

When labour's leaders feared a coup
centre pages

The big bang explained
page 11




For socialist renewal!



For workers' liberty!

LA: a vision of the future?
pages 3, 4 and 5



Did tabloids win it for the Tories?
page 6



SOCIALIST

ORGANISER *Unite the left*

Engineers...



Dieser Betrieb wird bestreikt

STRIKE WAVE!

TEACH YOURSELF GERMAN!

Public sector workers...



Rebellion is brewing in Germany. A giant strike wave is rumbling on, challenging the previously undisputed authority of the German ruling class. The workers are refusing to pay for the crisis.

Although — so far — the action has stopped short of an all-out confrontation, the strike movement has already shaken the confidence of Helmut Kohl's right-wing government.

3,500,000 are currently involved. The workers voted 8 to 1, and 10 to 1, for strikes. The huge majority for action represents deep working-class resentment of decreasing real wage levels.

Public sector workers are demanding 9.5% pay increases. Workers in Hamburg described themselves as "determined to win".

Last week civil servants, transport workers and refuse collectors reminded the German

Turn to page 2

Tories drive thousands to crime or begging

Thousands of young people in Britain are being driven into an "underclass" existence by Tory Government policy.

New reports from the official Social Security Advisory Committee, and from the National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaus, show that increasing numbers of 16 and 17 year olds can only live by begging or crime. Since 1988 all under-18s

have been denied Income Support benefit. The Government said they should all go on Youth Training Schemes. But more than half the regional Training and Enterprise Councils which run YTS admit that they do not have enough places for the young people in their area.

The number of 16-17 year olds applying for a special "severe hardship" payment from Social Security has

risen from under 2000 a month in October 1990 to

"Thousands of young people are driven into an 'underclass' existence by Tory Government policy."

7500 in February this year.

These young people are often homeless as well as poor: they have no cash to pay deposits on flats, or rent while they wait for housing benefit (which anyway is also reduced for under-18s). And being homeless makes it almost impossible for them to get jobs.

The Tories have also introduced a special cut-rate dole for people aged 18-24, £9 less than the rate for people aged 25 and over.



Poll tax: the fight goes on!

Although the Tory Government has admitted that the Poll Tax is unfair and unworkable, the tax is still being collected, and prosecutions of non-payers could continue into the next century. Above: police harass anti-poll-tax demonstrators in Birmingham. Photo: Mark Salmon.

Left MPs scatter leadership votes

The nominations for the Labour Party leadership election show some strange alliances.

The lack of a credible left slate led to the votes of left-wing MPs being scattered all over the place.

The Campaign Group of left MPs, which has 30-odd members, formally endorsed Ken Livingstone's self-promoting publicity-stunt candidacy for leader, but only 13 MPs nominated him.

Livingstone has claimed that nominations were pulled away from him in order to make sure Bryan Gould got the minimum 55 nominations. In fact Gould had well over 55, and many left MPs made no nomination at all for leader: Mildred Gordon, Max Madden, Bob Clay, Chris Mullin, Alice Mahon, Bill Michie, and Harry Barnes, for example.

Although John Smith is the candidate of the traditional Labour right wing, he got nominations from several MPs commonly reckoned on the left: Alan Meale, Brian Sedgmore, Andrew Smith. Scottish "left" MPs seem to have reckoned that support for Smith as a Scot overrode any left/right argu-

ments: Dennis Canavan, Eric Clarke, Michael Connarty, George Galloway, Jimmy Hood, Ernie Ross, and Gavin Strang all nominated Smith.

Bryan Gould also got several left MPs' nominations: Tony Banks, Dawn Primarolo, Alan Simpson, Bob Wareing, and others. The ambiguity and emptiness of Gould's "radicalism" was shown up by the nominations he also received from several hard-right MPs: Gwyneth Dunwoody, Frank Field, and Austin Mitchell.

The contest for deputy was more crowded; but, despite that, and despite entering the race late, Bernie Grant got more nominations for deputy than Livingstone for leader.

Outside Bernie Grant's 15 nominations, however, the roll-calls of all the deputy leader candidates showed the same left-right combinations as the leadership lists.

John Prescott corralled several left MPs - Harry Barners, Bill Etherington, Alice Mahon, Alan Meale, and Bill Michie - but also right-wingers Peter Kilfoyle and Peter Snape.

Livingstone calls for left to regroup round Morning Star

Ken Livingstone has called for the left to regroup round the ailing ex-Stalinist Morning Star.

As the featured speaker at a Morning Star rally last Saturday, 2nd, Livingstone called for a new "Socialist Forum", to "discuss the way forward for the left and the labour movement".

The Morning Star, he said, would be "the ideal vehicle through which discussion should be organised".

The Morning Star report of the event also notes that "John Ross from

Hornsey Labour Party said that previous divisions on the left were being rewritten and urged the paper's former critics to take a fresh look at the Morning

Star". Ross is the main leader of Socialist Action, a small ex-Trotskyist group linked to Livingstone which has wriggled its

way into central positions in Labour Left Liaison, Labour Women's Action Committee, Labour CND, and the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

Labour should oppose the PTA!

In the weeks before the General Election, Labour leaders started talking about "replacing" rather than "repealing" the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

But the PTA - originally introduced as a panic "temporary" measure after the Birmingham pub bombings

in 1974 - has now become a permanent boost for arbitrary police power. Last week, the High Court used the PTA to give the go-ahead to the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring "contempt of court" charges against Channel 4 TV and a TV production company for failing to reveal their journal-

istic sources for a programme on collusion between the British Army and Orange paramilitaries in Northern Ireland.

The PTA is routinely used to detain Irish people, or to exclude them either from Britain or from Northern Ireland, almost always without charges being brought.

Students:

Defend NUS democracy!

By Jill Mountford

Support is growing fast for the Campaign for Democracy in NUS.

The Campaign, launched in January to defend NUS democracy and, immediately, to stop NUS Winter Conference being abolished, has also taken up the fight to clear the names of Mark Sandell and Steve Mitchell.

Right at the end of NUS Spring Conference, last month, the right-wing NUS leadership initiated a foul witch-hunt against four Left Unity supporters alleging that they had physically intimidated Sam Peters, the NUS's National Secretary, at the NUS Emergency Conference in March.

No complaint of physical intimidation was made in March. The Emergency Conference had been called (unconstitutionally) to push through the abolition of Winter Conference (the right wing's main "reform"). Failing to get the required two-thirds majority, the NUS leaders closed down the Conference in chaos.

A couple of weeks later, NUS President, Stephen Twigg made a "ruling" that extra votes favourable to abolition should be counted in, and Winter Conference was abolished. In a vote at Spring Conference, a majority of around 100 delegates endorsed an NUS Steering Committee report declaring that Winter Conference was not validly abolished; but Twigg is still saying "no Winter Conference". After three days and nights of heated factional battle, a rotten bloc of right-wing Labour, inde-

pendents, Liberals and the Union of Jewish Students tried to get revenge with a witchhunt against Left Unity supporters.

The guillotine fell before charges could be brought against Kevin Sexton (NEC part-timer) and Liz Millward (Chair of Steering Committee); but allegations were heard against Mark Sandell (NEC part-timer) and Steve Mitchell (VP Further Education). Votes of no-confidence were carried after Mark and Steve were given just 90 seconds each to reply. It was lynch

The Campaign for Democracy in NUS: Nick Brereton, 40 Audley Road, South Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, or telephone Left Unity on 071-639 7967.

The Campaign for Democracy in NUS is determined to clear the names of Mark Sandell and Steve Mitchell and to save Winter Conference.

An independent Commission of Inquiry is being set up to investigate the allegations against Mark and Steve. We are campaigning in colleges for resolutions condemning the NUS leadership and opposing all witch-hunts.

The campaign is also collecting signatures for a petition defending Winter Conference. Given the right wing's commitment to "reform" at any cost, it is very unlikely Twigg will change his mind, so we are also pursuing legal action against the leadership on this issue.

Keep up the pressure!

By Nick Brereton

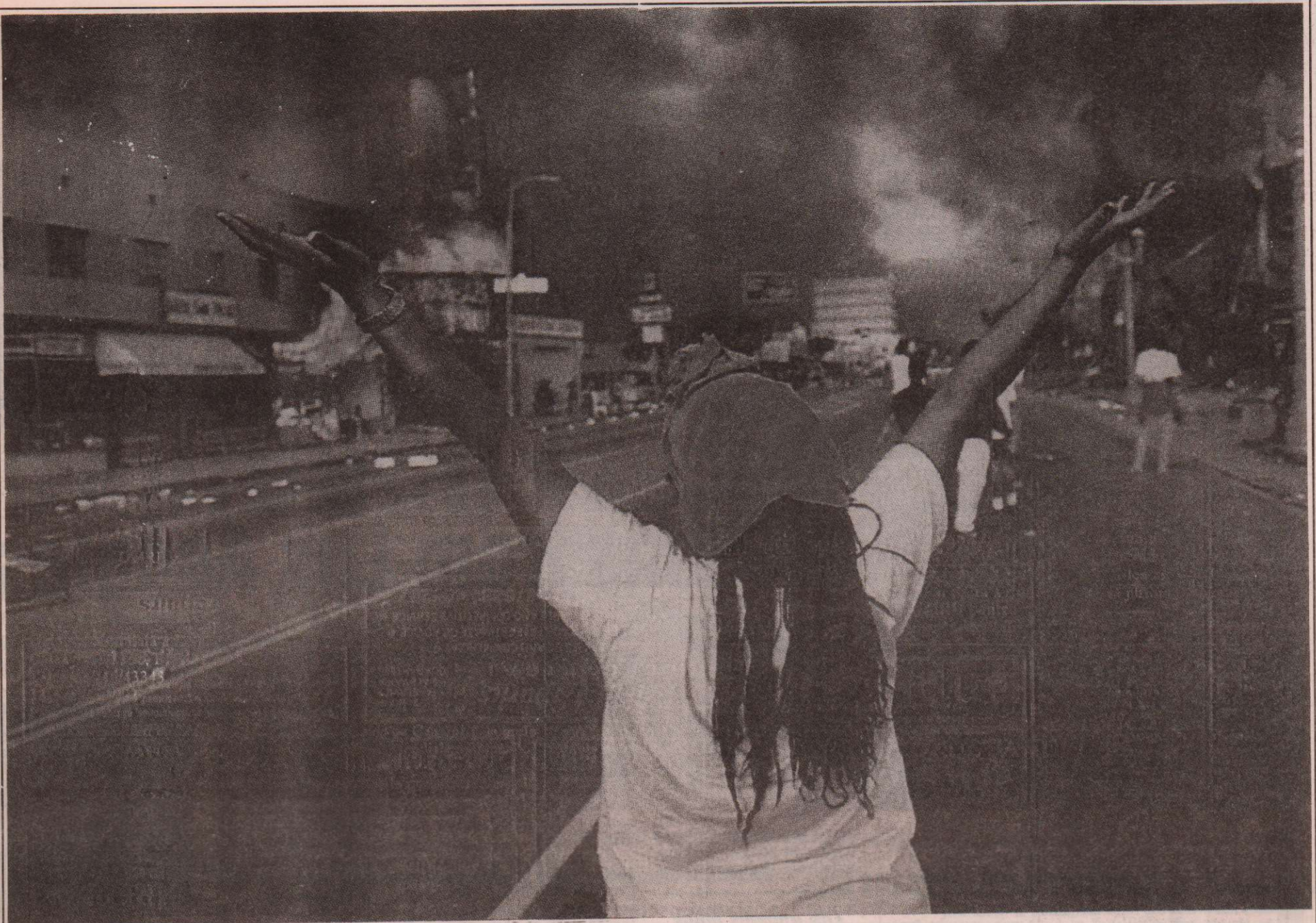
Students must keep up pressure on the Tories by fighting for better grants and benefits. The third term is usually a difficult time to organise; most students have exams. But already there is resistance. Students at Ripon, York and St John's College are organising a rent strike and with grants running out and the prospect of no benefits during the summer vacation there is a potential for action.

Student hardship is biting, yet the NUS National Executive has not even met to plan activity! To fill the gap Tyne Tees Area NUS has called for a mass lobby of parliament on May 28th to act as a focus for other action over

the summer. Activists should book coaches now.

NUS should be planning pickets of the Department of Social Security and get colleges to organise similar local activity, including mass signing on protests. NUS should also organise a national planning meeting to co-ordinate a national campaign during the summer vacation.

Instead, the Labour student leadership is too busy undermining NUS democracy. Lorna Fitzsimmons, NUS President-elect told the Times Higher Education Supplement that she was intent on pushing on with NUS Reform, specifically regionalisation. This is despite not having the conference mandate to do so.



Lessons from Los Angeles

The fires which consumed Los Angeles during last week's explosion of burning, looting, and killing throw a lurid light on what is happening in the societies of advanced capitalism.

This was a revolt mainly by black people who feel, every moment of their lives, the might of white America's racist oppression bearing remorselessly down on them. But it was more than that. It was an explosive revolt by modern American capitalism's great underclass of outcasts

and helots - the "people of the abyss", millions of whom are denied jobs, nourishment, and hope.

The decline of industry in the USA has pushed black people out of stable jobs. Black people suffer a far higher rate of unemployment than any other segment of the US population. More and more of them have been pushed to the margins of society, outside of production. In these riots, most of those killed were black people shot by police.

Very large numbers of Latino illegal immigrants throng American cities, where they are exploited in casual, often part-time jobs, at starvation wages. They are without unions, or job security, or social security, or even civil rights: if they protest, they get deported, back to even worse conditions.

The architectural geography of US cities tells the story most graphically, and explains what happened in Los Angeles, where people from the ghettos erupted into some of the prosperous areas like medieval peasants invading the manor houses of the landlords.

Life in whole areas of the major American cities is now startlingly close to life in Third World shanty towns, measured by unemployment, poverty, life expectancy, hygiene, availability of medical care, prevalence of casual violence, and permanence of ghetto residence for most of the people there and for their children after them.

Some of those areas went through the ghetto uprisings in 1965-7, in which amenities like stores were burned, and shopkeepers driven out. The shops and amenities have never been replaced.

To complement and balance the Third World ghettos for the

"What rampant market capitalism, uninhibited by a strong political labour movement, has produced in the USA, is what rampant market capitalism is already producing in Britain. That is the message from Los Angeles that we must take into the labour movement."

poor and the social outcasts, there are the ghettos of the rich. They live in cities within cities, often patrolled by private police. Some of the common features of US cities now were the fantasies of science fiction horror comics like "2000 AD" two decades ago.

In LA there is a bourgeois "super-city" elevated above the slums. The privileged can live their lives, driving from one

island of wealth to another, with minimum contact with the social jungle surrounding those islands. In Detroit things are set out so that the executives of the car industries and others can go in safe tunnels from the factories, under the areas where the lesser peoples live.

The government neglect of social concerns is producing within the great megapolises areas that resemble the small independent states of old. Governments like that of Reagan and Bush pursue policies which amount to nothing less than "social engineering" to produce social barbarism in the heart of advanced capitalist civilisation.

The rich and well-off, who have already seized the main wealth and own the main property, are organised to seize and hold their own against the poor. Government serves them. Education, housing, and health care, are organised privately, fenced off for the rich. The poor get what they got in the days of the Victorian workhouse, or less.

In the well-off areas, public shopping streets are replaced by privately policed shopping malls. There are 75,000 private police in Los Angeles alone!

The life of the American rich is becoming curiously like the life of the old Stalinist bureaucratic ruling class in the USSR, with its networks of houses, educational opportunities, special shops, and other privileges making up an elite "society within a society". In the USA now, the

card which defines your "credit rating" is as much a mark of caste as the old Stalinist "party card" used to be in the USSR!

The American "political process" also shows graphically what goes on in this "prize exhibit" American capitalist society. The rich monopolise politics; the poor, as a rule, do not vote. The Supreme Court and government officials decide what happens; "democratic politics" is a branch of show business in its public electoral aspects, and a matter of cash-in-hand in its legislative workings. The cost of election to the US Senate is known; it is said to be \$25 million.

Those who can pay contributions to "campaign funds"

Turn to page 4

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

Karl Marx
Socialist Organiser
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LOS ANGELES

T&G to Klein up its act

It is no secret that the TGWU is in a bit of a mess. Membership has dropped from 2 million to 1.2 million since 1979 and the union is closing £211,000 a week. Its problems are exacerbated by a ramshackle structure of semi-autonomous regions and trade groups.

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

The T&G's vociferous right wing continually sniped at Ron Todd for failing to deal with the mounting crisis, but, in fact, Todd did one thing that may turn out to be a decisive turning-point in the union's history: he called in Adam Klein and Co., a team of American management consultants, to make a root-and-branch appraisal of the union's structures and finances.

Some people within the T&G have questioned whether bringing in Klein was a particularly good way of spending several million of the union's funds. The fact is, however, that any proposal for re-structuring was bound to upset at least some of the many vested interests within the T&G bureaucracy: only an "outsider" like Klein could put forward the kind of drastic proposals that are clearly needed and not be accused of ulterior motives. It should also be noted that Klein is not just some Wall Street/Madison Avenue spiv, but a consultant with a good track record of working with unions and black groups.

Klein has now completed his report and it is certainly pretty drastic. Among his proposals are the reduction in the number of regions from 11 to 8, a "clustering" of trade group administrations and the centralisation of the union's budget.

General Secretary Bill Morris and the soft-left majority on the union's NEC will push the Klein report, which fits in nicely with their drive to curb the powers of the regionally-based right wing, and create a "one-union culture".

The right-wing are now faced with an agonising dilemma: they can hardly oppose the recommendations (most of which are eminently sensible) after years of attacking Todd and the left majority on the NEC for failing to "modernise" the union; on the other hand, they know that the implementation of Klein will inevitably undermine their regional power-bases — in particular the small regions that are going to be merged, all of which are right-wing strongholds.

Morris is promising a full consultation at all levels within the union, culminating in a special Rules Conference in December. The serious left needs to get stuck into this debate, putting forward positive proposals for improving the service to members (eg. beefing up trade groups at the expense of the regions) and democratising the union (most importantly, the election of Regional Secretaries).

Everyone knows that the kind of changes Klein has proposed have to come if the union is to survive: we need to make sure that the re-structuring results in a better deal for the membership, improved democracy and a stronger industrial base. For once, we seem to be going with the grain on these questions.

To clutch at: a merger with the GMB. No formal talks have taken place between the two unions, but "informed sources" within both unions now seem to think that a merger is almost inevitable.

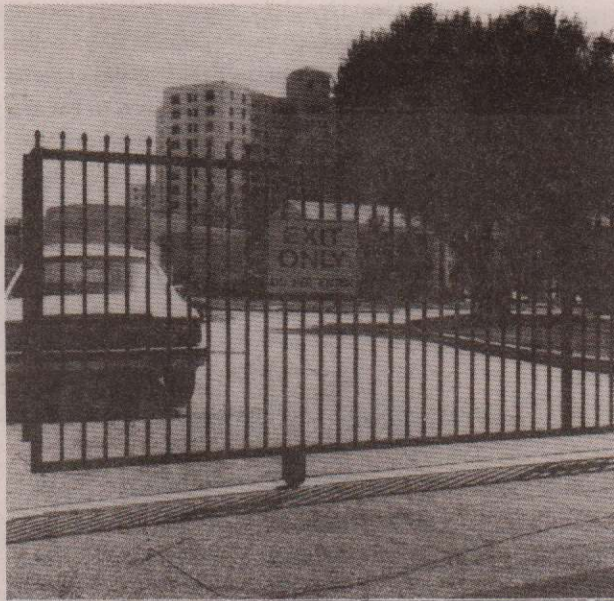
The T&G right see this as a way of regaining strength for themselves within a merged union in which (they calculate) John Edmonds would out-manoeuvre Bill Morris at every turn.

How should the left respond? Outright opposition to the merger in principle would be a mistake: in many ways a GMB/TGWU get together makes a lot of sense and could strengthen rank and file organisation on the shop floor. Once again, the questions of structure and democracy will be crucial and we need to get in on the ground floor of the debate that will take place within both unions.

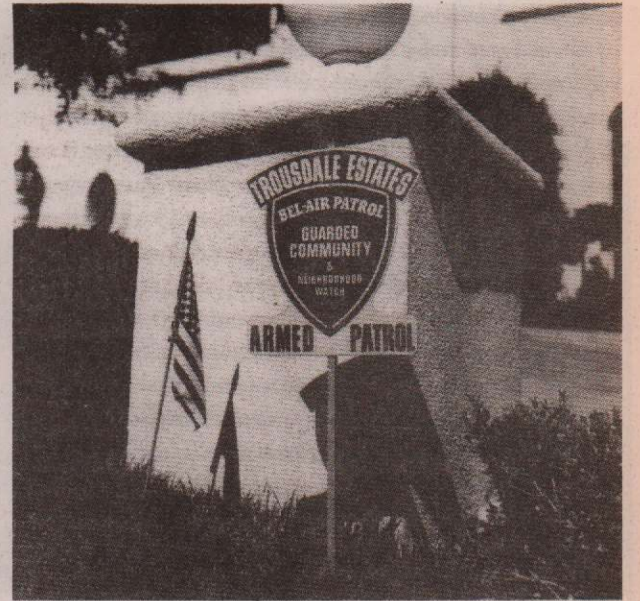
But it's early days yet: after all, both Bill Morris and John Edmonds deny that they have even considered the question of a merger. So perhaps it's all a figment of a few people's fevered imaginations.



A restructured and more democratic TGWU is needed to give effective support to members in dispute. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile



The rich and well-off in Los Angeles live in heavily-guarded islands of wealth, fenced off from the social jungle around them. Photos from Mike Davis's book "City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles" (Vintage, £8.99)



Lessons from Los Angeles

from page 3

inevitably control the votes of those politicians who are not themselves numbered among the very rich.

The capitalist rulers of the greatest bourgeois democracy on earth have succeeded in neutering democracy for a majority of their own people, convincing them that politics is

"Los Angeles holds the mirror of Britain's future up for us to see. And not only the Tories are the midwives of such a society. The leaders of the labour movement who have not dared present a root and branch indictment of the Tories share responsibility."

"just a racket". That is one reason why the most downtrodden of America's poor resort to methods of protest typical of pre-democratic societies where the poor had no political rights.

Outbreaks like that in Los Angeles were quite common in south European cities in the early and middle 19th century, when no democratic processes existed for the people, and before labour movements existed to organise them purposefully for political goals.

Political and democratic rights exist formally for the poor in Bush's America, but the normal operation of this corrupt capitalism has rendered them unusable and meaningless for the outcast millions. In practice they live in a political world little different from that inhabited by the pre-proletariat in, say, Bourbon Naples 150 years ago.

Central here is the role of the US labour movement. The capitalists

succeeded in confining that movement to bread-and-butter trade union affairs and excluding it from politics. The attempts of the small Trotskyist movement in the USA to steer the unions towards creating an independent party of the labour movement, a Labour Party on the British model or something better, were defeated.

The unions became very powerful for a while, but then they declined. They too take no responsibility for organising the unemployed and those who are the worst victims of American capitalism. The decline of industry, and the disproportionate loss of jobs by black workers, has meant less black participation in the trade union movement.

Los Angeles shows the inhuman lunacies of a rich capitalist society, organised according to the principles of the jungle and not according to principles of human social solidarity.

What rampant market capitalism, uninhibited by a strong political labour movement, has produced in the USA, is what rampant market capitalism is already producing in Britain.

In Britain too, in the last General Election, millions of the most oppressed did not vote. The homeless wander the streets. Ghettos exist throughout Britain now, in which people are oppressed both as black people and as a beaten-down section of the working class.

The rich and well-off organise their private islands of education, health, and housing in an increasingly jungle-like society. They have cut down the labour movement, deliberately creating a paradise for the exploitation of workers - so that today the Tory Government advertises Britain overseas as a reservoir of cheap, no longer tightly unionised, labour.

Los Angeles holds the mirror of Britain's future up for us to see. And not only the Tories are the midwives of such a society.

The labour movement's Establishment, which has turned Labour into a third carbon copy of the Tories, also share the responsibility.

The leaders of the labour movement who have not dared present a root and branch indictment of what the Tories are doing to Britain, and who have not dared mobilise the labour movement and others to oppose it: they too bear responsibility.

That is the message from Los Angeles that we must take into the labour movement.

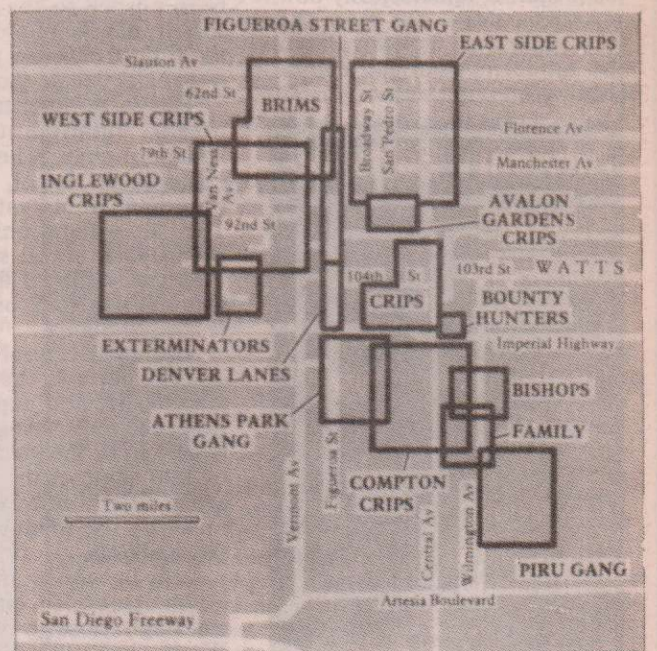
Revolts like that in Los Angeles are as hopeless as they are understandable. While we support the super-oppressed of US capitalism in their revolt, socialists should not indulge in romantic delusions that this sort of revolt is any way forward. It is not. It is what happens when the labour movement has been crippled and politically blinded.

It is what may happen in Britain if the left fails to change the course along which the labour movement is now being led by

its own soul-dead Establishment, following in the track of the Tories.

"As the head of the Los Angeles city planning commission explained the official line to incredulous reporters, it is not against the law to sleep on the street per se, 'only to erect any sort of protective shelter'. To enforce this prescription, the LAPD periodically sweep the Nickle, confiscating shelters and other possessions, and arresting resisters. Such cynical repression has turned the majority of the homeless into urban Bedouins. They are visible all over Downtown, pushing a few pathetic possessions in purloined shopping carts, always fugitive and in motion, pressed between the official policy of containment and the increasing sadism of Downtown streets".

Mike Davis, "City of Quartz".



"A recent survey of the 1980s suggests that affluence (incomes of \$50,000 plus) has almost tripled (from 9% to 26%) while poverty (\$15,000 and under) has increased by a third (from 30% to 40%); the middle range has collapsed (from 61% to 32%)" — Mike Davis, "City of Quartz". For many young men in the poor districts of LA, there are no jobs, no social security, no alternatives to starving except crime and drug-trading. Above: gang territories in South Central LA, according to the LAPD.

The super-rich and the super-poor

Why LA exploded

Jim Lauderdale, a socialist living in Los Angeles, spoke to Socialist Organiser about the riots which erupted after a jury in a well-off, mainly-white area acquitted the cops who were videotaped beating up a black motorist.

We have had a fairly quiet weekend — as you would expect, as Los Angeles has 15,000 troops on the streets. A State of Emergency exists. 10,000 people are under arrest and there is a curfew.

We have all types of military groups on the streets. I think they will be gradually phased out. The FBI's SWAT team, the Border Patrol, the National Guard, the Marines...they are all here.

The National Guard has been "federalised", which means that there is a Joint Military Command in LA. A Lt. Colonel in the US Marine Corps is giving the orders. Federalising troops is the one step before martial law.

It is not possible to separate this situation into either/or class and race. We have here a response to generations of inner-urban life. Latinos and blacks have suffered particularly, although not exclusively.

Much of the repression directed at this black community is not strictly based on economics. It is an issue of attitude. For example, American police reports have sometimes ended "NHI" or ("No Human Involved"). These are reports about incidents involving black people.

Although economics cannot be untangled from the issue, this is not simply a matter of economics.

The economy is in the process of restructuring. The capitalists are attempting to drive down wages right across the board. They are attacking even the best organised workers — for instance, recently at Caterpillar.

We are facing an unprecedented onslaught against organised labour. The capitalists are making use of the large influx of immigrant labour to drive wage levels down to terrible inadequacy. The restructuring has the effect of levelling-out poverty amongst great layers of the very poor.

We are dealing here with an underclass who have fallen away from the ability of organised

labour to defend them. In LA County, where there are 14 million people, one in seven are on public assistance. Half a million people here are from El Salvador and are here illegally. Another 500,000 are from Guatemala. There are more Mexicans in LA than in any city in the world outside Mexico City.

There is no investment in social infrastructure. The cut-backs take the last vestiges of the social nets away from them.

But, nevertheless, when this explosion took place, the worst repression was directed at the black community. This is because there is an assumption that these people are sub-human, that they will always respond violently.

The immigration pattern from the Pacific rim countries — specifically Hong Kong, Taiwan and Korea — often meant that people arrived with funds, and

"The reaction to terrible conditions is positive. But it manifests itself in ways which are absolutely destructive. It responds to the ever-present consumerism in an effort to take what has been denied."

the intention of becoming small proprietors.

There is a tremendous amount of Japanese and Korean banking capital in LA. These immigrants have found property relatively cheap, and loans relatively easy to come by. The Koreans also arrived with intact and dynamic family structures. This is one of the comparisons which should be made with black people. The black community has had its internal structures almost vaporised.

40% of households in the black community are headed by single women. A great number of black men are either addicted or in jail. In this situation there is no sustaining unit which can save money. There are no supportive institutions. People fight hard just to survive.

During the last 20 or 30 years Koreans have become a distinct petty-bourgeois group of small proprietors scattered among



Round up: at least 10,000 have been arrested

minority and oppressed communities.

The Koreans are resented by white Americans who will not admit them. So they are forced to sell to the Latinos and blacks, who hate them.

LA is not really a city. There are 88 cities which make up Los Angeles County. These cities are in search of a centre. They all run together, with the exceptions of the enclaves in North Hollywood and Beverley Hills, which are separate worlds. In the exclusive sections there are no pavements and areas are gated off.

The elites in these parts are genuinely insulated. Probably there are many who believe that none of this can ever affect them.

We have to spell out, realistically, what happened. There was desperation and anger with a tremendous power behind it.

Its nascent power is positive. The reaction to terrible conditions is positive. But it manifests itself in ways which are absolutely destructive.

It has no sense of its own power. It takes bottles of milk, diapers, VCRs, and responds to the ever-present consumerism in society in an effort to take what has been denied.

People steal to get something to trade in the pawn shops.

This riot has happened at a time of great attacks on the labour movement and on women's rights. There has never been a greater disgust at the two-party game which passes for politics in this country.

There are a number of independent political projects emerging: from the National Organisation of Women; Labor Party Advocates; the Green Party; Ron Daniels' campaign.

Literally millions of people are asking the question: how do we get out of this mess?

It is not clear that a workers' party is possible at this point. The road to independent politics may pass through a number of different points before we reach a stage where the working class finds a real, powerful political voice.

We have now reached the point that only 11% of workers are unionised — down from 34% in the 1950s. We cannot just call a congress of the unions and declare a party.

Our conception of a workers' party is not based solely on the unions. The main thing now is that people must break with the Democrats. We still find people who say: I understand Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition was a mistake. But excuse me, I have to go to my Jerry Brown meeting.

Shouting in the abstract for a workers' party has no grip. The job now is to push the existing movements as far left as possible.

The most important issue now is the formation of an LA anti-racist coalition. There is a meeting today where we will push for demands around ending the federal occupation of the city and for community control of the police.

We want to end the police sweeps of the city and the harassment of immigrant workers.

- The LA Police Department's (LAPD) budget is now \$400 million
- Since 1974 two-thirds of all young black men in California have been arrested
- LA's black youth are three times more likely to go to jail than to university
- 84,000 people are in jail in LA County — a system designed for 48,000. All Britain's jails, in total, have 40 to 50,000.
- It is expected that the prison population will rise to 145,000 by 1995 — three times the number jailed in the whole of Britain
- In 1990 LAPD and the Sheriff's Department picked up 50,000 suspects. In many major sweeps of the city, 90% were released without charge
- Los Angeles is about 40% Hispanic, 37% Anglo, 13% black, and 10% Asian (Korean, Chinese, etc). LAPD is 68% Anglo, 21% Hispanic, and 13% black; in ranks of sergeant and above, it is only 10% Hispanic and 8% black. Most

- Los Angeles cops live outside the city, in white suburbs.
- Daryl Gates, LAPD chief, was called to testify in the case of a Chicano family beaten by police. He said "Mr Lavez was lucky to have only his nose broken"
- The Hardcore Drugs Unit chief says, "this is Vietnam here"
- Daryl Gates recently called for the invasion of Colombia. He offered Jimmy Carter the LAPD SWAT team to rescue the Teheran hostages
- In South Central LA a young black man was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for possession of 5.5 grammes (a fifth of an ounce) of crack
- Police shot dead three Latinos for robbing a MacDonalds with a pellet gun. A fourth who was seriously wounded was charged with their murder
- After 1987, when crack became an epidemic in LA, the

- black middle class began to collapse behind the police. Harry Edwards, former Minister of Propaganda for the Black Panther Party and now a professor of sociology, says this about 13-year-old crack dealers: "Turn him in, lock him up. Get rid of him. Lock him up for a long time. As long as the law will allow, and try to make it as long as possible. I'm for locking 'em up, getting 'em off the street, putting 'em behind bars."
- There are now 75,000 private police in LA
- 100,000 have nowhere to sleep in LA
- During the slump of 1978-82, 75,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. California's economy is being pulled away from America and restructured as it is slotted into Asian capitalism

The Sun's man - fit to be Labour leader?

GRAFFITI

There is nothing wrong with using tabloid papers to reach a wider audience for socialist ideas but Ken Livingstone's weekly column in the *Sun*, the nastiest, most mendacious and opportunist of them all, has only been bland, bizarre, sometimes downright foolish stuff. Here is a selection of the views of this "Voice From Labour":

On anti-racist campaigning:

Anti-Nazi con trick

AFTER the killing of black schoolboy Roland Adams last year, black and Jewish groups set up the Anti-Racist Alliance. It rapidly got the support of the main churches, trades unions and MPs from all parties. It has started a range of activities including a campaign to close the Fascist British National Party headquarters where Roland was murdered.

Loyal to that group well-known to *Sun* readers, the Anti-Racist Alliance, Ken has been on a binge against the Anti-Nazi League... attacking it in four columns so far this year.

Just what audience he hopes to win over on this issue, through the pages of the *Sun*, is a mystery. Just whose interests he serves in the long run is far clearer.

On Labour's Shadow Budget:

by the abolition of the National Insurance cut-off limit. I proposed: that no one earning less than £24,000 a year should pay any extra tax. After inflation that figure would now be £25,000. After the bashing Neil has had in the last two weeks I bet he wishes he'd taken my advice.

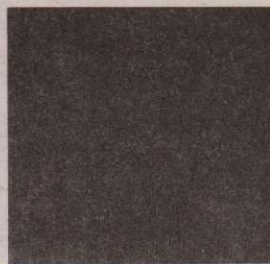
As the *Sun* gears up for Labour-bashing prior to the General Election, Ken blows his own trumpet, undoubtedly at Labour's expense, and makes us wonder just whose side he is on...

(Demonstrating that he has a fine sense of proportion about what are the big issues of life, he followed this up with useful advice on getting rid of aphids without resorting to environmentally-harmful pesticides).



Ken with Linda Lusardi: this was the man who said he'd learned all he knew about feminism from radical feminist, Angela Dworkin

On the General Election:



Nothing. The fair-minded *Sun* pulled his column for the duration of the Election campaign whilst older favourites, like the rabid Richard Littlejohn, ranted on unchecked. After the election, Ken Livingstone's first column was a polemic against Neil Kinnock - for saying that the tabloids helped the Tories!

On the Labour leadership contest:

...of their members not their masters. This is 1992. The idea that a few trade union bosses know best is as outdated as the horse and cart. Saying they can't afford a ballot because of postal charges is rubbish.

It is hard to believe that Ken's quibbles about the conduct of the union block vote will not get lost amidst, or merely serve to reinforce, the general gloating of the *Sun* about Labour's internal wranglings. Just how firmly they have Labour's interests at heart has been seen in the weeks around the election.

Our Ken?:

Ken Livingstone was once boss of the GLC. Since then he has moved to higher things as a columnist in The Sun. Now WE offer him as The Sun's fit to the Labour Party. Vote for Ken, a real man of the people.

If Ken is unusually modest about his own candidacy for Labour leader, his patrons give him a boost.

Linda Bellos, who is not the "Sun's man", fares less well though her fees are probably smaller than Ken gets for his column.

Was it them wot won it?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Sorry to keep banging on about this, but the question just won't go away: to what extent did the tabloids contribute to Labour's election defeat? The question is central to the post-mortem now beginning within the party and it is of even more significance to those of us whose vision of socialism goes beyond election results. If the influence of the Tory tabloids was strong enough to deny Mr Kinnock's ultra-respectable New Model Labour Party electoral victory at so propitious a time, what are the chances for the kind of socialism that requires the working class to break with ruling class ideology altogether?

The common-sense view (expressed by Kinnock himself in his resignation speech) is that the torrent of Tory propaganda dis-

guised as "news", and the downright lies about Labour policy that issued from the tabloids throughout the campaign, had a decisive effect. If it didn't, why would they bother? Come to that, why would Heineken spend millions on newspaper ads telling us that their lager refreshes parts which other beers cannot reach?

Then there is the evidence of the opinion polls: a survey by Mori shows that 4 per cent of *Sun* readers switched to the Tories in the last week of the campaign. That kind of swing would have been decisive in the 21 marginals that gave Major his majority.

Against this is the fact that the same survey showed that 2.5 per cent of *Mirror* readers also switched to Tory in the same period, while readers of the *Daily Mail* (whose anti-Labour propaganda was, if anything even more vehement than that of the *Sun*), registered only a 2 per cent swing.

The great danger of blaming it all on the press is that it lets the Labour leadership off the hook: it wasn't their failure to put forward a convincing and inspiring alternative that lost them the election - no, it was the all-powerful Tory press!

This is an attractive argument for many Labour supporters who are (rightly) outraged by the overwhelming bias and blatant dishonesty of the press. But it doesn't explain how it

was that Labour won in 1945, 1964, and 1974 against a press that was scarcely less hostile. And (as more than one Tory commentator has noted) it implies a pretty poor view of the intelligence of the majority of working class people.

"The great danger of blaming it all on the press is that it lets the Labour leadership off the hook: it wasn't their failure to put forward a convincing and inspiring alternative that lost them the election - no, it was the all-powerful Tory press!"

Of course, the press is overwhelmingly biased against Labour, and it is very often blatantly dishonest. We need to think about what should be done about it. The temptation is to rush towards restrictions on press freedom that would, in fact, be counter-productive for the left. The British press is already restricted by a range of legal and regulatory restrictions that recently shocked a visiting newspaper editor from Estonia.

One proposal that would have no damaging effect on press freedom, but would greatly restrict the tabloids' ability to lie and distort, would be to require that party political broadcasts be clearly distinguished from "news" and be marked with some sort of health warning (eg. "this is not a news item. It is a Conservative Party press handout slightly re-written). In fact, the Press Complaints Commission code of practice already requires papers to "distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact". It is about time that it was enforced.

Andrew Knight, the chairman of News International, has been at the forefront of the Tory-supporting media's rush to deny that their bias in any way influenced the election result. News International's *Sun* likewise insisted that there was "not a word of truth" in Neil Kinnock's claim that the tabloids played a major part in the Tory victory: "It is flattering of him to suggest we have so much power. Like so much else he says, it is also untrue", protested a *Sun* editorial.

Could this be the same *Sun* newspaper that on April 11th ran the front page headline "It's the Sun wot won it" and boasted that "Triumphant MPs were queuing yesterday to say 'Thank You My Sun' for helping John Major back into Number 10"?

Mothers' Union outflanks Militant

WOMEN'S EYE



By Jean Lane

One of the country's bastions of traditional morality is to debate the legalisation of brothels as a way of stemming the spread of AIDS.

The Church of England's Mothers' Union, set up 115 years ago to uphold the "sanctity of marriage" and the "Christian family life" has decided to recognise reality and debate a way of dealing with it - a method many people on the British left would do well to emulate.

The spread of AIDS, of course, is a matter for everyone, not just prostitutes. Figures from Amsterdam, however, show that half of its street prostitutes are HIV positive, whereas those that work in municipal-regulated

brothels have a 1% positive rate.

The spread of AIDS, though, should not be the only reason for considering this question. Other diseases, violence from pimps and clients, harassment from the police could also be, at least, reduced, if not prevented.

Because brothels - two women working in the same house - are illegal, women are forced onto the streets where a furtive and seedy business leaves them vulnerable to attack, abuse and harassment, in which they cannot expect the help or protection of the police.

Also, although many women become prostitutes in order to pay for their drug dependency, many others do not, and the furtive way and the place they have to work in open them up to drug abuse. Pimps often get them onto drugs in order to increase their control over them.

Brothels are illegal in Amsterdam, but this is ignored and the municipality both recognises and controls them, laying down rules over the number of rooms, the methods of sanitation, including hot and cold running water, providing education about safe sex, supplying replacement needles for drug addicts and outlawing the use of chil-

dren. No such outlawing can be effected when prostitution is underground.

"Because brothels are illegal, women are forced onto the streets where a furtive and seedy business leaves them vulnerable to attack, abuse and harassment, in which they cannot expect the help or protection of the police."

An argument that has been raised against legislation is that prostitution is born of poverty. Poverty is the real problem and this is not being dealt with. For instance, Cathy Wilson writes in this week's *Militant*, "I would much rather people like the Bishop, who claims to have great sympathy for poor people, started looking at why we've got 41% of the population of our city (Liverpool) living in poverty."

This is a strange reason for being against legislation and control. At the turn of the century in Ireland there

was a league which campaigned against the inoculation of children to prevent diphtheria. "The cause", they said, "of diphtheria is poor hygiene. We should be dealing with that, not inoculation". They were right. The cause was hygiene. But you don't let children die whilst campaigning for better hygiene. You do both. Whilst fighting poverty and the whole stinking system which forces people to prostitute themselves in order to stay alive, you also better the conditions of those worst affected - the prostitutes.

Cathy Wilson goes on, "The legalisers say that theirs is the only alternative and that they are addressing reality... We don't accept the realities of youth unemployment. We don't accept the realities of drug abuse... we shouldn't accept that (prostitution) reality."

The church, whatever, the problem, tells us the answer is God. The *Militant* tendency for years have told us that, whatever the question, the answer is socialism. That may be so, but there are a few little problems that have to be answered along the way. It's ironic that it is the Mothers' Union that should see this before *Militant* do.

A 'German model' for British workers

Workers defy 'consensus'

By Bruce Robinson

Germany is undergoing a "spring of discontent" as a massive strike wave hits the Western half of Germany, with over 300,000 workers involved in action over the last week. In many cities there is no post, rubbish collection or public transport; some hospital workers, nursery nurses, airport ground crew, long-distance railway workers have also been involved. It is the biggest strike in post-war German history.

The public sector union OeTV has called a new wave of workers into action this week, giving about 250,000 on strike in the public sector. International air traffic is likely to be closed down this week. The engineering sector, including the car industry, went on warning strikes last week and may also stop work altogether when their compulsory cooling-off period expires this week and the union (IG Metall) is able to vote on strike action in response to the employers' provocative 3.3% offer. Building and print workers are also due to vote soon on their own negotiations.

Often in Germany, strikes are averted by a compromise emerging from the long sequence of negotiations and ballots imposed by law. This time no compromise was possible, because of the economic crisis brought about by the costs of the reunification with the East. About two-thirds of the costs of reunification has fallen on wage-earners. The official inflation rate is already 4.8% and the prices of food and staple goods is rising at between 10% and 20% according to union spokesmen. Rents are soaring as a result of movements from East to West. Despite election promises, Chancellor Kohl raised taxes to pay for reunification almost immediately on getting back into power and then called for 0% wage rises.

The government, directly involved in the public sector negotiations, and calling for belt tightening to help the badly-off Easterners, sees this pay round as critical to putting the costs of reunification onto the backs of the working class, and Chancellor Kohl has unwisely put his prestige at stake in holding wages down.

The two options to end the strike satisfactorily would be using civil servants (who are not allowed to strike) and the army



On the march in Hamburg

to break the strike, or just waiting for it to fall apart. Strike-breaking would be unpopular with the public, who are sympathetic to the strike, and many civil servants have indicated they are unwilling to do it.

Alternatively, he could wait for the strike to collapse but this is unlikely to happen quickly and in the meantime it will be him who becomes unpopular, rather than the strikers. Only a new deal could get him off the hook and if the strike now wins anything above 4.8% it will mean a humiliating defeat for Kohl and quite probably the end of his government.

While public sector workers are particularly badly off, traditionally earning about 10% less than the private sector, the disappearance of their traditional well-being and security has hit all workers hard. In the public sector, the workers, seeing their living standards plunge because of the economic crisis, voted in scarcely credible percentages for action: in the public sector union OeTV, 89% for; in the post 95.4%; on the railways, 96.6%; the support staff in the police union, 90%; and the traditionally professional white-collar union, the DAG, 74%.

Public opinion is also sympathetic to the strikers, with 54% in a recent poll giving support and half that percentage definitely against. The government, elected with a large majority in December 1990, is very unpopular, with the CDU (Conservative) share of the vote down to 34% and 75% unhappy with the government, which is generally blamed for the strike.

The public sector unions originally made a claim for 9.4% on wages. The claim went to arbitration and the arbitrators awarded 5.4%. While the unions were prepared to accept this, the employers, in a rare move intended to show their determination, rejected the award and stuck to their previous offer of 4.8%.

As we go to press, the employers may be about to offer the 5.4%, but the union leaderships have publicly said that they now expect more (at least 5.8-6%) and would be unlikely to get the rank and file to accept what was in any case only half the original claim.

The strike is the first in the public sector for 18 years, and the strike funds of the OeTV contain about DM 600 million. The union has calculated it needs 1 million DM a day to support 10,000 strikers, which would enable it to support a strike of some weeks, which is long by German standards. The leadership has decided on the tactics of a rolling strike, using sectors which have an immediate impact, such as transport and post, and focussing on the large cities. The strike is highly centralised and control over who comes out is in the hands of the union leadership, who have consciously aimed to avoid unpopular actions by, for example, not calling out medical personnel in hospitals. While there are some strike committees and mass meetings organised at a local level, there is as yet little

way for the rank and file to take control of the strike.

The strikes do not involve workers in the Eastern half of Germany. They are unable to go on strike and have an agreement by which they should reach Western wage levels automatically by 1994. The employers are now talking about delaying its implementation.

Even if wage levels were equalised, there are still many differences in working hours, overtime pay and holiday pay.

"The economic crisis has forced Kohl to play for high stakes... his election promise that the East would reach Western levels within five years now looks like a sick joke."

The danger of not involving the East German public sector workers in the strike is that it will merely serve to accentuate the already existing divisions between Eastern and Western workers.

The economic crisis has forced Kohl to play for high stakes. In the East unemployment is running at 3 million (30-40%) and in January industrial production dropped by another 5% there. Kohl's election promise that the East would reach Western levels within five years now looks like a sick joke. State debt has rocketed to about £445 billion, and interest rates are high and likely to remain so.

As Britain is now in the Exchange Rate Mechanism, which is underpinned by Germany's helplessness. As usual, the social democratic politicians are torn between their role as employers in the nine provinces (in the West) and their own clientele. (Sound familiar?)

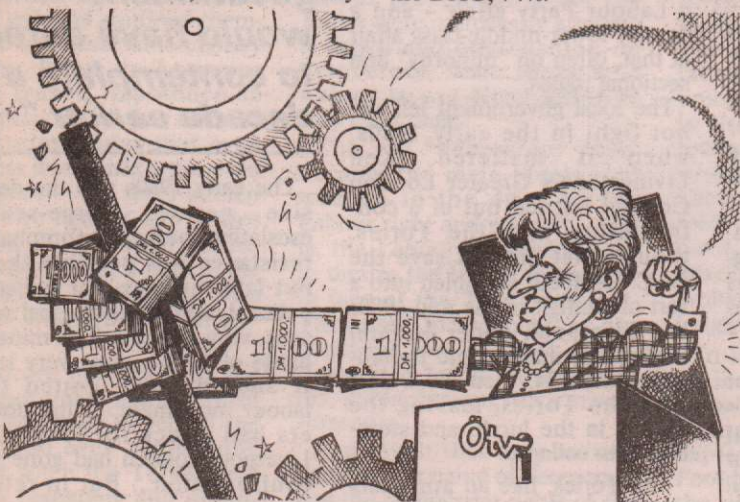
The effects of reunification are undoing the post-war industrial consensus in Germany, which has been the cause of the traditionally low level of industrial struggle there. In the past it has been possible to pay for higher wages and more state expenditure out of higher productivity and profits gained from Germany's successful competition on the world market.

Now neither the state nor the employers are willing to continue doing this in the face of the costs of reunification, which they hoped to offload onto the working class.

The Economist sadly states that after reunification, it was hoped that an influx of badly-paid workers from the East would force down West German wage rates. Instead, it continues, what is happening is that highly paid West German workers are creating pressure to bring Eastern wage rates up to Western levels. The conflict about the redistributive impact of reunification will continue for some time and it is unlikely that the "spring of discontent" will be the end of the issue.

For years, the "German model" was held up by bourgeois commentators as the solution to the "English disease" of striking. Now Britain has the lowest number of days lost through strikes since recording began, while Germany is undergoing a record wave of industrial action.

So now is the time when British trade unionists should start looking to the "German model" as an inspiration and a path of march for their own struggles.



Right-wing press hate trade union power

When they fe

Labour lost the April general election because for more than a decade the Labour and trade union leaders have been on their knees before the Tories.

One of the great mysteries in labour movement history is why, in 1980 and after, the leaders of the labour and trade union movement – trade union leaders who had been widely-believed in the mid-'70s to have more power than the Labour government – peacefully lay down under the wheels of the Thatcher juggernaut, surrendering without a fight.

John O'Mahony offers an explanation.

Socialism is impossible without democracy. You can not have collective ownership of the means of production that is not also day-by-day democratic controlling ownership. Collectivism without controlling democracy would turn into practical ownership by those who had control. This is one of the key lessons and irrefutable conclusions socialists draw from the experience of Stalin's counterfeit socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe. *Where there is no democracy, there will never be socialism.*

And because this is so – what follows?

Therefore, workers lose the right to resist injustice when it is inflicted by a democratic parliament – injustice like the poll tax, or the successive waves of anti-union laws?

Therefore, it cannot be an option for socialists to fight back with direct action and illegal resistance against class legislation – the Tory anti-union laws for example – when it has a parliamentary majority behind it?

Therefore, workers must always bow down low – as low as Neil Kinnock and his predecessor as Labour leader, Michael Foot – bowed before the existing British system of democracy?

Or is it, on the contrary, possible for workers to fight back against a parliamentary majority, elected democratically, and still remain democrats? Despite Neil Kinnock, Michael Foot and their cronies, is it possible for the labour movement to resist capitalist attacks, refusing to lie down before blatantly unjust class legislation, even when it has the backing of an elected parliamentary majority, using direct action and illegal action where necessary without repudiating democracy?

That question, in major and minor keys, was posed to the



labour movement again and again throughout the 1980s.

It was posed sharply in the late 1980s by the poll tax. Millions of people refused to pay; they defied the law, that is, they defied parliament. It was their resistance that broke the poll tax – and Mrs Thatcher. Yet that resistance, according to the Labour leaders, was nothing less than a crime against "democracy".

No matter how wrong, regressive, or iniquitous a piece of class legislation may be, said Neil Kinnock and his friends – and they never denied that the poll tax was a piece of vicious class legislation – parliament must govern. No-one has the right to resist parliament.

"Is it possible for workers to fight back against a parliamentary majority, elected democratically, and still remain democrats?"

In the early 1980s the same question was posed with even greater sharpness, and much greater consequence to the labour movement. The Tories had won the 1979 general election and immediately launched a relentless many-pronged attack on the labour movement and on the working class. Not since the "National Government" of 1931 had there been in Britain so open a class-war government, a government willing to use every weapon they thought necessary to beat down the labour movement.

The Tories deliberately worsened the conditions of slump after 1980, the better to cut down the labour movement. Whole swathes of industry – and the militant labour organisations erected within them – were wiped out. Whole communities were devastated. A big part of a generation of young people was thrown out of industry. The first of a long series of anti-union laws was put on the statute book, laws which by now add up to the most illiberal labour legislation in Western Europe. The welfare state was

undercut: the Tory demolition of the National Health Service, which has continued throughout the 1980s, was starting. The Tories had decided to kick over what was left of the post-war Tory-Labour-Liberal consensus and set out on a radical bourgeois programme to reshape British society. They ruthlessly used state power.

Later, during the 1984-5 miners' strike, they would organise the police as a semi-militarised force under the control of one national centre, to physically beat down striking workers. In the course of doing that they sometimes acted quite outside the law, for example arbitrarily and illegally controlling the movements of miners. In 1986, they sent the police to strong-arm printworkers at Wapping.

But, though Thatcher had won only a minority of the vote in both the 1979 and 1983 elections, and though until the 1982 Falklands war opinion polls showed her to be as unpopular as she would again become by 1990 when the Tory MPs dismissed her, the Tories did, of course, through all this, have a majority in parliament. Yet resistance was possible by direct action, as it had been in the '70s.

At the beginning of the 1980s, before mass unemployment had cut into the sinews of the labour movement, before so much of industry was destroyed, the labour movement probably had the strength successfully to challenge Thatcher, as Tory Prime Minister Heath had been challenged a decade earlier and driven from office. But did the labour movement have the democratic right to organise extraparliamentary resistance? Did it have the right to try to dislodge the Thatcher government by extra-parliamentary action?

Serious socialists – *Socialist Organiser*, for example – advocated resistance and confrontation on every front possible, from industry to local government (where nominal left-wingers were strong) to parliament. We invoked the right of revolt and resistance to oppression and tyranny proclaimed by the serious bourgeois democrats who led the American and French revolutions in the 18th century. We argued for a fight by the labour movement to defend democracy against Thatcher's strengthening of the central state and abuse of parliamentary power and for a fight to deepen and develop democracy in the spirit of the old Chartists.

The Labour establishment, including its left and ex-left segment said: No, it is undemocratic to resist parliament. The Labour Party left – people like Ken Livingstone – said: Yes, resist; but most of them soon thought better of it.

It was the time of the great left-wing upsurge in the Labour Party, triggered by the dismal



Jack Jones: union leader who justified the unions' failure to resist Labour government cuts by the danger of a coup

record and the comprehensive failure of Labour in government between 1974 and 1979.

The political labour movement was trying to draw the conclusions from over a decade of serious class struggle. Tony Benn was able to secure 83 per cent of the CLP votes when he stood against Denis Healey for deputy leader of the Labour Party. The left won a succession of victories at Labour Party conferences in Blackpool, Brighton, and Wembley. Our weakness was in the trade unions.

Objectively it was possible, had the Labour Party and the trade unions chosen to challenge the Tories head on, to reforge the British working-class movement into a radical anti-capitalist force.

Objectively it was possible for the labour movement, defending the post-war welfare state, to have rallied all sorts of petty bourgeois around itself, and eventually to have won a parliamentary majority for its policies.

That did not happen. The trade union leaders did not fight. Soon undercut by the slump, neither did the rank and file to whom it had fallen in the 1960s and '70s to set the pace – not on the scale necessary, anyway.

The radicalisation was mainly a Labour Party affair – and a heavily lower-middle-class affair at that, often on "minority" and sectional issues.

The local government left did not fight in the early 1980s, when it mattered. Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council bottled out of a confrontation with the Tories, though that did not save the GLC. Lambeth stumbled into a sort of conflict in the mid-1980s and Liverpool, under *Militant* leadership, made some mobilisation in 1984, then did a deal with the Tories, leaving the miners in the lurch, and stumbled into collapse.

The Tories, like an army see-

ing the enemy in unexpected disarray, improved on their initial victories. Round after round of anti-union legislation was rammed through. The Thatcherites pushed the entire axis of British politics – and, slowly, the Labour Party too – a long way to the right. Ultimately they hegemonised the Labour Party which, in the beginning, had – on certain questions – challenged them fundamentally.

"...the Tories were like victorious cavalry riding around in command of a battlefield looking for targets, casually picking off and destroying the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989, something that no government would have dared to contemplate a decade earlier."

The early 1980s was the decisive period. Large-scale, escalating, perhaps triumphant, resistance was possible then, but later became, for logistic, political, and psychological reasons, very difficult. The miners' battle of 1984-5 came very late. It should have ignited the labour movement. If the dockers had struck for longer; if Liverpool council had gone for confrontation... But in retro-

democracy. In fact they feared "the stormtroopers"

Feared a coup



Michael Foot: Labour leader who promised "a storm of indignation" but retreated for fear of "the stormtroopers"



Neil Kinnock: he built on the defeats of the early '80s to gut Labour Party democracy

pect it is not at all surprising that it did not. It was too late. The Tories had become too strong.

By the later 1980s, the Tories were like victorious cavalry riding around in command of a battlefield looking for targets, casually picking off and destroying the National Dock Labour Scheme in 1989, something that no government would have dared to contemplate a decade earlier.

The early 1980s was the decisive time. Because of the slump, resistance to the Tories then would probably have had to be spurred and organised initially by a political campaign, albeit with a growing industrial dimension. When he defeated Denis Healey for the position of Labour Party leader in 1980, Michael Foot promised to organise a great crusade and whip up such a "storm of indignation" against what the Tories were doing that they would be driven from office as they had been seven years before. It was what was needed and what, then, was almost certainly possible.

But Foot never did it. He did not even make any serious attempt to do it. Instead this "left" leadership of the Labour Party turned their fire on the labour left, and confined themselves to in-house parliamentary posturing. It was the beginning of that frozen impotence so characteristic of the Labour Party leaders today that even bourgeois journalists - no, even the Liberals! - can sneer at their lack of fire against the Tories and wish for a more vigorous official opposition, if only in the interests of preserving the health of Britain's political system.

The future historians of the labour movement and of British politics will have to record the strange and even astonishing fact that when the Tories were radically reshaping and dimin-

ishing British democracy, when they were curbing local government, destroying the rights of the labour movement and many of the reforms it had achieved - just at that time the leaders of the Labour Party, Michael Foot and his pale understudy Neil Kinnock, were crusading in defence of democracy: but they were defending it not against the Tories but against the Labour left! The Tories were using parliament as a base for the operations of a one-party minority dictatorship ruthlessly pushing through cranky bits of social engineering, destroying much of Britain's industry and many millions of jobs - and the Labour leaders at exactly this point in Britain's political history chose to crusade in defence of "democracy" against their own left wing!

In parliament and in the *Observer*, the big business newspaper, the old-time left-winger, then Labour leader, Michael Foot concurred with the violent campaign of denunciation in the mainstream press, indicting the left as the main enemy of democracy, and identifying the left as the immediate threat to British democracy. Those who now threatened democracy, said the political leaders of the labour movement while the Tories were mercilessly grinding it down and encroaching on democracy, were those who wanted to use direct action to stop the Tories!

The cry "democracy first" became the main ideological weapon in the drive by the Labour right and soft left - that is, the Labour establishment - to disarm the labour movement in face of the Tory onslaught. They used "democracy" to discredit the idea of direct action. It was their "good", respect-worthy, public "reason" for a craven surrender.

And much that they surrendered in the name of democracy was the democratic rights of the

labour movement, and of all British citizens!

"Democracy" versus direct action was the issue on which the "soft left" first separated itself from the more serious left. Later it was the blade of the knife the Labour establishment plunged into the back of the miners during their great strike. It was the ultimate justification for their craven inactivity all through the 1980s.

The history of reformist labour movements like the Labour Party includes many grimly obscene episodes - such, for example, as the day in 1933 when the German Social Democratic leader Otto Wels got up in the Reichstag and offered his loyal collaboration to the new - legally appointed - Chancellor, Herr Hitler. It is their nature. When they kowtow to the bourgeois establishment, their deepest instincts are in operation!

They fear action and they fear the rank and file. But they also come under the pressure of their members, and when their organisations are threatened, they sometimes try to defend them. Even the most wretched creatures defend themselves when driven into a corner, when they can no longer fool themselves into thinking that things will turn out all right. The great mystery of Britain's labour movement and trade union leaders in 1980 and after is that they did not. Trade union organisations which had seemed as powerful as the Labour government itself in the mid-'70s now sank away into nothingness before the first attacks of an enemy they could probably have beaten had they fought.

To look for one simple explanation for that behaviour is probably misleading. Yet I want to highlight one part of the explanation, which Michael Foot brings out pretty clearly in the articles by Michael Foot

reprinted in the *Workers' Liberty* pamphlet on democracy.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Labour and trade union leaders were terrified of a campaign of resistance to Thatcher by direct action because, as Foot phrased it, they feared "the stormtroopers". They feared to resist Thatcher because they feared a military coup in Britain.

"...the Labour and trade union leaders were ...far from confident that democracy in Britain was stable ...they knew that the ruling class was prepared to smash British democracy if that was the only way it could win against a working class movement that dared to fight."

They were far from confident that democracy in Britain was stable, and - despite what they said in their demagogic denunciations of the left - they knew that the ruling class led by Thatcher were prepared to smash British democracy if that was the only way they could win against a working class movement that dared to fight.

They knew, having been in government, how close British democracy had come to a breakdown in the mid-1970s.

Behind all their confident

assertions about British democracy lived the fear and terror of men and women who felt that they had looked into the abyss in the mid-1970s. Michael Foot did say this in his anti-left polemics in the *Observer*, though not with complete candour; the mid-1970s TGWU leader Jack Jones said it plainly.

The astonishing failure of the Labour and trade union establishment - powerful politicians, so recently in government, and powerful leaders of powerful organisations, so recently in strong partnership with government - even to defend their own immediate interests in the early 1980s was a late by-product of the bitter class struggles of the first half of the 1970s.

In 1974 a Tory government was forced out of office and, according to the then Chief of Staff, Lord Carver, speaking in a debate with the pacifist Pat Arrowsmith: "Fairly senior officers were ill-advised enough to make suggestions that perhaps, if things got terribly bad, the army would have to do something about it..."

The Labour and trade union leaders confronted the new Thatcher government in a blue funk at the possible consequences of a new round of 1970s level class struggle. So they demobilised the labour movement and surrendered.

Thatcher took on the labour movement after 1979 with the bigger stick of the military, with whom she had close ties, raised behind the big sticks she used - the semi-militarised police she used against the miners, for example.

In face of Thatcher, *Socialist Organiser* advocated direct action and confrontation with the Tories all across the board: industrial direct action, local government defiance, parliamentary withdrawal of cooperation. We said to the labour movement: fight the Tories by every means possible, or face a historic defeat. Our comrades were active in the trade unions, and in the Labour Party.

We initiated the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, which united most of the left in the drive that, for a while - before the labour movement and especially the unions were ground down by the Thatcherites - took the Labour Party sharply to the left.

We argued that the labour movement should fight to kick out the Tories and replace them with a "workers' government" - a Labour government radically different from all previous Labour governments, doing for the working class the sort of things Thatcher spent the 1980s doing for the bourgeoisie.

We fought the passivity of the right and the soft left, and criticised the empty verbal or sectional radicalism of the local government left who essentially also pursued, at a verbally criti-

Continued on page 10



Miners fight police at Orgreave: 'Between equal rights, force decides' - Karl Marx

When they feared a coup

From centre pages

cal distance from the Labour establishment, a policy of passivity and surrender to the Tories.

Part of that work was to oppose the craven mystifications about democracy with which the soft left rationalised their surrender to the Tories and began their slide to the right. Sharing in our own way, and from a pre-Stalinist Marxist point of view, the broad labour movement's concern for a commitment to democracy - to which Foot, Kinnock and their friends so demagogically and misleadingly appealed - we challenged the ideas put out by Foot and Kinnock and *Tribune* from within the democratic tradition that they falsely claimed and misrepresented.

We explained the genuine tra-

dition and the real history of the struggle for democracy, first by "the people" and then by the labour movement, and contrasted the unrealised goals of that struggle for democracy with both the anti-democrats posing as socialists, the Stalinists and various Stalinoid "Trotskyists", and the anti-socialists (like Foot and Kinnock) posing, in essence falsely, as serious democrats.

In the broad labour movement, the Kinnockites won the argument. The Tories, the trade union bureaucrats, and the local government left who messed around instead of fighting, won it for them. Those of us who advocated struggle were increasingly marginalised as the decade wore on. These craven "democrats" have run before the Tories down through a whole decade during which those who took their stand against the direct-action left as defenders of democracy never dared take a stand against the Tories when they attacked and undermined democracy, never even protested when - as in the miners' strike - the Tories cut holes through democracy in pursuit of victory in the class struggle.

They arrived at the April 1992 general election spiritually so battered that they did not dare even to promise to restore the democratic rights the Tories have cut out of trade unionism.

The labour movement after 1979 was faced with a choice of either prevailing over the Tories or of accepting savage defeat. Foot and his friends did not, and could not, choose the status quo ante. Not to fight brought many of the worst consequences defeat - even a defeat involving the army - would have brought. Defeat following surrender in the interests of "preserving democracy" brought the destruction of a wide array of our democratic rights, and brought deep demoralisation and self-doubt. We have learned that in the 13 years of Tory rule lording it over a weak and intimidated opposition.

The class struggle is a fact of life: you can not evade its consequences by running from it: running from it is only another way of losing it.

(This article is part of the Introduction to *Socialist Organiser's* pamphlet, "Socialists and Democracy".)

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IN DEPTH

A fortnight ago, US astronomers announced to a bemused world that they had detected the evidence for an event that had occurred some 15 billion years ago.

The burden of this evidence was that, instead of being a uniform 2.73 Kelvin (K degrees above absolute zero), the average temperature of the universe varied by some 30 millionths of a degree either side of this.

On the face of it, this does not seem very significant. All the more surprising to hear various astronomers and cosmologists hail this as "the finding of the century, if not of all time" (Stephen Hawking), "the Holy Grail of cosmology" etc, with one saying "Wow! You have no idea how exciting this is!" Slightly more illuminating is the comment of British astronomer, Michael Rowan-Robinson that "What we are seeing here is the moment when the structures we are part of - the stars and galaxies of the universe - began to form". The excitement was infectious enough for the *Independent* to devote most of a front page to the discovery and for even the *Sun* to cover the news. Les Hearn explains what this discovery means for our understanding of the Universe.



Birth of a universe...this microwave map of the entire sky was created from fluctuations 300,000 years after the Big Bang

Echoes from

In 1755, the philosopher, Immanuel Kant suggested that the Universe was made up of galaxies like our Milky Way. Only in 1923 was Edwin Hubble able to show that the Andromeda Nebula was a separate galaxy and since then many thousands of others, at various distances have been observed.

Separate observations of the spectrum of hydrogen in these galaxies revealed an intriguing fact. The spectrum of hydrogen is a characteristic pattern of radiation, some visible, emitted by hot hydrogen gas. This spectrum is easily distinguishable from the spectra of all other elements and compounds.

Now, the colour of the light in the spectrum is affected by the motion of the emitter. This is known as the Doppler effect and is responsible for the raised pitch of the sound of a police car siren as it approaches

and its lowered pitch as it recedes. If the galaxy is approaching us, the light from the hydrogen spectrum is shifted towards blue while, if moving away, it is "red-shifted".

When the Doppler shifts of the galaxies were measured, those of the nearer ones were found to be randomly blue or red, while those of the further ones were all found to be red. In other words, they were all moving away from our galaxy and from each other. Furthermore, the further the galaxy, the greater the red-shift and the greater its speed of recession. Indeed, the furthest known galaxies are receding at 90% of the speed of light! Incidentally, these galaxies are so far away that their light set out some 10 billion years ago, long before our solar system was formed. We are seeing them as they were then.

The simplest explanation was the philosophically uncomfortable one that the Universe was not an unchanging one. It was expanding so that the galaxies were rushing away

from each other like spots on a balloon that is being inflated. This implied that at sometime in the past, estimated to be some 15 billion years ago, the entire universe was concentrated at a single point, at an infinite density and temperature, and had exploded in what was termed, with masterly

"The standard Big Bang model has been vindicated but there are still problems with it."

understatement, The Big Bang.

Cosmologists have made a plausible reconstruction of the history of the Universe since a tiny fraction of a second after the Big Bang, giving approximate sizes and temperatures. They are not able to say anything about the Big Bang itself as the laws of physics break down at infinite temperatures and densities.

They are able to suggest at what stages the pure energy of the early Universe started to crystallise into the matter that we now see. There has always been a problem with how the unevenness we now see (matter concentrated into stars and galaxies) could arise from a symmetrical explosion. The main theory in this field is that of Cosmic Inflation. According to this, the Universe underwent a colossal expansion increasing in size by 100,000 billion billion billion billion times (from less than an

The Universe makes microwaves

This is one of those important discoveries that are made by accident.

Some 30 years ago, two US radioastronomers, Penzias and Wilson, were observing the microwave radiation put out by our galaxy. To ensure they were measuring it accurately, they needed to find out how much "noise" there was, ie microwaves from other sources and spurious readings from the machinery itself.

To their surprise, after allowing for noise there was still quite a high intensity of microwaves, equal in all directions and independent of time of year. This was radiation from the whole universe.

Effectively, the universe was bathed in microwaves of the wavelength typical of a body at about 3K, exactly as predicted by the Big Bang model. The physics we learn in school tells us that, as gases expand, they fall in temperature, and this is precisely what has happened to the Universe's temperature as it has expanded out of the Big Bang.



ed with information recorded over a year by the Cobe satellite. It shows the

the big bang

atomic nucleus to the size of a grapefruit!). During this inflation, matter was randomly interchanging with energy so that the density was slightly different from place to place. These ripples in density would have been "frozen" as the Universe expanded and eventually would have provided the basis for the formation of galaxies in the regions of higher density, with large empty areas or voids in between. This is exactly what is observed.

Furthermore, the radiation left over when the Universe was cool enough for matter to be stable (about 300,000 years after the Big Bang) would have retained this unevenness. Subsequent expansion of the Universe cooled this

background radiation from about 6000K to about 3K but preserved

"The simplest explanation was the philosophically uncomfortable one that the Universe was not an unchanging one!"

the ripples. COBE has therefore detected evidence of something that occurred an infinitesimal fraction

of a second after the Big Bang.

Once again, the Standard Big Bang model has been vindicated but there are still problems with it. Firstly, it cannot say what caused the Big Bang to occur (and space and time to come into existence), though Stephen Hawking argues that quantum theory more or less removes the problem. Secondly, it cannot account for the existence of the so-called "dark matter" which seems to make up about 90% of the Universe but has not been explicitly detected. Thirdly, it cannot say whether the Universe will carry on expanding or whether it will eventually start contracting under its own gravity and collapse into a "Big Crunch".

What is COBE?

The NASA satellite Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE) was designed to investigate the background of microwaves in space, radiation detected by accident some 30 years ago.

This radiation is of a sort typical of a body at about -270 degrees Celsius or 3K. The accepted theory of the development of the Universe requires that this background, apparently smooth when measured on Earth, be slightly uneven. Any slight variations though would be swamped by the effect of the Earth's atmosphere so it was necessary to send instruments into space. COBE, orbiting at 900km above the Earth, is above the atmosphere and

its instruments can do their work unhampered. COBE was ready for launch by shuttle 6 years ago when the Challenger disaster put paid to launches of most non-military satellites. Extensively modified, it was launched by Delta launch rocket 2½ years ago.

It has been making measurements with three sets of instruments. One set has established the average temperature of the background to be 2.735K. Another is making an infra red map of the Universe (not possible on Earth). The third set has been measuring the microwave background at three different wavelengths.

So far, they have scanned the entire sky 2½ times, taking some 1 billion individual readings! A team

of 34 scientists has been analysing the data, much of which is "noise" or "static". This noise consists of microwaves produced by various objects in the Universe or of spurious readings caused by imperfections in the electronics. Computer analysis has allowed them to eliminate this noise, rather like the process of image enhancement. What is left is the radiation remaining from the Big Bang that started the Universe but stretched out by its subsequent expansion. And it is in this radiation that ripples or unevennesses of the predicted size have been detected. Of course, corroboration needs to be received but it looks as if the Standard Model of the Universe is in line with reality once again.

A letter to Chris Patten from China's elder statesman

Dear Mr Patten

So you finally decided. We were just beginning to wonder if the job will be offered to that David Owen chap.

Welcome to our Hong Kong. It will be ours soon you know that. What took you so long? It surely couldn't be the money. The salary isn't bad at over £150,000, with £2,800 a month expenses. The highest paid job in the civil service, I'm told. I know this still makes you look poor compared to those Cantonese billionaires you have to rub shoulders with, but you also have the use of 2 Daimlers, a Rolls, a yacht and a country residence in addition to Governor House. So there must be something else troubling you.

Perhaps you were concerned about your wife's career as a barrister. You need have no worries on that score, because Hong Kong's legal system is still the same as yours, except that barristers can earn a lot more. And she wouldn't need to know a word of Cantonese in the courts. The only barristers we don't like are those who meddle in politics, like that so called United Democrat leader Martin Lee. However, I appreciate that you may need to keep up appearances about conflicts of interests — although that has never worried us or those people in your so-called Legislative Council, especially that Lydia Dunn who was given a seat in the House of Lords by your ex-leader Mrs Thatcher. (You know I still remember how she tripped over the red carpet and fell, as if she was know-towing to me, when she came to Beijing).

Maybe you were concerned about your future political career. After all handing over a British Dependent Territory to us communists does look a bit lame, however much noise you in the West have made about the end of communism, thanks to that weak kneed turncoat Gorbachev. This may be a dead end job, but it looks quite well rewarded, unlike being Secretary of State for what you British call Northern Ireland, or that other province called Wales.

No, you must have realised that all ex-Governors of Hong Kong earn a seat in your House of Lords. You are a young man, and after I have to go to continue my arguments with Mao and Stalin in that other place, you can still go back and be Foreign Secretary like that other fellow Lord Carrington.

On the other hand, my ambassador in London tells me that resentment in Britain against your party is so strong after your recent general election that whichever 'safe seat' is found for you, you could well lose a really embarrassing

by-election, and that would really finish you off for good.

Now I hope you are not thinking about how to spread your friend the Prime Minister's message about the classless society and the idea of a citizen's charter in Hong Kong. After all, we thought our governments agreed about democracy — it's just not suitable for the Chinese people, in China or in Hong Kong. And while we never liked your drug trafficking from the Opium War days of 1840 onwards, we at least thought we could rely on you since 1949 not to give an inch to those who seek to use Hong Kong as a base to oppose us. We thought our governments agreed about the important things in Hong Kong which is to make money.

Then I began to have severe doubts about your ex-leader's iron grip — just because we had a little local difficulty in Tiananmen in 1989, that fellow Governor Wilson

"I hope you are not planning to spread your friend the Prime Minister's message about the classless society and the idea of a citizen's charter in Hong Kong..."

allowed a million people to demonstrate on the streets of Hong Kong without calling on your troops to restore law and order. To make matters worse, your government caved into subversive demands for elections. (In Hong Kong I meant). We had to tell your foreign office not to concede more than 30% of the Legislative Council seats. To this day, I still couldn't understand why you British would entrust your colonial subjects with the vote after managing to run the colony since the 1840s without such devices.

I saw your television statement that you intend to represent the wishes of Hong Kong people. Ha! You can't fool me, and I am sure you can't fool them either! I hope I have made our Party's views very clear — Hong Kong people are only ever going to get full voting rights, citizens charters or whatever, political parties and elected governors — over my dead body!

Looking forward to our first meeting
Deng Tsiao-ping



Fighting the Nazis

Book

John Cunningham reviews *Escape through the Pyrenees* by Lisa Fittko

There is something to be said for the autobiographical account of a specific period: the boundaries both define and limit the scope of the writer's life, enriching it in a way which vast, rambling tomes can not. Free from the clutter of superfluous detail and unnecessary 'background', often merely padding, the shorter work focuses the reader's mind and whatever is lost in terms of the 'long view' is more than compensated for by the attention of historical detail, relevancy and sharpness.

Lisa Fittko's modest account of her life in France in the early 1940s is welcome in more ways than one.

It fills a number of small gaps in our knowledge of the situation in France in the aftermath of the 1940 Nazi invasion. This has never been an easy period to get to grips with and is a source of continuing controversy in France. Fittko's 'on the spot' account, as it were, is thus very illuminating.

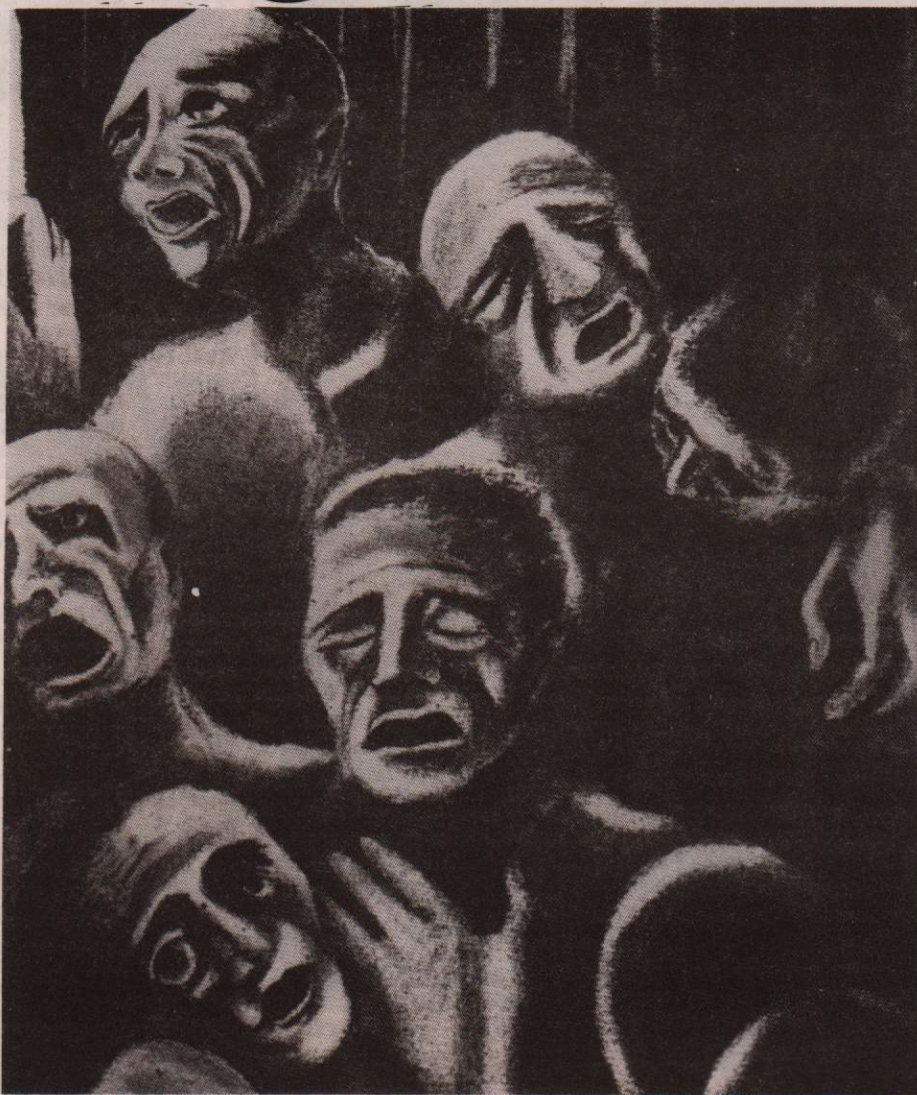
Her book is worth getting for one chapter only. She was one of the last people to see Walter Benjamin alive. This German-Jewish writer achieved posthumous fame for his work on aesthetics and politics, in particular an essay entitled *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Difficult at times to read, Benjamin trod a curious path which oscillated between the mysticism of the Jewish Kaballah and Marxism. His was a precarious and often lonely life and Fittko's loving description of him gives us a rare glimpse of a man perpetually living on the edge of a precipice.

The book's strongest theme is the absolute necessity for good political organisation. Courage, audacity and nerve are also needed but organisation is the extra ingredient without which they are wasted. There was no shortage of brave people around in the 1940s, but *without organisation* they died just the same as the cowards.

Born in 1909 in Berlin, Lisa Fittko's life would probably fill a number of volumes. A socialist and an anti-fascist, first in Germany then in France, she escaped to Cuba and then moved to the USA in 1948, where she has remained politically active despite her advanced years. In her book, she recounts one period in that busy life, the months when she guided political refugees over the Pyrenees, out of the clutches of the Nazis into Spain, then onto Lisbon and eventual safety in the USA.

Thousands of German anti-fascists were stranded in France at the collapse of the French and British forces. After the surrender, most of them tried to escape to the South or the South-West where the "unoccupied zone" offered them a precarious and, as it turned out, temporary safety.

Lisa Fittko and her husband were apprehended in Paris shortly after the surrender. The French authorities simply rounded up as many foreign refugees as they could and shipped them off to a concentration camp in Gurs near the border with Spain. As long-standing anti-fascists, socialists and Jews, Lisa and Hans Fittko were particularly vulnerable in the confusion and paranoia that swept through France at this time.



Those who didn't escape: "The Transport", Pierre Mania, Buchenwald, 1943

Paradoxically, this very confusion worked to their advantage. Conditions at Gurs were not good but just about bearable, even so, it was necessary to escape as they would almost certainly be handed over to the Germans who would kill them. The problem for the camp authorities was that they had no idea who was in charge. One day the prisoners noticed there were no guards! It wasn't clear why. Perhaps the guards simply went home when demobilised without waiting for replacements.

Whatever the reasons, the Fittkos and others were quick to take advantage of it. They walked out in freedom, but with no money, no papers and nowhere to go.

They eventually found a safe route over the Pyrenees, used by smugglers, but

"People fall into a trap; they watch while it slowly closes..."

Determination to get out of the trap demands every effort and suppresses all doubt about its feasibility."

before they could use it, they were asked by a political refugee organisation in Marseilles to act as guides to help other refugees escape over the mountains to Spain.

So, for almost a year, they postponed their own escape to help hundreds of others. Most of her book is taken up with this period, which came to an end in April 1941 when the time arrived for

them also to leave.

The situation, particularly for German political refugees, was extremely precarious. The puppet Vichy government worked hard to prove its credentials with its new Nazi masters, and informers were all too ready to denounce any suspicious person to the police. As a large number of the refugees were Jews, they were also the target for keen French anti-Semites, of whom there were many.

Documents and papers were a particular problem and numerous sections in the book deal with the search for, or the forging of the various travel and identification papers which were needed. Bribes sometimes worked, though not always in cash. Food was scarce, rations often inadequate, and the Panamanian Consul, for example, became well-known for his predilection for salami bribes instead of hard cash!

The Fittkos would assist with the search for papers and were accomplished forgers, but their main task was to take refugees over the Pyrenees to Spain. Based first in Banyuls-sur-Mer, they carefully and meticulously mapped out a route which, under the very noses of the French border guards, led to the Spanish town of Port Bou. Here, the fortunate refugee could, with the right papers, register with the local police and then proceed to Portugal and Lisbon.

One of those refugees was Walter Benjamin, whom Lisa Fittko had met briefly in Paris before the Nazi invasion. Benjamin's health was not good and the mountain path proved arduous for him. Fittko was impressed by his discipline, however. He would stop at exactly ten minute intervals for a brief rest, thus he was able to master the mountains and cross the border.

Under his arm, throughout the climb, he carried a brief case. In it was a manuscript, to him the most precious

thing in his life. "The manuscript is more important than I am," he explained to Fittko. Sadly, this manuscript has been lost. The night after his arrival in Port Bou, Benjamin committed suicide.

The Spanish police had told him that a new order had just arrived from Madrid allowing no one to enter Spain without a French exit visa. Benjamin, having no such document, was to be returned to France, where he would certainly be handed over to the Gestapo. He preferred instead to take his own life. Tragically, but not untypical of the times, the order was rescinded the very next day.

Not all refugee stories ended so disastrously; the Fittkos were able to help many to safety before an order came that the border area was to be cleared of all foreigners. They hastily left for Marseilles, eventually found themselves the necessary papers and travelled to Lisbon themselves, not over dark, stony mountain paths, but in the relative comfort of a French locomotive.

France at this time was a deeply divided country, the ignominious collapse of the French army and the collaboration of major political figures left a demoralised and confused population easy prey to all sorts of suspicions and prejudices.

However, reading this book it is impossible not to be struck by the number of times ordinary people, workers, clerks, peasants and even, sometimes, police, helped the refugees, often at great risk to themselves. Sometimes this manifested itself as simply "looking the other way", sometimes it meant using a rubber stamp which didn't mean anything but looked impressive.

In the Pyrenees, the Fittkos and their charges often mingled with early-morning vine-workers, attempting to blend in with them as they wound their way up the foothills. Not once were they exposed though it seems highly unlikely, in such a small rural community, that their activities were not common knowledge.

Lisa Fittko is, no doubt, a remarkable person, but you get the impression that this isn't all. Alongside the courage there is also political conviction and belief to which is also brought the knowledge and experience of 8 or 9 years underground activity in Germany. Time and time again, it was the German political emigrés who saved the day.

It was they who built up an organisation of safe houses, centres for forging papers, funds for bribing officials and escape routes. It was they who kept clearly in mind the political goal - the continuation of the fight against fascism and responded by organising. By contrast, the social-democrats we encounter in the book appear lost, unable to act, unable to believe that these things were happening. In Fittko's own words:

"People fall into a trap; they watch while it slowly closes. Some are numbed at the sight of their incomprehensible fate. Others are panic-stricken and run around in circles. The ones who have objectives search for a way out. Determination to get out of the trap demands every effort and suppresses all doubt about its feasibility."

Unfortunately, Fittko says little about the political make-up of the German emigrés in France; disputes and divisions, particularly when the Soviet Union is invaded, are mentioned but never detailed. This is a major fault with an otherwise excellent book.

Published by Northwestern University Press, USA, 1991.

Women as subjects, not objects



Gong Li plays Songlian in *Raise the Red Lantern*

Utterly unlike Hollywood

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews
Raise the red lantern

Set in China in the 1920s, "Raise the red lantern" shows the bitter fate of a teenage, orphan girl, Songlian, who marries a wealthy, older man. She is not his only wife; he already has three others, and Songlian is little more than a concubine to him.

She feels humiliated that she, a girl who has been educated, who has attended university, for a short time, should be relegated to the role of Fourth Mistress to a man she hardly knows.

But Songlian has no choice. With no family, and no means of support, marriage is the only career open to her.

The world she enters is comfortable, even luxurious. Songlian has her own rooms, and servants to wait on her. While she pleases the master, she can have what she wants, but only while she pleases him.

To do that, she must win out over the other women, all of whom want the master's favour for themselves.

Red lanterns are lit both within and outside the rooms of the woman with whom the master chooses to spend the night. As evening approaches, the wives gather to see who will be the lucky one tonight.

It's the world of the harem, though on a smaller scale, where the women have little to do but plot and scheme against each other in an effort to come out on top.

Songlian is bright, and she soon sees how to get the treatment she wants. Yet her efforts can't bring any meaning to her life.

"For all the comfort Song lian enjoys, she and the other wives are chattels, with no rights. They are slaves to a master's whim in a society where women are expected to produce sons, and where to give birth to a girl brings disgrace."

She doesn't love the husband who has bought her, and there is no-one else to care for. She cannot trust the other wives; the servants have their own axes to grind.

The women have no lives of their own, no outlet for their energies or their emotions, apart

from the pointless rivalry and jockeying for position amongst themselves. They are all out for what they can get; their lives a constant dissembling towards the master they must please, since he holds all the cards, having literally the power of life and death over them. It's easy to see why Songlian is driven half-mad by her life there.

The film is slow-moving and rather static, as befits this story of a rigid, enclosed world. After her arrival, Songlian is never again seen outside the walls of her master's house. Despite this, the film never seems claustrophobic.

It makes its points quietly but tellingly. For all the comfort Songlian enjoys, she and the other wives are chattels, with no rights. They are slaves to a master's whim in a society where women are expected to produce sons, and where to give birth to a girl brings disgrace.

The film is utterly unlike Hollywood movies, where filmmakers rely on sex, violence and special effects to stir up the audience. The meaning in this film is largely conveyed through close-ups of Songlian's face as she moves from indifference to fear, from defiance to despair.

Had the film been made in Hollywood, the emphasis would have been on the man, with the women all lumped together, instead of displaying, as they do here, their individual ways of coping with unbearable lives.

Kamikaze and culture

Television

By Colin Foster

Everyone has heard about the bad treatment of British soldiers in Japan's World War 2 prisoner-of-war camps, or on the Burma Railroad, and about the horrors of kamikaze warfare. But Japan's war atrocities against Westerners were small compared to its massacres and mistreatment of Chinese and Koreans, described in Gordon Brewer's BBC "Assignments" documentary on Monday 27 April.

Why are those war crimes getting attention now, 50 years after the event, rather than earlier? The TV programme did not say, but the major reason must be that history is written by the powerful.

After 1945, the big powers had no interest in publicising the grievances of Chinese or Koreans. Now South Korea and China have some weight in world trade; and, moreover, the US and Western Europe have an interest in boosting Asian grievances against their increasingly forceful competitor Japan.

In the TV programme, Singapore's ex-premier Lee

than any of the absolute monarchies of 16th-19th century Europe. In 1868 a section of the feudal elite carried through a sort of "revolution from above" which destroyed feudalism and opened the way for capitalist trade and industry.

It opened up Japanese society a bit, for a while; but the great mass of the people, the peasants, moved only from submission to feudal chiefs to submission to commercial landlords. By the late 1930s a fascist regime had smashed all trade unions and banned political parties. The entire population was organised (as it had been under feudalism) into groups of five households, with each head of household responsible for seeing that everyone in those households carried out government orders.

There were no checks on the raw brutality of this new industrialising capitalism, least of all when it seized on colonial peoples. When Japan seized Nanking from the Chinese nationalists in December 1937, the banks of the Yangtse river were clogged with corpses: they killed up to 300,000 people.

From Korea, a Japanese colony since the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-5, 200,000 women were conscripted as prostitutes for the Japanese army, and many thousands of men as slave building workers.

The Korean women were killed if they were found to be pregnant or to have VD; the men were often killed after building jobs to keep the sites secret.

Was it "Japanese culture"? The most poignant shot in the TV programme was of three young Japanese women tourists in Singapore, coming by chance upon a commemoration for the victims of Japanese wartime atrocities against the Chinese community in Singapore. The women were appalled and tearful at what their country had done.

How many young Britons would be equally willing to face the truth about the history of British imperialism if they came across a commemoration in India or Ireland, Dresden or Nairobi?

"Japan in 1941 was only 73 years out of a feudal regime tighter and more repressive than any of the absolute monarchies of 16th-19th century Europe."

Kuan Yew was given the last word, blaming the horrors on Japan's "culture". But imperialism has brought horrors whatever the "culture" of the imperial power, British or Belgian, French or American; and if the horrors of Japan's empire were extreme, and they were, that was a product not of "culture" or "national character" but of a regime of which the Japanese workers and peasants themselves were victims.

Japan in 1941 was only 73 years out of a feudal regime tighter and more repressive



Japan's war atrocities against Westerners were small compared to its massacres and mistreatment of Chinese and Koreans

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In the last two weeks readers of our paper and activists of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty have raised £801.86, or 10% of our fund total.

We aim to raise £8,000 by our Workers' Liberty '92

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You can help your socialist weekly by joining the 200 Club draw. Each month the winner of our 200 Club receives £100. All money in excess of the £100 prize goes to help Socialist Organiser. You can enter the 200 Club for as little as £1 per month. Details from SO sellers or the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is organising a paper-selling drive. As the days get longer and the weather gets better Socialist Organiser sellers will be increasing sales on streets and estates. Why not help us get the socialist message across? If you would like to take a



few copies of Socialist Organiser to sell, write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty public forums

Wednesday 13 May
"Support the Tubeworkers", Davenant Centre, Whitechapel, East London, 8.00

Monday 18 May
"Which way for the Labour left?",

Students

"Where now for the student movement?"
London Left Unity meeting. Speaker Janine Booth, 6.00, Tuesday 12 May, London College of Printing

Labour Left Campaign Group Conference

Leeds, Saturday 20 June

Students for Bernie Grant

Thursday 7 May
SOAS, ULU Complex, London, 7.30

"Where now for Labour?"
Monday 11 May

Wallasey Unemployed Centre, 7.45

Wednesday 20 May
"Lessons from the German Workers", London AWL Forum. Calthorpe Arms, Gray's Inn Road, 7.30

Thurs 21 May
"What next for the

Speaker Bernie Grant. Grosvenor Ball Room, Wallasey, 7.30

"Where now for Labour?"

Thursday 14 May
Newcastle LPS meeting, St John's Church Hall, Granger Street, 7.30

Socialist Campaign Group meeting
Tuesday 19 May with Bernie Grant, Ken Livingstone, Alice Mahon. Civic Hall, Leeds, 7.30

The Unions

Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference. 18-19 July, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London.

Labour left?", Swarthmore Centre, Leeds, 7.30

"The politics of the AWL", Brighthelm Centre, Brighton, 7.30

"What is working-class culture?", City Halls, Glasgow, 7.30

The case for socialist feminism

Alliance for Workers' Liberty Meetings

Thursday 7 May
North London College, 1.00.
Speaker: Jeni Bailey
Poly of North London, Kentish Town site, 2.30.

Speaker: Janine Booth
Poly of East London, Maryland Site, 7.00.
Speaker: Janine Booth

Friday 8 May
Richmond College, 1.00.
Speaker: Alice Sharp
Camberwell Art College, lunchtime.
Speaker: Jeni Bailey

Tuesday 12 May
Liverpool Institute of Education, 12.30.
Speaker: Alice Sharp
Luton College, 12.00.
Speaker: Janine Booth

Wednesday 13 May
Canterbury Tech College, 1.00.
Speaker: Jeni Bailey
Boston College, lunchtime.
Speaker: Alice Sharp

Thursday 14 May
Essex University, 6.30.
Speaker: Jill Mountford

Royal Holloway and Bedford, 6.30.
Speaker: Alice Sharp
Kent University, 1.00.
Speaker: Jeni Bailey

Friday 15 May
Lancaster University, 1.00.
Speaker: Alice Sharp

Left Unity and Women's Fightback

The Case for Socialist Feminism Dayschool

Saturday 9th May
11.30-5.00
Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Square, London (nearest tube: Euston)
£2 (waged/grant); £1 (unwaged/no grant)
Details from: 071-639 7967

The politics of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

We live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private. Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private". Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat. Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decreases the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship of productivity and profitability. From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years; the working to death - it

is officially admitted by the government! - of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism; and also the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" areas like Bangladesh and parts of Africa. From that comes the cultural flight and barbarism of a society force-fed on profitable pap. From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" and a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture. From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions. From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principles of anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and

humanly irrational market forces. From it come wars and genocides; two times this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it comes racism, imperialism, and fascism. The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produces societies like Britain now where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents. From the exploitation of wage-labour comes our society in which the rich who with their servants and agents hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and to prevent real democratic self-control developing with the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid

propaganda or - as in the 1984-85 miners' strike - savage and illegal police violence, as they need to. They have used fascist gangs when they need to, and will use them again, if necessary. Against this system we seek to convince the working class - the wage slaves of the capitalist system - to fight for socialism. Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality, and fraternity. Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals. We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. The working class can win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by

overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power - that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence - now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system - a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges. Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China. What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing. Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane,

democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all - we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism. Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth. To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

INDUSTRIAL

Tragedy at Armthorpe

Rob Dawber and Mark Serwotka report from South Yorkshire, Saturday 2 May

We arrived just in time to join the march around Armthorpe and following the mass meeting to decide what to do next at Markham Main. The decision had been to go back to work and put the pit into the Extended Review Procedure. About 70 miners marched behind the banner. In front went the band and leading the four branch officials.

We marched round some of the streets of pit houses at Armthorpe whose occupants came out to see us go by. There was little enthusiasm. One old miner was called to join the march, "Come on Bob". Bob didn't come but he smiled and raised a clenched fist.

Here are workers who want to fight but feel the whole weight of 13 years of Tory government, the prospect of another 5, extensive anti-union legislation, the TUC's and Kinnoch's "New Realism" and their own defeat in 1984/5.

Key Coates, Branch Secretary said of the decision to called off the action: "The branch com-

mittee recommendation was unanimously accepted and we have to resume normal working. If the pit is accepted into the Extended Review Procedure we have 6 to 9 months but only if the pit is profitable week by week."

British Coal had taken only 4 minutes to deliver their statement at the Review meeting on Friday 1 May. They made it clear that work would continue on the 2 faces left only so long as this "generated a positive cash flow" and the workforce was "co-operative". The private contractor that had caused the dispute were now to be removed as no development work was needed in a pit about to be closed.

We asked one miner what he thought of Scargill's call for action. "At first I thought it was good but the more I think about it I reckon it was just a knee-jerk reaction. Striking can't benefit us now". Scargill had said he was in favour of a national strike against the closure. Kevin Taylor, Armthorpe NUM Delegate, had explained the background earlier, when new legal moves had been made:

"We've had to write to AMCO (Amalgamated Mining Company) and promise them

that in no way would we instruct, advise, hassle or interfere in any way, shape or form with their workers going to work. We also had to say that anything we've said or done in the past that might be seen as interference was hereby rescinded."

AMCO is the private contracting firm brought in to do the drive (preparing the face for production) on 2 faces at Markham Main. The NUM branch won a majority, 75% of its members to fight such privatisation. This ballot was disqualified on a legal technicality. The next ballot got 81%. 24 hour stoppages, 1 shift stoppage, and 2 three day stoppages were called to fight the contractors. Each time AMCO workers, all NUM members, refused to cross picket lines.

British Coal responded by putting Markham Main into the Review Procedure - that is considering it for closure. The Armthorpe branch then went for support from the rest of Yorkshire. This was achieved in a ballot declared on 24 April.

While the Yorkshire NUM was considering its next move new legal procedures began resulting in the Penal Notice delivered to Armthorpe NUM at the end of the week.

Steve Taylor, Armthorpe



NUM delegate continued: "The Penal Notice was sent to all 4 branch officials and the branch committee. It said that we had to stop interfering with AMCO workers going about their work. Failure to comply meant unlimited fines or jail. That was why we had to write that letter to AMCO."

We put it to Steve that meant that they were allowed to fight contractors but only so long as they didn't do anything to hurt them. And that while they were allowed to fight British Coal there was nothing they could do against a decision to bring in contractors if the law as followed.

He agreed. "We would have had to ballot the AMCO workers to get their support. But since the aim was to get private contractors out they'd be voting to put themselves out of jobs. Even though they've been with us ever time I don't think we'd get that".

"The Penal Notice did say we were allowed to picket lawfully. We were waiting for legal advice to see if that meant we could picket AMCO workers."

Most miners we spoke to were despondent. They couldn't see a way to fight though they wanted to. They'd had everything thrown at them and felt they could only consider earning money before they were made redundant.

"If British Coal refuse us the Extended Review Procedure then we've got a dispute at the Yorkshire level of the union. We might be able to buy some time if we get into it." Steve Taylor added.

Messages of support and donations to: Key Coates NUM Branch Secretary, 98 Tranmoor Lane, Armthorpe, Doncaster, South Yorks.

Note: our apologies for giving Steve Taylor the wrong name last issue.

Why the fightback collapsed

What are we to make of the collapse of the fightback against privatisation at Armthorpe, the encroachment of contractors, the threat to conditions and jobs? That the working class does not want to fight? Or cannot? That the defeat of the Labour challenge - or government - means that no resistance is possible?

That another five years of the Tories means we can only put our hands up in despair? Is the working class disappearing, or what there is left does not want to fight?

If there is anyone in the labour movement who would answer to these questions, they do not work at Markham Main. For sure the pressure of a Tory onslaught, and the defeat of Labour, has taken its toll, but faced with a battle the workers twice answered "yes" to struggle.

gle.

Each time British Coal upped the stakes - challenges to the legality of the ballot, closure threats, legal writs, penal notices - the workers at Markham Main appealed to the next layer of their union, the Yorkshire NUM.

Faced with recent climb-downs, and defeats, the outcome was not certain, but in the event the vote for action in defence of Armthorpe NUM was won. The stage was set for scaling up the action.

But this did not happen. Despite expectations the Yorkshire NUM went for more talks. Markham Main was threatened with closure for having fought privatisation, and the full-timers insisted we should talk about it!

A charitable interpretation could have been that since the vote throughout Yorkshire was not "overwhelming", then the NUM needed talks to "expose" British Coal's intentions to doubting members. If that was

true, then the time was not used that way. Instead, Armthorpe NUM were left to flounder and to worry about legal problems while the full-timers at Barnsley fiddled.

On Friday 1 May British Coal felt emboldened to go in for the kill. The announced closure: therefore no more need for the contractors who were developing coal faces, but continued production so long as the workers were "co-operative", and produced a profit week by week.

Arthur Scargill was asked by the media to respond to this decision. He said he favoured national strike action. Good, that is what is needed; but there is no evidence this is to be organised, or even that it is on the agenda of the next NUM meeting.

On Saturday, before heading up to Doncaster for the May Day march, Armthorpe NUM members voted to return to work as normal. It was not they who were found wanting.

The London Brick Company ballot for action

By a TGWU member

We're continually being told that the recession is over and that the house buying/building market is picking up, as a result of us now having this stable government. Well that's not the impression that the workers at Stewartby's London Brick Company are under.

As the stockpile of bricks in

the yard soars through the fifty million mark (enough to build a city the size of Nottingham) the inevitable call for redundancies has been announced.

52 jobs are to go this month, the majority of which have already been agreed upon by the union (T&G). However, in the Burning Department, the company are attempting to take advantage of the redundancy situation to bring in new working

arrangements which would remove cover during holiday, absenteeism and sickness periods. The Burners maintain that the question of work practice should be discussed as a completely separate issue to redundancies, and workers should not be taken in by the scare tactics being used by the company.

One Shop Steward from the Burning Department remarked

last week, "In the highly likely event of cover being required, the burners will be expected to work extra overtime shifts to cover. This is totally unacceptable when our workmates are losing their jobs."

The company are calling for 12 redundancies in the Burning Department, while the Burners maintain that the figure must be a maximum of 10.

It's quite obvious to see that the union bureaucrats are either too scared or simply just not willing to lead a fightback. After all, they rolled over and accepted the redundancies without a murmur in the first place. So, active stewards have taken it upon themselves to lead the fight. They've rallied round their workmates and have forced a ballot over industrial action to combat the implementation of both the job cuts and new working practice.

The lesson from the London Brick Company are clear. Rank and file trade unionists must not be afraid to take up the fightback and must not sit around and wait for the nod from the union bureaucrats, after all, it might never come.

UCATT corruption

By The Building Worker Group

Albert Williams, ex-UCATT General Secretary, retired on February 12th. He takes with him his ill gotten gains of a union house, car and two pensions. Some reward for his years of gross disservice to the UCATT membership!

We say good riddance to this particular piece of you know what. But he leaves behind him: a loathsome legacy of deceit, dishonesty and double dealing in UCATT; an industry which murders three building workers a week, on average, and the biggest cover up operation of the most widespread evidence of ballot rigging and corruption ever witnessed in the history of the UK trade union and labour movement.

Last year the building industry and unions, the general labour movement, and the country for a period, were awash with allegations and accusations of ballot rigging and corruption in UCATT. Much of this carried in the National and local press.

Then on May 8th 1991 at 8.30pm, the dam broke, when a Ch4 Dispatches programme presented clear evidence of widespread ballot rigging and corruption in UCATT. It also clearly showed that the General Secretary, A Williams, and the Executive Council of UCATT were guilty of orchestrating the ballot rigging and most of the corruption.

The same week in May saw a "new" Executive Council elected. This so called new executive contained two of the "old" executive that had been clearly implicated in the corruption on the Ch4 programme, and in quite a few exposes since. One is now the general Secretary of UCATT, G Brumwell. You'll note the funny rewards system in UCATT!

Almost the first thing this "new" Executive Council did was to set up "The UCATT Inquiry", to allegedly investigate the ballot rigging and corruption in UCATT. As we wrote at the time, it was an is a classic bureaucratic manoeuvre to take the issue of ballot rigging and corruption out of the public eye and the gaze of the UCATT membership and to place the evidence in the very safe hands of two lawyers, John Hand QC and Jennifer Eady. They conducted the Inquiry. Then the Executive Council thought they would issue a severely watered down and meaningless report of the Inquiry, and that would be that.

But they had seriously miscalculated the general reaction of the exposes and the anger of the UCATT membership in particular. They realised they wouldn't get away with a watered down report at that time, so they played for more time and executed another classic bureaucratic manoeuvre. They declared that what now

happens to "The UCATT Inquiry" is now in the, even safer, hands of the UCATT General Council, who meet only once in a blue, and we mean blue, moon and who up until now have always carried out the orders of the General Secretary and Executive Council.

So we had the evidence and exposes of ballot rigging and corruption culminating in the Ch4 programme last year and subsequent revelations. Then "The UCATT Inquiry" was officially ended on November 15th last year, with masses of evidence being given by the UCATT membership.

Since then all the membership has heard is a deafening silence. This means in anyone's language that the official cover up of the evidence of ballot rigging and corruption initiated with "The UCATT Inquiry" in June of last year, continues. This means the corruption and denial of democracy also continues.

It means those who are guilty of some of the most heinous examples of corruption in the history of the working classes in these islands are being protected by what must now be termed an official wall; a conspiracy of silence.

It is also obvious that those UCATT organisations, left, right and centre, who are protecting the guilty by this wall of silence or by eventually releasing a meaningless, watered down report, must indeed by protecting those among them who are the guilty parties. The main orchestrators and purveyors of corruption and ballot rigging in UCATT.

We now challenge the UCATT Executive and General Councils and the new General Secretary, G Brumwell, to come clean by authorizing and ordering that a fully comprehensive report of "The UCATT Inquiry" is published and made readily available to the membership via Shop Stewards, union branches and regional councils.

This report must name the guilty to have any credibility. They must then be banished from the trade union and labour movement for life.

We ask all site workers and UCATT members who read this to support and campaign for these demands.

Finally we remind all that the type of corruption and cover up going on in UCATT is a cancerous disease and as such democracy in the union is now critically ill. This illness is now entering the terminal stage and unless the disease is incisively removed by full exposure and punishment of the guilty, then democracy will be well and truly dead in UCATT. The consequences of this for building workers is incalculable and certainly continuing to be measured in the blood of those killed and seriously injured on site.

Yes, in the construction industry, the corruption and denial of democracy in the unions and on site costs us and our families very dearly.

The Industrial Front

● The civil service union CPSA will probably ballot its members next week on a new pay deal, greatly extending "performance pay" and including provision for Departments and Agencies to break away from national pay bargaining. Chuck it out!

● Strike ballots are taking place this week against cuts and redundancies in Southwark

(south London) council's Education and Leisure and Recreation departments. The underlying issue is the council's new redeployment procedure, a charter for tinpot dictators. A big yes vote is expected.

● The first of a series of one-day strikes by West Midlands Travel bus drivers took place on Saturday 2 May. The action was an overwhelming success, with 90% of West Midlands Travel buses off the road.

The action is in support of the drivers' pay claim, following a ballot that threw out the com-

pany's offer of £125 plus a "top-up" tied to inflation.

However, the action has been weakened by other bus companies, who have drawn up plans to run extra services when the West Midlands buses are on strike. One of the companies doing this is Midland Red West, which (like West Midlands) is TGWU-organised, and where drivers also had a pay dispute.

It is obviously vital that the West Midlands strikers get together with their opposite numbers in Midland Red West.

Messages of support to: John Partridge, TGWU, Victoria Street, West Bromwich.

Tube ballot looks good

By a Central Line guard

As we go to press on Tuesday 5 May, the result of the ballot of RMT union members on London Underground over the Company Plan is not yet known, but a big majority for action is expected.

RMT leaders should use this majority to force London

Underground management to negotiate over withdrawing the plan, and to put the pressure on the leaders of the other unions, ASLEF and TSSA, to ballot their members as well.

If RMT stick to their guns and make it clear that they will organise a full-scale strike unless the Company Plan is withdrawn, then they have a chance of both bending management and pulling the other unions into line.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Support the Vascroft strikers:

Building workers say "enough is enough"



Why you should go to Workers' Liberty '92:

Ideas that can win!

"Ideas for Freedom" is the title of Workers' Liberty '92, the annual summer event organised by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

"Ideas for Freedom" will run from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 July at Caxton House, north London. Our main aim is to initiate discussions which help to rearm the socialist movement politically. We believe our ideas stand up well under close scrutiny - so the Alliance for Workers' Liberty invites socialists from other points of view to debate out the issues.

"Ideas for Freedom" also hopes to provide a forum for activists from the trade unions, Labour Party, and student movement to discuss the issues which directly affect them.

A professionally staffed crèche is available, and so are accommodation, entertainment, and food. Activists from the AWL will be organising transport from

many areas.

For more details, phone Mark on 071-639 7965 or send a stamped addressed envelope to Workers' Liberty '92, AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

"Ideas for Freedom"

Basic courses to introduce various aspects of Marxism include:

- Marxist economics;
- Classics of socialist literature;
- Ideas from everyday life.

We aim to answer:

- How does capitalism work?
- What will socialism look like?
- How do we get socialism when the bosses control the media?
- Does "human

nature" prevent socialism?

- Why are Marxists atheists?
- How can workers win?

Further issues include:

- The prospects for socialists after the General Election;
- How to defeat the racists and racism;
- What is the answer to the conflict in Ireland?;
- What should socialists say about pornography?

The Israeli Trotskyist Michel Warshawsky will be attending Workers' Liberty 92 to discuss the conflict in the Middle East. A French socialist will speak on the rise of the fascist National Front in France.

Other debates include:

- Cuba: socialism on one island?
- Abortion rights in Ireland;
- Should Scotland become independent?;
- What do we say to "Essex man"?
- Will the union leaders always betray us?
- Was Keynes right?

A ticket for Workers' Liberty '92 is cheaper if you buy now. Rates for three days are £16 (waged), £11 (students and low-waged), and £7 (unwaged). Subtract £1 unwaged/£2 other for tickets for Saturday and Sunday only.

Send cheques and P/Os, payable to "Workers' Liberty", to Workers' Liberty '92, AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

"This is a battle for basic trade union principles, something every working class activists and socialist should support".

This is how one of the strikers at the Vascroft site at Harrington Gardens, West London, explained their cause.

The strike started on Tuesday 28 April, against the victimisation of a steward.

Chris, the steward in question, explained, "Wages and health and safety on the site are a disgrace, so a couple of weeks ago we decided to get some activity going."

"We held a meeting and occupied the canteen for six hours until management agreed to union recognition."

"But within a couple of days the intimidation started. On Monday 27 April I was sacked, shortly after being seen giving out UCATT union forms."

"I supposed I was privileged. The last union activist they sacked got only a couple of minutes to get off site. I was given two hours".

The next day a flying picket shut down the job and another nearby Vascroft site.

"It's the first time in twenty years in the building industry in London that I have seen a display of solidarity like that. It obviously got Vascrofts worried", remarked one of the strikers.

A leaflet put out by the Joint Sites Committee - an unofficial body that aims to link up building workers across London - has publicised the demands of the strikers. They are:

- * Union recognition;
- * Five o'clock finish;
- * Increase in pay;
- * Overtime for working Saturday.

As one of the strikers put, it "We want every one of the sacked men back, and we want pay for our strike days so that we can walk back with our heads held high".

The strikers have got management worried because they have been prepared to use the methods that are needed to win: flying pickets, solidarity strikes, and unofficial action. "We have turned away 50% of the deliveries, at least", explained one striker, who then told SO how the plumbers' subbie had threatened to make him personally liable under the new Tory laws against unofficial action.

"I just told him to sue me! He could have everything I've got - my TV, my furniture - but it wouldn't even pay his legal fees".

One picket wanted to make it clear that the strikers were absolutely delighted at the support they have received from rank and file trade unionists.

"We've had fantastic support from everywhere we've gone - well, almost everywhere. They weren't too keen on us at Congress House when we turned up on Friday for the official TUC May Day celebration."

"The TUC and the rest of the movement are as alike as chalk and cheese".

Support the picket: 7.15am onwards, Harrington Gardens, Gloucester Road underground, Kensington, London. Telephone: 081-343 9172.