that any concern by socialists with the rights of Protestants or Jews is a betrayal of the Catholics and Palestinian Arabs.

The Marxist approach is that there is no such thing as a 'bad' people, or a people without rights. In conflicts like those in Ireland and in Israel/Palestine, we advocate — in Lenin's phrase — 'consistent democracy'. We support the oppressed in their fight for full democratic rights; we do not support any drive for revenge or suppression of the rights of the communities which are currently oppressors.

We advocate equal rights and compromise and conciliation between the conflicting peoples — and, on that basis, working-class unity across the communal and national divide to fight for socialism.

All that is a closed book to the SWP. Indeed, they educate their

## Socialist Worker 1969-1989



A consistent record? In fact *Socialist Worker* effectively supported the troops in 1969

recruits to regard such an approach as a betrayal of the fight against imperialism.

Therefore it is useful, and for people miseducated by the SWP, salutary, to learn the strange history of the SWP on Ireland. In 1969-70 the SWP (then IS) supported and justified the deployment of British troops in Ireland!

In effect, they advocated the same policy as was then put forward by the Labour Party parliamentary left round *Tribune* — indefinite direct rule — wrapping it up in a lot of militant-sounding 'demands' and 'conditions'.

A true account of their own history on this question might lead SWP members to think about the real issues, and listen to the arguments against their own slogan-mongering approach. For that reason, the SWP leaders lie about their history.

Last week's *Socialist Worker* had four pages on "20 years of repression" in Northern Ireland, opening with a page on "The day the troops went in".

That page tells us that "The British army [was] sent... to crush a peaceful civil rights movement fighting discrimination..."

"[In Derry] the defenders [of the Catholic ghetto] matched the teargas and baton charges of the police with stones and petrol bombs. In three days they fought the police to a standstill."

"Britain's Labour government sent the troops in... Far from sending the troops to protect the Catholic population Callaghan and fellow minister Healey insisted to the cabinet, 'Our whole interest is to work through the Protestant government'."

No reader gaining their information solely from that page could doubt at all that *Socialist Worker* would have boldly said 'Troops Out!' in 1969.

To redouble the cynicism, the page is illustrated with copies of *Socialist Worker* front pages from 1969. They include no call for troops out, but — so you would think — that call must surely have been in the small print.

In fact the small print said just the opposite. In 1989 *Socialist Worker* says that the troops went onto the streets in 1969 to crush the Catholics. In 1969 *Socialist Worker* said the troops were protecting the Catholics (albeit unreliably) from the Protestants.

"Time is vital to bring aid to the Northern people. The intervention of the British troops only allows a

temporary breathing space in which the defences of the Catholic community can be strengthened", declared *SW* on 21 August 1969. "The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital", it insisted on 11 September. "Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists".

A big centre-page headline read "Fine slogans and grim reality — the contradictory role of British troops gives Catholic workers time to arm against further Orange attacks".

But *Socialist Worker* followed up its feature with a leaflet to the 'Time To Go' demonstration illustrated by *SW* front pages from 1969 to 1989, trying to show how consistent *SW* had been over twenty years in its opposition to the troops. On page 8 this week we call John Molyneux to the witness stand, to document the reality of what *SW* was saying in 1969.

It is not possible in 1989, in the light of 20 years' experience, to pose the issues as they were posed in the debates in the SWP/IS in 1969.

Those of us who fought the pro-troops position of Tony Cliff, Paul Foot and others continue to oppose the troops; but we now believe that troops out cannot be proposed as simplistically as we did it then.

Twenty years later, it seems clear that troops out without a political settlement would actually lead inevitably to full-scale civil war and repartition. We therefore advocate linking troops out to a programme of a federal united Ireland, with regional autonomy for the Northern Protestants, and voluntary confederal links between that united Ireland and Britain.

Marxists relate to the world and where necessary modify their ideas and responses in the light of events. But that is not what the IS/SWP leaders have done. They posture and sloganise in an irresponsible fashion which, 20 years ago, was peculiar to Gerry Healy's SLL.

There is no way that Tony Cliff and his colleagues can square what they say now with what they said in 1969. Every argument they gave for supporting the troops in 1969 would apply ten times over today. Nothing, nothing at all, in the last twenty years' experience — which includes a powerful and successful Protestant general strike — can be cited in support of the present policy on Ireland of the SWP.



MANUS demonstration outside Tory Party conference

# Labour Students leaders rat on unilateralism

By Dave Barter

**T**he new National Committee of the National Organisation of Labour Students, elected four months ago, has finally got round to meeting. Now I'm not quite sure why it bothered.

Labour Students National Committee was presented with one mandate from Labour Students Conference. It broke the mandate.

The mandate was to send a resolution in support of Labour's unilateralist policy (passed at Labour Students Conference against the opposition of the NC) to Labour Party Conference. The vote on sticking to the mandate was tied 5:5 (with Helen Cooper and Scottish Labour Students rep Tommy Paton voting with Gary Younge, 'Militant' supporter Paul Heron and me) then defeated on the chair's casting vote.

The major discussion of the day was on 'building NOLS'. The National Organisation of Labour Students is in poor shape: membership down, affiliated Labour Clubs down, and influence in the National Union of Students diminishing. A serious political discussion is long overdue.

Unfortunately — but not surprisingly — that is not what took place in the hour allocated at the meeting.

There are four main reasons for the decline of Labour Students: the right wing bureaucratic politics it has pursued in NUS, the lack of any independent campaigning profile, its failure to organise in the Further Education sector and the corruption and absence of democracy within Labour Students.

The last Labour Students Conference saw a flurry of bulletins from fragments of the formerly dominant Democratic Left faction urging Labour Students to pull out of NUS and concentrate — as an alternative — on work for the next General Election or building Labour Clubs in colleges.

Since then there has been some sobering up, rumoured to be imposed by the intervention of Neil Kin-

nock. But still the discussion papers adopted by the National Committee rested on ideas such as that "Labour Clubs are too identified with student politics".

So the independent profile Labour Students now intends to build for itself is one based not on Labour Students leading active campaigns on the ground, but on an attempt to separate Labour Students from NUS politics in the eyes of students.

It is an attempt by the Labour Students leadership to extricate themselves from the wreckage of their own record in NUS.

The new turn may result in some of the absolute basics finally getting done — like the occasional production of a NOLS leaflet perhaps — it is certain not to be able to give any lead to students wanting to fight the Tories or to be able to reverse the decline in the fortunes of Labour Students.

One aspect of Labour Students that remains completely unchanged is the lack of democracy. Clubs are carved out on political grounds from Labour Students conference. On the National Committee no agenda or papers are circulated beforehand, and time is restricted (two hours a term at this rate). On the Officers' Group, black sections activist Gary Younge has had part of his job as Publicity Officer taken away from him and given to the person he beat in the election for the job! — Derek Draper, who was expelled from Labour Students Conference for sexist abuse of a woman delegate.

Over the last few years Labour Students has increasingly lined up with the centre-right in the Labour Party. It has helped the Labour Party leadership smashing up the LPYS and instituting the new powerless Labour Youth Conference.

Now for the current Labour Students leadership, the "major problem" is "that many Labour Clubs are not identified with the Labour Party and the politics it stands for". They want an approach based on Labour's mass membership campaign the high spot

being videos of Labour Election Broadcasts available for clubs to borrow. As far as they are concerned, Labour Students should be even more identified with Kinnock & Co than it is already.

The majority of Labour Students' activists and student campaign activists will want a different approach: we should be fighting for Labour commitments to accede to student demands, and implement party policy. We need to line up with those in the party fighting for democracy and accountability, and against back-tracking. That was the significance of Labour Students Conference's decision for unilateralism and the NC's decision against.

Labour Students leaders are more right-wing now than they have ever been. At a NOLS Officers' Group meeting recently they came out in support of much of the Tory anti-union legislation. When Gary Younge pointed out how that legislation had worked in practice against actions like the miner's strike, Simon Cox's response was that that was the miner's fault, "they should have had a ballot". Ballotting didn't help the seafarers or the dockers much, did it?

The left has to organise seriously in Labour Students, fighting for a unity of the student Labour left that must include:

1. Democracy in NOLS — no to carving and corruption!
2. No to downgrading work in NUS — NOLS must fight to lead students' struggles and the students' movement. NOLS must have an independent profile leading student struggles on the ground!
3. Turn to the Further Education colleges! NOLS must allow FE membership on the same basis as in higher education — full time and part time. NOLS must campaign for FE union rights and autonomy and for youth rights!

4. Build support for the strikes, Labour Clubs must build strike support groups!

5. Fight for Labour Party support for student demands! Labour Clubs should link up with CLPs. NOLS must fight for the next Labour government to accede to student demands and implement party policy! For party democracy, no to backsliding on party policy!

6. NOLS must fight for unity on the student left! For dialogue with socialist greens!

7. NOLS must respect the right of the oppressed to organise in our movement. Support for Black Sections, get NOLS's house in order.

A platform of this sort can unite the Labour Students left to do the work the Labour Students leadership would never do or understand.

## Manchester Area NUS Demo

**No to loans!  
Stop the poll tax!  
Defend our union!**

**Wednesday  
18 October, Manchester**

**Details: phone 061 736 3636  
Book coaches from your Student Union —  
NOW!**

## Unholy alliance aims to smash Area NUS

By Richard Love

**A** tiny group of so-called student unionists at Manchester University are trying to set up a scab area organisation of the National Union of Students (NUS).

Manchester Area NUS (MANUS), the legitimate organisation in Manchester, has been run democratically by a broad coalition of the left, including supporters of Left Unity, for the last few years. In that time MANUS has maintained a national reputation for being a good, active, campaigning area.

Various right-wingers are unhappy about this and want to run the area for themselves, but because MANUS is so good they know that they cannot win elections for the executive. So they are by-passing the democracy of the area and trying to set up an alternative scab area.

Outrageously, Clair Nangle (a supporter of Socialist Action) is allowing herself to be used by the Hattersleyite right-wing as a figurehead for the new scab area as 'acting convenor'.

The right-wing are trying to get activists in colleges to support them by telling blatant lies.

Lie 1 — that MANUS is undemocratic. This is clearly untrue, and is very cheeky coming from a group of people who hardly ever go to MANUS meetings, who have never (as far as I can remember) proposed a motion at a MANUS meeting, who didn't even stand in the elections at the recent AGM (and lost heavily last year when they did stand), and have only ever been destructive when they have been to MANUS meetings.

Lie 2 — they claim to have widespread support. This is also untrue. They are claiming to have support of several college student unions, without the knowledge of the student unions' executives!

The only college which is giving them any support at all is Manchester University, but even here it is only the executive. No vote has been taken by the membership.

A group of six people have committed a union with a membership of 11,500 students to an area organisation which they haven't even heard of in a deliberate attempt to smash up a perfectly healthy area organisation.

Lies 3 to 100 — are a series of false accusations of corruption, laziness and the usual sort of dirt.

What they have over estimated is their ability to tell enormous lies and get away with it. Student unionists in Manchester can see through these people for what they are — scabs.

Supporters of Socialist Action must seriously ask themselves why one of their comrades is doing the dirty work of the right-wing and why is Socialist Action letting Clair Nangle get away with an attempt to smash up a healthy student organisation, whilst the Tories are planning a series of attacks in the form of voluntary membership.

Concerned student unionists must write to the President of NUS demanding action in support of MANUS, and send letters of support to MANUS c/o Salford Tech Student Union, Salford.

# Where is Poland going?

**Zbigniew Kowalewski, an exiled leader of Solidarnosc's left wing, explains why and how radicals in Solidarnosc oppose the Solidarnosc leaders' moves towards market economics and compromise with the ruling bureaucracy**

**A**fter the setback to the Polish revolution in December 1981, rank and file activists spontaneously raised the slogan: "The wintertime is yours, the springtime will be ours".

Solidarity's spring arrived not when they expected it, but many years later in May 1988. In the Lenin Steel Works at Nowa Huta, a worker, Andrzej Szewczuwaniec, unleashed the strike in his department. Twenty-four hours later, 20,000 steelworkers from Nowa Huta were on strike. The central demand was the sliding scale of wages for all workers — manual and intellectual, including pensioners.

General Kiszczak (the same one who later, with Walesa, sponsored the roundtable discussions) launched his elite troops, called the "antiterrorist brigade" to break the strike by breaking the bones of the strikers. Students in almost every university went on strike in order to solidarise with the workers and protest against the savage repression.

A second, larger strike wave began in August 1988. This time it was launched by the miners of Upper Silesia, a sector that had formerly been considered rather quiescent. It expressed the entry into the struggle of a young generation of workers — which surprised and roused the entire country.

This generation hadn't known the glorious days of Solidarnosc in 1980-81. But this time it was they who took the banner into their hands, unifying the strike movement under the slogan "There cannot be liberty without Solidarity".

The spectacular awakening of the youth led several of the regime's sociologists to believe that the situation was rapidly evolving toward a dynamic similar to that of the Palestinian Intifada.

If we don't put the brakes on this dynamic, they declared from the pages of the official press, the Polish political scene will degenerate. It will be reduced to two forces, the youth with stones in hand and the police with their truncheons.

It was then that there appeared a "man from Providence". Lech Walesa met with Kiszczak, the head of the police. On the strength of a promise of opening negotiations, Walesa forced the strike committee in Gdansk, in the mines of Upper Silesia, and in the entire country to proclaim an end to the strikes.

The workers' leader Walesa showed a capacity to demobilise and disorient the workers that was 100 times more effective than that of General Kiszczak's "antiterrorist brigades". Many strikers threw a terrible accusation in Walesa's face

— that of treachery.

Meanwhile, Jaruzelski named as new prime minister one of the key players on his team, Mieczyslaw Rakowski. The Jaruzelski-Kiszczak-Rakowski wing of the bureaucracy then undertook a political initiative of strategic dimensions — to arrive at an agreement with Walesa before more strike waves could explode in the factories and universities.

On 28 January 1989 the influential weekly *Polityka*, linked to Rakowski, gave a stern warning: "We confront the question of to be or not to be... The danger of loss of power by our party is real."

At this same moment, the third strike wave burst forth. According to the government's figures, in January 1989 there were 170 industrial conflicts in the country, three times more than in December. In the first three weeks of February, there were 800 conflicts, including 50 strikes.

Lech Walesa and his colleagues at the roundtable condemned the strikes as "provocations". They mobilised to put down the strikes in the name of "the good of Poland" and of "social peace". This was necessary, they said, for a successful outcome to the negotiations.

The basic premise of the roundtable negotiations — and agreement — was the common goal of the Jaruzelski wing of the bureaucracy and the "constructive" wing of Solidarnosc to implement a radical market reform of the economy.

The Jaruzelski leadership proposes expanding private initiative, dismantling a part of the state property in industry, opening the country to investment by Western capital and control by the International Monetary Fund, and subordinating the workers to the instruments of control and discipline lent by capitalism.

Jaruzelski and his cohorts want to atomise the working class in order to destroy their solidarity and their capacity for collective resistance and mass mobilisations — introducing among them great social inequality, bitter rivalries, and insecure employment.

Another aspect of the project consists in the formation of a new trade union bureaucracy. The present one, during the strike waves of 1988, showed itself unable to rein in the workers. The Jaruzelski team has understood that an efficient sellout leadership can be consolidated only if this task is shared by the leadership of the independent workers' movement.

Finally, Jaruzelski's political project is looking to restructure bureaucratic rule itself, in order to base it directly on the needs of world capitalism. It is evident that the Polish bureaucracy's current governing team counts on Gorbachev's approval.

The international bourgeoisie, with the rulers of the White House at its head, is ready to pitch in its support. Its major worry consists of making sure that Poland avoids a revolution whose victory could possibly upset the "order of Yalta" — that is, the system of domination established on the continent at the end of World War II.

Already, in February 1981, at the highest point of the Polish revolution, a common strategy of the "communist" bureaucracy and capitalism was proposed by Professor Richard Portes of the influential British Royal Institute of



PPS-RD demonstration in Poland

International Relations.

This plan foresaw an economic reform of the Hungarian type (radically market-oriented), a restructuring of the ruling PUWP, the concession of a certain degree of pluralism within restricted spheres of social and political life, and the "bureaucratisation of solidarity" by means of its integration into limited "joint management" tasks of the system.

According to Portes, this would permit an effective blockage of the "disruptive forces of syndicalism and workers' self-management" and arrange a joint plan between East and West to "save" the Polish economy.

Today, this old plan of Portes seems to be reaching fulfillment. President Bush was the first one, immediately after the conclusion of the roundtable agreement, to lavish millions of dollars and numerous other initiatives of economic "salvation" on Poland. His example was rapidly followed by the ministers of the European Economic Community.

The national congress of Solidarnosc — which met in September 1981, three months before the state of siege was implemented — democratically adopted, through representation by the workers of the entire country, a plan for economic reform and a new system of state power. This project foresaw the construction of a Self-Managed Republic, which would be characterised by the widest democracy possible and by a real socialisation of the economy.

After the imposition of martial law, in the autumn of 1984, the clandestine leadership of Solidarnosc reneged on this project, turning their backs on what had been

the expression of the will and aspirations of the immense majority of the Polish people.

This leadership completely abandoned all reference to democratic planning, reducing the idea of workers' self-management to a caricature. It came out for economic market reforms.

It's true that there was, in this period after the defeat, an inevitable regression of social consciousness and an expansion of illusions in the "values" of the market economy. But this regression was much more limited than may seem.

According to a confidential report, produced by the Institute of Investigations of the Working Class of the Academy of Social Sciences (a body associated with the Central Committee of the PUWP), in 1985 more than 40 per cent of workers declared themselves, more or less clearly, for a "workers' self-management-oriented economic reform".

Some 60 per cent of the workers were for an economy oriented worldwide toward the satisfaction of social needs — and not for the satisfaction of the imperatives of the market economy.

Other studies carried out in 1988 by sociologists at Warsaw University reveal that within the working class, after 1984, one could observe a precipitous lowering of illusions in the market economy. The explanation for this turn of events is simple. Growing sectors of the working class were already experiencing the social effects of market reforms.

In November 1987, this tendency expressed itself in a surprising manner. The Jaruzelski leadership organised a national referendum to give legitimacy to its economic

reforms. More than 60 per cent of Polish citizens boycotted the referendum or went out to vote "no".

But Walesa and his followers had decided to continue on their own path. In order to clear the way, they proceeded more and more openly toward a purge of the national and regional leaderships and staffs of Solidarnosc.

The list of top trade union leaders who have been fired because they didn't meekly follow the Walesa line is quite lengthy. Andrzej Gwiazda and Anna Walentynowicz in Gdansk head it. Among others are Marian Jurczyk in Szczecin, Swereyn Jaworski in Warsaw, and the entire historic team of Lodz, headed by Andrzej Slowik.

The openly declared goal of the roundtable was, for the Jaruzelski team, the division of Solidarnosc and of the mass movement — the definitive rupture between the "constructive" or "moderate" wing and the "destructive" or "extremist" wing. This objective seems to be completely achieved.

In the Polish mass movement there are many activists who — some in a rather confused manner and others in a more politically and ideologically defined manner — declare themselves for an intransigent defence of "the rights, dignity, and interests of the working class" (the historic statutory objective of Solidarnosc) by means of mass mobilisation and struggle.

As a result, they defend the idea of a mass trade union, unified and democratic, loyal to the traditions of 1980-81; they refuse to renounce full employment and workers' solidarity; and they aspire to a social order without bureaucrats and capitalists — under a collective

# Should socialists talk to Sinn Fein?

## NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

**T**he response of the British left to Sinn Fein is a strange thing to see.

When Gerry Adams spoke to the Socialist Conference in Sheffield in June most of the audience appeared to idolise him. He received a standing ovation before the speech!

There is a rare psychological condition at work here — it's called revolution by proxy! It happens when the most cautious and routine of British socialists are exposed to contact with the leaders of real physical-force nationalist revolt. Normally these people consider it 'ultra-left' for local councils to refuse to make cuts or increase their rates but under the effects of this exposure they become goey-eyed advocates of armed struggle.

But Adam's presence in Sheffield provoked another response. There was much pressure from the Labour Party leaders and the local press to prevent him from attending. The organisers were attacked for inviting 'a spokesman for terrorism'

This attitude was not confined to opponents of the Socialist Conference. One group involved in the event Independent Labour Publications (ILP) took particular exception to Adams presence. Gary Kent of ILP sent an open letter to the Socialist Movement strongly deploring the invitation to Adams which "wrongly identified socialists with those who justify the murder and maiming of opponents."

I would share many of the feelings expressed in the ILP letter. The ILP condemn Adams for telling British socialists to mind their own business rather than worry about the fate of the Protestants or what will happen after a troop withdrawal. They assert the right of socialists to comment on and think about international affairs.

The socialists of the PPS-RD raised more advanced slogans — concerning the plan of construction of a Self-Managed Republic (a state based on workers' democracy) that had been adopted by Solidarnosc in 1981.

They confronted illusions in the possibility of a democratic reform of the system of bureaucratic power by raising the alternative of a democratic workers' revolution. To the re-privatisations and the openings toward capitalism, they opposed the slogan of "the factories to the workers".

The slogan (put forward by the socialists as well as by other diverse radicalised currents) of full state democracy is tightly linked to the demand of full democracy in Solidarnosc itself. All these currents share the sentiment that those who have accepted 65 per cent of bureaucracy and 35 per cent of democracy in the state will also try to impose a line establishing 65 per cent of bureaucracy and 35 per cent of democracy in Solidarnosc.

To point the way forward, socialists must build a party of the anti-bureaucratic revolution, of workers' democracy, and of international socialism — counting on the programmatic and political support of socialists of the entire world.

Walesa, Kuron, Michnik, Geremek, and others who today monopolise the Solidarnosc leadership say "no" to revolution. It is necessary instead to dare to say "yes" to revolution. This is what members of the PPS-RD already have done — with admirable courage.

Abridged from Socialist Action (US).

We were certainly not part of the standing ovation. From our own standpoint however, it is important to reject the ILP's outrage and stress the importance of dialogue with all forces working for a just settlement in Ireland, including Sinn Fein.

Firstly if socialists refused to talk to anyone in Northern Ireland who justified the use of violence against opponents they would have few people to talk to. The ILP advise us to look to the Workers' Party. The Workers' Party's sanctimonious attacks on IRA violence are a standing joke amongst Catholics in Northern Ireland coming from a group which could teach Vito Corleone a thing or two about how to deal with opponents.

Aside from the Workers' Party's record in treating opponents, past or present it is their policy that Catholics should give their support to the RUC! If ever there was a bunch of murdering, skull-bashing thugs in Northern Ireland this is the original.

None of this leads me to reject discussion with the WP — but the idea that you can single out Sinn Fein as the party of violence really is a dangerous concession to government propaganda. The IRA is a violent reaction to a brutally violent, irreformable state.

Secondly, Sinn Fein represents a sizeable part of the people of Northern Ireland. Its vote is falling slowly, but it does represent the most deprived and oppressed section of the population, the nationalists of the urban ghettos like West Belfast, Bogside, Cregga etc.

The idea that we should not listen to such a force is an insult to those people whether it comes from the Thatcher government, Neil Kinnock, or the ILP.

You don't have to accept Sinn Fein's particular strategy to see that many nationalists bitterly dislike any reformist solution, coming from London or Dublin and want to rapidly gain freedom to shape their own destiny. Sinn Fein reflects the besieged fear and determination of that section of the population.

Hence they are fiercely nationalist, they are socially radical (many are socialists) and they are reluctant to abandon what they see as their one prestige weapon — a relatively efficient armed wing.

I think there is a big gap between the aspiration of self-determination and the current strategy of Sinn Fein and in Socialist Organiser we have made it plain that we think the armed struggle should be dropped — but the last way to make progress on any of these points is to denounce any dialogue with Sinn Fein, to cut them off from any contact with British socialists. This would be especially shameful when the state has censored that organisation and the left should be championing their right to be heard.

There are two simple and silly assumptions made about our attitude to Sinn Fein.

1. The IRA are terrorists therefore we condemn and shun them. This makes no more sense than saying the same of the ANC or PLO — it is to accept the one-sided view of a state under attack. In fact they are revolutionary nationalists — they use violence, though nothing like the scale of violence against them — but more important they represent and reflect the consciousness of the oppressed.

2. The IRA represent the oppressed and are militantly fighting their oppressors — therefore they must be supported — we must demure to their politics, their strategy, their agenda.

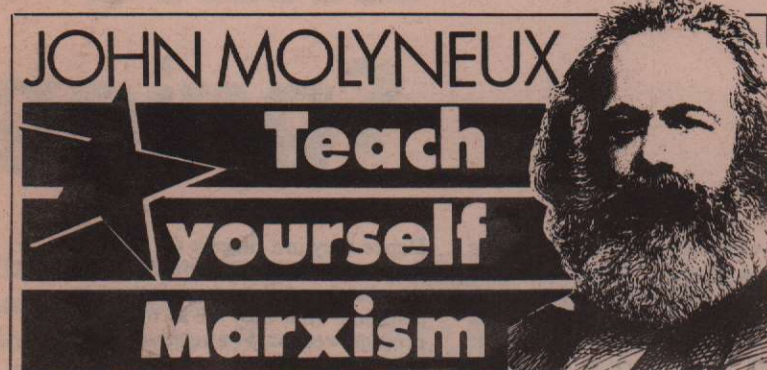
In fact their politics are less adequate than at any previous period in Irish history — they represent a very small portion of the Irish people.

The reality is that Sinn Fein must be part of any discussion on a solution to the national question in Ireland — but it must be a genuine discussion and that means socialists speaking their own mind, spelling out their programme for a democratic settlement. We have to sort out what we have to say in such a discussion and that isn't helped either by idolising Gerry Adams or refusing to let him speak.



Gerry Adams

# Teach yourself honest political accounting



**John Molyneux is a prominent writer for Socialist Worker, author of its longstanding column 'Teach Yourself Marxism'.**

**He was one of those who opposed the SWP (then IS) leaders' support for British troops in Ireland in 1969-70. We reprint part of an assessment he wrote of the debate on the issue at the IS/SWP Easter conference of 1970.**

**It may be useful for IS members to cast their minds back to exactly what happened at conference.**

First it must be said that the one thing the debate didn't achieve was political clarification. In part this was because of insufficient time, in part because those arguing for the "withdraw the troops" slogan did not put their case very well, but mainly it was because certain leading members of the group resorted to demagoguery and histrionics rather than arguing their case.

Should some comrades doubt the validity of this accusation I would remind them of some of the 'arguments' used on this occasion.

Comrade Foot wanted to know where all these people calling for troop withdrawal were last September [at the IS/SWP conference then] and how come there is all this militancy now? The answer, comrade, for many of us, is simply

that then we accepted your arguments, and now we don't. We trust we have the right to change our minds.

Comrade Foot also wanted to know what these people were doing with sophisticated arguments about agitation and propaganda when the matter was really quite simple, ie. for or against pogroms. If the matter is really that simple perhaps comrade Foot could tell me why when, before the debate, I asked comrade Cliff what our current position on the troops was he said "we are for withdrawal, of course" (meaning at the propaganda level, of course).

No, the agitation/propaganda arguments were raised not by us, but by comrades Harman, Marks, Palmer, etc. In fact on the basis of what he said, comrade Foot's position can only be interpreted as one of support for the troops, while his whole speech was delivered in tones of righteous indignation.

Comrades Harman and Cliff were not much better, Harman's main points were that it is not enough to just repeat the ABCs of Marxism over and over again, and that to call for troop withdrawal is 'petty bourgeois' heroics.

But in fact the opposition were not arguing the formalist case that since we oppose imperialism, and since we are for a workers' republic, we must raise the withdrawal slogan, the opposition was arguing that this slogan could have played a progressive role in the struggle, and that failure to raise it leaves IS in a position of confused and ambiguous tailism.

It is the ABC of Marxism. The 'petty bourgeois heroics' point was highly misleading for no one on the opposition side indulged in any heroics, or in any accusations of cowardice. Comrade Cliff used the 'cups of tea' argument, ie. the families of Derry and Belfast welcomed the troops so we cannot call for withdrawal. If one applied this argument to such questions as immigration control, the First World War, or in times past to various colonial adventures, it is clear the kind of position one would arrive at.

A large part of comrade Palmer's speech was also conducted at the 'braver than thou' level, though in this case it was mainly 'I know people who are braver than thou'. We were treated to a series of emotional stories about men who had spent years in British gaols [and were not calling for troops out], all of which was quite irrelevant as no one was making any accusations of cowardice.

The charge was a political error. Going over those arguments like this would be mere pedantry were they simply accidental asides to the main points of these comrades speeches, but they were not. They were, on this occasion, the mainstays of their case, and, by the atmosphere they generated, hindered rational discussion of the group's position.

Conspicuous by their absence at Conference were some of the arguments used to justify our position, which however do deserve a mention here since they were more serious than much of the stuff we



were treated to in the debate. Firstly that the Catholics needed a breathing space in which to arm themselves, which was provided by the troops.

This argument was dishonest because it was very obvious that it was extremely unlikely that the Catholics would succeed in arming themselves. It was also obvious that the presence of the troops, far from facilitating this, would make it very difficult.

What is more, as the Trotskyist tendency<sup>1</sup> pointed out, the Catholic workers would only get arms were there an immediate and urgent need for them, ie. a struggle going on. IS never answered the question of how arms were to be obtained but put forward the slogan "Open the Southern arsenals", knowing full well that this was merely a propaganda demand which could not be realised.

Secondly, there was the agitation/propaganda argument which was explained at great length. Much has been written on this and I do not intend to go over old ground.

What I will say is that I accept the distinction between agitation and propaganda as an abstract argument but would argue that its concrete application in this case has led to a failure not just to agitate against the troops but to make any propaganda against them.

I am aware that the early articles in Socialist Worker contained escape clauses in the small print as it were, and we have often used such phrases as "socialists never had any illusions about British imperialism and its objectives in Ireland", but the fact remains that over the months we have completely failed to carry out any systematic propaganda against the troops.<sup>2</sup>

Until the issue of 2 April [1970], Socialist Worker carried no articles analysing the concrete activities of the troops. The Marks/Palmer reply to Workers' Fight in the Internal Bulletin carried no analysis of the current situation, or of what sort of things the troops have actually been doing, nor did comrade Palmer's report at Conference which in fact did not even mention the troops.

Thus we have not even at the propaganda level made any preparations for the struggle with the troops which must come sooner or later. In this we have failed not merely our Irish contacts but also those British workers who read our literature. Is this failure accidental, or is it due to a desire to avoid the troops question?

So far I have dealt with the way in which our position on the troops has been defended rather than with the basis of that position itself. Has our fundamental analysis of the situation in Northern Ireland when the troops went in been right or wrong?

I believe that it has been wrong and that the crucial error has been, when dealing with the question of the troops, to argue as though Northern Ireland were a separate isolated country. An analogy used by both Marks and Palmer neatly illustrates this way of thinking. If a group of our comrades, they say, were set upon by a much stronger force of fascists and the police intervened, we would not call for the police to withdraw. However, to apply this analogy accurately to Ireland our small group of comrades would have to have a much larger force of friends, asleep just round the corner who might well be roused by the sound of battle.

Had the troops not gone in there was surely the possibility of volunteer forces from the south coming to the aid of the Catholics in the north, thus not only practically raising the question of a United Ireland but also completely undermining the regime in the south. Unless we take the position that Ireland is one country there is no possibility of workers' power there in the foreseeable future. Once we take the position that Ireland is one country in relation to the troops it is clear that there is a third alternative which can be counterposed to the troops or massacre dichotomy.<sup>3</sup>

In the light of this perspective the argument that trusted PD comrades<sup>4</sup> weren't calling for withdrawal of the troops so we shouldn't either is not very impressive precisely because from the outset PD has had a tendency to

regard Northern Ireland as a separate unit. This has manifested itself in a number of ways.

There was PD's reluctance to take a position on the border (we didn't on that question say our comrades aren't opposing the border so we can't), there is the naming of their newspaper 'Northern Star', and there is the position taken by Mike Farrell in 'Struggle in the North' on Southern Irish troops as an alternative to British troops. Farrell seems to suggest that this extremely unlikely eventuality would be even worse than British troops, which I think is tantamount to recognising the border this side of socialism.

The main disadvantage of our position is that it puts us completely in a tailist position, in particular tailing the IRA<sup>5</sup>, and makes it impossible for us to play an educative leadership role on the nature of the troops. In addition to this we end up never quite saying what we mean. It is also becoming abundantly clear that regardless of who was right or wrong last August, or even at Conference, that we must change our line soon.

<sup>1</sup> The 'Trotskyist Tendency' in IS/SWP was a political forerunner of Socialist Organiser.

<sup>2</sup> John Molyneux writes here as an IS/SWP loyalist. In fact SW carried systematic propaganda for the troops, in the form of repeated attacks on the call for their withdrawal and repeated insistence on how vital they were for the defence of the Catholic areas. The support for the troops was, of course, critical, but support it was.

<sup>3</sup> Molyneux's point about IS/SWP in 1969 treating Northern Ireland as a separate unit, apart from the whole of Ireland, is valid. But this argument about Southern Catholics rallying to defeat the Protestants in the communal conflict in the North was not endorsed by the Trotskyist Tendency then, and still less does it make any sense today — though versions of it are now widespread on the left.

<sup>4</sup> PD — People's Democracy — was then linked politically to the IS/SWP. In 1971 it swung over to becoming a sort of auxiliary propaganda unit for the Provisional IRA.

<sup>5</sup> In 1969 the (pre-split) IRA did not call for troops out.

## Time to rethink

**About 5,000 marched in London last Saturday, and joined a 'Time To Go' carnival in Finsbury Park to demand British troops out of Ireland.**

The demonstration, although fair-sized compared to other demonstrations on Ireland in recent years, was far smaller than its main organisers hoped for.

An opinion poll published the same weekend showed 77% of people in Britain backing 'troops out'. But the vague disgust reflected in such polls can and will not be mobilised into positive action until we can offer a positive solution.

Neither the illusion that a broad mass campaign is ready to emerge in Britain if only we can find the right tactical formula, nor bombastic "anti-imperialism" sloganising for the left's own self-satisfaction, offers a way forward.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Thursday 14 September**  
Leeds SO: 'Labour's Policy Review'. Speaker Alan Johnson. Coburg pub, 7.30

**Friday 15 September**  
'Labour's Socialist Alternative'. Pre-conference rally at Sheffield City Poly, Totley Hall Lane, Sheffield, 7.30. Organised by CLPs Conference and supported by Campaign Group.

**Saturday 16 September**

Pre-Conference Briefing for CLP delegates. Sheffield City Poly, Totley Hall Lane, Sheffield, 10.30. Contact CLPs Conference, Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Merseyside L44.

**Friday 3 November**  
History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601)

**Saturday 11 November**  
Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions'. Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond St, 10.30. Credentials £6 waged, £4 unwaged from Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1



# Nicaragua ten years after

**Maureen Tucker, recently returned from Nicaragua, surveys the situation there. Since the Sandinista revolution overthrew the dictatorship of the Somoza family in July 1979, this desperately poor country has faced an economic blockade by the US and military attacks by the US-sponsored 'contras'. The 'contras' have been defeated, for now — both the opposition within Nicaragua, and all the Central American governments, have called for them to disband — but the economic effects of the war and blockade remain ruinous.**

**O**n 19 July in Managua, there were huge celebrations for the 10th anniversary of the triumph of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Despite claims that these public demonstrations were stage-managed by the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front), they actually reveal that the Sandinistas have retained the support of sizeable sections of the population.

That a government which has presided over a massive collapse of wages maintains any public sympathy is remarkable. Under economic circumstances such as Nicaragua's, most regimes would be facing riots in the streets, not celebrations. How this situation has arisen, and how much longer it can be expected to last, are the crucial issues now.

The FSLN was founded in 1961 by dissidents of the pro-Moscow Nicaragua Socialist Party (PSN) and others who advocated a Fidelista strategy of rural guerrilla warfare. Its ideology was an eclectic mix of Marxist and non-Marxist socialism, nationalism, anti-imperialism and Guevarism.

The 1969 'Historic Programme of the FSLN' outlined its aims — expropriation of the clique around the dictator Somoza, renunciation of foreign loans, nationalisation of all foreign firms, veneration of the martyrs of the revolution, establishment of a standing people's army, reincorporation of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast area, initiation of agrarian reform and the defence of religious tolerance.

While the programme included increased workers' control in industry, it was in no way an exercise in Marxist political economy. The statement by the original leader of the FSLN, Carlos Fonseca, that "I am not a Marxist-Leninist" should be taken at face value, and applies to most — but not all — of the leaders emerging after Fonseca was killed by Somoza's National Guard in 1976.

The task of focusing the enormous popular opposition to the rule of the Somoza dynasty was shared by many groups in the 1960s and early 1970s, and the FSLN was not

the most prominent. In 1972 an earthquake destroyed half of Managua, and Somoza's channelling of relief funds into his own pocket increased public discontent.

While the deal which Somoza concocted to ensure that most of the profits to be made from the post-earthquake reconstruction went to him was not his most outrageous — compared, for example, to his involvement with a blood-products factory where corpses drained of blood were discovered and photographed for the opposition newspapers — it outraged the Nicaraguan capitalist class because unfair business competition was involved.

Bourgeois opposition groups developed — most importantly the Democratic Liberation Movement and The Twelve, which later merged with similar groups to form the Broad Opposition Front (FAO). The FSLN was initiating increasingly effective military actions, culminating in the raid on Congress in August 1978 during which 1500 hostages, including members of Somoza's family, were taken.

Strikes against Somoza's rule increased, and trade unions, leftist political parties and student and youth groups came together as the United People's Movement (MPU). This organisation was broadly sympathetic to the Sandinistas, whilst the FAO was negotiating with Washington for the peaceful removal of Somoza.

The final offensive by the FSLN and its supporters started in May 1979. The US attempted to push the Organisation of American States (OAS, an association of Latin American governments and the US), to intervene with a 'peace-keeping' force, the task of which was clearly to save Nicaragua for the yankees, but in a unique act of defiance the OAS refused. On 19 July Managua fell to the Sandinistas.

At the time of the insurrection the FSLN was at the head of a large popular front. The Sandinistas had the implicit support of countries such as West Germany, Costa Rica and Mexico, and their triumph was helped by the reduction in arms sales to Somoza initiated by US president Jimmy Carter. The regime established after the victory on 19 July was not the "totalitarian communist dictatorship" of the later US propaganda.

What followed was essentially revolution by stealth. A month before the triumph a five person Junta of National Reconstruction was named, including Daniel Ortega of the FSLN, two representatives of the business class (including Violeta Chamorro, now publisher of the right-wing opposition newspaper *La Prensa*), Sergio Ramirez from the Twelve (now vice-president), and the leftist Moises Hassan.

Many "mass organisations" were initiated during the struggle against Somoza — Rural Workers' Association (ATC), Association of Women Confronting the National Problem (AMPRONAC), Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS), Sandinista Workers' Federation (CST), National Union of Farmers and Stockmen (UNAG) — among others. The FSLN was and remains a small elite group, but these larger organisations were sympathetic to the Sandinistas.

The first Council of State, which had co-legislative powers with the Junta, contained many representatives of the bourgeoisie, but the Council was developed in such a way as to increase the influence of the FSLN in the guise of the "mass organisations".

The original business representatives quit the Junta in April 1980 in protest at the increasing domination of the FSLN. Their replacements lasted no longer. In



The FSLN retains mass support, but its policies have contributed to a collapse of wages

1981 Moises Hassan resigned, and has since become a vocal critic of supposed corruption within the Sandinistas.

The Junta and Council of State continued to govern until the 1984 elections — probably the fairest ever held in Nicaragua — gave the FSLN 67% of the vote, and 63% of the parliamentary representation.

Expropriation of the Somozistas' industrial and agricultural holdings followed the insurrection, but no further large nationalisations were carried out. Welfare ministries were established, the Sandinista army consolidated, and plans for a national literacy campaign developed.

Post-revolutionary policy development was not a one-way process. In the field of health, for example, the initial model was of a progressive but still doctor-dominated service. Pressure from traditional healers and midwives and non-professional health workers (brigadistas) led to a more community-based approach. Local health councils represent community interests, and there has been much popular involvement in preventive health campaigns, such as those targeting vaccination and malaria eradication.

Only 20% of the land had been taken over or redistributed by the state by 1980. Demonstrations by the ATC, with FSLN support, protested against this and agrarian reform legislation was advanced. This made allowances for expropriation of inefficient large

farms, the land resulting from which was collectivised or given to "heroes of the revolution".

The Sandinistas wanted to speed up development by avoiding a return of the nascent working class to individual peasant smallholdings. However, there was continued pressure for the granting of individual land holdings.

This was highlighted by the 1984 election, in which the FSLN did badly in areas with landless peasants. The population displacement consequent on the Contra war increased demand for land, and from mid-1985 on, individual plots were granted to peasant families.

The policies implemented after the revolution demonstrated the adaptability of the Sandinistas. Within many spheres the basic direction of policy would be established centrally, but would then be modified in response to popular demands.

The outcome was often impressive — illiteracy rates fell from 40% to around 15%, infant mortality rates declined rapidly, polio was eradicated, availability of health and education services improved, landlessness and homelessness decreased, and progressive social legislation was enacted.

The economy, however, fared less well, and the decline in production and export earnings paved the way towards the future economic problems.

Within two months of having

taken power, the Junta joined Nicaragua to the Non-Aligned Movement, in the hope of avoiding the close identification with the Eastern bloc and the resulting diplomatic and economic isolation which befell Cuba in the 1960s.

The closest relations Nicaragua maintained were with Cuba, which provided nearly \$300 million in aid in the first three years of the revolution. Many Cuban economic, agricultural and military advisors and medical personnel served in Nicaragua, while Nicaraguans received Cuban scholarships.

Despite such close ties, Nicaragua remains independent, and in the United Nations its voting record is closer to Mexico than to Cuba.

The Soviet Union recognises both the Moscow-line 'CP', the PSN, and the FSLN as legitimate heirs of the Nicaraguan revolution, whereas Cuba recognises only the FSLN. In the Soviet-dominated Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (the Comecon) Nicaragua has only observer status.

Soviet aid to Nicaragua has never been at the level of its support to Cuba, though it has been important, especially in the military domain, and in the provision of oil. Scandinavian and EEC (especially Holland) countries have provided large amounts of material and human resources for the reconstruction of Nicaragua.

Continued next issue

# Weepy it is, political it isn't

## CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Running on Empty'

Getting chased by the FBI can seriously screw up your love life — that's the message you get from 'Running on Empty'.

It's been billed as a political film, but it's not. The parents, Arthur and Annie Pope, were involved in politics at the time of the Vietnam War, but for years they've been on the run from the police for a bombing that went horribly wrong, so they are no longer openly active. At best, they try to sow the seeds of radicalism in the communities they hide in from time to time, but they never stay anywhere long enough to reap the harvest.

On the run with them are their two sons, one a ten year old, the other a teenager, and it's this teenage boy, Danny, that the film is interested in, not his radical parents. The parents' politics only impinge insofar as they affect Danny. Because they're running, he has to, and the wear and tear of the life is starting to bite.

Danny wants a career and a life of his own, and the film is about his realisation of what that means, to him, and to his family. Classic tear-jerker stuff.

I doubt there was a dry eye in the house by the end. If you didn't cry at another bit, the ending would get to you. It's all fairly predictable, but it's not unenjoyable, since the Popes are a pretty lively and likeable bunch who are obviously very fond of one another.

Deep it isn't, and there's no complexity to Danny's crisis. He wants



Life on the run

to leave his family but he loves them too. That's his dilemma, and it's hardly uncommon. Danny's circumstances are a little different because he may never see his family

again, but otherwise it's a straight growing-up story.

The film shies away from any examination of the political issues behind the Popes. We never know

what Danny or his brother think about what their parents did and politics is never discussed by parents and children. It's just a given. The Popes are politicians-on-

the-run the way other people are poor, or 'different' — it's treated basically as an inconvenience.

Politics is just a backdrop to this boy-meets-girl movie.

## Supermagnets — an attractive prospect



### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Last week I described a breakthrough in the field of super-conduction. Super-conduction occurs when a metal wire is cooled down to below -250°C.

It suddenly loses all resistance and an electric current will flow for ever in the wire, without losing any energy as heat.

The breakthrough is the discovery during the last three years of new ceramic superconductors which work at higher temperatures, up to -145°C, which are easier and cheaper to attain.

Unfortunately, high temperature super-conduction (HTSC) will not be much use in power transmission, as I pointed out last week. A single lightning strike on an overhead power line would break down the super-conduction and lead to a meltdown of the National Grid.

Super-conduction is already used to make very intense magnetic fields. Could HTSC be used to expand the use of very strong electro-magnets? David Goodstein, professor of physics at Caltech, writing in *New Scientist* recently, discussed this and other possible uses of HTSC.

He looked at magnetic levitation systems of transport, such as operates at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. There, a train containing electro-magnets rests on a track containing oppositely-magnetised electro-magnets. When switched on, they repel each other, forcing the train to hover a few centimetres up. Switching them on one after another makes the train move. Some maglev systems have achieved speeds of 300mph.

But existing super-conducting magnets are quite adequate and HTSC will not make maglev trains any more feasible. The problem with maglev systems is the high cost of building and maintaining perfectly straight tracks, not making stronger magnets. At speeds of 300mph, it is cheaper to fly.

A further use of super-conducting magnets is to store energy for quick release. Research into super-conducting magnet energy storage (SMES) is going on as part of the 'Star Wars' pro-

gramme.

SMES could also be used for evening out the peaks and troughs in electricity supply and demand. Energy from power stations could be stored at night and released at times of peak demand, eg. breakfast and teatimes. In the US, it has been calculated that this would require a conventional super-conducting magnet 1km in diameter.

Using HTSC, higher magnetic fields could be obtained. Since the energy stored depends on the size of the magnetic field squared, it

should be possible to store the same energy as above in a magnet of only about 1% of the volume.

But a strong magnetic field causes a high internal pressure in the magnet. In this case, the pressure could be perhaps 100 times that inside a gun barrel as it fires a shell. This pressure would cause a gun to explode. It is difficult to see how it could be contained within a brittle ceramic super-conductor.

A further problem occurs when you try to switch the SMES system on and off. Like an ordinary household switch, there would be a

spark. But this spark would be enough to vaporise the switch!

Goodstein thinks the only practical good to come out of HTSC will be in the construction of faster and faster computers.

Super-conducting switches will release no heat, a problem with existing computers, so the computer will be able to be made even smaller than they are now. But so far, all that's come of HTSC are two of the fastest Nobel prizes, for Bednorz and Müller, the discoverers of the new super-conducting materials.

## Fear after Chernobyl

### BOOKS

Gordon Mac Millan reviews 'Accident' by Christa Wolf. Virago Press, £5.99.

Accident, "A Day's News," is set in the reality of post Chernobyl Europe.

It is the diary of a day, weaving together today's tomorrows and next week's fears. It smacks of a horrendous irony, and reflects perfectly the inhumanity and the insanity of the nuclear child.

A woman's diary merges

thoughts of her brother's operation as he lies open to the cut of the surgeon's knife, the garden she has just tended and its fruit which may never be tasted. She reflects time and the slow turn of evolution as the poison of Chernobyl sinks through the planet.

This could not possibly have been written by anyone else with quite the same crisp and faultless poetic precision. Christa Wolf is probably the greatest living German writer, East or West.

She places the tragedy of Chernobyl, and of those to come, in the most global of terms. "Accident" is without doubt as fine and precise as "The Quest for Christa T".

Throughout the novella, news reports are heard from officials and experts who pontificate about how "one would have to take certain

risks into account until one fully mastered this technology as well".

There will no doubt be many more words written on the events of Chernobyl, but Christa Wolf is master in executing the stilted passions evident in Accident. It does not try to be prophetic, as there is no need, nor is it apocalyptic, even when it would be so easy; this book has great elegance as it has great strength and that is found in our own legacy.

Christa Wolf is an immeasurable voice who has in the past written searchingly on the Nazi past of Germany and the Stalinist inheritance of East Germany. The book is touching, and easily manages to remain resonant and hopeful, because it has faith in an uncertain future, and it is this that made it a rich read.

## Tube: keep the rank and file links

By Ray Ferris

**I** am so annoyed they didn't come back to the membership and let us decide on the offer," said a tube driver about the deal between tube unions and bosses.

"It was a very solid strike, hardly anything running and it was wrecked by incompetent leadership. They had promised to put any deal to a mass meeting."

The deal falls far below the original claim of £6.43 an hour or a £64 per week rise for one person operated (OPO) trains. Drivers will receive only £7 per week on top of their basic pay from 10 April.

Another £14.73 OPO bonus will be consolidated into basic pay in two stages — on 1 August and 1 January 1990.

Tube bosses and unions agreed the deal last Wednesday, 9 August. It was the recommendation of a mediation panel set up by ACAS — but not binding on either side. After agreement both sides told workers to ignore the strike that had been called off for Thursday 10th. Even so, around one third of drivers and guards voted with their feet and struck unofficially.

The next day a management circular threatened unofficial strikers with the sack. An article in the *Sunday Times* claimed to reveal elaborate plans for mass scabbing to break a further strike.

However, much of this was bravado. When workers at Neasden refused to fill in a memo about their absence last Thursday, local bosses at first said they could not sign on for work on Friday. They quickly gave in and withdrew their threats.

Nevertheless, the threats set a serious precedent for management.

Mass meetings on Monday 14 August decided to call off unofficial action. In the meantime the strike coordinators will keep in touch. The meetings called for the resignation of union negotiators Bob Harris and Martin Eady. But the drivers felt they could not continue unofficial action against both bosses and their own unions.

Tube workers have won concessions from management, but how much more could they have won given decent leadership? Any campaign to force resignations should be tied in with replacing leaders with rank and file, accountable to their members, who will stand up and fight.

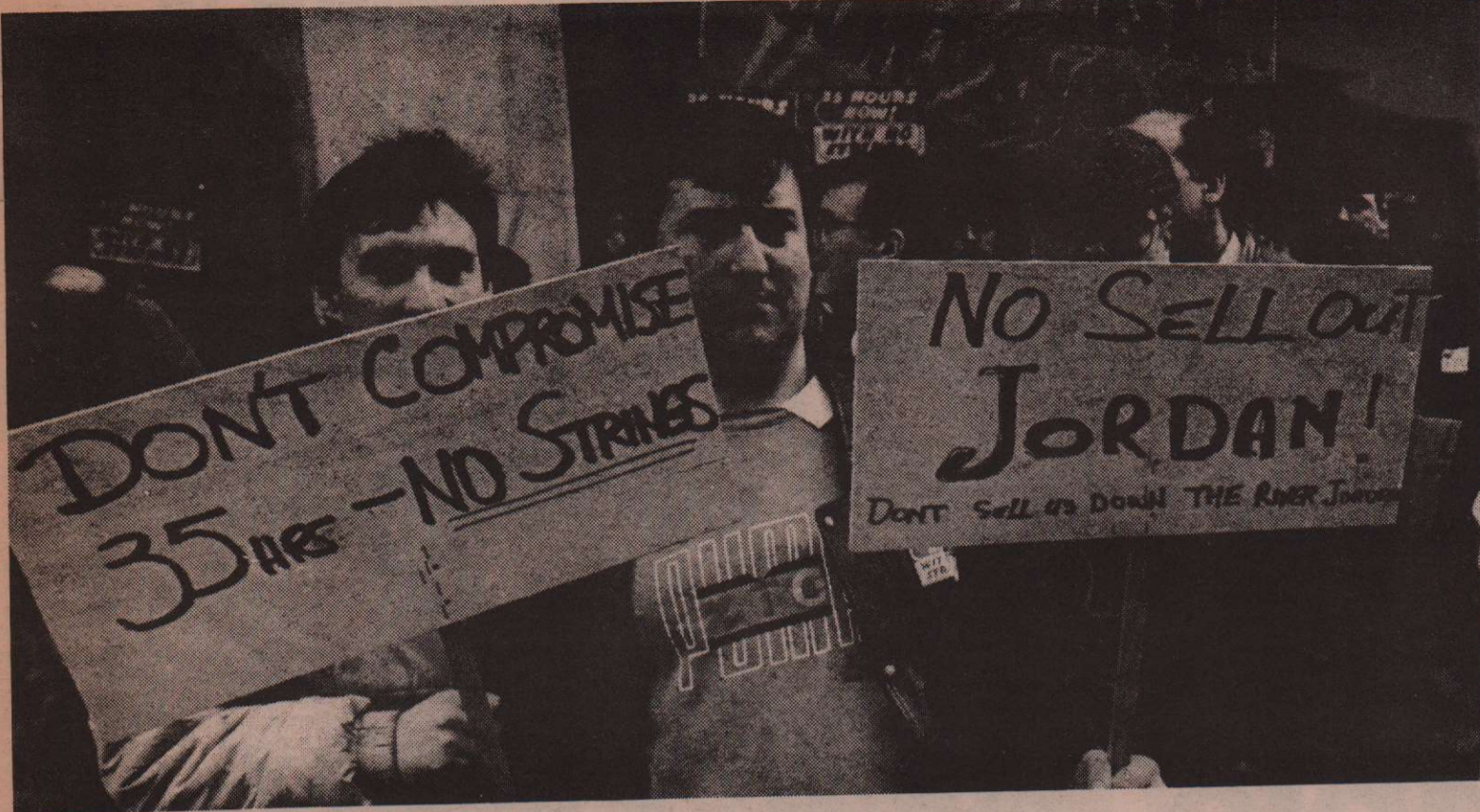
When ASLEF General Secretary Derrick Fullick rattles on that "the deal that has been struck is money in the bank. Round two is to get talks going to see how we can increase that" he is talking hot air.

The concessions won so far are without strings. Now he and his ilk want to negotiate productivity and "flexible" working deals — just what the tube bosses wanted in the first place!

The important thing now is that tube workers do not give in to demoralisation. They need to build on the rank and file initiative of the last four months. Real possibilities exist to build a fighting and democratic rank and file movement to form a counterweight to both ASLEF and NUR leaders.

It was much easier for unions and bosses to stitch things up because the coordinators wound down their activity and because they did not develop a strategy to break the stalemate of one-day actions.

A rank and file movement will be needed in the future battles ahead.



The fight for 35 hours in engineering is about to begin

## Time to take stock

### INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**L**ast week's NALGO settlement still has to be ratified by a delegate conference later this month and it is just about within the realms of possibility that the deal could still be thrown out.

Nevertheless, a temporary lull has now fallen over the industrial battlefield, at least as far as major national disputes are concerned.

I stress the word temporary, because, even as the NALGO leaders settled, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions were drawing up plans for selective strikes over their '35 Hours' campaign and the UCW was preparing to call a ballot for national action over pay.

But still, now seems as good a time as any to stand back for a moment and take stock of the so-called 'Summer of Discontent'. The first thing to be said is that however unhappy we may be about some of the deals reached by the union leaders, the government is even less happy. Their unofficial 7% pay ceiling has been decisively smashed. Chancellor Lawson's hopes of 'tugging' inflation down towards 5% by mid-1990 through a combination of high interest rates and 'realistic' (ie. less than inflation) pay settlements is in tatters and the 'going rate' on

pay is heading inexorably towards the dreaded 'double figures' mark.

The panic gripping the Tories as their anti-inflation strategy is knocked off course by successive pay deals, was well illustrated by last week's bizarre statement from one David Hunt — said to be the minister for local government — in the wake of the NALGO deal: "If we take out mortgage interest rates, the inflation rate is under 6%," he proclaimed. Even the BBC interviewer had the nouse to ask Mr Hunt why on earth any worker should want to "take out" mortgage rates from his or her assessment of inflation: at this point the poor fellow's answers became less than coherent.

The government's other big disappointment is that in all the recent settlements, managements have had to abandon most of their productivity and restructuring 'strings' — at least for the time being. London Underground was forced to shelve the 'Action Stations' plan while it goes to non-binding arbitration and BR have had to agree to submit their local pay bargaining proposals to a national conference with the unions, which will also include the opportunity for non-binding arbitration at the request of either side. The local authorities seem to have unambiguously dropped all the 'strings' which they had previously insisted were essential to any agreement.

Of course, none of these settlements are exactly famous victories (despite the hyperbole

employed by the NALGO leadership) and all fall short of what was objectively possible, given stronger leadership and a better organised rank and file. But the balance sheet of the BR, London Underground and local government disputes (not to mention the less publicised 8.8% BBC settlement) is overwhelmingly positive. Quite apart from the immediate victories that have been achieved on pay and 'strings', there is the less tangible but even more important knock-on effect summed up by the *Financial Times* last week: "The councils' climbdown comes in the wake of disputes at British Rail and London Underground which were also settled after considerable concessions by management. Taken together, the settlements are likely to encourage a growing confidence among British workers that carefully planned industrial action can achieve results."

The significance of the latest round of national disputes is best illustrated by some simple statistics: in the 12 months up to May 1988, 2,147,000 strike days were lost; in the 12 months between May 1988 and May 1989 the figure was 2,911,000; this year's NALGO action alone has lost well over 3,000,000 strike days; industrial action is now firmly back on the agenda as a fact of British industrial life, despite all the Thatcherite propaganda and *Marxism Today*-type theories about "the end of the working class".

We mustn't get carried away and forget the docks dispute. Last week's SO dealt in some detail with the reasons for this defeat and, in particular, with the disastrous role of Ron Todd and the TGWU leadership. Without wishing to minimise the tragedy that this

represents for the dockers (or forgetting the need to give maximum support to future battles for decent local contracts), it has to be said that this defeat does not look like having the generally demoralising effect on workers that some commentators predicted. The Tories may glory in the subjugation of an old and hated enemy (as they did after the miners' strike) but the symbolism of this victory is now, paradoxically, more important to the Tories than it is to the working class as a whole. Insofar as other groups of workers draw lessons from the defeat in the docks, it seems likely to be that staying rigidly within the law is no panacea.

Meanwhile, apart from the engineers and the Post Office staff (who have already rejected an 8.5% offer), local authority manual workers have submitted a claim for a "substantial rise" (ie. at least the 9.5% offered to the lower grade local authority white collar workers) and Vauxhall workers have lodged a claim for a £25 per week increase. Most important of all, the Ford hourly paid workers pay talks begin in October and the company is rumoured to have already tabled an unofficial offer of 11%.

Unlike those "socialists" who sneer at pay disputes as mere "economism" (a fancy word to conjure up the idea of the "greedy worker"), we should welcome these developments. Basic economic struggle at the point of production is the starting point for serious socialists — and the most important testing ground for our overall politics.

So enjoy the summer...but prepare for the Autumn of Discontent!

## Docks round-up

"There will be no compulsory redundancies".

That was one of the port bosses' "assurances" when they prepared for the abolition of the National Dock Labour Scheme.

It was a lie.

14 foremen have been sacked at Southampton after port bosses ABP failed to obtain sufficient "volunteers" for voluntary redundancy.

While 140 dockers remained sacked, new contracts issued to dockers at Tilbury made no mention of the T&G.

The Port of London Authority refuses to confirm or deny whether the union has, in their view, any future "role" at the port.

## Drive for 35

**A** monster mass meeting this Monday, 14 August, at the Preston North End football ground marked another stage in the build-up to a real battle over the engineering unions' claim for a 35-hour week.

The meeting, which included over 5,000 workers from BAe Warton, was told by Confed secretary Alex Ferry that the employers' opposition to a cut in hours with no loss in pay was an "indefensible obscenity" as some engineering directors had awarded themselves pay rises of up to 65 per cent.

The Confed has called for a levy of one hour's pay from every engineering

worker to support their strategy of selective strikes in key companies. Collecting this levy and discussing the campaign in stewards committees and mass meetings at every engineering plant will help lay the basis for escalating the action if and when necessary.

And if the past can teach us anything then that escalation could be needed sooner rather than later. For in 1979, during the last national engineering dispute, it didn't take long for the bosses to revert to lock-outs.

Only by widening and increasing rank and file involvement in the 'Drive for 35' campaign will it be possible to ensure that Jordan and co don't waste the momentum generated so far and accept a shabby compromise.

### IN BRIEF

25,000 manual workers at ICI have won a 9.6% pay rise.

Post Office counter staff are to be balloted for industrial action over pay. Bosses have offered 7%, which amounts to a pay cut.

Around 600 drivers at Trent bus company have begun a series of one-day strikes over pay. Bosses have offered 7.6%.

Unions in European Community countries are asking for European Commission funding to set up Europe-wide works councils. This way they hope to negotiate with multinationals on an international level.

A study by the Henley Centre for Forecasting claims that women will form a majority of the workforce by the year 2000.

More pamphlets from *Workers' Liberty and Socialist Organiser*

*Lenin and the Russian Revolution*  
By Andrew Hornung and John O'Mahoney. Price 50p  
*Arabs, Jews and Socialism*

The Debate on Palestine, Zionism and Anti-Semitism. Price £1.80

How to Beat the Poll Tax  
All you ever needed to know about the poll tax and how we can beat it. Price 60p.

All available from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Add 30p p&p for postage.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### Council bosses crumble

By Nik Barstow,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Islington NALGO

No wonder Tory ministers are hopping mad about the 8.6% rise for Town Hall workers.

They told the councils to stick to 7% with strings and the councils collapsed!

It certainly is a defeat for them, but is it a victory for us? Industrial action which brought half a million council workers on strike certainly got rid of the strings and won an increase in line with other workers. But we did not win our full claim of 12% or anything like it. And we could have done.

If you are on scale one or scale two (the lowest grades) you get an extra percentage increase, but still only an extra £500 to £600 a year. If you're a principal or a chief officer (ie, the top brass) it's over £1200.

We can't ignore the low paid any longer in local government. We must never again have percentage claims.

We need to campaign now against low pay, not just wait until next year's pay claim. It will be the low paid who suffer, too, when councils bow to the pressure from the Tories to make more cuts to pay for the increase.

NALGO nationally needs to rebuild its national strategy against the cuts into a real campaign, not just the "Do what you can" approach that leaves branches isolated.

Now that we've seen the employers crumble on pay, we know that we can beat them on cuts, too.

If NALGO hadn't won the first

ballot the employers wouldn't have compromised. They'd have stuck the boot in and imposed all the strings. Why should we be so nice? We

had them on the run, and we should have finished them off.

These days we can't even say "it's just not cricket" to grind your opponents into the ground. We could have done to the bosses what Australia did to England. Anyway, in pay battles the rule has always been war to the knife.

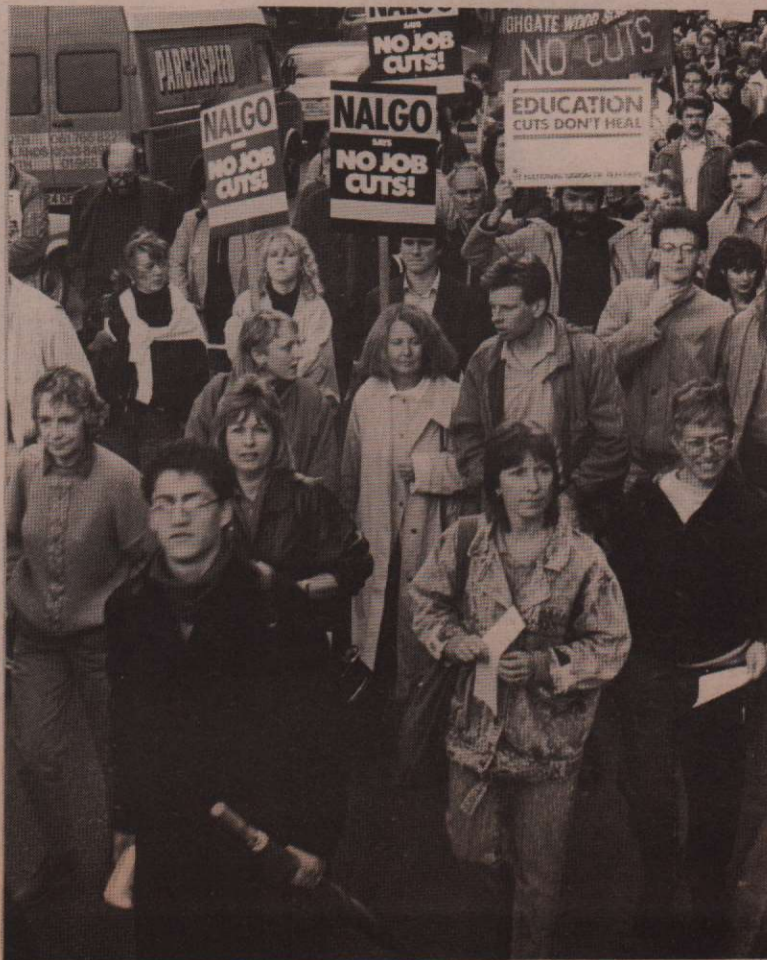
The reason why we didn't win the full claim is the way the action was run. NALGO's national leadership will point to the selective strikes and say "that's the way to win". But that's not honest. There was a lot of enthusiasm and commitment amongst the "key section" strikers, whose numbers grew to 25,000 during the last week. But the tactic was adopted so enthusiastically because it filled a glaring gap in the industrial action strategy left by the leadership.

After the one, two and three-day strikes in July, selective strikes were the only action on offer. If the sectional strikes had gone on longer the problem of groups being left isolated would have grown.

Demands from the bosses that workers do extra work to cover places where computers had closed down, for example, would have grown — leading to either growing strikes, or demoralisation and defeat.

The tactic of selective strikes was imposed from the top by a small section of the national leadership. They claimed they consulted branches and districts about the policy, but they were lying.

Certainly the London (Metropolitan) district's local government committee wasn't ask-



ed a thing about it, even though the vice-chair of the national committee, Jean Geldart, is on the district committee and is one of the people who dreamed up the strategy na-

tionally. When the going gets tough, NALGO democracy goes out the window!

### NALGO: the fight after the deal

Tim Cooper reports from Nottinghamshire

NALGO's first national strike has led to 10,000 new members nationally, 300 new members locally in my area, Nottinghamshire, and dozens of new stewards who are now trained in disputes.

There will be meetings to decide formally whether to accept the offer or not, culminating in a national delegates

meeting on 23 August. It seems highly unlikely that the membership will reject, but a substantial minority of members are angry about the way the national leadership accepted the offer on behalf of the membership.

Most of us learned the news of the acceptance of the offer via the 9.00 BBC news.

Activists must now turn towards a fight for accountability within the union. For too long the National Executive elections have been a non-event, with a very low turn-out and most people who do vote following the mandate of the local branch.

of affairs in the Soviet Union, in the middle of glasnost, for Russian mineworkers to come out on strike like that.

I was quite pleased that they got the assurances that they did get but I would urge them to wait until they've got delivery before they start celebrating, because if political promises are worth as much in that part of the world as they are in this part of the world, then don't count your chickens before they're hatched.

I certainly think it won't be the last strike. Workers in the USSR will start to demand the better world that they've been promised for generations — the promises of bread today and jam tomorrow.

They have taken a stand and demanded a little bit of jam today, and I think that's got to be for the good.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

### Why Beirut is bleeding

The Syrian and Christian Lebanese armies are now warring for control of a town outside the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

The latest round of bitter fighting, which has left 100 dead and 450 wounded, is the worst sus-

tained bombardment Beirut has ever seen — worse even than the Israeli siege of 1982.

There is no electricity and little food in the city, and soon there will be no water.

Syria has occupied part of Lebanon since its invasion in 1976, at the end of the civil war. Syrian intervention was designed to protect Syrian interests, threatened by the success of Lebanese nationalist and radical Palestinian groups.

Lebanon is divided between Christian and Muslim communities, in turn subdivided — Maronite and Orthodox Christian; Sunni and Shi'a Muslim; Druze (an offshoot of Muslims). There are other, smaller religious and ethnic groups.

Within each community are numerous political factions. The dominant political forces today are quite different to ten, or even five years ago. The Christians have been united under General Aoun, who sees his mission in life as the liberation of Lebanon from Syria.

Traditionally, Christians are the more anti-Syrian Lebanese. But the recent experience of Syrian occupation has alienated thousands of Muslims who may previously have supported it.

One group, the Shi'ite militia Amal, is closely linked to Syria. It seems that in the current fighting Amal is not directly allied to Syria.

Lebanon is a society in an advanced stage of collapse. Communal-religious sectarianism long ago became the dominant motive in the bloodletting, with all sides equally reactionary. Until some way is found to break the cycle of civil war, nothing will improve.

Syria should not be there, nor any foreign power — such as Israel, which effectively controls the south.

But Aoun's revamped Christian nationalism, the main effect of which is to bring untold disasters on Lebanese villages caught in the crossfire, is no alternative.

Lebanon could show the future of a society like Northern Ireland (the current levels of violence in which are incomparably lower). There could one day be sectarian civil war in Ireland, if a political solution is not found. And out of sectarian civil war, nothing progressive, democratic or socialist can come.

### A second tragedy at Aberfan

WHETTON'S WEEK  
A miner's diary

Ask any Englishman what he remembers about 1966 and he will tell you the World Cup.

Ask any Welshman what he remembers about 1966 and he will tell you about Aberfan, when a waste tip from a coal mine collapsed onto a primary school. It touched the conscience of the nation.

Here we are in 1989 and the pit is being closed. I think it's a tragedy for South Wales. It shows exactly what people in the Establishment think. They think sod you, sod your community,

we're just closing you down. Up and down the country pit closures have taken place and communities have been wiped out.

It's 20 years since British troops went onto the streets in Northern Ireland.

I remember the arguments that were put about at the time that we had to send the troops in to avert a bloodbath. Yet what's happened since is that a bloodbath has taken place.

I do not think that a military solution can be achieved in Northern Ireland. A political solution is the only thing that is going to solve the problems of Northern Ireland. Having troops on the streets is not going to solve the problem. I believe now more than ever that we should fetch the troops home.

The troops should be brought out of Northern Ireland. People should sit round the table and a political solution should be arrived at that is acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. It is no

good the British government, or indeed anybody else, imposing a solution. It is up to the Irish people themselves to solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

It's very handy for the British government to have a battle training ground for their troops, I think it is to their advantage to keep the people of Northern Ireland divided. It will continue until the people of Northern Ireland sit down and declare that they themselves are going to solve the problems of Northern Ireland.

I was a little bit surprised about the miners' strike in the USSR, because mineworkers are amongst the most highly regarded in the Soviet Union and in order for them to come out on strike something must be terribly wrong.

The information that I can glean is that it was a little bit about wages but more than ever about conditions and political demands.

It must be a comment about the state



Stalin's heirs face the workers

### Out now!

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