

# Time-warp witch hunters



## Editorial 1

THE WEST won the cold war. The Stalinist Russian empire is dead. All the stranger then is the new campaign of the Murdoch press against its "agents." They do not target people who have been — or are said to have been — spies, or saboteurs for the Russian state, but people who are *said to have been regarded* by the Russian secret service as "agents of influence." Michael Foot is the latest example denounced on the front page of the *Sunday Times* as an agent of the KGB, the Stalinist secret service.

What is an "agent of influence"?

- Someone who would see certain things from a viewpoint paralleling that of the Russians
- or someone who would chat occasionally about public affairs in Britain to someone posing as a press attaché at the USSR embassy in London
- or anyone who believed dialogue with Russians on any level was better than the frozen incomprehensions of the cold war.

And *who says* that the Russian secret service regarded Michael Foot — or former Transport and General Workers' Union leader, Jack Jones — as their "agent of influence"? Oleg Gordievsky, who defected from the USSR to Britain in 1985 after having been a double agent. That means that *the British secret service*, which runs Mr Gordievsky, *says so*. What Mr Gordievsky says about Michael Foot must be very old news to these people. So why is it "released" now?

Surely the point is to discredit the Labour Party? Some of the loonies in the secret service see even the Tony Blair-led Labour Party as a threat! It is a very strange business. During the cold war real spies like Anthony Blunt were for many years shielded from exposure. Now that the Stalinist Russian empire is dead and rotten, people like Foot, Jack Jones and others are in retrospect being pilloried for

- their *opinions* on international affairs;
- for talking to people they knew not as KGB but as press attachés;
- for what Russian agents eager to talk up their own "successes", said about them in secret dispatches home, decades ago;
- for having tried to build private bridges across the frozen wastes of the cold war;
- for having been against potentially suicidal nuclear weapons.

This is true witch-hunting in the grand McCarthyite style. In the 50s, the McCarthyite witch-hunters in the USA identified people as "communists" or "agents", or "fellow travellers" on a points system — so many points against them if they were interested in "causes" the Stalinists manipulated then, like equality for black people, for example, or if they were against nuclear weapons, or had

been "premature anti-fascists"; supporting the Spanish republic against the fascists, for example, before, in 1941, anti-fascism became the official ideology of the American government. People were pilloried for *knowing* or talking to other people, for having attended a meeting, for refusing to report on their friends to the FBI.

Much of what is said against Michael Foot and others stinks of that system.

The trouble of course is that large layers of the left *were* "soft on Stalinism"; they sometimes felt it incumbent upon them to excuse or not make too much of a fuss about the crimes of Stalinism lest they "play into the hands of the warmongers in the USA"; they sometimes opposed what the right in this country was saying with a hear-no-evil-about-Russian-socialism policy. A large layer of the left, much of it influenced by the writings of the late Isaac Deutscher, accepted that, despite everything, the Stalinist system was progressive, and better than the bourgeois democracies. There were idiotic things like Tony Benn's Chesterfield CLP writing to Gorbachev, the reforming Stalinist dictator, as to a comrade. *Socialist Organiser* kept up a running criticism of such things over many years.

But if the sort of thing Michael Foot is pilloried for is to be used like this, then it cannot be confined to the Labour left, or to people like Foot, who plainly acted out of honest political conviction when, for example, he helped create the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. And he was right to back CND!

Large sections of the trade union right — people like Bill Sirs of the Iron and Steel Confederation, who were not in any sense left-wing — had connections with the institutions of the Stalinist states. The TUC had links with the Russian and East European police-state pseudo unions.

Perhaps the most grotesque example of what this meant occurred in August 1980 during the birth of Solidarnosc — by way of mass illegal strikes — in Poland. The TUC had arranged before August to send a delegation to visit the Polish "trade unions", which — backed by police terror — functioned like the unions in every Stalinist country did, as a worker-controlling agency of the police state.

What these unions were was startlingly shown when, in response to the 1980 strikes in the shipyards there, the official "union" leader in Gdansk told the strikers to go back to work or he'd call in the tanks and have them shot down — as workers in Gdansk had been shot down a decade before, in December 1970.

Even after Poland was paralysed by strikes, the TUC refused to call off its planned visit to its strike-breaking Polish "colleagues." The visit was finally cancelled by the Poles, who were busy just then. ▽

Nor was it popular then on the left to raise the demand in the British labour movement — as we did — that the British trade unions should break off all connections with the Stalinist police-state pseudo-unions and support the persecuted underground embryonic workers' movements in Russia and elsewhere.

This whole pro-Stalinist current of labour movement opinion, left and right, was always grievously wrong and harmful. It is too late now to do anything about it except learn the lessons. The secret service and its lying "agents of sensation and influence" like Oleg

Gordievsky, were never the right people to do anything about it! These long-time backers of the South African apartheid regime, to take only one example of their criminality, are not the right people now! If, with the help of their stooges in the press, they want to start a grand inquisition on the past opinions and attitudes to international affairs of honourable men like Michael Foot and Jack Jones, then their purpose can only be to discredit the Labour Party.

The labour movement must condemn these time-warp witch-hunters. ☐

# Build a mass movement for the Welfare State!

## Editorial 2

THIS IS the age, it seems, of the single issue campaign. People who are disillusioned with politics, or who can see little reason to expect much from the official politicians, have created powerful single issue campaigns. The campaign against "live exports" is the latest example, the anti-poll tax campaign another. There are many low-profile, small-octane campaigns up and down the country concerned with various issues of health and welfare, from nursery provision to hospital closures.

The proliferation of such campaigns is a symptom of the unravelling of mainstream Labour politics into its component parts. Around the core of the labour movement many issues of welfare, civil rights and general public policy were woven and integrated into a general enterprise of reform. One price we pay for the wretched quality of our present Labour leaders is that many elements that should be woven together into a powerful, labour

movement-led, anti-Tory crusade are not woven together at all.

The single most pressing issue neglected by the Labour leaders is, of course, the Health Service, and the welfare state in general. Opinion polls show that most people do not want the welfare state destroyed, and detest especially what the Tories are doing to the health service. Yet, because the leaders of the Labour Party do not fight the Tories and because they give every evidence of agreeing with the monstrous premise of Tory policy — that "we" cannot afford state-of-the-art health care for the poor — there is no effective nationwide campaign to *stop* the Tories doing what they are doing.

The creation of such a campaign is one of the great immediate tasks facing the left. We cannot let it happen that because we have such wretched Labour and trade union leaders, the Tories succeed in finally destroying the Health Service and the Welfare State!

What can be done? The thing to do is to create a great, mass, integrating "single issue" campaign for the health service and the welfare state. The left can do that and, doing it, rouse the labour movement. The Welfare State Network has begun to do it. And there is a model for what needs urgently to be done — the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Against the danger of nuclear war and in pursuit of the policy of unilateral British renunciation of the hydrogen bomb, people like Bertrand Russell, Michael Foot, Canon John Collins and Peggy Duff created a powerful single issue campaign. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in marches, rallies and meetings on the issue. A generation of youth was radicalised on this question, learning to see the threat of nuclear war in the context of imperialism and of the class societies which generated the threat of nuclear war.

Fifty thousand, then a hundred thousand, then a hundred-and-fifty thousand people took part in spectacular marches for nuclear disarmament each Easter weekend in the late 50s and early 60s.

Beginning as a single-issue campaign — and at the beginning CND were denounced as "ultra-left" by the biggest force on the left, the Communist Party — CND spread its influence into the labour movement, into the trade unions and into the Labour Party, becoming a great moral crusade against the inhuman, suicidal lunacy of nuclear weapons. In the early '80s, when the cold war reached freezing point again, CND organised enormous demonstrations once more.

The same sort of movement can be created in defence of the health service and the welfare state. Since the leaders of the labour movement won't do it, *the left must do it*.

*We already have unorganised mass support in the form of millions who say they hate and oppose what the Tories are doing.* Unfortunately, they do not know what to do about it. We can reach and organise such people. How can we do it? By petitions, marches, meetings, literature, circulars. A network already exists in many localities in the form of local campaigns on particular issues: these can be linked up nationally and each made more effective by asso-

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

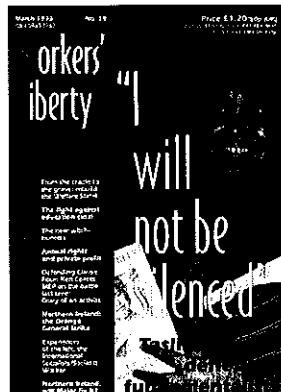
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ciation with the others.

We can reach the youth — not only in their capacity as people who may one day need a good health service, or who now need the right to benefit payments between the ages of 16 and 18, but in their capacity as caring idealistic human beings who want to live in a decent society, not in this pig-eat-pig society the Tories have created.

*We can create a great moral crusade against the Tories and in support of the ideas of health, welfare and human solidarity.*

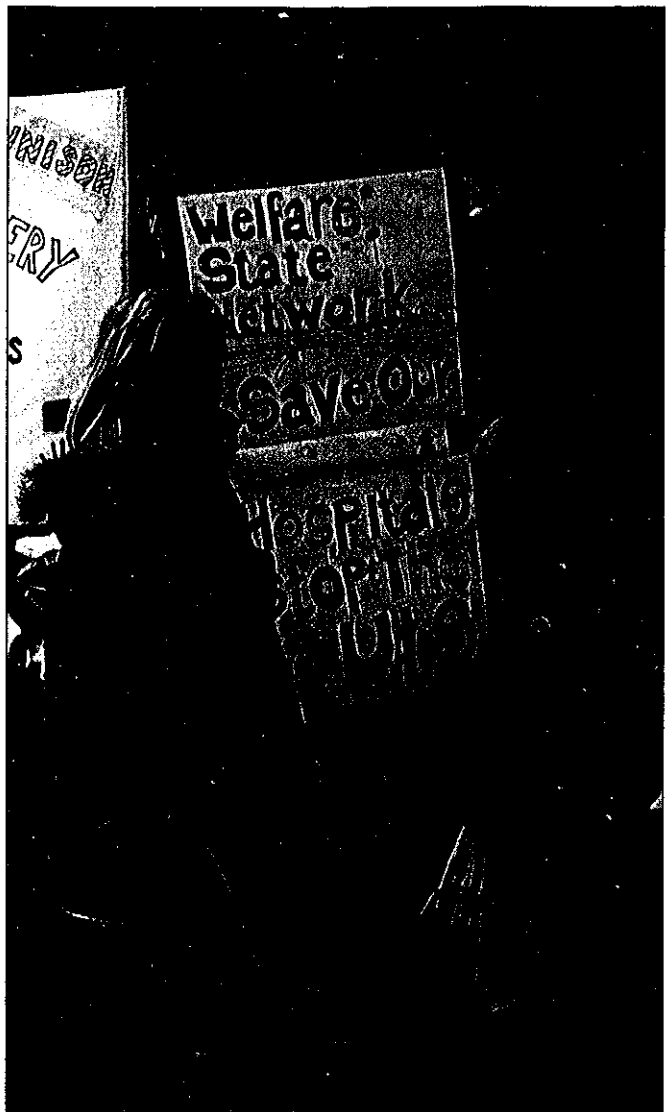
For too long nothing has been done because too many people felt that nothing much could be done.

Yes it can!

The Welfare State Network — which held a successful conference in London in mid-February — has already proved that things on this front can be made to move, that “something” can be done. The circulation of its paper, *Action for Health and Welfare*, proves that there are many kinds of people willing to respond to even a minimal lead.

But a great deal more needs to be done — a much bigger, and more powerful, and more high-profile campaign needs to be built.

The main thing that stands between us and such a campaign is the inability of many on the left to *believe* it can be done. It is up to those of us who have started to do it to show them. We will! But the campaign needs every help it can get. Join the fight to stop the Tories destroying the NHS and the welfare state. Join the crusade for health, welfare and human solidarity! ☐



## Take Action!

### Affiliate to the Welfare State Network!

The Welfare State Network aims to build a national movement to defend services, benefits, and public sector jobs. It publishes the newspaper *Action for Health and Welfare*.

- Affiliation is £25 for unions and Labour Parties, £10 for unemployed/pensioners groups
- Individual subscriptions £5 or £3 (unwaged)
- Affiliates receive 10 copies of *Action*

Write to WSN, c/o Southwark TUSU, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17.

# Stop this legal lynching!

## Editorial 3

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL is on death row in Pennsylvania, USA, for a murder he did not commit. He has been there for the last thirteen years.

Jamal was framed for the killing of a police officer, Daniel Faulkner. He was convicted even though four witnesses said they saw someone else shoot Faulkner.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's life is now in imminent danger. In January 1995 Republican Tom Ridge won the state governorship of Pennsylvania and has pledged to sign the death warrants of those on death row.

There are currently 170 men and women on Pennsylvania's death row. This is a barbaric business for a so-called “civilised” state to be involved in. But what is worse is that “justice” is not dispensed evenly. Lethal “justice” is meted out disproportionately to the poor and to black people. Throughout the US, 40% of those on death row are black, although black people are only 12.6% of the population.

The planned state killing of Mumia Abu-Jamal is nothing more than an attempt at a legal lynching. Jamal was framed because he is a former Black Panther and currently a supporter of the black nationalist/religious organisation, MOVE.



MOVE became a well-known organisation nearly ten years ago, when in May 1985 the Philadelphia police department dropped a bomb on a MOVE commune, burning to death 11 MOVE members, including five black children. The bombing followed a 12 hour siege during which a police SWAT squad had fired 7,000 rounds of ammunition into the building. What “reason” did the police give for this full-scale war

confrontation? They had, they said, received complaints about loud music, and about litter scattered on the pavement outside.

The police were out to destroy MOVE. The powerful Pennsylvania police lobby has never stopped demanding the death of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Tom Ridge is likely to give them what they want.

● You can join the campaign to stop them killing Mumia Abu-Jamal. Contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London, WC1 3XX.