

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**"Today's demonstration is only a starting point for building up the campaign. We haven't got the muscle to win this dispute by ourselves. So the next stage is to urge the leadership of the TUC to call a one-day general strike and that's what we're going to be campaigning for."**

**Tommy McLauchlin, speaking on behalf of the Liverpool ambulance crews**

# Solidarity strikes will beat the Tories

**"We won't win on our own. We've never believed that we could.**

**We're going to need solidarity action from other groups of workers. 30 January is just the start.**

**We know other trade unionists will back us. There is not going to be a repeat of the miners' strike. From the collections and meetings we have done we can see the support is there.**

**Other workers know that if we win this one then it will be easier for them to win their own battles.**

**The mood is changing in this country. At last people are beginning to realise that Thatcher is beatable."**

Eric Roberts, North West London NUPE, National Ambulance Council.

## 7,000 strong Liverpool rally calls for one-day general strike

**H**undreds of demonstrators were still converging on the assembly point as a 7,000 strong demonstration set off on the day of action in Liverpool, led off by the banners of the NUPE Mersey side ambulances division and Liverpool Trades Council.

Particularly large contingents were present on the march from Liverpool NALGO and manual council worker unions (council offices and buildings were shut throughout Liverpool after staff walked out at 11 o'clock), the UCW (many of whom struck for half a shift) and the FBU (who were answering only 999 calls for the entire day of action).

Other large contingents were made up of NHS staff taking action in support of the ambulance crews and of Liverpool students, though only one college in the

city (Liverpool Institute of Higher Education) was effectively shut down for the day.

A cavalcade of taxis, organised by the taxi drivers T&G branch brought up the rear of the demonstration.

Other demonstrations on Merseyside were held in Birkenhead and St Helens, whilst a number of local rallies were also held on industrial estates during the lunch break.

After the rally closing the Liverpool demonstration, which was the biggest demonstration in Liverpool since the early '80s, speakers from the FBU, EPIU, the ambulance crews and also Terry Fields MP and the chair of Liverpool Trades Council all called for the TUC to call a one day general strike in support of the ambulance crews.

**More on pages 4, 11 and 12**

### Solidarity action — what to do now

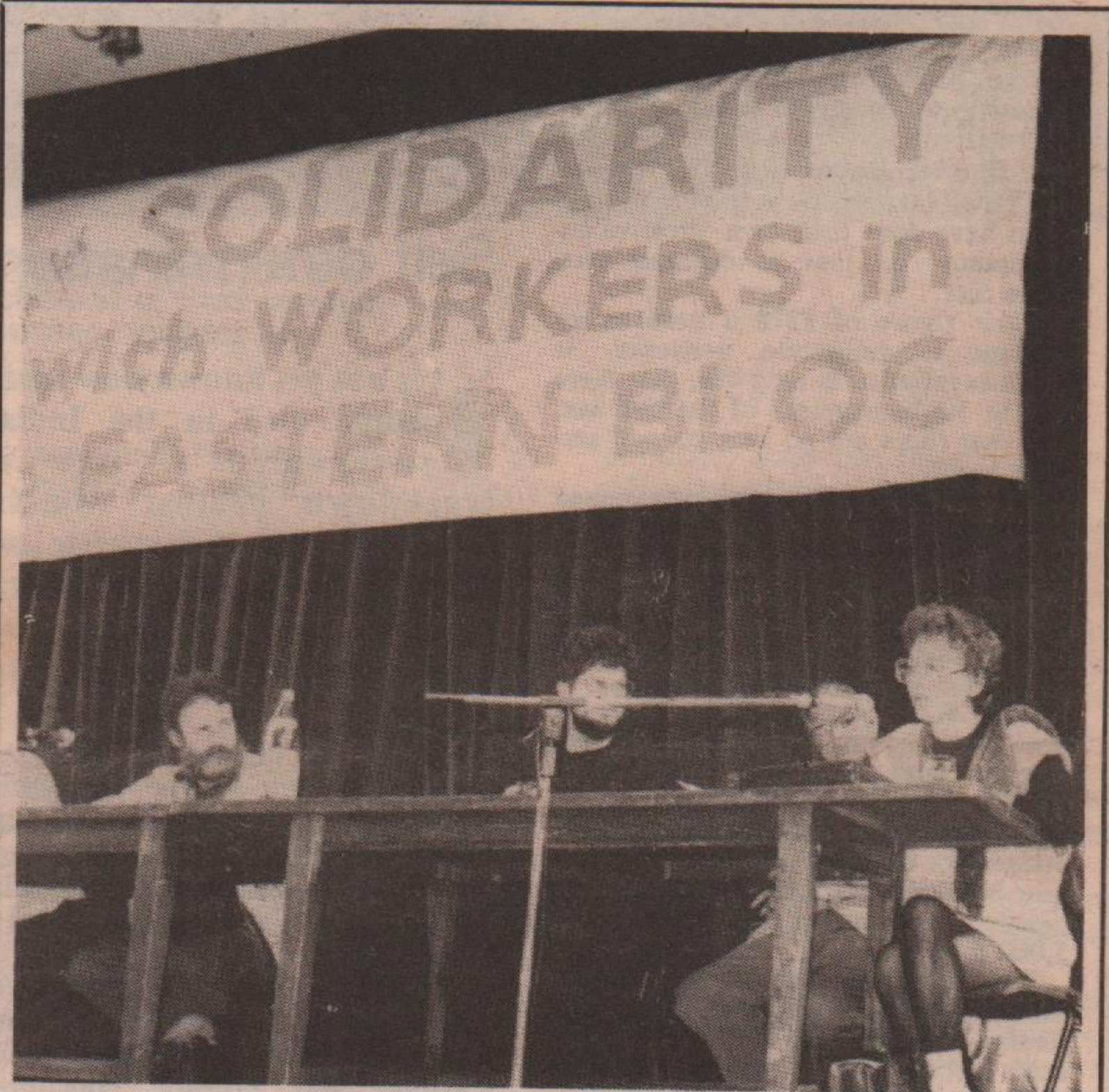
The response to the call for action on January 30th shows quite clearly the depths of support that exists for the ambulance workers.

They have inspired millions of working class people to believe that the Tories can now be beaten.

The TUC should now call, at the earliest possible opportunity, a proper full-

scale day of strike action as the first step in an escalating programme of action.

Other groups of workers who have pay claims and other issues in the pipeline should move forward the timetable of their dispute to strike alongside the ambulance workers. Let's make the Tories fight on more than one front!



Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) addresses the conference

## East European campaign takes off!

**500 socialists, trade unionists and Labour activists came to the conference last Saturday called by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.**

The revolutions of 1989 do not end the need for solidarity. On the contrary, they increase it.

Stalinism is not dead. Stalinist terror still rules in China. The Stalinists still hold great power and privilege in Eastern Europe. In the USSR, the bureaucracy has loosened its grip, but not abandoned its monopoly of power.

And what will replace Stalinism? In Poland — as Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) told the conference — anti-semitic, fascist and authoritarian forces are growing fast amidst the despair and disillusion created by Lech Walesa's sell-out to capitalism and a catastrophic fall in living standards. The same could happen in other countries of Eastern Europe.

The revolutions of 1989 have settled nothing. They have only opened up a period of intense class struggle to decide the future — capitalism or workers' liberty, authoritarianism or democracy.

The conference heard speakers from the East German United Left, Czechoslovakia's Left Alternative, the PPS-RD, and the Front for a Democratic China.

John Cunningham, an ex-miner who waged a single-handed battle to get the National Union of Mineworkers to back free trade union activists in the USSR's mines, called on the conference to back the fund appeal for the USSR's new independent trade union, Sotsprof. Anna Wagstaff reported on the Pergamon Press strikers' battle against Robert Maxwell, the self-proclaimed "socialist" union-bashing millionaire who has made a fortune out of cosy deals with East European dictators.

Eric Heffer MP, John O'Mahony (editor of *Socialist Organiser*), and Jake Ecclestone (NUJ) argued that the cause of socialism in the west is inseparable from solidarity with the fight against both Stalinism and capitalism in the East. The conference signalled its commitment to class struggle East and West by taking a collection for the ambulance workers and for workers in dispute at East Midlands buses.

For more on the conference and plans for future campaigning, turn to the centre pages.

## Link jobs and poll tax fight

By Nik Barstow,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Islington NALGO

As most local councils begin finalising their budgets for 1990-1 confusion, and the threat of major job cuts, looms.

The introduction of the poll tax to England and Wales from 1 April is the big threat. But the Tories have plugged all the other 'loopholes' in their clampdown on council spending too.

Until the poll tax, many councils had been fiddling their way out of a confrontation with the government by 'creative accounting'. But in November last year one of the main schemes they used — interest rate swaps — was ruled illegal by the High Court in a case against Hammersmith Council.

The council is now appealing the case, but if they lose — and it looks likely they will — the whole finances of many councils around the country could 'unravel'.

The big banks reckon they could lose £500m if these deals go wrong, so are planning to take action to recover their debts. The whole budgets of many councils for the last 5 years could be recalculated and the government demand back millions in grants.

And it will be us as 'community charge' payers who will have either to stump up the money in extra poll tax or see huge cuts.

If all this happens in April it will add to the poll tax threats — and the government have done their own 'creative accountancy' on that to demand even more cuts.

Their figure of £278 a head as an average is deliberate nonsense. It assumes inflation is only 4%, that there will be 100% payment of the poll tax, and that there are no new council services at all.

Even Tory councils have condemned the figures — but it will be the mainly Labour inner-city areas who will feel the brunt. Because of the way that payments are made up it costs 50% more in poll tax if a council spends 10% more than the government allows.

The Labour councils that have so far made their budget plans public are opting for 'moderate' levels of poll tax — £400 in Newcastle, £450 in Manchester, £460 in Islington and cuts. Newcastle's budget, for example, would cut £3m this year but have another £5m cuts in the pipeline. Manchester's cuts could cost 5,000 jobs.

The jobs fight this time will be national. Council workers in all the different councils and different unions can't just think it's someone else's problem — we need a national campaign and national action.

# POLL TAX



TUC demonstration against the poll tax. Photo: John Harris.

## MOD lied, it's official

By Gerry Bates

The Ministry of Defence has admitted that 'dirty tricks' campaigns were used in Northern Ireland against the IRA, and that previous Commons statements on the matter have included "inac-

curacies", ie. lies.

The admissions came in a written reply to allegations made by Colin Wallace, a former army press officer.

Disillusioned with his job, especially after a security services' cover-up of sexual abuse of children at Kinora boys' home, Wallace was "allowed" to resign. Shortly after, he was charged with the murder of a friend, Jonathon

Lewis, and sentenced to ten years in prison after the reduction of the charge to manslaughter. Paul Foot, the *Daily Mirror* columnist, wrote a book called 'Who Framed Colin Wallace?', published last year, which once again brought the issue to public attention.

According to Wallace, the dirty tricks campaign, information on which he received from MIS, included such things as targeting the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson, and forged documents designed to smear the Labour Party.

Despite yesterday's admissions, the government insist they have no case to answer as regards the justice of Wallace's imprisonment. No?

There should be a full inquiry. It must now be clear to everyone, following the 'Spycatcher' revelations, that the British secret service is involved in all sorts of activities which undermine democracy, and in particular are intended to undermine elected governments, if those governments are perceived by the ruling class to be in some way a threat to them — even feeble, right-wing Labour governments like Wilson's.

We need to know the facts, and musn't allow the security forces to hide behind the dogma of 'national security'. The actions they are known to be involved in do not protect the 'security' of the vast majority of people in Britain: they protect only the security of the wealthy few.

## Self determination for Kashmir!

It is not yet known how many people died in the Indian government's violent crackdown against Muslim demonstrators in Kashmir last week. Since Friday's massacre (January 26), foreign journalists have been expelled from the state.

Across the border in Pakistan's Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir) demonstrators have rallied in support of their fellow Muslims, demanding that India recognise Kashmir's right to self-determination.

According to the *Independent* (January 27) "it is clear that virtually the entire civilian population of Kashmir has become consumed with anti-Indian hatred."

The Indian government claims that the troubles have been caused by a handful of Muslim extremists armed by Pakistan.

Violent tensions between Muslims and Hindus (or Sikhs) in India predate the divisions of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, the latter supposedly a state for the Muslim minority. But religious and ethnic communalism has been getting worse over the past few years. Growing tensions between rival chauvinist factions underlay Rajiv Gandhi's defeat in the recent Indian elections.

Massacres have become almost common in Indian politics. But often the rights and wrongs are obscure. In this case, it seems clear that the Muslim majority wants to separate from India and that they should have the right to do so.

## Treated like cattle

### WOMEN'S EYE

By Rebecca Van Homan

We're hearing a lot about the fantastic movements in Eastern Europe but, not surprisingly, not much press coverage has been given to the rising, inspirational, women's movement.

In Romania, there is a newly formed 'National Council for the Free Women of Romania', which has been working to get women's demands heard and has already succeeded on several accounts: maternity leave will be extended from 3 months to one year; female university students will no longer be obliged to do national service. But the most fantastic victory came two days after Ceausescu's downfall — the repeal of the draconian anti-abortion laws which have been in force for 23 years.

I was totally unaware of the extent of the horrific suffering women faced in these Stalinist states, and the extent to which the power of the state extended into women's

bedrooms.

Abortion and all forms of contraception were first forbidden by the old regime in 1967, and women between the ages of 25 and 40 were compelled to have four children. Women were subjected to gynaecological examinations every three months. Doctors came to factories, schools, etc. under the supervision of the Securitate and if anyone was found to be pregnant they were closely monitored to make sure they did not try to induce a miscarriage.

If not pregnant, details were taken of their menstrual cycle, then a report was made on their fertility. Couples over the age of 25 without children were suspected of using contraception or having had an illegal abortion, and a 20% tax was deducted from their wages.

Contraceptions were very difficult to get hold of on the black market as sellers were hounded with as much vigour as drug pushers in the West.

Dr Sebastian Nicolau, director of maternal and child health at the Ministry of Health in Bucharest, tells of the atrocities facing women: when a woman came into hospital with complications after an illegal abortion, they were refused medical attention by the Securitate officer

until they told who had performed the abortion.

13,000 women died in Romania through illegal abortions — over a quarter at home because they were too afraid to go to hospital. Other women attempted to induce miscarriages or abandoned their children at birth.

Ceausescu was attempting to raise Romania's population to 30 million by the year 2000, but by the last year of his dictatorship the population was actually on the decline. 1.2 million illegal abortions are thought to have been carried out in contrast to only 300,000 live births. The maternal mortality rate was the highest in Europe.

The effects on the women of Romania will take years to redeem — both physically, with cases of sterility and cervical incompetency (common in the population in which the average woman will have undergone at least 5 illegal abortions by the age of 40), and psychologically, through the torment of having to have abortions or give up the unwanted child at birth.

This shows very clearly that women will not stop having abortions: illegal abortions just means women will die in pools of blood in the back streets. The repeal of this disgusting Stalinist law is an inspira-

tion which we must take into our campaign to fight for our reproductive rights.

The movement will be campaigning for the provision of pre-school education, state pensions for women, subsidies for families with handicapped children over the coming months.

There are already 300,000 women in this movement with municipal committees set up in most of Romania's 40 districts. Lilianna Pagu, the president, predicts it should reach 3 million by the April election.

Pagu adds: "For too long Romanian women have had to be silent. They've had to fight to keep their families fed and have worked like cattle in the factories and at home. Ceausescu ordered that we should have more children, but where was the milk and the food to feed them? Where could we leave them while we worked? Newborn babies had to be left in creches with 40 or 50 others and only one or two untrained workers to look after them, whilst the mothers were forced to go back to work."

"No, it is time they had a political force to represent them." As socialists we should welcome this force and express our solidarity with our international sisters.

## Sunday best

### PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

What is there to say about the new *Independent on Sunday*?

It is stylishly written, smartly turned out and, from the start, manages to give the impression of having been around for decades. Just like its week-day sister, in fact.

The paper's main novelty is its beautifully-produced tabloid-sized magazine, *The Sunday Review*, which contains all the arty stuff, as well as those hard to categorise articles known as "features", which don't exactly fit under the headings of either "news" or "reviews" — a Nelson Mandela profile, the national curriculum, the decline of the London bus queue, etc. The magazine would stand up well on its own and must be giving *The Spectator* and the *New Statesman* some worries.

The conventional broadsheet "newspaper" perhaps seems a little thin by comparison, but then it is an old adage of Sunday journalism that nothing much ever happens on Saturdays. The broadsheet does, however, contain an impressive piece of "investigative journalism" by James Dalrymple (on the Winston Silcott case) and the presence of the Neal Ascherson column will probably ensure that a fair number of the *Observer*'s more discerning readers finally desert that sinking ship.

Unfortunately, the *Independent on Sunday* is unlikely to hurt the *Sunday Times*, as much as it hurts the *Observer* and the fledgling *Correspondent*. Most people with any vestiges of common decency gave up on the *ST* even before Wapping, and 'Death on the Rock' but still it leads the field in circulation figures by miles.

I have long found it impossible to think of the *ST* as anything other than an extension of the ego of its singularly repugnant editor. Which gives the 'Neil and Times Newspapers vs Worsthorne and the *Sunday Telegraph*' case an added piquancy. I cannot do full justice to the splendid farce now running in Court 13 and, anyway, nothing I write could possibly be as hilarious as the reports that have already appeared in every paper from the *Guardian* ('Editor denies inhabiting "sleazy demi-monde"') to the *Sun* ('Dirty Don Stole My Pam Says Randy Andy').

The revelations of goings-on at Tramp nightclub; the bemused judge asking for an explanation of the difference between a 'bimbo' and a 'bimbette'; the walk-on parts for the likes of Bill Wyman, the Bay City Rollers and a man known only as 'Bungalow Bill'; Neil's accusations of a 'Garrick Club mafia' at work and the very presence of the sanctimonious Mr P Worsthorne as Defendant, give this case all the qualities of Moliere at his best.

I cannot, of course, make any comment upon the strength or otherwise of Mr Neil's case, or his motives for bringing it. Suffice it to say that Neil has so far been able to portray himself as man of the World — discreet, virile, complete with hairy chest. His rival for the favours of the lovely Ms Bordes — the *Observer*'s Donald Treford, comes over as a pathetic, blundering, small-time lecher.

Remember Neil's words last year, when the story broke: "I don't have to beat Treford in the bedroom, I beat him every Sunday with my paper." Students of Freud may note that the *ST* now bills itself as "The Big One".

# The 'crisis of socialism'

## EDITORIAL

**A**s everybody tells us, we are living through a "crisis of socialism".

In the East, the "actually existing socialisms" have collapsed or are collapsing. Everywhere in Europe, outside the USSR and Albania, the central pillar of the old authoritarian structure, the political monopoly of the Stalinist party, has gone. In the USSR, the Stalinists' monopoly has been very badly shaken, and to a considerable extent is already breached.

The rulers, those who in the name of socialism strutted for decades on the dizzy ramparts of dictatorial political power above a regimented and terrorised people, now disavow themselves and their system. They also disavow socialism and declare that the moral, political and economic bankruptcy of East European and Russian Stalinism is not their bankruptcy alone, but the bankruptcy of socialism.

The leading "mainstream" oppositionists against the old system make the same condemnation of socialism, and with additional gusto. "Communism is pie in the sky" was Boris Yeltsin's sales pitch when he toured the USA a few weeks ago.

Socialists in the Trotskyist tradition have for decades advocated that the workers in the Stalinist states should rise against their bureaucratic rulers, overthrow them, and reorganise the economy, replacing bureaucratic "nationalisation" with socialisation, authoritarian pseudo-planning with democratic planning, and the totalitarian political rule of the bureaucrats with workers' democracy. The workers should go forward from the Stalinist state monopoly system to what might be described as "democratic collectivism".

In fact, the movement now is in the opposite direction — back towards market economics and bourgeois restoration. Millions of workers, in Poland for example, follow intellectuals, priests, and drop-out bureaucrats, and choose to worship an idealised image of "the market", seeing it as the fulcrum of both prosperity and liberty.

Outside the old Stalinist bloc, the Communist Parties remain true to their vocation of the last 60 years. Now too they dutifully echo — and even anticipate — the official line from Moscow. Socialism is bankrupt, Marxism is no more than a strain of academic sociology. It is time to move on.

On? Well, back to an updated, "modernised" version of the pre-socialist populist radicalism which flourished in Britain in the 1880s! No joke, or intended paradox: that is just about where the ex-Stalinists are now, politically.

But there was once a world — so they tell us, the preachers of the "crisis of socialism" — with big workers' parties. The Stalinists were revolutionary, and even the reformists talked, often sincerely, of a socialism that would abolish crisis-ridden capitalism.

There was a great socialist state, the USSR, and then many socialist states, covering one third of the globe. World war and economic collapse discredited capitalism, and convinced large parts of a whole generation of bourgeois intellectuals in Europe and the USA that capitalism could not long survive and that they should work for socialism.

By contrast, Stalin's Russia burgeoned, and seemed to be the crisis-free economic model that would replace capitalism.

*"Revolutionary Russia, deprived by bourgeois victory of the aid of revolutionaries in the advanced countries of the West, stagnated in isolation and suffered a bloody Stalinist counter-revolution"*

How did the socialist movement come to suffer such setbacks? The "crisis" started long ago, in the early years of this century, when the movement suffered internal defeats because the ideas of the ruling class conquered a layer of its organised leaders and militants.

It collapsed politically at the outbreak of World War 1, and a renaissance was stymied by the bloody defeat of the rebel workers in Germany, Italy, Hungary and Poland at the end of it. The movement did take power in Russia, in conditions of material and economic backwardness where, according to all the teachings of Marxism and the beliefs of the leaders of the Russian Revolution, socialism could not possibly come into existence, let alone thrive.

Revolutionary Russia, deprived by bourgeois victory of the aid of revolutions in the advanced countries of the West, stagnated in isolation and suffered a bloody Stalinist counter-revolution. The leaders of that counter-revolution continued to masquerade under the "Communist" label, but in reality they changed into its very opposite everything that Lenin's and Trotsky's communism stood for.

Misled by Stalinists and old-style reformists, the movement suffered a succession of avoidable and bloody defeats in the 1930s, with fascism triumphing in Germany and Spain. The representatives of genuine socialism were isolated from their natural base, the would-be communist workers of the '30s, who rallied to Stalin because he seemed to represent the Russian Revolution of 1917; the Trotskyists were murdered and persecuted by Stalinism and fascism all over the globe until they were marginalised and almost extirpated.



General strike in Czechoslovakia, November 1989. For now the bourgeoisie is crowing; but the collapse of Stalinism has set millions of workers organising, striking, thinking and debating.

When capitalism recovered after World War 2, there were powerful workers' organisations able to impose serious reforms on the still-in-place ruling class.

But there they stopped. Capitalism began to boom and develop at a great pace. The workers' parties stagnated and began to decay.

The reformist parties became increasingly just alternative parties of government, at ease running capitalism, concerned only with petty reform. The Stalinists in Italy and France were kept from the goal natural to their domestic politics, government office, by their links with Moscow; but their social programmes were moderate.

The whole movement drifted to the right. Socialism was a meaningless party tag for the reformists, and what existed behind the Iron Curtain for the Stalinists. Millions of workers continued to believe in socialism, even if only as an ill-defined anti-capitalist aspiration. But what was socialism?

The Russian model, and the others copied from it, ceased to inspire any but a dwindling core of West Europeans — though they did inspire Third World revolutionaries, and gave them a model to aim for. Stalinism came to inspire horror in more and more workers as the facts about Russian and East European reality filtered out into an increasingly prosperous bourgeois Europe.

Over the years the Stalinised CPs moved ever more to the right. In their definition of socialism as the nationalisation of all property (even small shops) under a totalitarian state; in the practice of the Russian state, which "communists" had to endorse and glorify; in their conduct in the class struggle of the workers — in everything that makes the difference between a living, vigorous, learning, fighting working-class movement and a bureaucratic, corrupt, turbid movement, Stalinism dirtied and dragged down the working class.

The proper symbols of the crisis of socialism are not the images on our TV screens of Moscow's satraps being hounded from power in East Germany and the other satellite states, but the millions of German

communist workers being led by Stalinists peacefully into Hitler's prison camps, and the systematic slaughter of the Trotskyists of the Soviet Union at the Vorkuta prison camp in 1938.

It is an old crisis, not a recent one. What is happening in Eastern Europe and the USSR does not indicate a deepening of that crisis, yet another degree of malaise and sickness for socialism. These are the most hopeful events in the last 60 years from the point of view of socialism — events which open the possibility of a rapid regrowth of a mass socialist working-class movement.

*"The 'crisis of socialism' is a crisis of those calling themselves socialist, not as the media tells us a crisis of socialist ideas"*

The "crisis of socialism" is a crisis of those calling themselves socialists — not, as the media tells us, a crisis of socialist ideas. The Stalinist states had nothing to do with the genuine ideas of the socialists, of Marx, of Rosa Luxemburg, of Lenin. The victory of the bourgeoisie over the Stalinist socio-economic formations does not vindicate the bourgeoisie as against socialism, despite what their propagandists, echoed by the erstwhile official socialists, say and perhaps believe.

Paradoxically this victory of the bourgeoisie may even help, by clearing away the powerful state-centred Stalinist falsification of socialism, and thus excavating the space on which socialism can revive.

The prospects of the victory of free market economics in the formerly stultified East European

countries does not register a crisis of socialist ideas. It is not that the genuine East European socialists lack "answers", lack a viable programme of socialism for those states — it is that decades of Stalinism have decimated the ranks of socialists and poisoned the social ground on which socialism can grow.

What the East European states and the USSR need instead of free market economics is:

- Social ownership of the means of production, on the basis of cooperative production.
- Democratic planning of basic economic choices. Subordination of those elements of a free market economy found to be useful to overall social needs as defined in the democratically worked-out and implemented plan.

- Democracy — effective, real democracy in which the people, in the first place the working people, daily administer their own lives in all their dimensions, including the economic. Such democracy would prove as impossible in a capitalist Eastern Europe, where the major means of production are privately owned, as it has always done in bourgeois democratic countries like Britain.

This programme derived initially from the working-class response to market capitalism. It has as its irreducible core the fight to abolish wage slavery and to destroy the state power of the bourgeoisie. The idea that it ceases to be valid because of the introduction of free market economics is as nonsensical as the idea that the exploitative Stalinist state tyranny over the people was identical with the socialist programme of a democratic, cooperative, self-administering society!

Socialists today who stand by their programme and let the bourgeois and Stalinist babblers (echoed here and there by faint-hearted who should know better) get on with their quack diagnoses — these will be the very people who will prove that the disintegration of Stalinism is not the end of socialism, but the beginning of the end of the crisis that has eclipsed genuine Marxist socialism for many decades already. Socialism is reviving, not dying!

*"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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# Is Britain going Republican?

## GRAFFITI

Is Britain going Republican? According to recent surveys, given wide publicity, especially in the Sunday papers, perhaps a majority of people think the Queen should abdicate before she dies — in favour, of course, of Charles, rather than an election, or something like that.

This only goes to aggravate the alarm of sections of the Establishment, including the popular press, who think Charles is a complete lunatic, dangerous radical, ozone-protector, pervayer of embarrassing opinions on architecture and language, and all-round odd-ball.

Certainly, over the past few years we have seen unusual degrees of criticism of members of the Royal family in the media. Not the Queen, mind you. Nor the Queen Mother, Britain's favourite granny. Princess Ann, in fact, is liked a lot more than she used to be, thanks to her Good Works with the Save the Children Fund, and despite her unseemingly marital failure.

But everyone knows that the future King is a bad husband who allows his wife to cavort in public with other men, knows that Andrew and Fergie are bad parents who desert their baby in favour of holidays, and knows that Edward is a bad son who can't even stick it out in the marines like a real man and prefers to ponce around on television in medieval costume getting pies thrown at him.

The popular press thus have a difficult job to do. On the one hand, they resolutely don't want to inflame anti-Royalist emotions to the point where the Great British Monarchy might be in danger as an institution. On the other, they don't want Charles to be King — but worse, there is no one he can very easily abdicate in favour of.

There are a few facts they tend not to tell us very often, though. Did you know, for example, that the Queen stands to save £12,000 on her Sandringham estate in Norfolk alone, as a result of the poll tax. Being Queen, you see, she won't have to pay it. She saved £5,698 last year on her Balmoral estate in Scotland where the poll tax has already been introduced.

That's not to mention the millions she gets from the public purse every year, or the thousands lesser Royals get as a 'salary' from the state.

The Queen should abdicate;



we should nationalise her property. And Charles-to-be-the-third should remember what happened to Charles I...

According to a study produced in Michigan, USA, old people who drink coffee are nearly twice as likely to be sexually active as those who don't.

Experts in the United States have insisted that no causal link has been proven; it could just be that sexually active people like strong flavours.

Reports don't say if the coffee has to be caffeinated.

"I'm sure there are other places to eat"

Mike Gatting, after black South African workers refused to serve him.

"It is up to them, as long as they do the job the same. Blacks make good soldiers except they can't swim."

Corporal Gordon Muirhead, army instructor, explaining that the army isn't racist.

"I know an occasion when a black soldier and a white soldier were up to their necks in mud and barbed wire. One was calling the other a black so and so, and the other was calling his colleague a white so and so. It proved nothing."

Lt Colonel Donald Campbell, explaining that the army isn't racist.

"Each person is an individual to be treated as such. You cannot be sex blind. If a woman comes into a room, I'll make sure she is offered a chair."

Lt Colonel Donald Campbell, explaining that the army isn't sexist.



March in support of ambulance workers, 30 January. Photo: Geoff Ward

# Strike without emergency cover!

## LETTERS

I have been following the debate on the progress of the ambulance dispute in your paper with interest. I believe your position, both in its original form and the one taking into account the letters printed in last week's paper, fundamentally flawed.

In my opinion, the way forward to secure a speedy and successful conclusion is to call for all-out strike action with no emergency cover, backed up wherever possible

by solidarity action from other workers.

As socialists we should be able to differentiate between correct 'theoretical' positions and the solutions required to respond to actual situations. Theoretically the way to win the ambulance dispute is for a general strike to take place. Regrettably, this is not an option at present. Faced with this, we should not fall into the trap of substituting what we would like to see for what is achievable at a given moment.

Whilst the call for 15 minutes of action by the TUC should be used to argue for half or one-day strikes, this is still a long way short of the required solidarity action needed to win. In view of this, we must look

to the ambulance workers to win the strike.

As with all strikes we should accept that when action is at its most effective, the bosses make concessions. Effective action does not mean a withdrawal of labour on the one hand, with a service provided on the other.

The situation in the West Midlands is a good example. A Labour authority providing a service instead of the NHS does nothing to pressurise Thatcher at all; neither does a strike which means the employees agreeing to carry on with their most important duties.

Effective action is based on workers withdrawing their labour in total, in this case it would mean that working class people would be hit. However, I believe that when this occurs we must put the blame squarely on the Tories, not on the ambulance workers themselves. It will be when the crisis is at its height that the possibility for victory will be at its greatest.

Doubtless I will be attacked for having a syndicalist view on this issue, one which lacks any class analysis. I reject this, however, as I firmly believe that the best outcome for our class as a whole would be a defeat for Thatcher in a major industrial dispute, for this would mean not only a victory for the ambulance workers, but would also shatter the myth of invincibility surrounding Thatcher, leading to countless other disputes and victories for the working class.

Unconditional withdrawal of labour is a right that we should always defend. We should leave it to the Tories to talk about no strikes in essential services. It is they who fear such a situation, for they realise it is the key to victories for the workers.

An all-out strike, with no emergency cover, is the way forward. This we should argue for, whilst continuing to build the maximum amount of workers' solidarity action.

Mark Serwotka  
Aberdare

# Unify the ambulance crews?

The reply to my letter in SO 431 is a welcome clarification of SO's position on the ambulance dispute.

The section on what we are putting forward in terms of escalation of the dispute, I would agree with completely. It is a pity, however, that it has taken up to now for SO to actually argue this. What prompted my original letter was the one-sidedness of SO's coverage.

While the paper was, rightly, strongly against walk-outs, and for solidarity action, it was impossible to tell from our coverage whether SO was for escalation of the dispute.

Given that solidarity action is the key to winning the dispute is our omission unimportant? Not at all. Part of our role as Marxists is to politically arm ambulance militants with a strategy not just to take out into the rest of the labour movement but also one to take into their unions. To unify their ranks and to give them greater control of the

dispute, both locally and nationally.

The ambulance workers face not only the Tories but also their own union leaderships. The longer the dispute continues the more likely Poole, et al, will settle for any deal Clarke puts on the table — our coverage must arm ambulance workers against this.

DSS Worker

## High heels

Re Liz Millward's article 'Freedom is fashion slavery?'

I would like to hope that in the socialist utopia I could (if I chose to) walk around unmolested (or stereotyped) in a pair of high-heels — especially if they were well crafted, good quality and a comfortable fit.

Dick Cannon  
London SE5

## NEW PROBLEMS NEW STRUGGLES



A handbook for trade unionists.  
£1 plus 32p post from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

A handbook for trade unionists by Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty £1

## Eastern Europe: situation remains fluid

Sam Jones surveys recent events in Eastern Europe

Romania's ruling National Salvation Front most starkly sums up the experience so far of the Eastern European revolutions: despite the immense mobilisations, despite the fall and death of Ceausescu, despite the great unleashing of popular demands for democracy, fundamental change has yet to be carried through.

President Iliescu was one of Ceausescu's hacks and can make no claim to represent a break with the old regime.

This week the National Salvation Front survived a huge demonstration of popular opposition by turning the tanks on the protestors. About 40,000 people laid siege to the Front's headquarters last Sunday (January 28).

Iliescu's government responded by mobilising its own supporters, and the next day opposition parties had their headquarters in turn besieged.

## 'Show me an example of genuine socialism'

Student activists from Czechoslovakia spoke to Socialist Organiser

The Czech revolution was an enthusiastic period. The nation itself decided the type of government it really wanted to have.

However, some two months after the revolution started, people are tired. They have demonstrated and protested — now they are tired.

We managed to destroy the old totalitarian structures. Now the time has come to build something new and create new democratic structures. Our problem is we have missed the last 40 years. We are new to democracy.

I still fear the state security. Nobody is quite sure how many people are working for them. No one really knows who is in charge of it.

In the Ministry of Education we have a new Minister and new directors of the universities. But, on the other hand, we have still got the old

Meanwhile the Polish Communist Party has followed the Hungarian example and changed its name — in their case to Social Democrat — but still can't change its history. The Yugoslavs, reeling from several years of intensifying national conflict (a kind of pre-echo of what Gorbachev is going through) gun down more protesting Albanians. The Bulgarian ruling party, which so far has avoided being driven from office, faces a deepening crisis.

Gorbachev himself, according to reports coming via the United States, is thinking of leaving his post as leader of the Party, faced as he is with apparently uncontrollable opposition in the Caucasus and elsewhere.

A new 'unity government' is formed in East Germany, to assist in bringing forward the date of the country's elections. And as Gorbachev signals that he accepts eventual German unity as "inevitable", observers comment that the GDR elections, to be held now on March 18, will in effect be a 'referendum' on German unity.

Elections now loom, over the next few months, in East Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia (although in some cases oppositionists fear that the very fact that the elections are so soon will count against them, giving them too little time to organise). But there can be no doubt that whatever the details



Tanks turned on protestors in Rumania this week

of the election results may be, the official Communist Parties are dying, or dead. Across all of Eastern Europe the question they are asking

themselves is how they can adapt to the new situation.

It would be wrong to think that adaptation is impossible. But the East German case is showing how difficult it can be. Honecker, who refused to change, is now facing charges of treason; Krenz, who changed too little too late — where is he? Expelled from the party, and in oblivion.

German unity may be the issue of the day, but whatever public sentiment is about it, putting it into practice would require first answering some fundamental questions. In particular, the relationship of a reunified Germany to the rest of Europe is something that both the bureaucracies of the East and the capitalists of the West want sorted out.

The official Communist Party still forms part of the government

of President Havel in Czechoslovakia, although as each week passes, more prominent party members hand in their cards — or get expelled. Havel's aim is to construct a wide coalition, including everybody from the church to old Party members.

But a big part of the old hierarchy remains intact. Indeed, unlike in Romania or East Germany, there is still a secret police that has not faced massive popular protests: as one Civic Forum representative told the *Guardian* (January 29): "There are hundreds of thousands of people working for the secret police. But we can't shoot them or lock them up. And no one knows exactly who they are."

So in all the countries of Eastern Europe, the situation remains immensely fluid. Almost nothing has yet been resolved.

machine.

I do not fear that this machine will destroy attempts to reform the education system, but I do think it will be an obstacle to reform.

So the revolution has to go further?

No, not the revolution. This is the job of the new people in government.

Do you think that the Charter 77 people, in government alongside the communists, have done enough? They seem to be just waiting for the elections.

Havel, the President of the Republic, said he would become president for six months to bring the country to the elections. The political parties should be creating programmes to present at the elections. This is a time of preparations.

If there was an election tomorrow, which way would you vote?

It's difficult to say. The political parties are still in the process of creation. When I left the country there were 44 political parties.

All I can say at the moment is that I will vote for the people good enough for the job. I don't really mind if I vote for a communist or a

liberal democrat — the person just has to be good enough for the job. I think I would vote for individuals rather than for parties.

Is there any specific role for the working class in politics?

We could not have had the revolt in Czechoslovakia without the working class. But I do not want to say that the working class should be a specific force because of our experience of collectivism.

The working class and the rest of society were to an extent corrupted by Stalinism. I do not want to say that I believed the old government when it said that it was the representative of the working class. That was not true.

On the other hand, the working class did not actively fight back against Stalinism in the way that some of the intellectuals did.

The working class is the decisive power in society, so they should have done more to fight the old system.

I like the idea of socialism. But after the experience of Eastern Europe socialism means Stalinism to me. Socialism for us means the secret police, not being able to travel, no freedom of speech.

It's easy to say socialism is not Stalinism. Show me an example of genuine socialism somewhere. I cannot find one.

Look at the Russian Revolution of 1917. After a few years of civil war and foreign intervention in backward Russia the revolution was destroyed. But this revolution was at first a workers' revolution. It was not Stalinist.

That's true. The workers had hegemony. They were betrayed by Stalin, and Trotsky was beaten and sent into exile. In Czechoslovakia in 1968 we had "socialism with a human face" — it was crushed with tanks.

There is always a big danger that power will be misused by some of the leaders.

### Draft Statutes of the Free Union in the Forge at Tracturul, Brasov

#### In Romania workers have been organising their own independent trade unions

elected democratically on a roughly yearly basis, and they may not be elected for two consecutive terms or more than four times in ten years.

7. In order to avoid subjectivism, the union leader and his deputies may not hold political posts.

8. The union leader can only make decisions after consulting the union and after it gives him a mandate.

9. The leader and his deputies can be recalled by a simple majority at any time that the organisation decides that they no longer represent it well.

10. Nominations to higher union bodies must be made individually and not by slate. Such representatives cannot be leaders of the local unions.

11. Local union leaders and representatives cannot have any more rights than any other union members.

12. Changes can be made in the statutes at organised meetings of the union by simple absolute majority (over 50%).

Reprinted from "International Viewpoint"

1. The free union at T-32 is based on the workplace principle and the defence of the rights of its members with respect to the management of the workshop, section and enterprise management.

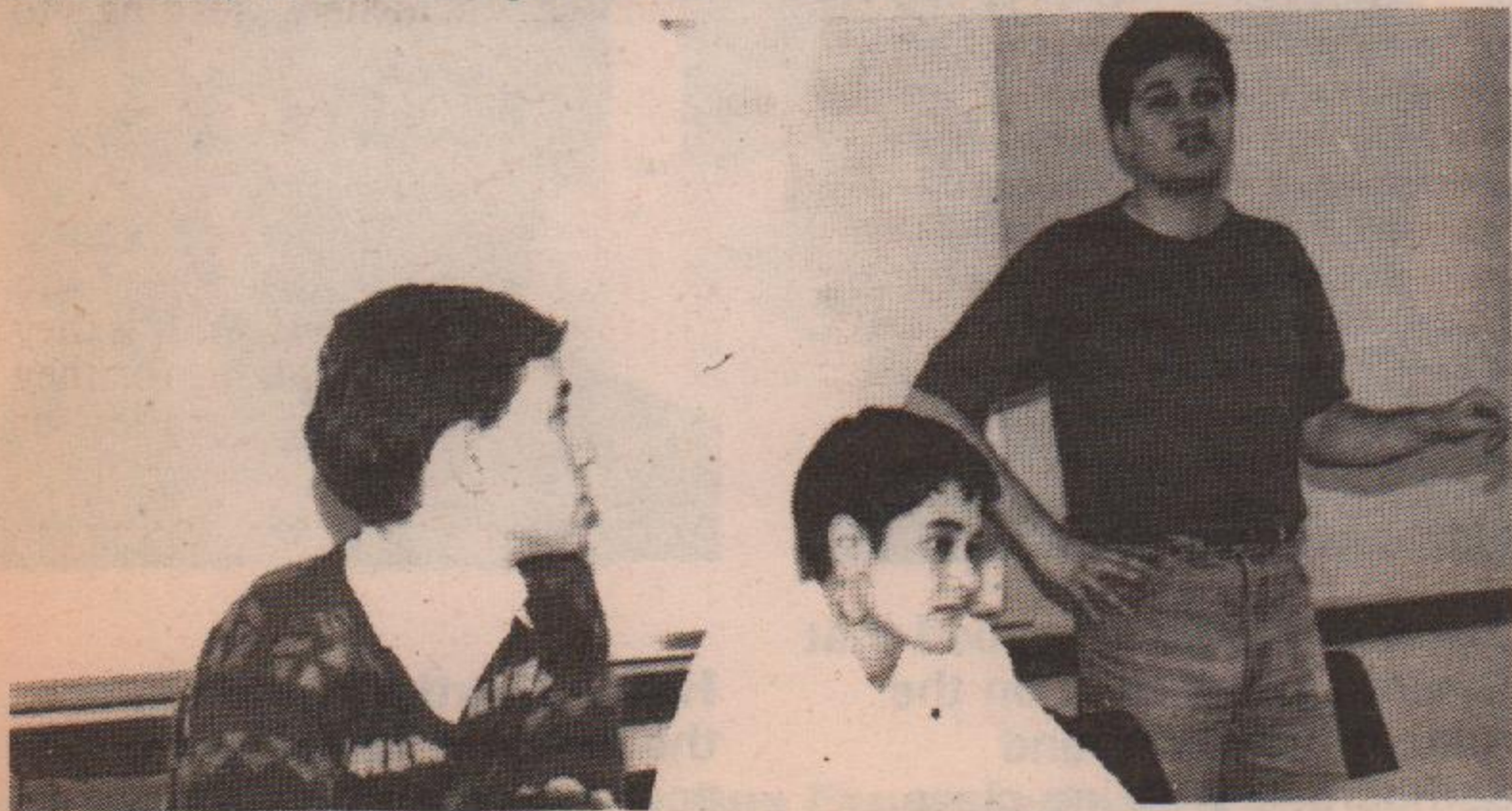
2. Membership in the T-32 free union is voluntary.

3. Decisions are by a simple absolute majority (over 50%) in all cases except strike votes, for which a vote of two-thirds of the membership is required.

4. Union meetings are to be called at least once a month or at the request of at least one third of the membership.

5. In its relations with other administrative bodies, the free union will be represented by its leader or his two deputies.

6. The leader of the union and his two deputies will be



Czech student activist leads a workshop at CSWEB conference with Emma Colyer and Paul McGarry of the National Union of Students executive

# We must help the real socialists in Eastern Europe

**Eric Heffer MP has been one of the most consistent campaigners within the British labour movement against Stalinism and for workers' rights in Eastern Europe. At the opening session of the CSWEB Conference he spelt out why.**



Eric Heffer MP

**A**s a socialist looking at events in Eastern Europe it would be very easy to be overwhelmed by a feeling of despair.

When we talk now about solidarity with workers in the Eastern Bloc we have to be very clear about which workers and which socialists we are going to support.

We have to analyse the reasons for the current crisis. The reasons why the Stalinists have been in such a position. Basically, the Gorbachev faction have decided that they will no longer use Russian troops to hold up the system in Eastern Europe. If the recent wave of revolt had met with a 'Brezhnev solution' then we could have faced a very bitter civil war across Eastern Europe, but the fact that the Russians decided not to intervene gave the opportunity for the removal of the old leadership.

Look at Rumania. There was a great revolution from below but it was a controlled revolution.

I don't know what the Soviet Union is: state capitalism, bureaucratic collectivist, a deformed workers state or whatever. Some of you know. But I do know one thing. It's not socialist! And hasn't been for a long time. That's why I supported Solidarity. But today I don't support Lech Walesa because he has gone against a basic tenet of socialism. The idea that the working class can take control of their own lives and manage the economy

without bringing in capitalism or the market.

We should give critical support to some of Gorbachev's changes but we should really help those forces in the USSR and Eastern Europe who are trying to renew socialism.

But we can't support all the forces in the Eastern Bloc. Some of the nationalist groupings are almost fascist.

Not all nationalists are fascists,

*"Stalinism was brought down almost overnight and it couldn't have been brought down without the action of the working class"*

we have to support the right to self-determination obviously.

This is a very complex matter. In the old days I used to find it difficult to get a second for a resolu-

tion of the Labour Party NEC. Nowadays everyone wants to be a second, but I'm not on the executive!

The CIA are working very hard in relation of Eastern Europe. They are going over there in their lorry loads. What are we doing?

That's why it's important for us in the labour movement to get together. We've got to have our people going over there making contacts with our comrades in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the other countries.

If we don't do this then socialism will be set back for a very long time.

But we should have confidence in the basic views and capabilities of working class people. Why? Because as long as capitalism and bureaucracy and Stalinism exists there will always be a desire on the part of working class people to establish their own democratic society.

The struggle for socialism has been going on for hundreds of years now. We almost thought at one stage that we had made a breakthrough and we'd got it, but we hadn't.

Stalinism was brought down almost overnight and it couldn't have been brought down without the action of the working class.

Yes, let's continue to build our movement, on an even wider basis than we've got now. In the near future let's have another conference in which all the banners are from trade union, Labour Party and other working class parties.

Let's not be sectarian, let's extend our contacts. We have to help those in Eastern Europe and renew our commitment to socialism.



Part of the audience at the solidarity conference last weekend

## Support the socialists!

**T**he Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) has launched an appeal to Support the Socialists in the Eastern Bloc.

For every £10 individuals or organisations raise or donate we will send £2 to each of the following organisations:

- The Polish Socialist Party (RD)
- The independent East German trade union federation IFUG
- The East German left organisation, the United Left
- The Soviet independent union federation, Sotsprof
- The Czech socialist opposition group, the Left Alternative

All the money donated will go to these groups. No money will be spent on administration. Clearly mark cheques 'Support the Socialists'.

This appeal ties together the ideas in the Campaign Pack produced for last Saturday's conference. This pack gives details of all these socialist groups. It is available from CSWEB.

CSWEB is looking for affiliations and making an appeal for people who can offer translation services to CSWEB, to translate documents from and to Eastern European languages.

Donations, information, affiliations to CSWEB, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.

(Affiliation: large organisations £10; small organisations £5; individuals: waged £5, unwaged £2. All supporters and affiliated organisations will receive regular mailings with details of events and appeals and documents from the opposition.)

We are asking all affiliated organisations and sympathetic solidarity campaigns to send delegates to our next national CSWEB planning meeting. Individual supporters are also encouraged to attend.

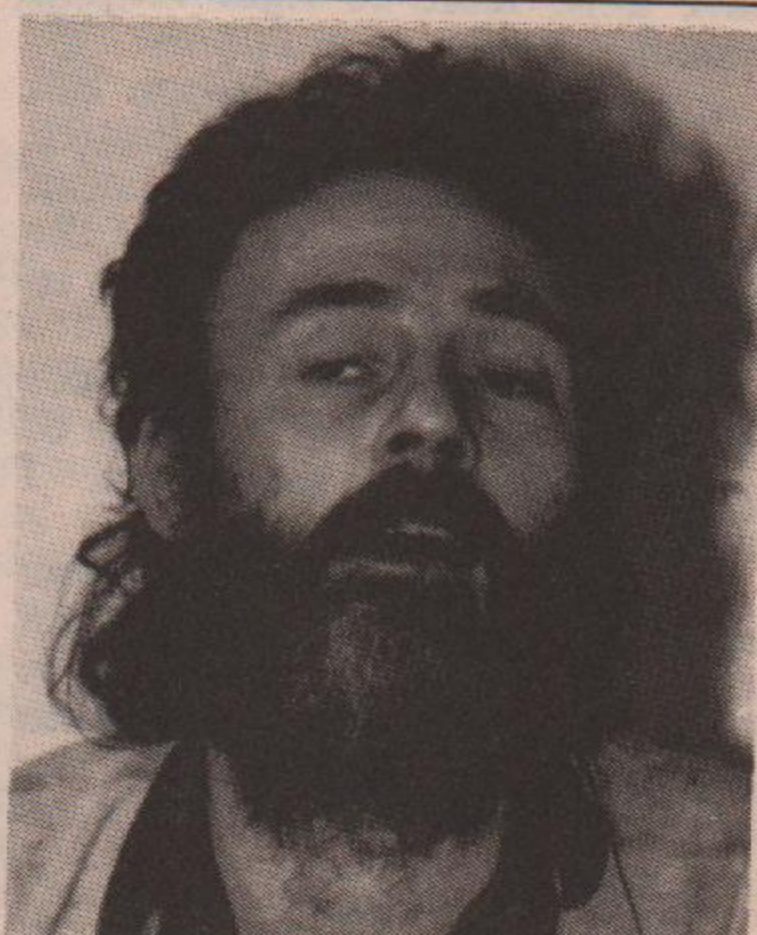
6.00 Saturday 24 February  
London School of Economics  
Houghton St  
London

**Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) will be speaking at the following**

## Arguing for solidarity and socialism



**Adam Novotny** provided an eye-witness account of the Czechoslovakian general strike.



**Jorg Walter** described the momentous events in East Germany and outlined the politics of the United Left.



**John O'Mahony** argued that Stalinism was built on the ruins of Leninism and democratic working class socialism



**Hillel Ticktin's** analysis of the crisis of the Russian economy provoked a lively debate.



## Ambulance workers inspired

Britain's ambulance workers who have been locked in a struggle for decent pay, have been inspired by the power of public opinion that has been so clearly witnessed in the dramatic developments in Eastern Europe and the impact of people's power in that process.

Indeed, our recent national assembly in Trafalgar Square on 13 January was as a direct result of that inspiration.

We know that the ambulance staff enjoy overwhelming public support in the UK, and we hope that this support will force the government to bring about an honourable conclusion to the present strife within Britain's ambulance service.

With best wishes for the success of your conference.

Roger Poole, National Secretary, NUPE.

## Defeat the threat from the right!

### Polish socialist appeals for solidarity

Already there are fascist groups organising in Poland," said Milka Tyszkiewicz from the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution).

"There have already been attacks by fascists on a leftist group in Warsaw.

"People who are glad that we have finished one totalitarian system in Eastern Europe are wrong to think

this means we are finished with all authoritarian regimes. There is still a struggle.

"If we don't receive any help from the Western left — money, information, books, help from intellectuals — there could soon be no left current in Poland.

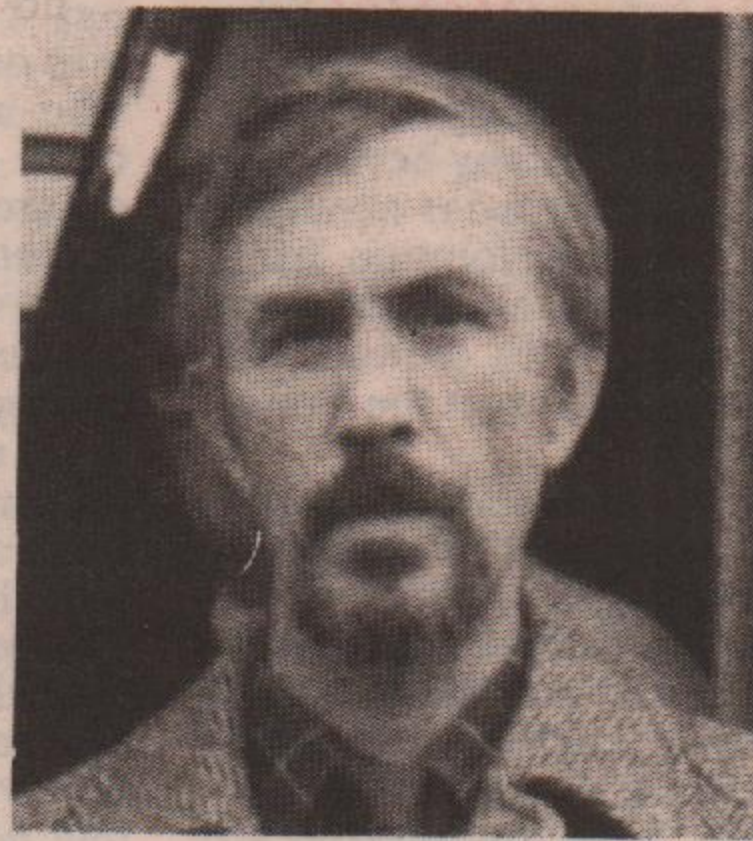
"The economic situation is very bad. We have price rises like there were in Germany before Hitler came to power.

"In Warsaw, gangs of children hunt cats and dogs, not as a game, but to kill them and eat them.

"The situation is very urgent."



Milka Tyszkiewicz



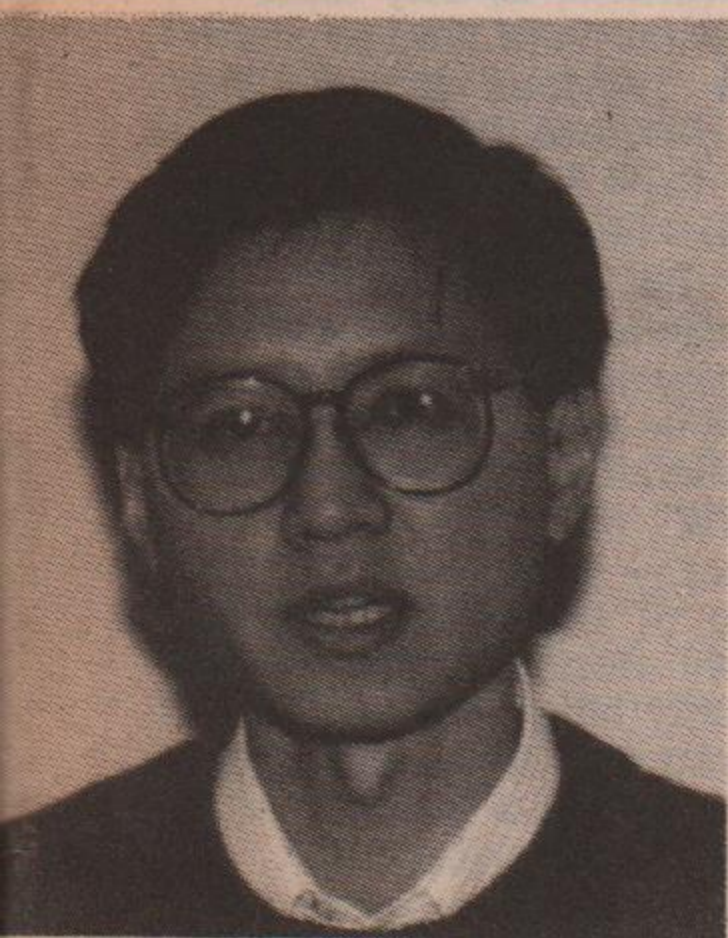
Jake Ecclestone NUJ

## Practical assistance

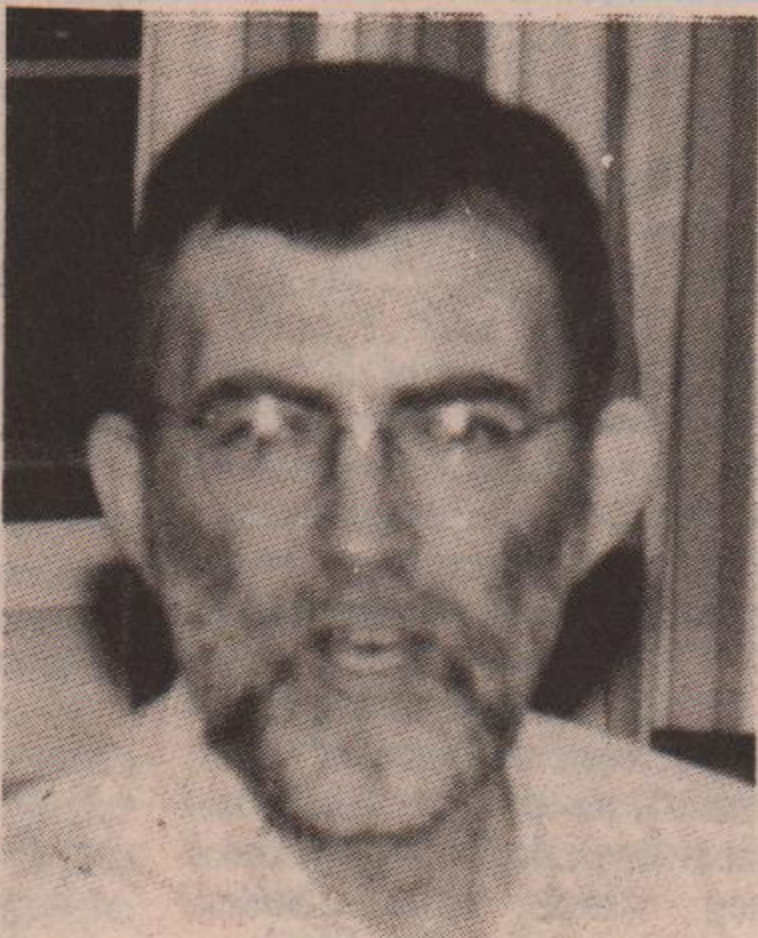
"Practical, material and financial support to the independent labour movements in Eastern Europe is vital. In the early eighties the NUJ provided facilities in our national headquarters for the Solidarnosc office in Britain"

Jake Ecclestone, NUJ.

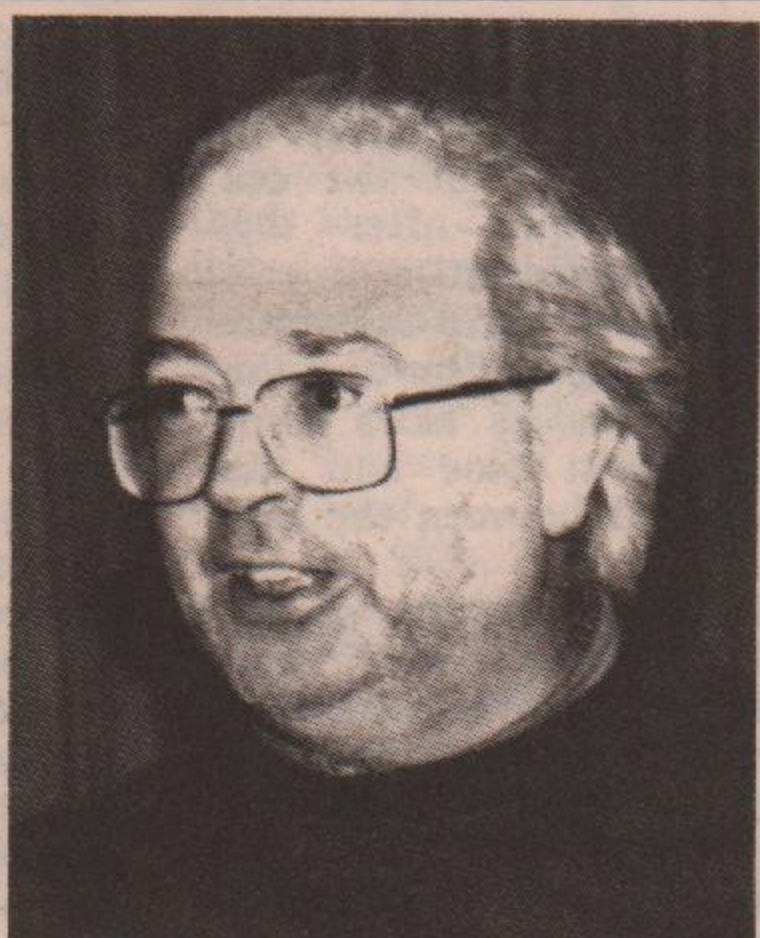
meetings co-ordinated by CSWEB:  
 1.00, Thursday 1 February: Leeds University Student Union. Organised by CSWEB.  
 7.30, Friday 2 February: Manchester Town Hall. Organised by CSWEB.  
 10.00am, Saturday 3 February: Sheffield Coordinating Centre Against Unemployment, West St, Sheffield. Organised by CSWEB.  
 8pm, Saturday 3 February: Social at 2nd Floor, Derwent House, Southern Grove, London E3. Organised by PPS-RD support committee.  
 1.00, Monday 5 February: Liverpool Institute of Higher Education. Organised by CSWEB.  
 7.30, Monday 5 February: GWU offices, 1 Price St, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead. Organised by CSWEB.  
 7.30, Monday 12 February: London Socialist Forum at Student Union, Institute of Education, Bedford Way, London WC1. Organised by Socialist and Revolution, Socialist Organiser and Women's Fightback.



Cheung Siu Ming discussed the issue of Hong Kong.



Gus Fagan analysed the crisis in Hungary today.



Bill Lomax assessed the historical significance of the Hungarian workers' uprising of 1956.



Peter Tatchell talked about lesbian and gay oppression in Eastern Europe.



Greg Benton talked about the tradition of dissent in China.

# 'Defending the gains of Stalinism'

Liz Millward reviews 'Socialist Organiser and the Eastern Bloc', a pamphlet by Paul Stevens, published by Socialist Outlook

Over the last two years *Socialist Organiser* has been conducting a public debate on the nature of the Stalinist states.

Articles have been written, debates held. Through our paper and magazine we have invited contributions from the left. Recent events have brought a new sharpness and urgency to the debate.

Workers in the Eastern Bloc have been demonstrating their feelings, their response to decades of Stalinist rule. That response has been overwhelming: Stalinism must go. Secret police terror must go. Shortages must go. Instead, the masses of the Eastern Bloc demand democracy, freedom to travel, freedom to organise and enough to eat.

It seems that millions of East European and USSR workers are — mistakenly — willing to look to the free-enterprise market as the fulcrum of both freedom and prosperity.

A series of revolutions and attempted revolutions are sweeping established Stalinists from direct political power to be replaced by — what? The world is changing.

We may be witnessing the beginning of a struggle for genuine socialism in these countries. Workers in the streets have begun to take power away from their Stalinist oppressors and exploiters, and they may take power into their own hands. But that outcome is not inevitable, or even likely, unless the workers learn fast, and organise strongly and quickly.

Because world capitalism is already ready to step in to the Eastern Bloc. Its propaganda machine is already there, aided by social democracy, East and West.

These events will be decided and shaped by class struggle. One class will win and another be defeated. The working class is in a position to make history. It is only the active intervention of the working class which will make socialism, the active participation of its organisations and parties in the class struggle which can ensure a good outcome for the proletariat and for socialism.

So socialists in this country have a duty to help the working class in Eastern Europe. They need every weapon we can give them. One weapon is solidarity, another is theory — the historic overview which (for now) a combination of Stalinist censorship over decades and Stalinist lies about what socialism is obscured from the eyes of most newly awakened workers in the East.

One thing is vital and irreplaceable — and that is to get it across that the present and coming events are a class war, which workers must win or lose. There can be no compromises on basics, and another chance may not come again for a long time.

For socialists our call to the East European and USSR working class must be first and foremost a call to action — action in defence of their conditions, inadequate as they are, against such things as the prospect of mass unemployment, and action to better those conditions and to secure a socialist outcome from the crisis and breakdown of Stalinism.

## Outlook's polemic

The *Socialist Outlook* pamphlet issued at the CSWEB conference is

full of distortions, as you would expect, and strange, factionally-generated misconstructions about *Socialist Organiser's* politics.

They have the polemical stupidity and political dishonesty to suggest that *Socialist Organiser* thinks — or logically should think because we see nothing 'progressive' in Stalinism — that the October revolution should not have happened!

But worse than that, it gives no help to East European or USSR workers struggling for political clarity about the crisis of Stalinism. Instead it tells them how lucky they were under the Stalinist yoke. It tells them the same things that their Stalinist exploiters have been telling them for years. *Outlook* dwells on the horrors full blown marketism will inflict on the East European and USSR workers, if it can. They do this only to contrast marketism unfavourably with the Stalinist status quo, and build up a ludicrously false and positive picture of the very Stalinist systems whose horrors and deficiencies have driven millions of workers in the East — for example, Solidarnosc in Poland — to embrace, or look favourably on marketism.

"First, capitalist production would be re-introduced on the basis of destroying the real social gains — in terms of job security, social services, health care, rhythm of work — which the masses in these countries have won... [my emphasis]

"Penury, austerity and vast exploitation would be the price paid by the workers..."

"(We must) build on and extend the social gains of the masses under bureaucratic rule..."

"...the states...have seen both horrible repression and irrationality and tremendous social progress..."

In the whole pamphlet there is not one word about democracy — democracy which is the demand of workers fighting Stalinism. There is nothing about the freedom to travel or even the freedom to think and organise, ie. the prerequisite of a creative self-activating working class movement, which is for socialists the only protagonist of the struggle for socialism.

But then the tendency to which *Socialist Outlook* belong have spent 40 years spinning scenarios about an "ongoing" world revolution from which the working class has been absent — which is to produce the play 'Hamlet' and forget the Prince of Denmark!

*Outlook* are so out of touch with the world outside their formulas that their response to the revolutions in Eastern Europe is to tell the workers how well off they are compared to their brothers and sisters under capitalism — even as Eastern Bloc peoples are demonstrating in action that they know it is not so.

Many of the East European revolutionaries do not know the bad side of capitalism — the poverty, homelessness, unemployment. They do not know that private ownership strangles freedom as much as the Stalinist bureaucracy. Part of our job is to tell them.

But we have to tell them the truth about capitalism in a way which makes sense according to their own experience of life under Stalinism.

For instance, Western-style democracy is a big improvement on Stalinist authoritarianism. Simply to ignore this issue as *Outlook* does is to cut yourself off from the struggle, not to speak of making it impossible to talk to workers willing to risk their lives in a struggle for democracy — even though it is for an ill-defined 'democracy'. To say that in terms of the quality of life capitalism is worse than the tyranny which they have suffered for the last 60 years is to lose the respect of the people who walk into West Berlin and see well-stocked shops, well-fed people and the open sale of



Czech workers' general strike

goods and travel tickets — for the first time in their lives.

At the moment, the East European states are 'led' by people who want to embrace capitalism, at least in a limited way. But until the last few months, the Stalinist rulers, whilst admitting that a few mistakes had been made in the past, contrasted their own system with capitalism in the same terms that *Outlook* does.

Using such talk about the 'social gains' since the revolution does not make *Outlook* a bunch of Stalinists, but it does make one doubt their grip on reality. They are like people who have been too badly shocked to be able to register what's going on around them!

*Outlook* does not engage with real workers in the real world. Their concerns are reflected in banal passages like this:

"Just contemplating the disastrous consequences of the restoration of capitalism reveals the fact that the very existence of the post-capitalist states, despite everything, is a vital component of the political relationship of forces on a world scale." You didn't know that now did you?

Disentangled, the logic of this must be a call for the retention of Stalinism as a counter to imperialism — until we can replace it with socialism. They engage in shame-faced defence of the old Stalinist status quo after the Stalinists have moved on!

For *Outlook* the world falls into two camps — imperialism and the rest. The USSR and its 'allies' form an anti-imperialist bloc and the world is divided between the two camps.

In *Outlook's* programme, people do not fight imperialism, "anti-imperialism" does! We know that imperialism will be overthrown by the working class. *Socialist Outlook's* support for the "anti-imperialist" bloc is de facto support for Stalinism itself. Polemical exaggeration? Look at the facts!

Throughout the Afghan war, the two groups from which *Socialist Outlook* originate both refused to call for the withdrawal of Russian troops. Even when the Russian armies were fighting not imperialism but the Afghan people, they were

supported by *Outlook*. A defeat for the Russians would have equalled a victory for imperialism according to the theory and that must be avoided even if the cost is the lives of thousands of Afghan peasants, and the driving of 5 million (out of about 20 million population) over the borders as refugees.

Now, after the event, they have changed their position. But there is no self-criticism and younger comrades probably don't know the group's history on this. This pamphlet even says it was "criminal" — ten years too late. What word fits these "Trotskyists" who gave shame-faced support to the "Red" Army when it was dropping napalm on Afghan villages? "Criminal", perhaps? Today, even Gorbachev probably thinks it was "criminal".

The anti-imperialist bloc is not an abstract concept. It is the Stalinist states, states ruled by bureaucracies as exploitative and as oppressive as anything capitalism can come up with, and with a history just as bloody. Being part of an anti-imperialist bloc dreamed up by *Outlook* theorists does not wipe the blood from the bureaucrats' hands. There is no case for support for the continuation of these states — unless from the point of view of a Moscow cold warrior. Anti-imperialism, like charity, begins at home.

The final defeat of imperialism will come from the hands of the working class of the imperialist nations — as Lenin and Trotsky pointed out. *Outlook* would do well to remember that rather than place their faith in imaginary anti-imperialist blocs. The ruling classes have too much in common with each other for us to have any faith in either.

*Outlook* in its theory makes a distinction between defence of the property relations of the Eastern Bloc "against imperialism" and the bureaucracy which rules those states. In this pamphlet the distinction is blurred — probably the result of polemical overexcitement. But in the world outside "the world historical process", the distinction between property relations and those who control them for personal gain is also blurred.

What 60 years of Stalinism has

shown us more than anything else is that nationalised property can be a tool for exploitation. It is only better than capitalism when it is under workers' control. *Socialist Outlook*, in their defence of nationalised property, fall into the trap of seeing it as somehow separate from the bureaucracy, as if it had an inherent purity, quite separate from who controls it.

*Outlook* do appear to blur this distinction in phrases like "the social gains of the masses under bureaucratic rule" which imply that the bureaucracy itself has a positive role to play.

In fact, the distinction itself is false. In China, which *Outlook* rightly points out, we do not think is, or ever has been a workers' state, the nationalised property was created by the bureaucracy. The workers have never had control of that property, even though it was supposedly held by the bureaucracy for them. Chinese workers are cruelly exploited by the bureaucracy and nationalised property, by itself has done nothing for them.

The rigid control of the Chinese economy by the bureaucracy has allowed the alleviation of the worst of the periodic famines. Rigid control under the feudal emperors used to do the same thing. But that rigid control, allied to some of Mao's policies also caused famine in China. For example: 20 million — and possibly a lot more — died between 1958-61 as a result of Mao's 'Great Leap Forward'.

So when *Outlook* talk of defence of nationalised property, they are also — in fact, and whatever they might want — defending the bureaucracy, which controls it and profits from it.

*Socialist Outlook* believes these Stalinist societies are "transitional societies", ie. better than capitalism, but not yet socialism. They know that a political revolution is needed to make the final step to socialism.

In the real world, the bureaucracy will not simply melt away as part of a smooth 'transition'. It has to be smashed, to allow the workers time and space to organise to take power. That has begun — and because of the nature of the Stalinist states there is no organisation which can take the workers to victory like the Bolsheviks did in 1917. For many decades the Stalinists have systematically uprooted the beginnings of such an organisation. That means there is the risk of "imperialism" getting in.

The question must be asked — would *Socialist Outlook* rather not stick with the "gains" brought by the bureaucracy, than take the risk of standing with the workers? Logically they should stick with the bureaucracy. If they choose to side with the workers, as they must — and will — they will have to abandon their previous theory and engage in a serious debate.

Instead they fudge the issue in passages like this:

"While the experience of the mass movement against Stalinism is itself an important gain for workers everywhere — and only on the basis of this is there the possibility of the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy — if the outcome is the restoration of capitalism it would be a world-historic disaster."

It can only be a "world-historic disaster" if it were a regressive step, rather than simply a step out of a blind alley. The restoration of capitalism is in no sense a progressive step. But it is only regressive if you accept, as *Outlook* does, that there is something positive about Stalinism. *Outlook* says that "Penury, austerity and vast exploitation would be the price paid by the workers" for the

Turn to page 10



# Monkey business

## TV

By Vicki Morris

**M**onkey Business: Aids, The Africa Story' sought to knock on the head, once and for all, one of the prominent myths concerning AIDS.

Its subject was the popular theory that AIDS originated in Africa, and came about because some people in an isolated village ate infected green monkey's brains, and subsequently migrated, spreading the disease.

Or perhaps they had allowed their children to play with dead monkeys.

It all sounded pretty absurd, but for a long time these have been the pet theories of the scientific community.

Something has been said in the British media about the frightening spread of AIDS in some parts of Central Africa. But we are more used to having AIDS explained as originating in the gay communities of some large US cities like San Francisco.

The programme was principally concerned with the Monkey Business of the title, but it also took

a firm stance against the attempts of the establishment to lay blame for the AIDS virus on groups who already suffer discrimination.

American AIDS sufferers and members of the Act-Up group were given time to explain how they have experienced and fought renewed prejudice and especially the vitriol of the fundamentalist Christians who explain AIDS as a punitive plague from God.

The more sensible scientists featured on the programme acknowledged that it is important to discover the origins of AIDS and to understand how it spread in its early phase. But, they argued this was not what the leading AIDS researchers were doing. They had continued to propagate the Green Monkey theory long after it had been discredited. It was better for their reputations to have some answers to the question of the origins of AIDS, than to admit to having none.

So what of the green monkey theory? Responsible scientists acknowledged that some wild monkeys have AIDS-like diseases.

It is probably true that the scientists haven't actually tried to lay moral blame for AIDS on people from Central Africa, any more than any other group. The media have

and do feed on these prejudices. But the scientific community has been guilty of other omissions.

They have directed massively more research, time and money into the African hypotheses than into investigating the origins of AIDS in the USA where it first appeared.

The programme suggested that AIDS might have come about by artificial means as a result, say, of stray viruses escaping from genetic and bio-chemical engineering laboratories.

Some evidence was given of the involvement of the "Popes of AIDS", the gurus of the Green Monkey theory, in US military research into bio-chemical warfare; and evidence given that this had included, explicitly at one point, plans to produce a virus which like AIDS could disable the human immune system.

The programme-makers didn't quite dare to say that these men were now deliberately pursuing a line of enquiry which would lead away from exposing an earlier partial responsibility for causing the virus.

And, of course, some mention was made of the huge profits which are to be made by the AIDS business, in which these people have a substantial stake.



Demonstration in Washington USA, 1987. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

This was a provocative programme with a scientific explanation which if a little turgid, was easy to understand. It posed some basic questions which, I feel a little ashamed to admit, had never occurred to me before, like, why did such a distinctive virus appear so suddenly, and why, at first, amongst

relatively small groups of people? And it suggested via an American researcher into the US military connection, that we need a world wide movement of people demanding and getting answers to questions about research into new viruses which can be used against us, as easily as for us.

# 'Worth dying (of embarrassment) for'

## OUT AND PROUD

By Edward Ellis

**T**his week, the controversial television programme 'The Two of Us' was shown at a time when its intended audience, school students, could see it. Originally it was shown at 11.30 at night, when hopefully school students would be tucked up in bed.

The programme is controversial because it is a fictional love story between two boys, one still at school, the other recently finished. When it was first made, programmers succumbed to pressure, and decided it was a bad idea to let young people see it.

Why? Now this is an interesting question. There is, of course, no passionate sex, nor indeed any discussion of sex to speak of, in the film. The two boys do spend the night together in a tent — but firmly in separate sleeping bags; and one of them does tell a girl they meet that they are lovers and therefore kiss... But really, that's about it.

So objection to the film rests on the notion that, since it presents homosexuality in a sympathetic light, it would somehow be damaging for young people to watch it.

It cannot possibly be that the Mary Whitehouses of this world think that, were it not for such programmes or other sex-educational initiatives, young people wouldn't think or talk about homosexuality. My memory of school is that everyone talked about it almost all the time. Mostly, of course, 'talking about it' meant accusing various fellow-students of it, yelling 'get you', 'shut that door' and other such expressions at each other, I suppose in the rather quaint belief that conversations between homosexuals consisted entirely of

such exclamations. Sometimes, I remember, we would have quite calm and rational discussions about it, along the lines of, Well I think it's unnatural but if you're born like that I suppose there's nothing you can do about it really.

From the age of about 15, after-school chats with schoolmates revolved around long-drawn-out angst about whether or not we were 'queer'. I, of course, was. Whether my friend Simon was, I'd really like to know, so if you're reading this Simon, please drop me a line to let me know.

It was never something we talked about in class, not even in the ostensible Religious Education classes we had occasionally, taught by a guy who had been some sort of student

radical in the late sixties. For actual information about homosexuality I was reduced to looking it up in Encyclopaedias, which didn't tell you much except that some famous artists had been homosexual, but usually died unhappy.

The other source of information was books like 'Boys and Sex' and I imagine 'Girls and Sex' too, which were mainly hell-bent on reassuring you that even if you couldn't get some same-sex school friend out of your mind (or your dreams, which was used to really get me worked up) it was 'only a phase', didn't really mean you were homosexual, and was nothing to worry about.

I am absolutely certain that if 'The Two of Us' had been shown to us in my school, I would have died

of embarrassment. But it would have been worth dying for it.

Without any doubt, such films would make proper discussion of homosexuality, and for that matter sex in general, a lot easier in schools, and would help alleviate the terrible feelings of guilt and pain that young people who are lesbian or gay go through when they are adolescents. If I had felt that someone in authority was telling me that it was all right to feel what I was feeling, I could have come to terms with it a long time before I did — and I was a lot luckier than some people.

Those who, with Section 28 and all the other bits of bigotry, want to stop informed and enlightening discussion about homosexuality in

school, in fact want a lot of young people to be unhappy, screwed up and guilt-ridden.

It may be true, dreadful though it may seem to the self-appointed protectors of our morals, that with a more open attitude in society to homosexuality, more people would be lesbian or gay. That is another way of saying that fewer people would be screwed up.

If 'The Two of Us' being screened at a sensible time contributes to the unscrewing of just one unhappy school student, its showing will be something the programmers could be proud of. We need more such screenings, more such films, more discussion in schools, and a society where no one gives a toss who other people choose to sleep with.

# Adapt or die

## LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

**P**redictions of the size of the greenhouse effect vary wildly. Estimated temperature rises range from almost nothing to several degrees Celsius on average.

These estimates would themselves be subject to local factors so that some parts of the world might even experience drops in temperature. Would these often small changes have significant effects? Writing in *New Scientist* recently, climatologist John Gribbin and science author Mary Gribbin described just such a situation in the past.

About a thousand years ago, the European climate warmed up to about 1°C more on average than today. This allowed, for example, grapevines to be cultivated in the north of England.

Rather as a previous warming had corresponded to the spread of the Roman Empire, this coincided

with a spreading of Viking settlers. Some came to the British Isles, leaving such evidence as many place names and the survival of many dialect words and indeed their language on the Shetlands until the middle of the 18th century. Others settled in (and gave their names to) Normandy and Russia (after Rurik).

In the 860s, they tried to settle in Iceland but severe winters drove them away. The sea-ice around the island prompted the name Iceland. Subsequently, there was to be no sea-ice for 300 years as that region of the north Atlantic warmed up and successful colonies were established.

In the 980s, Erik the Red sailed west, discovering a large rugged island which, though generally cold and icy, had some fertile land by a fjord warmed by the gulf stream.

It was somewhat optimistically named Greenland, though this was not as misleading a name as it is now. Unfortunately, Greenland's warm spell was about to come to an end. Before it did, though, Erik's son, Leif, led the first European expedition to North America and the resulting settlements were to supply timber to the Greenland colony.

Archaeology tells us the story of the Greenland colony but another

scientific technique enables us to fill in a lot of the details. The permanent ice sheets to the north of Greenland contain locked up in them a record of the climate year by year. The actual details can now be extracted in the following ingenious way.

There are two naturally occurring types or isotopes of oxygen: the common 0-16 and the much rarer and slightly heavier 0-18. Water evaporating from the seas around Greenland falls as snow on the northern ice sheets and each year's fall can be seen as a distinct layer. Now, water molecules with 0-18 evaporate less easily than the normal lighter ones, but the effect is less pronounced the higher the sea temperature.

Thus, drilling out a core of ice from the sheet and measuring the ratio of 0-16 to 0-18 in each layer gives a quite accurate temperature for the sea (and hence for the nearby land) for hundreds and even thousands of years.

Data from the ice cores show that the average sea temperatures around Greenland had fallen 2°C by 1100. There were fluctuations over the next 300 years but overall temperatures were too low for the West Vikings to carry on as they

had. Nevertheless, that is what they did do. They carried on farming and raising cattle. They wore European-style woven cloth instead of the warmer skins and furs worn by the Inuit people.

A slow decline ensued. Their last bishop died in 1378. There was only occasional contact with the outside world after 1408. Archaeologists have found that bodies in the graveyard declined in average height by some 6 inches over the life of the colony, testament to poorer nutrition.

By 1540, ships driven to Greenland by bad weather found no one alive, with one man (the last one?) lying frozen where he had fallen. But, as the Gribbins point out, this is not so much a tale of stoicism in the face of the inevitable but of stubbornness. In the same period, the Inuit thrived by hunting, fishing, sealing and whaling. Instead of using rare wood for their vessels, they used skin and whalebone. If the Norse people had adapted, they could have survived.

So what is the lesson for us, faced with the possibility of greenhouse effects and the certainty of climatic change for more natural reasons? It is that if we cannot prevent change, we must be prepared to adapt.

HAY FEVER

Summer Colds  
Dry Coughs

NOSTROLINE

# DAILY GRAPHIC

Wednesday, June 23 1950

DAILY SKETCH

A Weekly Newspaper 1d



**Truman orders forces to Korea**

**Britain backs U.S. action**

**Russia is told: Stop the war**

**North retreats 12 miles**

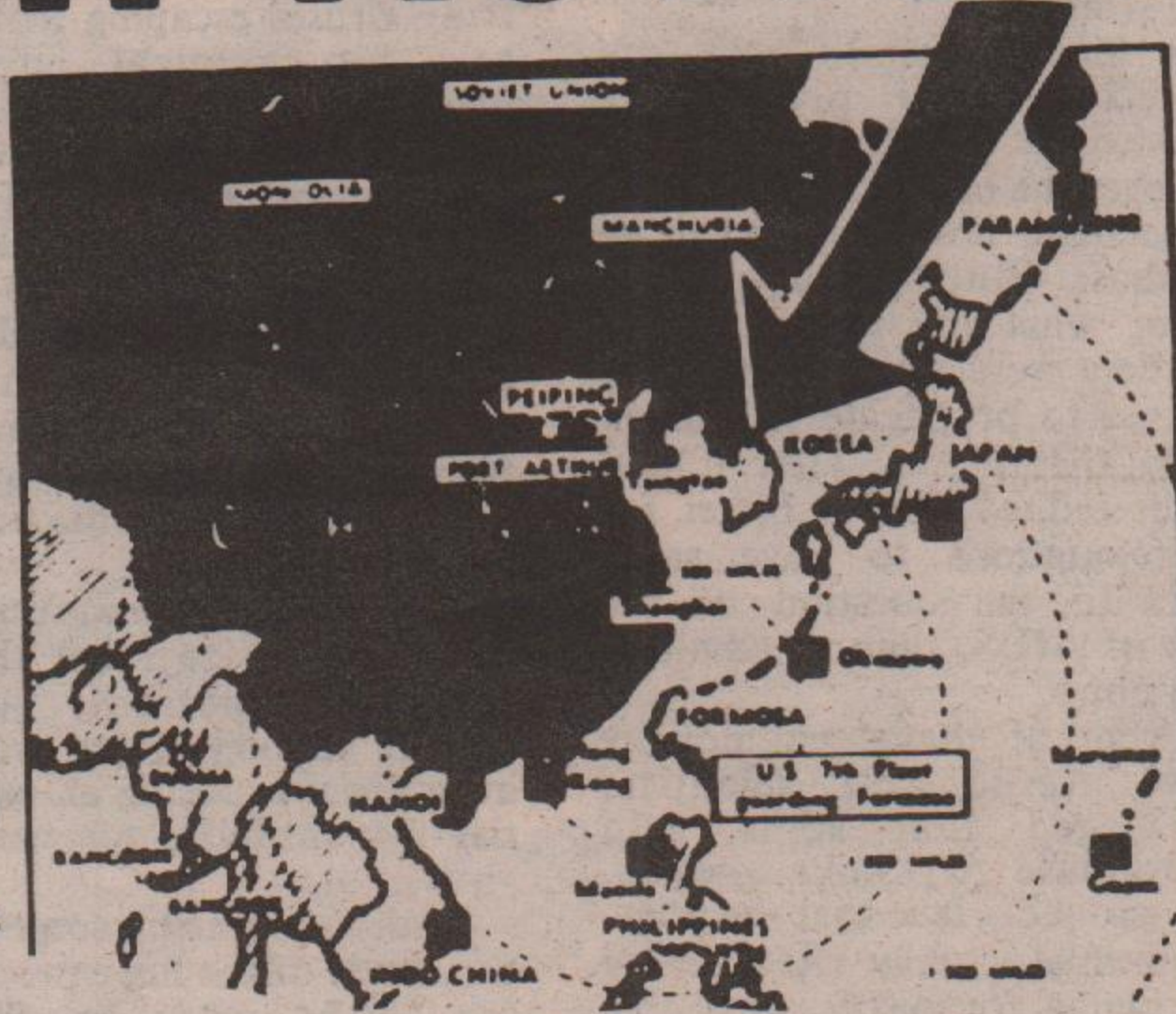
# AMERICANS IN ACTION

MacArthur in charge



## Fighters strafe a Red column—bombers ready UN ASKED: IMPOSE SANCTIONS ON NORTH

**A**MERICAN planes are in action against the Communist invaders of South Korea. General MacArthur announced last night.



## Should socialists have supported North Korea?

By Clive Bradley

Last week, *Socialist Organiser* reproduced the famous letter from Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedova, in which she announced her decision to part company with the Fourth International.

In our introduction, we commented that whatever the subsequent politics either of Sedova or of those she was criticising, in the substance of her letter, she was right against them — that is, in her more vehemently critical attitude to Stalinism.

But in one important respect, Sedova was wrong: she appears, in her letter, to endorse a position of opposition to both sides in the Korean War of 1950-53, both to the United States and its imperialist allies, and to the North Koreans, backed by China and the USSR.

This is a position associated also with the British Socialist Workers' Party, whose leader, Tony Cliff, originally broke with 'orthodox Trotskyism' precisely over this question.

It cannot follow from general hostility to Stalinism that we are indifferent to the right of nations to self-determination. Even if the Koreans were led by Stalinists and allied to the Stalinist superpower, they had the right not to be invaded by Western imperialists, and the right to resist them. The socialists who supported the North Koreans were right, even if on the broader issues of Stalinism they were wrong.

Cliff, for example, later implicitly shifted his ground, by supporting North Vietnam against the United States, arguing that the Vietnamese did have the right to self-determination.

There were socialists who opposed the US without giving any support to the Stalinist National Liberation Front, led by Ho Chi Minh. But in reality this was an evasive attitude; moreover, it was one shared by the pro-Moscow communist parties, who thought that too overt support for the struggle in Vietnam would alienate public opinion in the West.

In fact, it was clear commitment to such support that formed the

political backbone to the student radicalisations of the late 1960s, and it would have been, shall we say imprudent, for International Socialists, the forerunners of the SWP, to have stood out against this sentiment. They limited themselves to timid criticisms of the NLF, thereby abandoning the logic of their own position over Korea.

Or was there a difference between Korea and Vietnam?

Opposition to both sides in the Korean war would have to rest on the idea that there was no real 'Korean' dimension to the war; that it was a 'proxy war' fought out in reality between the dominant world imperialisms, the USA and the USSR. If it was really such an imperialist war, socialists could no more give support to one side than they could during the First or Second World Wars. The argument would be that the Korean War was no more about Korea than the First World War had been about the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.

In such a 'proxy war', the national rights of the Koreans, the argument would go, would be essentially a red herring; or, even if we were to accept their national rights as an issue, it would not justify giving support to the Stalinist armies: we would look to a different agency — a 'third force' — to secure these national rights, namely the working class.

There is an interesting and perhaps significant parallel to this approach, adopted by a section of the Trotskyist movement shortly after the outbreak of World War II. The part of the movement led by Max Shachtman argued that it was not possible to support China against Japan, because China's war was inextricably bound up with that of the imperialist allies in general, and with US imperialism in particular.

As far as I can make out, this argument was a spin off from the Shachtmanites' argument about the USSR itself: that whatever the specific case for 'defence of the USSR' (the Shachtmanites still considered the USSR more progressive than the West), in the war it was a catspaw of Anglo-American imperialism and thus could not be supported.

Ironically, this was an early version of the theory that divides the world into two camps, with the difference that both camps were considered reactionary. It is wrong to fade out all specific questions, all concrete issues, in wars, in the name of general opposition to imperialism.

It was necessary for socialists in China to assert vigorously the national rights of China against Japan, fight the bourgeois nationalists and Stalinists for the leadership of the national movement, whilst making propaganda about the imperialist nature of the war as a whole.

The Shachtmanites' practical attitude to the USSR in World War II may have been vindicated by the obviously imperialist character of

**"It [the Stalinists' programme] was not progressive in an absolute sense: its progressiveness would not cancel out concern for democracy"**

the USSR's victory, but their argument was utterly contrived.

Both in Korea and Vietnam, it was necessary to fight against the US and warn about the superpower ambitions of the USSR.

It is, of course, possible to advocate the right of a nation to self-determination without giving any support to the particular nationalist movement fighting for it: *Socialist Organiser*, for example, is for the right of Azerbaijan to self-determination, but we have no sympathy for the anti-Armenian chauvinism of the Azeri Popular Front. We were for the right of Afghanistan to self-determination, but not on the side of the Mujaheddin.

But were the 'indigenous Stalinists' in Korea or Vietnam comparable to the reactionaries in

Azerbaijan and Afghanistan?

The Vietnamese Stalinists already — by 1950 — had the blood of many Trotskyist working class leaders on their hands. Nobody could be in any doubt that when they came to power they would impose a bureaucratic vice on the workers and peasants of Vietnam, deny the right to independent organisation, stifle all democratic activity; *Socialist Organiser's* predecessors considered the consolidation of the Stalinist regime in Vietnam to be a defeat for the working class.

But the Vietnamese Stalinists did not mobilise the masses with the promise of totalitarian dictatorship. The masses supported them because they promised to bring land reform, economic improvement and national freedom. And, up to a point, the social programme of the Stalinists was progressive.

It was not progressive in an absolute sense: its progressiveness would not cancel out concern for democracy; it was not progressive in any greater qualitative sense than that in which most bourgeois nationalist movements promise, and to some extent sometimes deliver, social improvements. But it was certainly progressive compared to the regressive and socially reactionary programme of, for example, the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan.

We could not have the same attitude to the NLF in Vietnam as we have to the Mujaheddin in Afghanistan without renouncing the possibility of socialists winning influence among the Vietnamese masses. The SWP, in so far as their policy was based on such considerations, recognised this. A different line on Korea would have to argue that the subordination of the national liberation movement in Korea to the Russian bureaucracy was qualitatively greater than in Vietnam.

But Ho Chi Minh was not independent of Moscow. The argument is difficult to square logically.

In reality, there was a question of Korean national liberation in the war; there was a national liberation movement, as deserving of support, and with the same qualifications, as in Vietnam. But there is no way Tony Cliff's line on Korea can be squared with his line on Vietnam.

## Defending the gains of Stalinism

From page 8

restoration of capitalism. Yet "penury, austerity and vast exploitation" is the price the workers have paid to Stalinism for decades — plus a totalitarian state which Trotsky said was worse than fascism (in *The Transitional Programme*), which is precisely why they are tearing it down!

For *Socialist Outlook* the key is preventing the victory of imperialism, rather than bettering the lot of the working class.

"Imperialism triumphant, especially US imperialism, would wreak an orgy of revenge against its opponents in the third world. New inter-imperialist conflicts would much more easily turn into wars."

*Outlook* is once again more concerned with the "balance" of the two world "camps" than with the right of the working class in Eastern Europe to organise. To get any closer to socialism the working class has to smash Stalinism. In doing so the working class will smash the "anti-imperialist bloc".

Unless the working class immediately seize power, imperialism (according to *Outlook* theory) will have won. But we say the workers are right to smash Stalinism, even if they are not in a position to seize power immediately. The workers are plainly not taking a regressive step, even if capitalism results. It is *Outlook's* theory which is wrong, not the East European workers. *Outlook* supports the Eastern Bloc workers despite not because of its theory.

The descent into farce becomes even more pronounced when you turn to the section of *Outlook's* pamphlet on China.

According to them, the pro-democracy movement in China was nothing to do with democracy. The workers and students who sacrificed their lives did not do so for democracy, for freedom, for an end to state terror, for the smashing of the bureaucracy which holds the power of life and death over them. No, on the contrary, those workers and students died in their thousands to defend the bureaucratic state.

"The workers were expressing their allegiance to the gains of the revolution, to the relative equality, job security, and gains in terms of living standards, health care, etc., which the proletariat and peasant masses of China have experienced since the revolution."

*Outlook* continually accuse us of not caring whether capitalism is restored in the Eastern Bloc. In this they are wrong: we do care. We care very much. But there is a third choice — workers' power.

*Outlook* says that because we reject the ideas of the USFI we have become disorientated. In fact we have put the working class back in its central place. It is *Outlook* who are disorientated when they say that the working class has a better option in Stalinism than capitalism. There is only one better option, and that is socialist revolution. Stalinism is not a half-way step, and *Outlook* should not attempt to delude the workers that it is. To do so is to push the workers back down the very blind alley they are trying to escape from.

This curious pamphlet is badly written and confusing in a way which suggests the authors don't know what they want to say. In practical politics *Socialist Outlook* want the same as we do in the Stalinist states — a working class democratic socialism. You wouldn't think so if you were to take their threadbare theorising at face value. Most of the time they themselves don't take their theorising at face value — which is what lines them up most of the time on the right side on questions concerning the working class struggle against Stalinism.

# Slit wrist solidarity?

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**N**ow sit down somewhere comfortable and pour yourself a stiff drink. We're talking about the ambulance dispute and in a bit I'm going to come out with some pretty wild, ultra-left stuff. So brace yourselves.

First, the problem: as we've noted before, Roger Poole and his PR team have done a pretty good job in winning the war of words against the Fat Man from Ronnie Scott's... but... Mr Poole and his associates have no visible means of actually winning beyond something rather nebulous called "People Power". Extensive enquiries amongst the lower and middle reaches of the trade union bureaucracy have so far failed to uncover any precise meaning to the expression "People's Power". The nearest to something vaguely resembling an actual 'strategy' that I have so far discovered is the idea that events like the forthcoming double-figure pay award to NHS managers and even the forthcoming (May!) local government elections, will somehow force the government's hand. The problems with this sort of 'strategy' seem to my unsophisticated mind, fairly obvious.

1. It's rather long term. Well before the government is punished by the righteous indignation of the voters in May, the dispute could have begun (at least) to fray at the edges, demoralisation could have set in, collection buckets could have lost their magical appeal to the public etc etc.

2. Since when has this government — of all governments — been particularly prone to such emotions as embarrassment, shame, etc., etc?

More to the point, since when has this

government's actions been dictated by such considerations? They reckon they can ride the storm of public approbation, just as they've done over the health service 'reforms' and the very slick BMA campaign. Meanwhile the Fat Man at the bar in Ronnie Scott's will lean back and wait for the dispute to crumble.

Two possible ways out of this impasse are presently being canvassed by the left and by the increasing number of rank and file ambulance workers who realise Things Can't Go On Like This, and even (privately) by some sections of the bureaucracy (NALGO) in particular. The two options are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but in practice probably would be. They are:

1. Up the stakes in the ambulance service itself by balloting for all-out strike (without emergency cover?). This (the argument goes) would galvanise the will of the ambulance workers and shock the government to the negotiating table. Any adverse effect in terms of 'public opinion' would be outweighed by the likelihood that the public would blame the government for the crisis at least as much as they blamed the ambulance workers and pressure on the Fat Man and Co would become irresistible.

2. Keep the dispute itself more or less at its present level (the question of whether or not ambulance crews are formally 'on strike' being not particularly important, one way or the other) but drop the nonsense about "People Power" and go for solidarity strike action throughout industry, taking the calculated risk that the government wouldn't dare invoke its anti-union legislation in such a popular dispute.

The second argument was the common wisdom of the left in the early days of the dispute. Increasingly now, it is being superseded in papers like 'Socialist Worker' by the first argument. The reason for this has more to do with good old-fashioned opportunism than with any objective analysis of the facts. Crucially, a lot of rank and file militants in the ambulance service

themselves are now advocating Option 1, while Option 2 appears to them too difficult, too abstract and just plain unlikely to happen...

As I said, Option 1 does not necessarily preclude Option 2. But... developing a strategy for winning a dispute is often a question of priorities. Where do you devote your energies? At this point I must come clean and confess to a possibly heretical opinion: that is, that nothing the ambulance crews on their own do will be sufficient to win a decisive victory. Only if solidarity strike action on a pretty massive scale can be organised, will this dispute be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. If I am right about this (and I have yet to hear a convincing argument to the contrary) then questions of whether or not the ambulance crews declare themselves on strike, withdraw emergency cover, etc etc, become at best, secondary tactical matters.

There may, in fact, be a case for a national strike but there is no case that I can fathom for voluntarily withdrawing emergency cover (the two issues have tended to get confused in the course of the debate so far). If it were true that withdrawing emergency cover would increase the pressure on the government to reach a settlement, then how do you explain the eagerness with which local managements have attempted to sabotage ambulance workers' efforts to provide an emergency service?

If we accept that organising solidarity action is the key to winning this one, then there are powerful arguments against withdrawing emergency cover voluntarily. It is sometimes forgotten that trade unionists are also members of the public (and vice-versa). The goodwill that has been built up by the ambulance crews' well-publicised efforts to provide an emergency service ought to be a strong lever for solidarity action. The only argument I've ever heard against this is "How can we ask other workers to go on strike in support of a group of workers who aren't even on all-out strike themselves?". This argu-



sued crews to abandon efforts to provide an alternative service using regular ambulances. Instead, Sandwell Council brought in a small fleet of renovated old knackers from a firm in Wigan who usually specialise in the Third World market. Why not say (to management) "Sod you, we're taking our ambulances out with or without insurance"? Who would have objected?

In Camden, ambulance crews have occupied their stations. They made contact with the local NCU branch who agreed not to cut off the 'phones even supply yuppie 'phones as well.

The problem was that all emergency calls went first to the Controllers at Waterloo (members of the same unions as the ambulance crews) who were ordered by management to stop sending calls direct to the stations: instead "999" calls had to be diverted to the police. The unions instructed the controllers to strike in protest, but only six responded and they were immediately suspended. Similar things have occurred all over the country.

The obvious answer is for the ambulance crews and the NCU to defy the Ambulance Service Management and (more importantly) a whole host of laws of the land and set up their own emergency centre under workers control. Not easy. Shades of the Barcelona telephone exchange which workers held for 10 months during the Spanish revolution until they were attacked by the police and communist party thugs. But it would certainly up the stakes and put management and government on the defensive. Most importantly, it would provide a dramatic focus for solidarity action. The only worthwhile alternative I've heard so far came from a TGWU militant who replied to the suggestion of an all-out strike without emergency cover with the memorable words, "that's not militant enough — we should all go out into the streets and slit our own wrists in solidarity with the ambulance crews". Was that ultra-left enough for you? ("No — Ed")

ment invariably comes from lefties who've never done a hand's turn in their lives outside of a student's union or an FE lecture room. Any industrial trade unionist who used such an argument would be immediately branded a Grade 'A' Hypocrite and a Shit by the vast majority of honest workers. The student revolutionary and the NATFHE activist at least have the excuse of ignorance.

Now for the ultra-left bit you've all been waiting for! If we accept that the ambulance workers' willingness to provide an emergency service is potentially beneficial to the prospects of widespread solidarity action, then it surely makes sense to up the stakes in efforts to provide an emergency service. One problem with the dispute so far has, in fact, been the willingness of bureaucrats and rank and file alike to accept legality in this matter: in the West Midlands the mere withdrawal of insurance cover by management per-

## Camden strikers: 'We've taken control'

**O**ver the last week or so the striking ambulance workers in North London have received a lot of media attention.

Some sections of the press, TV and radio have tried to present them as wild men and women, bloody-minded in the extreme, who care little about the patients and accident victims they usually look after.

Nothing could be further from the truth. *Socialist Organiser* went down to the Camden ambulance station in North London where there is an occupation taking place to talk to some of the strikers.

"We are bloody-minded, but only to management," was how one ambulance worker described this attitude.

Paul, a NUPE steward, added: "We've taken the initiative, we're moving the goal posts, by going on strike we've taken control of the situation."

"Our strike sets an example to other ambulance workers in outlying areas. It's time to step up the action."

Eric Roberts, the convenor, who is also now a member of the trade union side of the ambulance council, the negotiating body for the service, explained how the strike came about.

"Even when we were operating strictly to the TUC's 14-point programme, it wasn't good enough for management. They stood people down. So we started to get the public ringing direct. We did jobs that had to be done even when management stood us down with no pay."

"We became one of the first worker-controlled stations, we gave out our phone numbers all over the place. The local NCU (British Telecom workers union) branch agreed not to allow our direct lines to be cut off. They then donated personal cellphones to us.

"But the problem is that management control the central 999 control room for London at Waterloo." When manage-

ment prevented controllers from directing calls to suspended crews, the union called out the controllers to force them to concede proper emergency cover, but only a few controllers responded. As a result, management can now use the Waterloo centre.

"They didn't need to transfer to their alternative central control set-up at Scotland Yard," said Eric.

"There's no relationship between us and Waterloo now, except when they think they need us, like during the storms of 25 January," he added.

## Strikers demand a ballot

**I**f we were allowed a ballot in London for an indefinite strike with emergency cover, then we could win it," argued one Camden ambulance worker.

At last Tuesday's (23 January) meeting, Roger Poole managed to persuade the London stewards not to ballot on any form of strike action.

He used some arguments that aroused the London crews' suspicions. Rounding on the Crawley strikers, Poole asserted, without there being any way of checking the accuracy of his story, that Clarke had put an extra 2% on the table and then withdrawn it when Crawley came out. If this was so, then how come no rank and file ambulance workers were told at the time?

Ironically for those on the left who

see the use of ballots as a blow to militant trade unionism, the Camden strikers want to see the issue of strike action put to a ballot and not just kept among a relatively narrow layer of stewards.

They believe the wider membership would go for strike action, but haven't yet been given the choice to. So far Roger Poole has done his best to deny them this choice.

"Poole has lost touch with the membership and the union is the membership," argued Eric Roberts.

The London stewards were determined to raise the issue again at the earliest possible opportunity and saw their action and that of the other stations in North London who have declared themselves on strike as a way of keeping up the momentum.

## Which side are they on?

**T**he Police Federation have been at pains to stress that they support the ambulance workers' case. However, your friendly local bobby on the beat isn't so sure.

At a North West London ambulance station recently, two long-armed gorillas made a visit to remove the flashing blue lights from the ambulances in an occupied station. Their aim was to make it more difficult for professional ambulance

workers to provide an emergency service.

They were sent back to the police station with their tails between their legs, but not before one of them could make this threat: "I'm not saying we want to fight you, but if we have to, we will."

Ambulance workers should take the initiative, and start making appeals to the police and army to stop scabbing and organise a transfer of emergency work, under trade union control, back into the hands of the ambulance workers themselves.

## Doing the Tories' dirty work

By Mark Serwotka, Regional Chairperson, Wales and South West DHSS (personal capacity)

**T**he leadership of the largest civil service union (the Civil and Public Services Association) exerts more venom attacking its own activists than it does on the government.

Eighteen months ago the national executive committee (NEC) closed down the union's largest branch at Newcastle Central Office, and ever since then the right wing have been looking for further scalps.

A major thorn in the side of the NEC, and the section executive committee (SEC) of the union's biggest section (DHSS) has been the Wales and South West region.

The right wing have now laid plans to shut down the region because the regional committee voted to campaign against the poll tax, including encouraging members to refuse to co-operate with deducting the poll tax from social security benefits. Other 'crimes' include donating £50 to the ambulance workers and £100 to a strike of CPSA members in Sheffield unemployment benefits offices. If it is a crime to fight the poll tax, and give money to strikers then we happily plead 'guilty'.

The threat from the right wing however, must be taken seriously. Plans are already in place to fight any suspensions. These plans are based upon maximum involvement of members in every workplace throughout the region. They also include mobilising support from other regions. Disappointingly however, comrades in the Militant seem not to be prepared to fight this battle. An example of this was a decision to rule out of order any discussion on the poll tax by the Militant controlled Midlands Regional office.

CPSA branches should flood the NEC with protest letters over this latest attack.

## Forcing the TUC into action

**E**ric Roberts stressed the need for solidarity action, and for rank and file ambulance workers to take a lead in fighting for it.

"It was our initiative to call for solidarity strikes on 6 December. The march and rally we called has forced the TUC into taking action."

"Without that pressure from the ranks they would never have called this 15-minute action. We intend to keep up the maximum pressure through the official structures of the union. January

30 was not the end of it. We need more action."

The list of local workplaces that are coming out on the 30th was pinned up in the union office. It included many traditionally militant places and strategically important ones too.

Euston BR signals were set to shut down for one hour. The London busworkers' decision to go for a pull-in, which would take the buses off the roads for around three hours was seen as a real boost. The Camden strikers also hoped for a good response from the tube drivers.

## Where is Kinnock?

**T**he Camden ambulance workers were disappointed by the performance of Labour's front bench.

"They haven't related to the dispute properly," argued Eric Roberts. "They

should be clearly supporting action, but they just seem to be saying 'don't rock the boat, wait a couple of years until Neil gets in'.

"But that's no way to deal with the Tories, and if we lose, Labour are less likely to win the next election."

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### Witch-hunt

# A disgraceful attack

By Eric Heffer MP

Last week Labour's NEC decided to "enquire" into the re-selection in Birkenhead and also to investigate the Wirral DLP and Wallasey constituency.

As far as I'm concerned the whole thing is absolutely wrong. There is no justification for such an enquiry.

In the Birkenhead re-selection the Regional Officer was perfectly satisfied that the whole thing was carried out strictly according to the rules of the party, and that therefore, the re-selection was perfectly valid.

According to friends of mine on the National Executive, he made this point at the sub-committee of the organisation committee of the NEC.

Nevertheless, despite that, the memorandum by Frank Field and his friends was accepted by the NEC, and, of course, they're opening up the whole thing to "investigation".

I think this is a diversion. The completely false impression is being given in the press, which is very much behind Frank Field in the whole question, that Field got one of the highest votes for Labour on Merseyside. In fact, the swing to Labour in Field's constituency was less than it was in the neighbouring Wallasey constituency!

I've checked the figures, I've looked at the *Times* report, and that

is the truth. The swing to Field was in fact less than the swing in the rest of Merseyside. It was, for example, nothing like the 13% swing I had in my constituency. Others in the Liverpool constituencies also got bigger swings.

So the idea that Frank Field is the best supported of Labour MPs on Merseyside, that he does the best job for his constituents, and that he really reflects the views of Merseyside Labour, as against other activists and candidates there is not borne out by the last general election figures.

If the figures are to be our guide, they prove the opposite!

Had Field not made the statement he did during the campaign attacking Lol Duffy, the candidate in Wallasey, then who knows — we might have won Wallasey and Lol Duffy would now be a Labour Member of Parliament. I think we would have won, if Field had remembered which side he was supposed to be on.

The idea that Wallasey CLP is riddled with supporters of the *Militant* and controlled by them is just ridiculous. I have many old friends, some of them on the DLP, who've been in the party ever since the end of the Second World War, and they tell me the numbers of people who could possibly be called supporters of *Militant* could be counted on one hand!

And now they target *Socialist Organiser*. This is exactly what we said could happen once any particular group or section, or newspaper of the party was purged.



Wallasey's left-wing election campaign in 1987 won a big increase in the Labour vote

This was the argument we used in relation to *Militant*. Now it's coming true in Wallasey.

*Socialist Organiser* has been around a long, long time, everybody knows about it. I have written for *Socialist Organiser*. They published a lot of the stuff that I've written.

I think it's an absolute disgrace that we should now be experiencing further witch-hunting. It was bad enough before. Now it gets worse. It has got to be opposed and

## Merseyside ambulance workers call for national ballot

The number of suspensions in the ambulance dispute on Merseyside continues to increase daily.

Management launched a fresh wave of suspensions 3 weeks ago, after local ambulance crews decided to respond to emergency calls instructions only. Some two-thirds of the 500 ambulance staff have now (29 January) been suspended. "It is only a matter of time", said NUPE ambulance shop steward Ray Carrick, "before virtually all staff on Merseyside are suspended. The suspensions are now continuing under their own momentum. Everytime a crew member is left without a partner as a result of a suspension, s/he gets suspended as well for refusing to be transferred to another ambulance station."

At a union branch meeting last Friday (26 January) crew members discussed two proposals for stepping up the action.

The first resolution called for a local ballot for indefinite all-out strike on Merseyside without accident and emergency cover. This was defeated by 55% to 45%. The second resolution, calling for a national ballot for a national strike with accident and emergency cover was passed overwhelmingly.

But local crew members are not optimistic that the union leaders will respond to calls for such a ballot.

"The resolution was passed overwhelmingly but the reality is that it will get stamped on by Poole — even though he can't lose, as the accident and emergency cover will still be there, and despite the fact that such a ballot could harmonise the action across the country", explained Ray Carrick.

## Action round the country on January 30th

In London hundreds of postalworkers and market porters joined the march in Nine Elms. Construction workers stopped the Grand Canary Wharf — the biggest building site in Europe. Buses were pulled in across the capital as rallies were held in nearly every borough.

Glasgow saw over 25,000 workers take action with factory gate meetings at Rolls Royce and other engineering plants. Across Scotland at least 25,000 joined demonstrations.

In Wales 2,000 people, including civil servants, steelworkers and council workers joined a march in Cardiff.

Shipyard workers at Harland and Wolff in Belfast walked out.

Cumbria saw walk-outs at Sellafield and Vickers shipyard.

Gas and councilworkers rallied in Newcastle city centre. 1200 rallied in the centre of York, joined by workers who walked out from Rowntrees.

Coventry saw over 1,000 Rolls Royce workers join the city centre march at midday. In Birmingham 5,000 joined the central rally but thousands more took action locally. £8,000 was raised in one single collection at Longbridge.

Nurses at the Royal Hallamshire hospital and others in Sheffield went on strike with emergency cover and joined the rally of more than 2,000 people in the centre of town. Council workers took half-day action.

1,000 joined the rally in Southampton and 2,000 in Nottingham.

In Manchester Albert Square was packed for the lunchtime rally.

## Union leaders should challenge law

### WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary

I went down to the ambulance workers demo in London and I was terribly disappointed in the lack of political outlook on that demonstration.

It was directed by TUC leader Willis, who seemed to think it was some sort of a party!

It seems to me that the public is fully aware of what's behind the dispute, but not yet aware of the hard-faced commitment of this government to turn their back on public opinion.

The Tories are defending an important part of their overall strategy. I've

said it before, and I'll say it again, they're not taking action against the ambulance workers because they are ambulance workers — they're taking action against them because they're organised in an effective trade union and that's what the government is obsessed with — smashing organised trade unions.

To win, the ambulance workers have just got to stick at it — and appeal to the rest of the trade union movement for support. That means action. It means action that is illegal under the government's legislation. Sooner or later the Tory legality has got to be challenged. The strongest case behind which to mount a challenge is just this present action.

It's good news that the Americans are going to close down three bases. One of those bases

happens to be Greenham Common. No doubt they will say it's just rationalisation, and all the rest of it. I think that if those women hadn't sat for years outside Greenham Common then it may well have been a different story.

It helped to tip the scales. They stuck at it long enough and hard enough and with enough determination!

I think that the coming down of the Berlin Wall is another example of that. People should bear that in mind when tackling their particular problems — employment, social environment, and all the rest of it. If you have enough commitment and put enough into it then it's amazing what you can achieve.

The trade union movement and the labour movement owe god knows how much to those heroic women who spent all that time outside Greenham Common and we'll never be able to repay it.

## Strike action in East Midlands

By Rob Dawber

A ballot for industrial action on East Midlands Motor Services takes place on Friday 2 February.

The aim is support for 24-hour strikes to win reinstatement of the two NUR members sacked for trade union activities.

There are some problems still to be sorted in depots where members are cynical about the union's sincerity. But with sufficient activity, argument and information, these members should be won around.

The result will be out on Wednesday 7 February and action should shortly follow. I am told that the law stipulates that only the ruling body of a union can implement the decision and so call action. So it will be for the NEC of the NUR to decide the dates.

No doubt George Watson, the managing director of EMMS will change his tune soon and want to start talking to the union. We have to insist that any talking and negotiating can only be done with the union representatives who have always done it — including the one of them that Watson sacked.

That way no deals are stitched up behind our backs.