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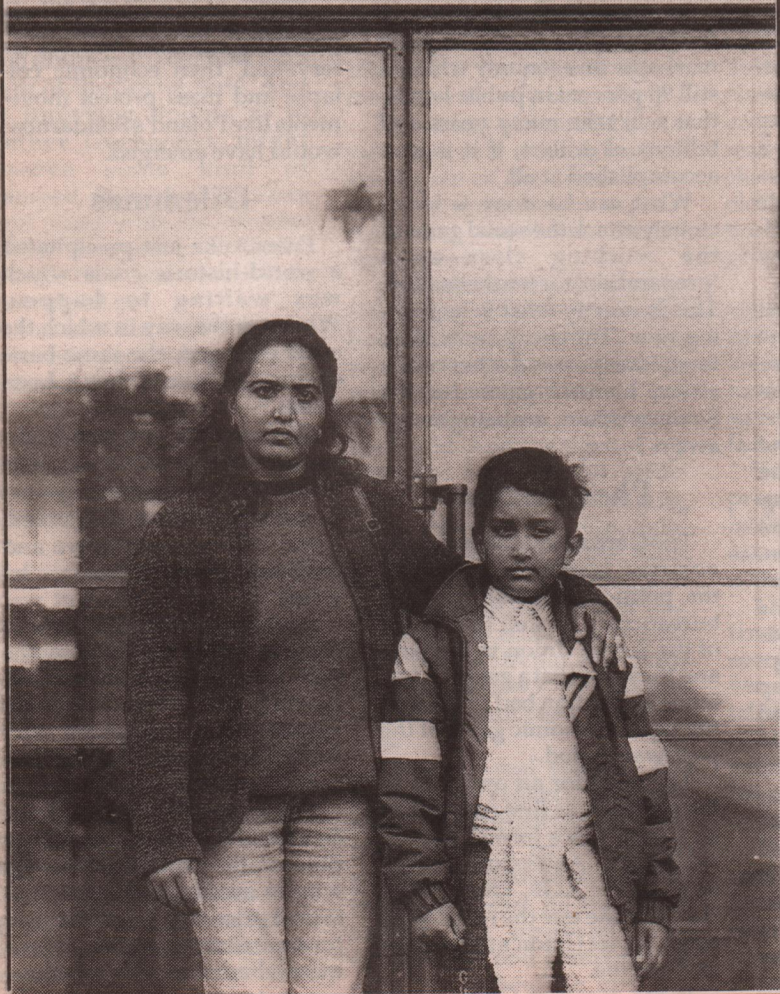
Jan 18, 1992

socialist **OUTLOOK**

Throw out Baker's racist Asylum Bill



IMMIGRATION APPEALS



Mark Salmon

Special feature pages 7,8,9 & 10

Throw out Major's racist gang!

Gorby: the sorcerer's apprentice?

By Phil Hearse

FOR MANY on the left the 'Gorbymania' of three or four years ago has been transformed into utter disillusion. Gorbachev seems like the person who brought the Soviet Union down.

Edward Pearce, the Guardian's perverse wet Tory columnist, heaped scorn on Gorbachev for surrendering everything to the Americans internationally and giving too much democracy away at home. But many well to Pearce's left share the same theme: Gorbachev was a disaster.

Obviously Gorbachev's perestroika totally failed. To see why it is necessary to look beyond the twistings and turnings of particular Gorbachev policies over the last couple of years: failure was built into the whole project right from the start.

Radical

Perestroika, a radical renewal and restructuring, was intended at the beginning, to *revive* the old bureaucratic-command system, not kill it off. It did not start out as a plan to bring capitalism to the Soviet Union.

Perestroika was aimed at a partial democratisation of the system *within the framework of the political monopoly of the Communist Party (CPSU)*; and at a marketisation of the economy *within the framework of continued national planning*.

Nearly seven years later it is difficult to remember these first objectives of perestroika. Why was failure written into the whole plan?

The democratic opening provided by the first initial glasnost measures brought the *de facto* recognition of the legality of parties other than the CPSU, and a tremendous release of nationalist sentiment in the republics.

Millions of people who had never been able to speak out

freely grabbed glasnost with both hands. Once that had happened an irreversible momentum towards elections with alternative parties and platforms developed.

But the ability of the CPSU to put the brake on the democratisation movement was constrained by the visible failure of its economic policy.

Attempts at marketisation of the command economy produced an unworkable hybrid. Most industries remained nationalised, but central planning began to break down as local factory managers, and bosses in the republics, used the greater freedom to try to bolster their own position.

More economic freedom with a command economy means greater freedom for hoarders, speculators and the black market. The whole economy was 'mafia-ised'. No alternative *democratic national* planning was proposed; the result was growing chaos.

At first the bureaucracy at regional and local level attempted to obstruct perestroika which they often saw as a threat to their positions; but when it was rammed through they sought the profitable openings that their control of goods and a growing black market gave them.

These factors combined to drastically increase the weight of pro-capitalist, pro-market liberal forces inside the bureaucracy and the CPSU. The trajectory of Yeltsin is eloquent here.

Reputation

Yeltsin, former CPSU boss in Moscow, made his reputation as a champion of *anti-bureaucratic* demands - against corruption and privilege.

But by the time he became *de facto* leader of the Inter-Regional Group in the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet he was in effect the leader of the *right*.



Jez Coulson/Insight

Perestroika has brought the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and new conflict between republics and

Gorbachev had no answer to the national question. He oscillated between repression of national movements and concessions. But the possibility of any kind of future federation on a non-capitalist basis was undermined by his refusal to concede the basic national right of self-determination from the very beginning.

By 1990 the pro-capitalist consensus inside the bureaucracy and the Communist Party was overwhelming.

The splits inside the bureaucracy revealed at the time of the August 1991 coup were essentially over the preservation of the *union*, reflecting the interests of sections of the bureaucracy like the armed forces' leaders dependent on the all-union state apparatus. But neither the coup plotters nor those who rallied round them were opposed to the restoration of capitalism.

But of course the coup tremendously speeded up the whole pro-capitalist process which was in train anyway. It gave the opportunity for the most vigorously pro-market 'liberal' wing of the bureaucracy, led by Yeltsin, to come to power and push through their wilder economic plans.

But they are faced with huge restraints. They cannot rapidly marketise an economy which is still 98 per cent in public hands; that will take many years and billions of dollars, if it is ever accomplished at all.

What can be done is to viciously attack the social gains of the working class as a 'preparation' for marketisation. This is exactly what is happening now. The cheap rents, fuel, food, transport and other necessities, historic gains for the Soviet workers, are being swept away.

Phenomenon

The Gorbachev phenomenon occurred because a section of the political leadership of the bureaucracy looked the reality of the Soviet Union in the face; and they saw that a general, systemic stagnation had overtaken the rapid economic gains of the post-war period.

The need for an overhaul of the system was first recognised by Gorbachev's former patron, Andropov. Andropov, former head of the KGB, knew better than anyone else the real details of the Soviet Union's stagnation and decline.

What some of Gorbachev's 'campist' critics don't see is that the Soviet Union was on the road to disaster and collapse

anyway. If Gorbachev and the perestroika process had not intervened, then economic collapse and mass protest movements like Poland's Solidarnosc would have emerged.

Dilemmas

Perestroika just precipitated a world-historic crisis which was waiting to happen. Whatever the way in which the crisis emerged, the same basic dilemmas would have been there.

Gorbachev's fate just highlights the fact that the bureaucratic command system is one *which cannot be reformed*. It can only be overthrown and replaced. The question is - by what?

And here we come back to the crux of the matter. Anyone who thinks that without Gorbachev and perestroika we would be coasting along with some new form of Brezhnevism is day dreaming.

For a transformation of the Soviet Union towards democratic socialism, the only way to avoid the horrible historical price which will be paid for capitalist restoration, is for a mass labour and socialist movement to emerge and take power. It is a huge task which is just beginning.

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Yeltsin's shock treatment has not abolished the queues – only workers' ability to pay for basic goods

Jez Coulson/Insight

The bitter fruits of marketisation

By Patrick Baker

NOT MANY Muscovites cheered in the New Year in Red Square this year – a last desperate dash around the state shops was more the order of the day.

Citizens of the ex-USSR are now feeling the first effects of the disintegration of the union and the mad rush towards marketisation. And those effects – as opposed to Yeltsin's rhetoric – have not been long in coming.

After the defeat of the August coup – the last fling of the union bureaucracy – there wasn't much doubt as to the short term future of the Soviet state. And any lingering doubts as to whether Gorbachev might preserve some kind of revamped, federal union were swept away with the massive vote for independence in the Ukraine. No union could survive without it.

It was also the death blow to Gorbachev's authority, already weakened in the aftermath of the coup. With Gorby and the central state gone, Yeltsin could get down to business – or rather make a desperate attempt to stop the union collapsing into chaos.

But the task he has set himself is near impossible, and he has hardly made a promising start. The legacy of six decades of stalinism is a melting pot of nationalities who have been denied the right to self determination; and a near-bankrupt economy, with none of the capital necessary for the marketisation plans that the Russian president has announced.

The first of his problems – the explosion of the 'prison house of nations' – means that the new Commonwealth of Republics, feted as the replacement for the union, will not live long.

It is difficult to see how even the richest of the republics



could get by without some form of economic co-operation with others, but the political agreements are already crumbling.

The victory of the struggle for national self determination arising out of the defeat of the coup was an enormous step forward, but nonetheless carried dangers with it.

The potential for destruction arising out of national conflict between and within the republics is almost limitless, with one of largest armies and stocks of nuclear weapons in the world. And the signs of any potential for peaceful settlement are hardly encouraging, with conflict in Georgia, Ukraine's seizure of the Black Sea Fleet and Armenia and Azerbaijan on the brink of war.

As for the economy, attacks on workers' living standards are nothing new – though they are worse than their predecessors.

The only real surprise has been Boris Yeltsin's methods. Most of his supporters expected him to get a privatisation programme going and then free prices. Instead he has done things the opposite way around. As one commentator said, it's rather like giving a patient the anaesthetic after the operation.

Workers are certainly being

hit hard by the price increases, and worse is to come. But is Yeltsin actually getting any closer to his aim, a market economy? No, not much. The reality is that very little will change in the economies of the old Soviet bloc until the big bastions of industry start to go into private ownership.

This isn't happening anywhere. In the ex-USSR, they haven't even tried. But even in Poland or Hungary, where they have been trying for years, they haven't sold more than a few factories.

So far, no-one has been prepared to invest any significant sums of capital into eastern Europe (east Germany is the exception to the rule).

There are two main reasons – first, most of the Western economies are in crisis themselves and are investing any capital they can lay their hands on at home; second, they have no confidence they'll make a profit (or even get their money back) in the east.

These are the kind of immense problems that Yeltsin faces – and tactical skill doesn't seem to be his greatest asset. But if we can say that his chances of success aren't good, what is the future for the Soviet peoples?

There is a big danger that the death of the monster of

stalinism will give rise to another. It is not difficult to predict that war and poverty will lead to a search for radical solutions among the hundreds of millions of citizens of the republics.

And it's pretty clear that the discredited name of socialism will not be the first option that they turn to.

Already some of Yeltsin's allies are canvassing an 'authoritarian solution', while in eastern Germany unemployed youth are queuing up to hear the grotesque speeches of the proponents of the Fourth Reich. Defenceless immigrants without a real voice in society have always been an easy scapegoat.

But the only real answer is not an easy one. It is one that can only be built on the basis of a rebuilding of the self-confidence of the working class, through their own experience of

fighting for their rights and living standards.

It is through this that workers will build up their own movement, spurred on perhaps by the small bastions of workers' organisations like the Soviet miners.

It is the reassertion of the class struggle that will allow the working class in the republics – a massive social force – to develop their own organisations and their class consciousness. And this is where the left have a role to play, even in a situation as gloomy as that in the republics today.

Preparing for that task now, putting forward a working class solution to the Soviet crisis, is essential groundwork for the future. The small groups of socialists in the republics have a thankless task – but they are the best insurance for the years to come.

Yeltsin pulls the plug on Cuba

BORIS YELTSIN had a New Year's gift for the Cuba people – the cutting of all subsidised trade and aid. Now Cuba will have to pay for everything in hard currency at world prices.

The same applies to other third world countries like Vietnam, Angola and Mozambique.

The decision will have catastrophic consequences for Cuba. Since the Second Declaration of Havana in late 1960, when Fidel Castro announced the new socialist direction of the revolution, Cuba has been massively subsidised by the Soviet Union.

More than that, since Nikita Khrushchev's pledge that Cuba was an 'integral part of socialist territory', the USSR acted as the guarantor against US invasion.

The result of the new turn is bound to be massive austerity for the Cuban people. The first problem is oil. Even under Gorbachev the oil supplies were becoming irregular. The usual shipments did not turn up in late 1991. Cuba was forced to buy oil from Mexico and Venezuela.

But such sources are subject to the threats and pressures of the US; they cannot be guaranteed. The threat to oil is compounded by the lack of spare parts for buses from eastern Europe. The transport crisis has led to the purchase of large numbers of bicycles from China, as well as the widespread reappearance of horse-drawn carts.

For the US, the situation in the USSR is a golden opportunity to deal a fatal blow to the Cuban regime, of all governments world-wide the one that it hates the most.

If the Cuban leadership faces difficult economic choices, it also has to deal with the demands for increased democracy.

Stark austerity policies need the maximum discussion and decision making among the masses. Imposed austerity was a fatal flaw in the strategy of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. But Fidel Castro has set his face against any demands for more democracy.

This is a fatal strategy. Authoritarianism plus austerity is a sure-fire formula for creating mass disillusionment and rebellion.

Tories struggle with legacy of Thatcherism

By Harry Sloan

'SQUIRMING' Norman Lamont, John Major's charmless Chancellor, has become an easy target for the frustration of increasingly nervous Tory MPs as time runs out for the calling of the General Election.

Lamont's endless and progressively less convincing claims that an upturn in the economy is just around the corner have made him a laughing stock on all sides.

His search for a way out of the current situation, that would give the more naive of the electorate the illusion that things are improving - or at least that they personally might be better off - before the election has proved fruitless.

The Tories have indeed spent the last 12 years painting themselves into a corner from which they have no obvious escape.

Global

The most stubborn aspect of the economic bind is that the British recession is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of a global recession hitting all the most powerful imperialist economies. The USA, Japan and even the apparently unstoppable Germany have each run into a period of simultaneous slowdown or recession.

In Japan, economic growth this year is expected to halve to just 2.5%, with some economists predicting outright recession (negative growth) in 1992 for the first time since the 1970s.

Inflated real estate values (which recently put the Japanese Imperial Palace at the same price as the whole of California) are collapsing, putting a squeeze on banks whose assets include property portfolios.

In Germany, orders for manufactured goods have fallen 4.7%, while the costs and pressures of reunification have helped push up interest rates. This has squeezed all the other European currencies, leaving the pound floundering at the bottom of the league of the EC's Exchange Rate Mechanism.

In the USA, a gathering economic recession shares many parallels with the problems facing Squirring Norman. There have been wholesale redundancies and plant closures in the manufacturing sector (most spectacularly in the motor industry, where General Motors is to sack 74,000 workers and close 21 plants following catastrophic losses of \$7 billion in North America); but

jobs have also been axed in the service sector, notably banking where 100,000 more jobs are predicted to go in 1992.

Estimates suggest that 25 million US workers, 20% of the workforce, were unemployed at some point in 1991.

Depression

Also key in the US crisis is the collapse of property prices, described by the head of the Mortgage Bankers Association as worse than anything since the Great Depression.

This has followed on from the disastrous collapse of many US Savings and Loan corporations - the equivalent of building societies; these have had to be bailed out by the government at a cost last year of \$151 billion. This has also made banks more reluctant than ever to extend new lines of credit.

Meanwhile the US federal deficit for 1991 is estimated at \$362 billion, on top of a cumulative deficit of \$3.6 trillion, which brings with it an annual \$210 billion in interest payments. The illusory prosperity of Reaganomics has bitten the dust as heavily as Thatcherism in Britain. As one senator told *Newsweek* magazine: 'In the Reagan years we borrowed \$1 trillion from foreigners and used it to throw a party'.

The problem for John Major's government is that while these conditions prevail internationally, there is little scope to alter the plight of the British economy.

The extent of Thatcherism's failure can be measured by a wide range of indicators, the key to which is the decline of manufacturing industry. Manufacturing output is now just 5% above its 1979 level, while engineering output last year fell 15% compared with 1990.

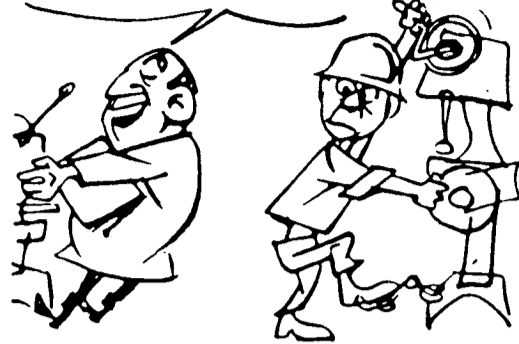
North Sea oil

Government hopes of economic growth for the financial year have been pinned on an expansion of North Sea Oil output, which is now actually in decline.

At the sharp end is the motor industry, with car sales down 20% in 1991, and commercial vehicles 30% below 1990 sales. Even the luxury car sector is in the doldrums, with Jaguar and Rolls Royce losing up to 50% of sales in the USA and facing a slump in demand at home. Rolls Royce has closed one plant and sacked 1,300 workers: the whole company may now be flogged off to BMW.

Meanwhile the managing

IN THIS CRISIS LABOR AND MANAGEMENT MUST CO-OPERATE...



...SO YOU WILL CO-OPERATE BY WORKING HARDER...



...AND WE WILL CO-OPERATE...



BY BOSSING HARDER!



director of British Aerospace has warned that over 20% of the industry's 194,000 workforce may face the axe in 1992, and the recession has hit deep into basic industry with the accelerated closure of the Ravenscraig steel mill.

As in the USA, service sector jobs have inevitably been slashed as part of the slump: it is this unemployment, largely focused in the Tory-voting south east, which vexes the government. Seven out of every ten lost service sector jobs were in the south east, where unemployment levels have doubled to 7.9% - equal with most other regions.

Many of the record 48,000 firms that went bust in 1991 were also in the south east, as is the new phenomenon created by Thatcherism - the epidemic of houses repossessed by building societies as a result of mortgage arrears.

Tories hit

No less than 80% of repossessions - expected to reach 80,000 in 1991 - were concentrated in just 100 Tory-held constituencies.

Small wonder that, egged on by a campaign from the 'quality' press, keen advocates of middle class interests, the government resorted before Christmas to panic measures to stem this embarrassing tide of repossessions, while ignoring the dire poverty faced by millions of tenants, claimants, pensioners, families who are paying their mortgages, and the 14 million part-time or low-paid workers who can only dream of getting a mortgage.

The Tory objectives were threefold: to conceal this symptom of their economic failure; to prop up house prices at their inflated level and thus prevent a further lurch into recession; and to do this without spending any new money.

This was achieved by the deal negotiated with the build-

ing societies, under which they will underwrite housing associations buying up and renting out repossessed homes, in exchange for a government pledge to funnel a share of income support payments direct to the building societies - bringing them at least an extra £350 million a year.

As a result, dispossessed home-owners could wind up having to pay up to £140 per week to rent back their own homes from housing associations. As the *Guardian* summed up:

'Reviving turnover in the housing market has become the key to economic recovery, for falling house sales and prices both depress consumer confidence and the myriad of in-

rowed, because this would further weaken the pound, and effectively force a devaluation (or 'realignment') against the ERM.

● They cannot cut income tax for fear that this, too, would be seen as weakening the position of sterling; in any case the cuts would take too long to reach the pay packet to make much difference in the Election.

● They cannot cut VAT, firstly because they only increased it to 17.5% in the last budget, and secondly because they have promised the EC not to reduce it below 16%.

● Other suggestions, such as increased mortgage tax relief, a cut or abolition of the £1 billion a year inheritance tax, offer too few short-run electoral benefits to be worth the financial cost.

Not one of these proposals goes any way to addressing the long-term decline of British capitalism in a world market which is static or declining.

It is the system itself which is at the root of the disease, and any effort to treat the symptoms alone will result in failure.

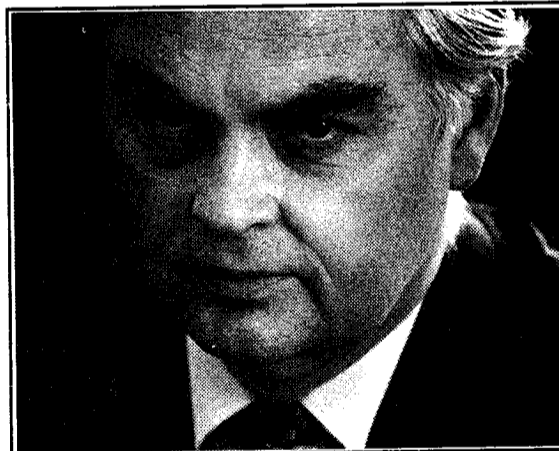
Charisma bypass

Once more we find that the main asset of Major and Lamont, both of whom face additional problems after undergoing successful charisma by-pass operations, is the weakness of the Labour opposition.

That is why the Tories launched their New Year media onslaught aimed at branding Labour in the eyes of the middle class and skilled workers as the party that wants to jack up taxes.

Kinnock's master-plan unveiled with a fanfare last week amounted to little more than offering incentives and encouragements to employers, coupled with the endless rhetoric on training.

As the election crunch draws ever-closer, the real danger is still that voters might prefer to clench their teeth now, and put up with recession in the faint hopes of a renewed Tory boom, rather than risk the tried and failed remedies of Kinnock's timid package.



Still squirming - Lamont

industries that directly serve the market'.

Heseltine

Meanwhile Michael Heseltine was doing his best to force up house prices and worsen the shortages by announcing the virtual cessation of council house building. A mere 51,000 houses for rent are to be built by housing associations in 1992: this in turn will deal a death blow to thousands of construction industry jobs.

Over 2 million rented houses (1.2 million council properties and 800,000 private rents) have been taken out of the market in the 1980s.

Major and Squirring Norman now face a Hobson's choice of what to do next.

● They cannot reduce interest rates to offer a little relief to those who have over-bor-

On the verge of a Labour government?

John Major's government faces a bleak new year. With the election just months away, it is certain that the economy cannot be turned around before polling day. The wave of redundancies and bankruptcies is hitting sections of the Tories' middle class supporters.

Now the recession, combined with British membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, threatens to deliver interest rate rises, triggering higher mortgage payments. And the duration of the world economic recession means that there is no respite in sight. A last desperate hope is that Lamont can deliver tax cuts in the Budget.

In the light of all this, the wonder is not that the Tories are behind in the opinion polls but that they are still in contention. Confidence in the Tories may be rock bottom, but there are few expectations that a Kinnock government will solve the economic crisis or deliver higher living standards; indeed, since Labour makes no promises on this score, this is hardly surprising.

Despite the lack of widespread enthusiasm for Labour, the odds must now be that the game is up for John Major's team. Whatever the congenital hopelessness of Labour's non-alternative policies, a Labour victory in the general election is vital. There are two aspects to this. First, a Labour government would create a new mood in the working class — not a mood of widespread expectation of major reforms, but at least that the worst years of anti-working class attacks are over.

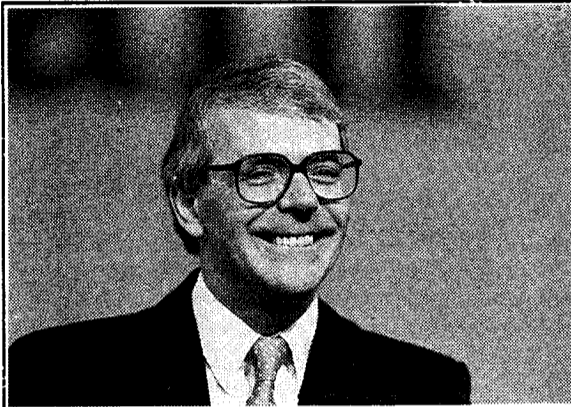
A further five-year term of Tory rule would

deepen the already rock bottom level of industrial struggle and pessimism.

If Labour were to be defeated again it would mean a near two-decade period with Labour out of office, the best part of a generation.

In such a situation the credibility of Labour as a party of government would plummet. The usefulness of Labour to the trade union bureaucracy would sharply decline.

The opportunity would then be created for the Liberal Democrats to try to establish them-



No laughing matter: Major faces defeat John Harris

selves as the 'second' party, trying to marginalise Labour as a 'party of the past', and perhaps creating stronger relations with right-wing union leaders.

Of course, given the relative strength of the two parties a Labour defeat would not automatically lead to its replacement as the second party. But the danger would be there.

Paddy Ashdown is already staking out a claim to the political space to Labour's right. His rejection of the 'social chapter' in the Maastricht agreement was very significant on

this score. He doesn't want to do anything to help Labour in this situation, and indeed is clearly prepared for a coalition with either the Tories or Labour.

In the event of a 'hung' parliament a Tory-Liberal government is very unlikely however. The price would be electoral reform and some sort of proportional representation.

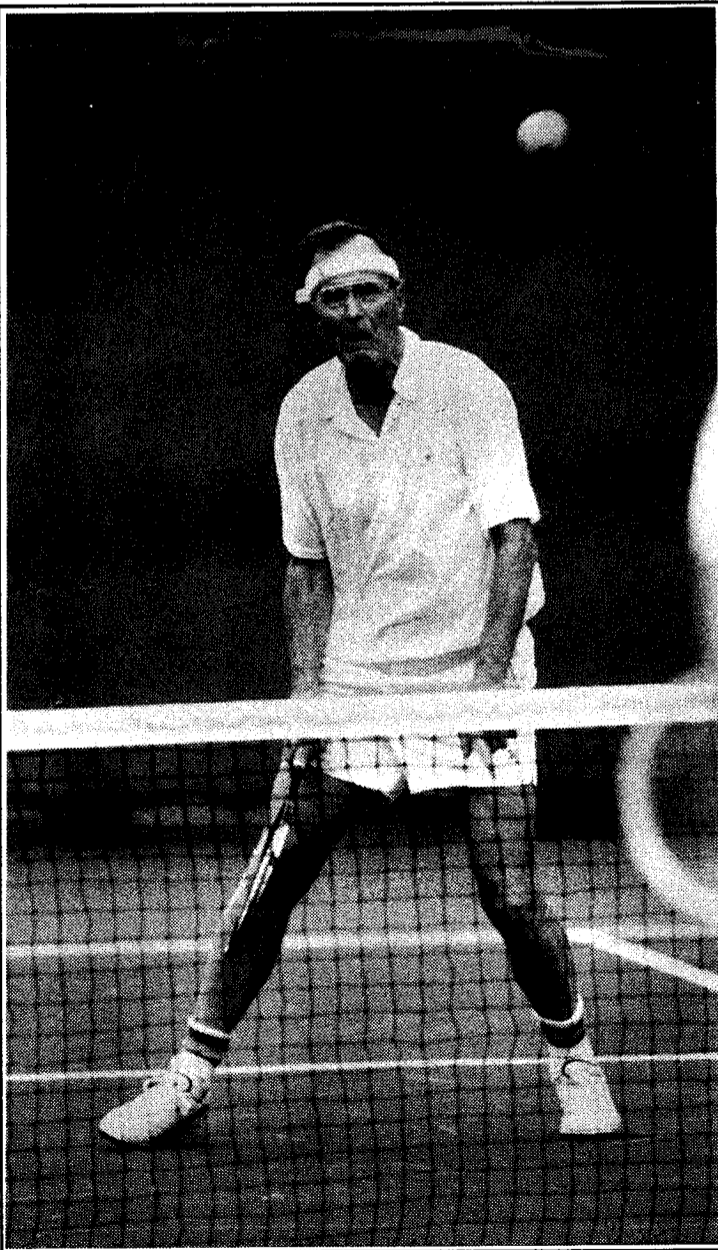
This the Tories, who see every chance of coming back as the majority party even if they lose this election, would never accept. Labour might, given their desperation to get a toe-hold in government.

The conclusions for socialists are stark. In a few months there will be an election, and everything possible has to be done to ensure Labour wins. But socialists will have to point out the reality of what a Labour government would mean.

A new Labour government led by Kinnock would add to the litany of Wilson-Callaghan-type right wing failures, but in conditions of much greater capitalist crisis than Wilson or Callaghan faced.

The scene could then be set for further demoralisation and an alarming polarisation of British politics to the right. Discussion needs to take place now about how the left would respond to a Kinnock government. This must be a central concern of the Socialist Movement AGM in June.

The building of a broad alliance to fight for key working class interests, such as the abolition of the anti-union laws, a massive reduction in defence expenditure and British withdrawal from Ireland, would be on the order of the day.



BUSHED! A game of tennis was blamed as the reason for US President Bush's embarrassing collapse at a Tokyo dinner during his abortive Japanese tour. Many Americans later fainted when the rumour spread that Bush's chosen Vice President, Dan Quayle, might take over.

As Tories seek to privatise BR Is Labour on the right track?

By an RMT member
'BACK to the Golden Age of Trains', ran the headline in the Daily Mail, reporting that the government is 'planning a rebirth of the fiercely proud and independent Victorian railway companies'.

According to this report the government is planning to privatise British Rail on the basis of regional firms. Just like the 'good old days'!

This will no doubt infuriate BR management which has introduced the new business structure (Inter City, Network South East, Regional Railways, Freight etc) in preparation for privatisation on the basis of the different services rather than regional areas.

The differences the government have with Bob Reid (BR Chairman) are not over the question of whether to privatise, but over how to do it.

Cutbacks

Although the cabinet has yet to reach a final decision on the exact nature of the proposals, one thing is certain; there will be big cut-backs in provincial services. Indeed a leaked BR report indicates that there are already proposals for which services would be struck off the list of Inter City routes should it be privatised.

The dithering over how to privatise is a result of the sheer complexities

which will result from breaking up the system.

Already the changes from adjustments to the business structure have created chaos, with arguments between different managements over who pays for what.

How much for instance, would Inter City have to pay to any 'track authority' or regional railway for travelling over their tracks?

On the other hand, dividing the system on a regional basis could lead to just as many problems. Will a passenger travelling from Brighton to Glasgow be forced to buy a separate ticket for each of the areas she passes through?

It's clear from the changes already in place that breaking up BR will not provide a better service for travellers. Network South East — the 'flagship' of the new business structures — has come under intense criticism, even from Tory stalwarts.

Labour government

The union leaders tell us we shall be OK with the return of a Labour government. The privatisation plans will of course be scuppered if the Tories lose the election.



Waiting for Labour? RMT chief Jimmy Knapp

However, the Labour Party isn't exactly brimming over with ideas to improve the lot of rail workers or travellers.

To make things even worse, the European Community has passed a directive, due for implementation in 1993, whereby the rail networks of member countries are supposed to be opened up to competition.

Open access

Operators, other than the national networks are to have 'open access' to run services over any track.

Would a Labour government accede to this directive? Clearly the rail unions should demand that they do not allow the implementation of this directive.

More than this, however, the RMT should take the initiative in drawing together the European rail unions in a Europe-wide campaign against it, and any further privatisation measures.

CUPY...OCCUPY...OCCUPY...OCCUPY...OCCUPY...OCCUPY...OCC

After last term's explosion of militancy

Students on standby for national wave of occupations

By Andrew Berry

City of London Polytechnic Occupation Committee and Communications Officer, NUS London

THOUSANDS OF students will return to college after the holiday break eager to turn last term's wave of occupations into a militant national movement against student poverty.

Morale was certainly high in many colleges before the holiday and it is vital that this is both maintained and extended to students who have not yet been involved in occupation.

The current volatility in the student movement is tremendously significant. The situation could well develop extremely positively and a highly combative mass national student movement could emerge.

Mapping out strategy and tactics for the positive development of the movement is therefore crucially important.

There is no doubt that the

new realist National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) is a considerable obstacle to be overcome. NUS has consistently opposed the occupations, preferring to concentrate on an electoral 'campaign' focusing on marginal constituencies in the General Election called 'Target 70'.

There is a deep and perfectly understandable bitterness towards NUS among occupation activists because of the national union's hostile response to their willingness to fight back. But it is important that this is *not* translated into an ultra-left, knee-jerk dismissal of all NUS structures – something that the Revolutionary Communist Party attempts to whip up in some colleges.

London Region NUS and the NUS Women's Campaign, for example, have consistently and practically supported the occupations in defiance of the national union.

Even at December's NUS



The militancy of the grants campaign seems to be reappearing

Conference when a motion urging the executive to lead a national movement of occupations fell, the card vote was extremely close. After a bitter debate, in which the right-wing used every trick in the book, the vote was 370,000 to 350,000 – a difference of two large universities.

The decision of NUS London to call an activists' conference on 22 January is very important. This will be the place where strategy and tactics can be discussed. In the absence of NUS support, it is vital that there is a *national coordination of occupations*, one that is elected by and accountable to students in occupation.

It is likely that this conference will be addressed by a Greek student activist who was in the leadership of the mass occupations in Greece last year. College occupations have been on a much higher level in

Greece, where the government was forced to concede their demands. Their experience will not only inspire activists in Britain but also provide useful lessons.

NUS London has called for a 24 hour occupation of all London colleges in the run up to the 'End Student Hardship' national NUS demonstration on 12 February. The march is anticipated to be very large and a strong appeal for further action will help develop a national occupation movement.

Going into occupation entails confrontation with both college management and, certainly if a national movement develops, with the Tory government. Fighting victimisation will obviously be a central task of occupation activists. That task already confronts those students who were in occupation last term. Defending occupation activists will be made very much

easier as more colleges fall under occupation.

It is also vital that students in occupation get support from workers in education, and from local labour movement bodies. You don't have to be a student to raise support for them.

Given Kenneth Clarke's blistering attack on student teachers and on teacher training colleges, any campaign on higher and further education must obviously try to forge links with these students, who may well be inactive themselves. Getting support from branches of the NUT and of NATFHE is also a priority.

A change in mood looks likely in the student movement. Driven by the Tories into dire poverty with the removal of benefits, frozen grants and top-up loans, lack of housing and expensive rents, students have begun to wake up after a period of passivity.

New battle for Ravenscraig

By Sam Inman

LABOUR'S RESPONSE to the closure of the Ravenscraig steel works in Scotland, voiced through the mouthpiece of spokesperson for Trade and Industry Gordon Brown on TV AM, epitomised Labour's scabbing on Scottish workers. In the event of Labour winning the general election, he said, the new government would *not* intervene to save the works from closure.

British Steel's decision to shut down the Scottish steel industry will lose 1,220 jobs by September, but is estimated to indirectly result in the loss of some 13,000 jobs. Even the Tories are privately furious that BS has reneged on its promise to keep Ravenscraig open until 1994.

The immediate political effect of this is to throw the Tories into yet another crisis. Ian Lang, the Scottish Secretary, is under pressure to resign from Labour, the Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats. The nine Tory MPs, out of Scotland's 72, must also be sweating over the political aftermath of Ravenscraig.

Major's response has been to defend BS's right to take decisions based on market conditions, to defend the beleaguered Ian Lang, and to offer workers in Lanarkshire a £50 million



Donald Dewar

enterprise zone to 'rebuild' the local economy – and even this is spread over ten years.

But the emerging dispute between the British government and the EC in Brussels over regional aid, could well block even this measly carrot. The EC Commission has already blocked some £100 million in EC funds originally intended to help former coal mining areas.

The European dimension to the crisis in the steel industry is particularly important. In the classical marxist sense it is quite simply a crisis of over-production. The European steel industry is estimated to face an over-capacity of some 20 per cent. It faces intense competition from low cost

producers like South Korea.

Within a capitalist framework this can only be solved by shedding tens of thousands of jobs across the whole European industry. The decimation of the British steel industry is a microcosm of this process. When the Tories came to power in 1979 there were some 184,000 workers in steel. The Ravenscraig closure will bring this to less than 46,000, a 75 per cent cut in the workforce in 12 years.

The Scottish dimension is obviously also pertinent to Ravenscraig. With its cowardly response to both the massacre of the country's steel industry and to the national question itself, Labour is unlikely to reap the rewards of any further Tory collapse, despite Labour's spokesperson on Scotland, Donald Dewar, bleating over BS's 'betrayal'.

Instead, the SNP with its perspective of 'independence within Europe', is more likely to gain as Scottish nationalism is further fuelled by the closure of Ravenscraig.

But tying Scotland to the Brussels bureaucrats will not advance Scottish steelworkers one iota. Like the oil industry, the Scottish steel industry should be controlled by Scottish workers, as should the whole of the country's economy.

Forcing the Tories out of office and fighting the Ravenscraig closure will be one step towards this goal.



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Mark Salmon

Asylum Bill: a gift to the ultra-right

EUROPE today is awash with racism. Immigrant workers have been murdered in Germany, France and Britain. Fascist and semi-fascist parties are winning millions of votes. There are four elements of the present poisonous situation.

First, a general rise of racist sentiment in sections of the white middle and working class; a rise in state racism, threatening the right to asylum and other immigrant rights; the growth of the fascist organisations; and an intensification of racist attacks as a result of all these things.

At the core of these developments is the new, intensified, stage of the capitalist crisis. Growing unemployment, bankruptcies and austerity

create a fertile climate for racism.

Deepening inter-imperialist competition reinforces various forms of nationalism, especially in the EC countries.

And the failure of the mainstream labour movement to put forward realistic solutions to the crisis creates an opening for the racists and fascists.

Fortress Europe

While European monetary and political union may be some way off, the Europeans have got their act together to impose tough new immigration controls and restrict asylum rights.

The *Schengen agreement*, signed in 1985 and due to come into force at the end of this year

creates a Europe-wide visa, and has drawn up a list of 104 countries whose citizens will now have to have a visa for any European country.

A huge computer system has been created to keep track of 'undesirables'. 'Foreigners' resident in any EC country will now have to register with the police when they visit another.

Anyone designated 'persona non grata' in the joint computer files will not be allowed entry into any EC country. French people from outside metropolitan France will now be considered 'foreigners'. And, crucially, *any asylum seeker refused entry into one EC country will not be allowed to seek asylum in another.*

Continued overleaf

Asylum Bill

(Continued from previous page)

As the neo-fascist parties have grown, the mainstream right-wing parties have increasingly capitulated to racist ideas. In France, the two main right wing leaders, Giscard d'Estaing and Chirac have both made violent anti-immigrant remarks to try to outdo fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Socialist Party premier Edith Cresson has promised to 'get tough' against 'illegal immigrants'.

Recession

But the growing strength of the new fascist parties must itself be explained. Since 1989 Europe has been in the throes of a new and ever-deepening recession.

The high unemployment rates of the early 1980s have returned, to be reinforced by an increasing squeeze of the middle classes.

Many small business people and middle class professionals who enjoyed a growth in their incomes in the mid-1980s, now face ruin or reduced living standards. The working class faces unemployment and merciless attacks on living standards and social rights.

In most European countries trade unionism has declined - dramatically in France and Spain. The mass Communist Parties are in crisis. And in France, Spain and Sweden social democratic governments in power have delivered nothing but capitalist austerity.

At the same time, the far left in Europe has in general also declined and in any case does not appear to the mass of the working class to constitute a realistic alternative. It is in this situation that the fascists have their opportunity.

France and Germany

While the rise of racism has been ugly everywhere, it is in France and Germany that it has taken the most threatening forms. In Germany the resurgence of xenophobia resulted last year in a wave of physical attacks, including the murder of a Turkish worker in Dresden.

But opinion polls showed 38 per cent of the population of former West Germany sympathising with far right ideals.

The most serious political threat comes from Le Pen's Front National in France. A huge percentage of French voters agree with Le Pen on immigration. In next Spring's local elections Le Pen could well get over 20 per cent of the vote.

In Britain, so far the fascists are weak. But the same basic political processes as in other European countries are developing. State racism is on the increase through the Asylum Bill. Racist attacks are increasing. And the fascist BNP will put up a yet unknown number of candidates at the next election.

In this situation a new fightback against racism and fascism is needed in Britain and the whole of Europe.

There are important signs that this mobilisation is under way. A hundred thousand people demonstrated against racism in Germany on 9 November. On 25 January there will be a big anti-fascist demonstration in Paris, as well as the demonstration against the Asylum Bill on 18 January in Britain.

The left must seize the initiative to build a huge movement to combat the racists and fascists; turning the tide on racism and fascism will be an important step in fighting back against all the attacks of the capitalist class and remobilising the left. *



Maximum unity of black and white organisation is vital in the fight against racism and fascism

Fighting racism and fas

By Ian McLarty and Charlie Langford

THE REAL significance of the Asylum Bill is often missed. Unmesh Desai of the Newham Monitoring Project explains:

The Asylum Bill fits into a strategy for Common Market Europe post-1992. It represents not an isolated criminalisation of the black community in Britain, but a harmonisation of immigration controls throughout Europe which will leave black people at the bottom of the pile ...

It is therefore a very specific product of 1992 showing that immigrants' status will be reduced to the lowest common denominator and it will mean the same for working class living standards as a whole in the long run.'

State racism

Home Secretary Kenneth Baker implies that the purpose of the Bill is to prevent racial conflict, but its effect will be the opposite, given the interplay of state racism at street level.

The Asylum Bill is based on two obvious myths, first that the British 'race' (whatever that may be) is being 'swamped by immigrants'; second that asylum seekers are bogus. Since the 1960s more people have left than have come here - Britain could not become overcrowded as a result of the 24000 arrivals between 1985-9 - and this figure includes a large number who have come from Europe, the USA and of course white South Africans.

The latest figures about so-called bogus applications reveal that the legislation cannot be aimed at 'abuse of

asylum'. Over the last 18 months for which figures were available barely a dozen people were convicted. There is therefore clearly no 'flood'. How many times is Kenneth Baker prepared to be found in contempt of court for sending asylum seekers back to possible death over such fictions?

Scapegoats

The facts are clear. The main countries from which people are coming - like Sri Lanka and Somalia - either have appalling human rights records or civil war. The Asylum Bill will scapegoat those whose lives are threatened and by implication all black people in Britain for the failure of the economy, lack of housing and unemployment.

The implications of the Bill are draconian. Refugees will only have 48 hours to lodge an application and they will lose their right to legal aid. Both immigration forms and immigration law are notoriously complicated.

Airlines can be fined up to £2000 for carrying anyone without the correct travel documents. This will encourage air companies to remove anyone from a plane, back even to states with records of torture, rather than pay a fine.

The Bill introduces a 'fast-track' procedure with no automatic right to appeal.

The legal requirement to rehouse homeless families will be scrapped, with no right to council housing while families are waiting for decisions.

Finally there will be the fingerprinting of refugees. This part of the Bill clearly works to criminalise the entire black community by implying that the mere presence of black people in Britain is a cause of crime.

Refugees are the most vulnerable to this type of treatment, given that it is unwanted state attention from which they are fleeing.

The Asylum Bill cannot be seen in isolation. The way to defeat rising racism and fascism is through mass action of the working class and its allies. Anti-fascists and the left have to make their appeal at least as attractive as the fascists'.

Probably the best example of how to go about this were the Anti-Nazi League Carnivals of the late 1970's.

The first Carnival in particular attracted 80-90,000 people - the organisers (essentially the SWP) anticipated 10-15,000 - and most of these were young workers and students.

While the main attraction for many would have been free music, the assembly at Trafalgar Square and the demonstration to Victoria Park via Brick Lane, and the statements of the bands taking part, will have moved many people's views.

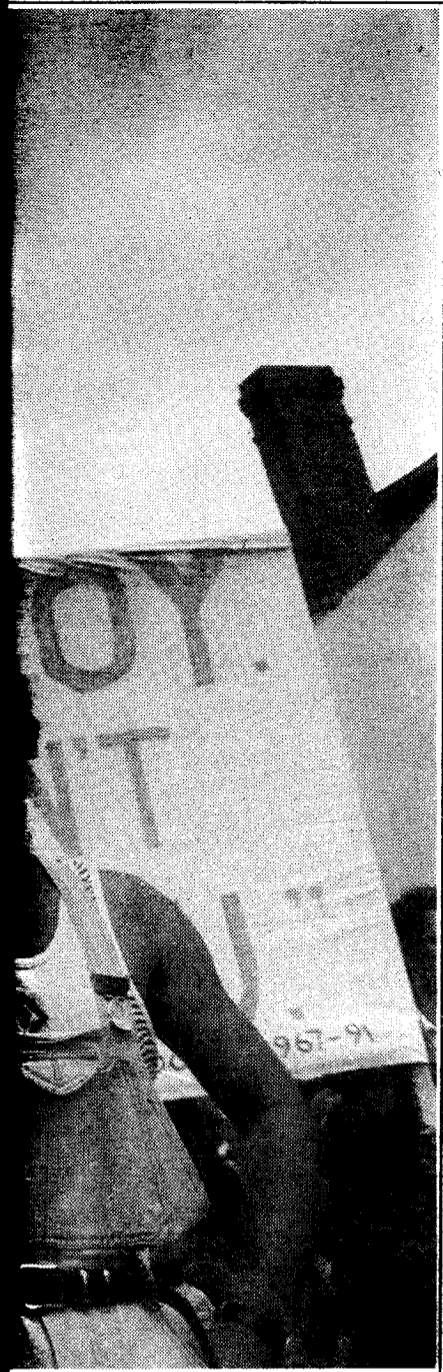
Youth

The link with youth and black culture and the very upfront gayness of Tom Robinson also highlighted the role of the oppressed in the fight against fascism.

This is not to say, of course, that the 'Carnival' method should be followed slavishly. The music of that time was highly politicised and thus more directly useful to anti-fascists.

While we were then coming to the end of the most right wing Labour government known up to that time, the subsequent ten years of Thatcherism has moved people, particularly youth, a long way further right.

This is why we cannot guarantee spec-



John Harris



Strong campaigns have forced back deportations

Mark Salmon

cism

cular results today. The work may well be harder for more modest results.

In this situation there is always the danger that the activists will see the modesty of the gains made as a product of the incorrect tactics rather than the objective situation. There are presently three major anti fascist and anti racist organisations existing – Anti Fascist Action (the oldest), the re-formed Anti-Nazi League and the Anti-Racist Alliance.

Divisive

This, combined with the limited gains available, has a strongly divisive dynamic.

Socialist Outlook's view is that there is no need for three separate campaigns covering largely the same area and that local groups should be relating to all credible initiatives called by whichever campaign.

Of course AFA, ARA and the ANL, coming from different traditions, will have their differences, and there will also be independent activists putting forward further views. What is necessary is that in activity all anti-fascists work together.

Therefore, it is essential that there is full discussion of activities where all shades of opinion have the opportunity to speak and the decisions are taken democratically. Once made they should be respected by all. Disunity in the face of the fascists is bound seriously to weaken the appeal of any anti-fascist campaign.

What is needed is a long-term activist campaign which recognises the link between state racism and fascism. The two are not mutually exclusive and they feed off each other.

Methods of campaigning need to be varied – carnivals, rallies, demonstrations (not confined to streets where no-one will see them), lobbies and mobilisations to prevent fascists marching and meeting.

The united front must be employed to guarantee the maximum mobilisation of the black community and the labour movement. This means the coming together of activists around a principled set of demands.

It is important for socialists that there are no preconditions set for any umbrella group which would in any way restrict debate or freedom of criticism. There must be a fight against those who would wish politics, especially those of the class struggle, to be 'toned down' in the hope to appease a 'middle ground'.

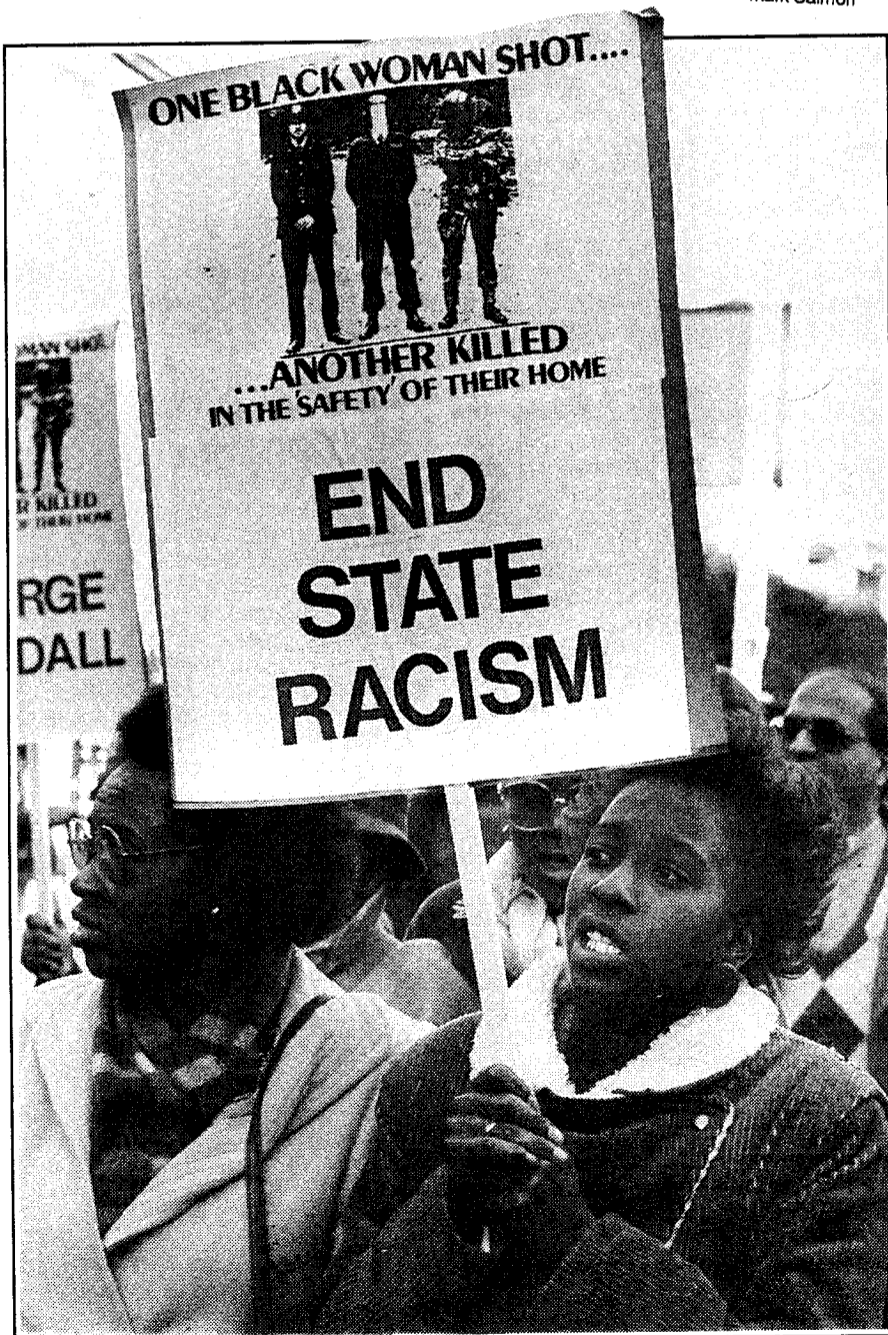
Anyone who insists on restriction of debate and views before participating in a campaign against racism or fascism will only ever be a fair-weather friend. It is not the left who are sectarian in such situations, but those who assume their actions are beyond criticism.

United Front

A united front tactic recognises the importance of class politics and does not allow the subordination of these ideas for the sake of the peace of mind of any bureaucrat. We are obviously in favour of the famous supporting initiatives – indeed this is vital in publicising campaigns – but as Trotsky observed in 1934 'abandonment of mass politics for the pursuit of individuals with big names is the worst kind of adventurism and political charlatanism'.

On the other hand, it is infantile ultra-leftism to use the presence of a broad-based list of sponsors as an excuse for not participating. If pressure is not put on the bureaucrats and the 'great and the good', they are left free to sell out those who face the sharp end of the attacks.

Ideally there should be a national cam-



Fighting racism and fascism

(from previous page)

campaign which brings together all those threatened by fascism and racism, that means the black community, women, lesbians and gay men, and the trade union movement.

Such a campaign must respect the autonomy of oppressed groups. It is unlikely that a campaign that patronises black people with regard to their demands – the black agenda – will be able to form a working alliance.

What is clearly needed today, with an increase in Britain of racist attacks – now running at one every 29 minutes – is a credible campaign that can deliver committed activists onto the streets, not pressure-group politics.

Working class

The force that in the final analysis will defeat – or be defeated by – fascism and racism is the working class through its organisations. None of the anti-fascist/anti-racist organisations have yet the active support of anything more than very minor sections of the organised working class.

This is now the greatest weakness of the movement. The trade unions, trades councils and Labour Party local branches must be drawn into the local groups, not just as sponsors or delegates but as bodies that will mobilise their members in activity. We need unions in particular – because they are frequently seen by their members as 'non-political' in comparison to trades councils and

Labour Parties – to raise and campaign among their members against racism and fascism.

There are plenty of opportunities to mobilise, around equal opportunities statements, for example. Fascism will display itself among workers first as racism, anti-semitism, homophobia, and gross sexism, playing on the Nazi attitude of women's role as 'Kinder, Kirche, Kuche'.

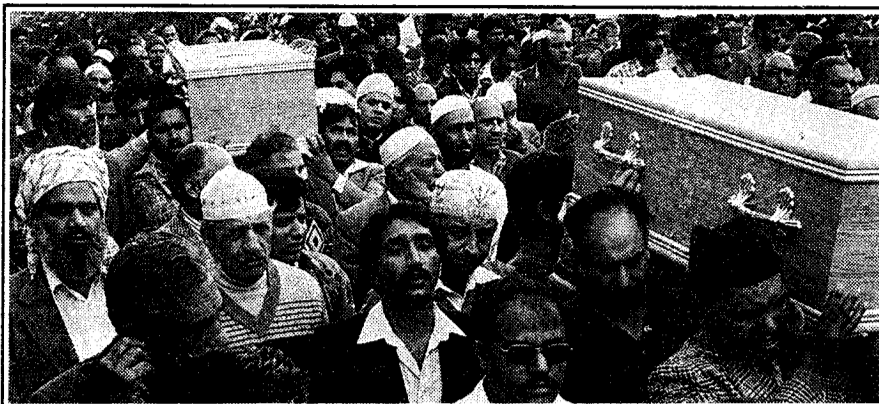
Several levels

Any serious campaign that is going to defeat the fascists and the rise of racism is going to have to mount an assault at several levels, uniting the broadest forces and mobilising the largest number of people in a variety of actions.

The fascists do not operate in a vacuum and we must not let them win the ideological battle. We must be holding meetings on the estates, attempting to win those for whom fascism will be most attractive to – white working class youth.

We also need to try to prevent the fascists doing likewise; fascist meetings are almost always accompanied by violent attacks in the communities where they take place, fire-bombings, stabbings, etc.

Anti-fascists need to take part in, and instigate where possible, community fightbacks to ensure that the fascists are made unwelcome and are unable put



their ideas over.

'Free speech'

The left should not be misguided by liberal notions of 'free speech' – the idea that would grant platforms to those who wish to deny the right of others to speak or even live.

The fascists don't respect any ideals of participation and equality – they incite racial hatred, perpetrate fire-bombings and commit racist murders.

We support the right of the black community to defend itself and are unequivocal in support for the slogan 'self defence is no offence'.

The British state will not stop fascism (rather, in a final resort it could turn to fascism as its own weapon). Ultimately only the working class has the power to be able to smash fascism – not through

the law or parliament or our current media but through its collective power.

Given the general election this year, the need for a concerted campaign against any fascists or neo-Nazis standing is clear. It is important that they do not get a free ride at the election and that the question of opposition to racism is not dropped.

The fascists are reputedly attempting to get sufficient finances together to stand in 60 seats at the election. This will entitle them to access to TV etc. There must be campaigns against them in every seat that they stand. Such campaigns offer the opportunity to unite activists across the country. The campaign could and should continue after the election to counter both racism and fascism. There has never been an acceptable level of either and such a fight therefore is not a short term issue.

Who are the new fascists?

By Paul Clarke

LAST AUTUMN, the new European fascists made important electoral gains. The Lombardy League won around 10 per cent in a by-election in the northern Italian town of Brescia.

In Antwerp, the Vlaams Blok ('Flemish Bloc') won a staggering 25 percent of the vote. The far-right Austrian Peoples Party won more votes than the mainstream Tories of the Freedom Party. And Jean-Marie Le Pen's party is consistently given over 20 per cent in opinion polls.

Dramatic images of German skinheads giving the Hitler salute do not give an fully accurate impression of the reality of modern European fascism. The serious far-right forces are very different types of organisations to the German Nazis and Mussolini's fascists in the 1920s and '30s.

Classical fascism was built in the aftermath of World War 1 in a head-on battle with the labour movement, in particular the mass Communist parties. Mussolini and Hitler fought to win the allegiance of ruined sections of the middle class, and especially the unemployed, away from the alternative of socialism. This affected the form of the movement.

Fascism of course is a form of extreme reactionary capitalist dictatorship. But the fascists had the ideology and appearance of a 'revolutionary' movement, employing an anti-capitalist as well as 'anti-Bolshevik' rhetoric.

For tactical reasons the Nazis supported strikes, especially those against the Social Democratic government in Prussia. The Nazis were thus a movement for the revolutionary overthrow of liberal democracy, utilising the methods of terror and 'storm in the streets'.

How does this compare with the new fascists? By far the biggest far-right organisations are those who disavow the old-style methods. The French Front National, the German Republican Party and the German Peoples Union, the Austrian Freedom Party, the northern Italian leagues and the Flemish Vlaams Blok present themselves as parties within the framework of

liberal democracy.

It is true that all these parties use strong arm methods and have their own goon squads. But there is nothing remotely resembling the Nazi storm-troopers or the Italian *squadristi*. Anti-capitalist themes are totally absent from their propaganda.

Traditional fascism constructed a 'corporate state' and politically expropriated the capitalist class, replacing its parliamentary rule with the gangster-fascist bureaucracy. For the ruling European ruling class, not least that part in Germany and Italy, it had disastrous consequences.

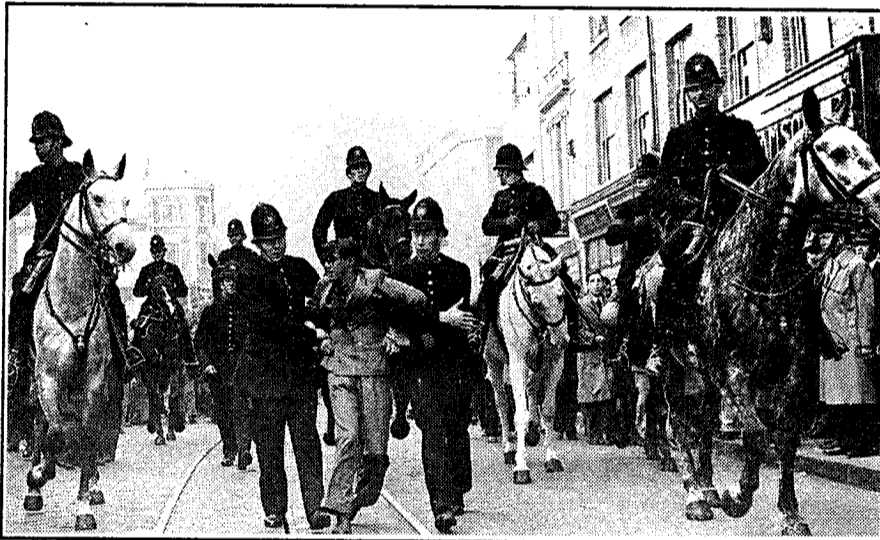
The most successful new fascists like Le Pen are keen to curry favour with capitalist elites who have no intentions of supporting another Hitler experiment. The Front National is recruiting heavily among young technocrats and high-flying civil servants, something the Nazis didn't do until they were on the verge of taking power.

Of course their policies are anything but 'liberal'; the coming to power of these parties would mean massive repression against immigrant workers, black people, women, lesbians and gay men – and of course the labour movement. And it is true that these parties are evolving; at a future and more intense stage of the class struggle they could take on characteristics of the old fascist parties.

Knowing the new fascists are different from their old-style parents shouldn't lead us into complacency – they are no less dangerous. But old-style fascism had different opponents and different tasks. Most importantly the Hitlerites confronted a labour movement with a strong revolutionary component, which is not true today.

To deal with strikers and other 'disorderly' elements the ruling class in Europe has constructed special riot police and repressive units. Storm-troopers are unnecessary and potentially dangerous.

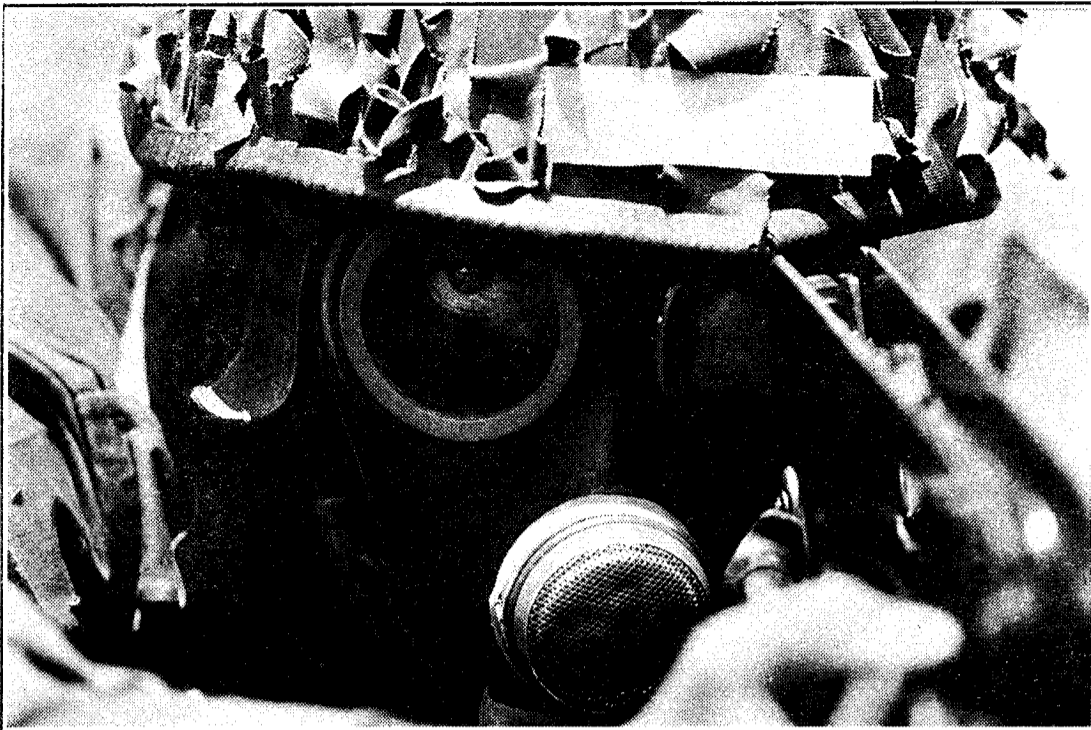
Nowhere in Europe are the new fascists on the verge of taking power. But they act as a permanent pressure, dragging the political spectrum to the right, most spectacularly in France. Exposing and defeating them is an integral part of the fight against racism.



So, what's new? Police arrest anti-fascists in Cable Street, 1936. And their latter-day colleagues carry on the same way



Mark Salmon



Gulf War – one year on Death toll still rising

A year after the US-led massacre in the Gulf, GEOFF RYAN reviews the harsh realities of what the Gulf war meant for the peoples of the Middle East. He goes on to look at the aftermath of the war – the fate of the peoples of Iraq and Yemen, and the ongoing struggle of the Kurdish nation. In our next issue, the second part of this article will look at the Middle East peace conference, particularly in relation to the Palestinians' fight for independence, and conclude with an assessment of the future for the peoples of the region.

ON THE night of 16-17 January the US airforce launched the most savage aerial bombardment in the history of humanity. For 40 days the people of Iraq were subject to ever more savage bombing attacks.

Despite all the talk of 'surgical strikes' only 7 percent of raids used so-called 'Smart' bombs. So 93 percent of bombs killed or maimed who ever happened to be in the vicinity. The result of this carnage was – according to the Pentagon – 150,000 military dead and 200,000 civilians killed.

'Military dead'

Since the Pentagon constantly stressed the 'military' nature of their targets 200,000 civilian deaths is – if anything – an underestimate. The vast majority of the 'military' dead were young conscripts forced to pay the price for Saddam's adventure in Kuwait.

These figures only relate to those killed in the war to 'liberate' Kuwait. Perhaps another 100,000 died during the uprisings against Saddam in the South of Iraq and Kurdistan. And a similar number of children will die due to illnesses related to lack of food, sanitation and unclean water – a direct result of the destruction of Iraq.

In the West the war has been claimed as a total success with few victims – over half a million dead Iraqis or Kurds apparently do not count. This gives the lie to the claim that the war was against Saddam, not the Iraqi people.

And when Saddam had been forced to surrender in Kuwait, the much vaunted 'New World Order' stood by while Saddam turned his elite troops – who had cynically been spared by the 'allies' – against the people of Iraq and Kurdistan, who naively believed that George Bush would support them in their revolts.

New Hitler

Despite all the rhetoric about Saddam being 'the new Hitler' Bush and Major preferred a weakened – but stable – Iraq under Saddam to the threat any successful rebellion would pose to imperialism. The Saudi regime certainly would not support any opposition which included radical Shia currents. And President Ozal of Turkey recognised the inspiration a successful uprising in Iraqi-held Kurdistan would be for Kurds in the Turkish state.

The result of these policies is that Saddam is now stronger than ever inside Iraq, however much he may have been weakened as a regional power. Any opposition is hopelessly divided by political and religious differences and by the machinations of other states – particularly Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. They back whichever organisation happens to best serve their own – differing – interests.

It is not just the people of Iraq and Kurdistan who have been made to pay for Bush's war. Yemen has suffered for daring to vote against the war in the UN Security Council – even though they were clearly op-

posed to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. And again it is not simply the government but the whole Yemeni people who are being punished.

A million Yemenis were expelled from Saudi Arabia, increasing the population of Yemen by one twelfth overnight. Not only have the Yemenis had to absorb such a massive increase in population, but they have had to do so on drastically reduced incomes. The million Yemenis in Saudi Arabia sent large amounts of money home to their families.

Collapse

Now that money has gone and their families and the state have to support them. The entire infra-structure of the already poor and weak Yemeni state has collapsed. Three quarters of the teachers in the former North Yemen were foreigners, mainly Egyptians. They have all been withdrawn as punishment.

Water services cannot be maintained leading to the spread of diseases such as cholera. As a result the health services too have come under enormous strains. There is a *de facto* imperialist boycott of Yemen, supported by the client regimes of the Gulf oil states.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have cut off all aid, massively weakening the already fragile economy, it had already been hit by the withdrawal of Soviet and East European aid. The tourist industry has totally collapsed, further exacerbating the widespread destitution.

According to Bush the 'New World Order' was supposed to bring 'democracy' to the Middle East. Yet ironically the only state in the region that was taking any steps towards democracy was Yemen. 'Democracy' in the 'New World Order' clearly means 'either carry out Washington's dictates or an entire people will suffer the consequences.'

Carnage

As a result of the Gulf War over 4 million people were forcibly displaced – primarily

Palestinians, Yemenis and Kurds. The people of Jordan – who also opposed Bush's war – have been particularly affected, with a large influx of Palestinians and Iraqis fleeing the carnage.

Washington soon patched up its quarrel with Jordan's King Hussein – it understood that he only supported Saddam in order to preserve his throne. But aid has been renewed solely in order to allow the monarch to maintain his reactionary regime.

After the people of Iraq and Yemen, it has been the Palestinians and Kurds who have borne the brunt of the 'New World Order'. One year after the emotional scenes of an entire people rising up against Saddam and then being driven into the mountains to die of hunger and cold, the Kurdish people in Iraq are facing another winter of death.

Saddam's economic blockade has provoked criticism but no action. The long drawn out talks in Baghdad between Saddam and Kurdish Democratic Party leader Barzani are no closer to agreeing any Kurdish 'autonomy'.

While imperialism may welcome an autonomous area policed by Barzani and PUK leader Talabani (if they can ever patch up their differences) there would be strict limits. The Kurds would have no control over Kurdish oil and large areas of Southern Kurdistan would remain under Iraqi control.

The West has no intention of supporting an independent Kurdish state. All they can offer is Jeffrey Archer struggling through the snow of Iraqi Kur-

distan, trying to find out what has happened to the money from his 'Simple Truth' concert.

Charity

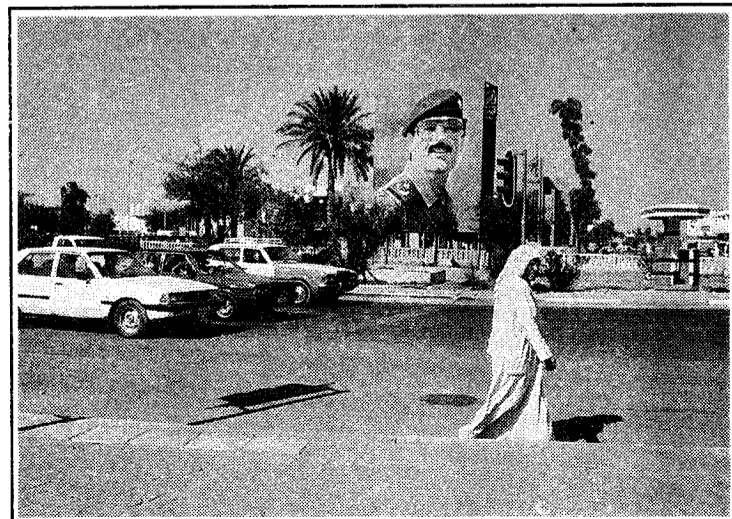
But even charity has its limits. Archer deliberately excluded the most radical Kurdish groups – particularly those who wanted to raise the issue of the repression of the Kurds in Turkey.

President Ozal of Turkey was, of course, one of the strongest supporters of the US war and can carry out attacks on the Kurdish population without fear of criticism from Washington or London. The chair of the HEP (Popular People's Party) Vedat Aydin was murdered in Diyarbakir – in Turkish-occupied Kurdistan – last July.

At his funeral, on July 10, the police and army machine-gunned the mourners. In August Turkish planes and soldiers attacked Kurdish villages in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing those forced to flee from Saddam's terror.

This brutal massacre – not to mention violation of supposedly 'sovereign' frontiers – provoked no protest from imperialist governments. The price the people of Kurdistan must pay for the 'New World Order' is death at the hands of Saddam and Ozal's thugs or death from cold and starvation.

However, the Kurds fought back and in the October elections the HEP won 22 out of 27 Kurdish seats, a victory celebrated throughout the whole of Kurdistan. The PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) continues to wage its guerrilla war in Kurdistan.



Saddam: still in charge in Baghdad

20 years after Bloody Sunday

Slaughter that focused a nation's anger

By David Coen

SUNDAY, January 30th 1972. The day British Paratroops shot dead thirteen unarmed demonstrators on the streets of Derry. Thirteen more were injured, one of whom died later. Seven of the dead were teenagers.

High Court judge, Lord Widgery produced the official report. His conclusion was that there had been shooting by the IRA. The British Army were merely returning fire. He could produce no evidence for this. None of the dead were carrying arms or throwing petrol bombs. Five had been shot in the back.

In December 1974 the British Government announced it would pay £41,500 to the families of those killed as a gesture of 'conciliation and goodwill'.

The report of the Derry city coroner into the shootings was more forthright in assigning blame:

'It strikes me that the army ran amok that day and they shot without thinking of what they were doing. They were shooting innocent people. These people may have been taking part in a parade that was banned but I don't think that justifies the firing of live rounds indiscriminately. I say it without reservation, it was sheer unadulterated murder.'

But the British Army were certainly thinking about what they were doing when they opened fire. The youth of Bogside and Creggan, who were at the forefront of the many demonstrations against internment, were going to be taught a lesson written in blood. Colonel Derek Wilford, the commanding officer of the Paras on Bloody Sunday, was awarded an OBE in 1973.

Reaction was swift and furious. In Dublin a crowd of 30,000 burned the British Embassy. Taoiseach Jack Lynch declared a national day of mourning and thousands of workers went on strike. The following day in the House of Commons, Bernadette Devlin physically attacked Home Secretary Reginald Maudling. Thousands of Irish workers downed tools and joined protest marches in London and other cities. There was also a flood of international condemnation.

In contrast there was no collective condemnation from the Labour Party. 'These tragic events belong in the past' declared Labour leader Jim Callaghan in the debate on the Widgery Report. He assured Heath's Government of the Opposition's support for the new (but still secret) policy - the suspension of the Stormont Government and the imposition of direct rule. Bloody Sunday effectively meant the end of Unionist government in the Six Counties, dating

back to the partition settlement 51 years before.

Internment had been the last desperate throw of Brian Faulkner's Unionist Government to put down what they considered was an IRA-inspired insurrection under the cloak of a civil rights campaign.

More than 450 nationalists were arrested in the dawn raids of 5 August 1971. Most ended up in the notorious Long Kesh prison camp, outside Belfast.

Twelve internees were selected for an experiment in sensory deprivation techniques and other methods of interrogation, later condemned by the European Court of Justice as 'inhuman or degrading'. These included being hooded, forced to stand for long

periods in the 'search' position, denied sleep, food and drink and being subjected to 'white noise'.

Faulkner believed that internment would at least prevent the unrest growing. In fact the reaction to internment was so fierce that on 12 August 1971 Faulkner was forced to ban all demonstrations for a year. But this had little effect on growing opposition in the streets. Barricades were built in Nationalist areas to keep out the British Army and the RUC. In these 'no go' areas the IRA was able to operate openly.

A rent and rates strike against internment, organised by women in Belfast, was so successful that the British Government passed the Payment of Debt Act allowing arrears to be taken

directly from benefits. Similar legislation was later used in the collection of the Poll Tax in Britain.

Internment and Bloody Sunday finally put an end to the illusion that reforms could be wrested from the Unionist Government at Stormont by a mass movement on the streets. If internment did not succeed in putting down the revolt, then it appeared as if shooting demonstrators was the next stage. It became clear to all that the sectarian statelet was incapable of reform. Created through partition by the British in 1921, against the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Ireland and under the threat of 'immediate and terrible war', any reform would undermine the Northern State's very existence.

But Bloody Sunday revealed something more important. If the movement for civil rights brought down the Stormont regime and eventually grew over in a demand for the ending of partition, it would also find itself openly confronting the British State. In Derry, January 1972, it did.

The Derry march was organised by the Civil Rights Association in response to pressure from the Northern Resistance Movement, an organisation supported by the Provisionals and Peoples' Democracy. It was the latest in a series of protests against internment held in defiance of Faulkner's ban.

Both the Provisional and Official IRA had assured the organisers that they would not engage in any armed confrontation with the British Army on the day. There is no independent evidence to support either the Parachute Regiment's claim to have been fired on first, or the Widgery Report's acceptance of this as fact.

Heath and Whitelaw obviously decided that the time had come to take matters into their own hands. They suspended Stormont for one year, but it never returned. Nationalists were overjoyed to see the end of the sectarian Government at Stormont.

But any hope that direct rule would lead to an improvement in the condition of the Nationalists was quickly dashed. After twenty years of rule from



Westminster, unemployment among Catholics compared to Protestants is worse than it was at the time of Bloody Sunday. This is especially significant given the fact that more than a third of employment is in government services - within the control of the 'impartial' British Government.

Bloody Sunday represented the end of the civil rights period in the North of Ireland and revealed the true protagonists - Irish nationalists and the British state. After 20 years of war the situation is one of stalemate, militarily and politically. Both sides recognise that the other cannot be defeated by military means.

Politically, the British government have repeatedly tried 'initiatives' to drain the pools in which the IRA swims - to take political support away from them. The most promising of these has been the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement which tried to woo Nationalists away from Sinn Fein by giving the Dublin Government some say in the affairs of the North.

The Agreement came about in response to increased support for Sinn Fein following the Hunger Strike where, for the first time in ten years, a mass movement developed in support of the prisoners and against the British attempt to criminalise them. So far the British have been unable to take this process forward, despite the efforts of Peter Brooke. It was the Unionists, despite their divisions, who were the main opposition to Brooke.

Some of this was undoubtedly nostalgia and the desire for the return of Stormont in some form. The more farsighted thought they could extract even stronger guarantees against Irish unity than provided in the Anglo Irish Agreement. Hence the demand that that the Twenty Six Counties' constitutional claim to the North be changed before they enter further talks with Brooke.

The Social Democratic and Labour Party (and the British Labour Party) seem quite happy to go along with Brooke, despite the fact that it pushed the question of unity into never-never land. SDLP leader, John Hume's favoured solution is a 'Europe of the Regions' within the EEC, which unfortunately for him is unlikely to appeal to the Tory Party, even post-Thatcher.

It is not hard to see that in either of these developing scenarios, the political struggle, especially in the South of Ireland, will be critical for Republicans. Not all of the lessons of Bloody Sunday are helpful for that.

Algeria Troops confront Islamic power bid

This article was received from CHAWKI SALHI, leader of the Algerian PST, before the resignation of the Algerian President, and the cancellation of the second round of elections.

None of these moves will halt the rise of the reactionary FIS. Rather, they are likely to reinforce the loyalty of FIS supporters and discredit pro-democracy forces.

Whether a military government will be installed is unclear. But the FIS is likely to be strengthened. As Chawki Salhi points out, the only way to resist the rise of fundamentalism is through a united mobilisation in defence of democracy.

IT WAS LATE in the evening of 26 December 1991 that Algeria discovered that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was the main victor in a general election which involved only 6.8 million people out of 13 million registered electors.

The results show that in the absence of a mass workers' party, the unemployed and the youth chose a reactionary banner to express their protest, because the FIS gave the illusion of being a radical, powerful and effective opposition. The electoral system pushed people to cast a 'useful vote' and reinforced the FIS.

Islamic majority

In the first round the FIS took 188 seats out of 430 and is on course to win almost all the 199 seats up for election. It got 3.26 million votes out of the 6.8 million cast. With the 518,000 votes for similar parties, the Islamic vote took an overall majority. 28 seats will be enough in the second round on January 16 for the FIS to take the majority by itself.



The Front of Socialist Forces (FFS) expressed the consensus among the masses around their right to speak Tamazight (the Berber language). But with its 510,000 votes and 26 deputies, it is hardly on course for power.

With 1.65 million votes and only 15 deputies, the vote of the ruling party, the FLN, was split between the rural areas and those worried by the rise of the FIS – it is this factor that boosted their vote.

The intellectual and social elites voted for the 30-plus liberal parties, but their 635,000 votes were rendered useless by

Jez Coulson/Inlight



Islamic leaders want to reverse gains made by women and return to fundamentalism

the 'first past the post' electoral system.

The Socialist Workers Party (PST) has always challenged the legitimacy of these elections. It participated to ensure that there was a socialist alternative on offer.

The elections were clearly anti-democratic – there was no comparison between the parties in either funding or organisational ability; the electoral system increased the vote of the biggest parties; and there was a biased media campaign. The complexity of the voting procedure and the political confusion led to more than 6 million abstentions or invalid votes.

The voting procedure was complicated so as to exclude the illiterate, and only the FIS organised courses to train illiterate supporters to tick the right number on the ballot. The 924,000 invalid votes represented such votes, lost by the

FIS' opponents who had made no such preparations.

In numerous women's voting booths the FIS won a majority – the 'democratic' parties failed to mobilise their women supporters. The right to vote for women, just won in the face of opposition from the fundamentalists, was turned to the advantage of enemies of women's rights.

The government, who had promised free and honest elections, clearly had expected neither the FIS victory nor the high level of abstention. Then, faced by the scale of the defeat, it seemed there was a possibility of a coup. The FIS lead was so large that there could no longer be any doubt as to the result.

Panic

The panic which particularly hit the middle classes has been used in a crazy campaign for the annulling of the results, led by the 'Committee to Save Algeria', created by the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) and bosses' organisations.

But this campaign discredits democracy and will only enlarge the FIS. The massive demonstration on January 2 is

the only positive element in this disastrous situation, with up to 300,000 people taking part.

Now the government is aiming to rerun the vote in some of the FIS' seats where there have been claims of fraud. We are obviously heading for a prolonged election, which improves the FLN's chances, but also lets them prepare for an FIS victory.

It seems very unlikely that the FLN can recover its losses, but not everything is yet decided. Imperialism is hesitating between the real possibilities offered by an authoritarian regime – to smash people's purchasing power, close down the public sector and open up the economy to the world market – and its fear of destabilising its domination over the region.

But to defeat the fundamentalists, the working class youth need to be won back from them. The fight against the right and resistance to the IMF's plans must continue. And the revolt of the marginalised youth needs to be the driving force of the struggle.

This is the challenge before us. The workers' movement has already waited for too long, but it is the only way forward.

El Salvador negotiations A tactical retreat

PEREZ DE CUELLAR was all smiles. At the last minute the UN secretary had achieved a compromise where none seemed possible.

But will the agreements signed between the Salvadorean government and the revolutionary FMLN do the same for the embattled people of El Salvador?

The agreements mark the end of more than a decade of armed struggle between the FMLN's guerrillas and government death squads, backed up by billions of dollars in US 'aid'. It is a mark of the popular support enjoyed by the guerrillas that they were able to sustain the struggle for so long.

And there is no doubt that the terrible destruction wrought by the war played a big part in bringing the FMLN to the negotiating table. With the removal of Soviet aid as the USSR collapsed and the electoral defeat of their allies – the FSLN – in neighbouring Nicaragua, the FMLN's room for

manoeuvre declined dramatically.

These factors largely explain what brought the rebels to the negotiations – they felt that it was now or never for a negotiated solution. But as for the FMLN's basic aims of 'Democracy, Freedom and Social Justice', the outlook is not good.

At best the agreements amount to a formula for moving El Salvador from military dictatorship towards liberal democracy. This is clearly the aim – as the FMLN puts it 'to continue the struggle on a new level'.

The agreements contain formulae that aim at curbing the worst excesses of the death squads and the worst excesses of obscene wealth. They also attempt to depoliticise the armed forces and police, removing those responsible for atrocities and, to some extent, integrating the FMLN.

Whether these agreements will be implemented is, to say the least, doubtful. The apparatus of the government, the army and the police are so



The FMLN guerrillas have survived only because of their popular support

riddled with death squad goons that it is hard to imagine UN observers having much effect.

But this is not the main point. Rather, it is that the USA will be bound to continue to operate the 'NIMBY' principle (Not In My Back Yard). And the amount of room available to make concessions to the workers and peasants – the lifeblood of liberal

democracy – is close to nil.

As long as El Salvador remains in the pocket of the USA, a poverty stricken semi-colonial nation, it is only through revolutionary struggle that the state can be forced to implement anything approaching 'social justice'.

The FMLN have been forced into a corner and have won agreements that may curb some of the worst excesses

of the past. As a tactical retreat it is understandable.

What is essential is that the rebels continue their political struggle, in the knowledge that the accords have not resolved any of the fundamental problems facing Latin America's poor. That struggle will not be resolved by negotiation, nor can it be solved within El Salvador's borders.

The dictatorship of the grassroots Raver

By Major Unrest

SO WHAT'S the rave about Rave music? Several people who know me to be a musician ask me this question, incredulous that I could even listen to Rave music, let alone be well into it.

'But...it's incredibly loud, monotonous and repetitive...it's nothing but a load of bleeps and buzzes...it's controlled by big business...it's escapist...'. These are all common arguments thrown at me by those who claim to be into 'Real Music'.

Ever heard these arguments before, about other kinds of youth sub-cultural music? Remember your dad poking his head around the door to comment on the Sex Pistols single you'd just rushed out to buy? If you're a little older, this would be the new Pink Floyd LP you'd be listening to, lying on the floor, two feet from the speakers.

Now I'm NOT saying that people should not make judgments or have strong opinions about different musical forms. But these should be considered opinions, not prejudiced impressions, with the recognition that individual taste will always vary greatly.

Yes, Rave is loud, monotonous and repetitive. But so is most dance music. Repetition and variation of rhythm patterns are used to induce the semi-trance like state of mind that allows you to relax your body and dance. And I, like millions of others, love dancing.

Yes, Rave is full of bleeps

and buzzes and countless other new-to-music noises. But I would say that this is one of its creative points. At least it's not another guitar-based indie rehash of what the Velvet Underground and Iggy and the Stooges were doing over twenty years ago - ooh...my musical prejudices crept in there!

As for the accusation that Rave is controlled by big business; it is simply not the case. Most Rave is released through small independent labels or artist self-financed white labels. Of course, there are

much dominant within the Rave scene as a whole, especially in the underground.

This extends from the making of the music, right through into the setting up of illegal free Raves by loose, informal collectives - called crews or possees - of DJs, sound and light technicians, MCs and general organisers, and of pirate radio stations.

Yes, Rave is escapist by and large. But there is a loose overall philosophy of unity and

"Yes, Rave is loud, monotonous and repetitive. But so is most dance music. Repetition and variation of rhythm patterns are used to induce the semi-trance like state of mind that allows you to relax your body and dance. And I, like millions of others, love dancing."

pressures to conform to popular styles within Rave and House. But these styles are dictated not by big music business moguls but by what kicks on the dancefloor. That is, by what grassroots Ravers go for.

The big labels are doing their usual 'smash and grab' raid into the Rave scene, picking up tunes that have been popular in the underground for a year or more and mass promoting them into the charts. But the independent Do It Yourself philosophy, inherited from punk and black dance music, remains very

'positive vibes'. For example, a statement of intent from Nottingham Massive DIY Sound Crew reads: 'From the start DIY has promoted unity and cooperation, challenging people to drop their prejudices and ego-orientation stances, and will continue to do so'.

It is this more than anything else that gives the Rave scene its positive dynamic. For no-one, except perhaps your hardcore Kraftwerk fan, would fail to acknowledge the massive influence of black youth sub-culture on the Rave scene.



Raving on...

Some readers may remember my articles on the Hip-Hop and House scenes in *Labour Briefing* three years ago where I stated:

'This [scene] represents a positive development: the coming together of many black and white working class youth in multi-racial inner city areas, the increasing self-confidence and openness of many young black people, and a generation of young white people growing up with, and to some extent respecting and learning from the rebellious combativity of black culture. Socialist cultural activists must build on this to create a rock-solid counterpole of attraction the next time the state whips up racism (as it will when the capitalist crisis deepens)'.

Three years on and the crisis is deeper, the spectre of a fascist upsurge is haunting Europe. But the Rave scene is creating ever stronger links between white and black youth. Raves against racism and fascism should be an essential element in the creation of an anti-fascist movement among youth.

Just to give a taste of the underground Rave scene at the moment, I'll describe a Rave I recently went to. It was in a

disused warehouse squatted by a few anarcho-travellers, and set up to make it very difficult for the police to easily get in and close it down.

Word of mouth over a two-day period generated a crowd of 300-400, mainly inner city, black and white youth, a fair mix of both and also of lasses and lads. Entrance was in the form of donations towards costs through a very secure door. The overall vibe was streetwise, goodtime unity - sort of a psychedelic northern soul buzz. A brilliant example of youth self-organisation.

The police came, snouted around outside for a while, decided there was not alot they could do about it, and pissed off again. Not bad for the times we live in.

Rave music will eventually get even better, as it cross-fertilizes with others, the latest hybrid being Ragga Rave and Ragga Hip-House...well worth checking out. Hot tips for the future - Rebel MC and other Tribal Base stuff, the Moody Boys, Sister Levi, Bad Base, and two Paris crews, IAM and Raggamatic.

Watch this space for further articles about the influence of black culture on the youth sub-scene.

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Mayor in burning ghetto shocker!

City of Hope

Directed by John Sayles

Reviewed by Valmay Young

DESCRIBED BY *Time Out* as 'the finest movie by a US independent in years', *City of Hope* is a film title both true and ironic.

Sayle's film portrays a sophisticated and undogmatic account of ghetto life, where the issues of right and wrong are as interwoven as the plot. Despite the complexities of a multi-character work, Sayles manages to excel. Most other directors would balk at the thought of having more than three central figures.

Nonetheless, the large number of players makes it difficult to distinguish who the main characters are. First the film highlights Nick Renaldo (Vincent Sparo). A wilful young Italian, he leaves his father Joe's (Tony La Bianco) building site, in a bid for independence. Both he and his father are drawn into a web of corruption with the town's mayor and police, involving arson, robbery

and murder.

Next, interwoven with this, is the story of two young blacks, Desmond (Jojo Smollett) and Tito (Edward Jay Townsend Jr.), who live in a property owned by Joe. They get involved with the law in a dispute which becomes an issue of black rights.

Also, this situation brings in other characters including Wynn (Joe Morton). Wynn is a careerist black councillor, intent on exploiting the confrontation as much for himself, as the community he represents.

While Sayle's style in this, as in other movies of his, is to use a political backdrop in order to describe personal relationships, a number of issues emerge.

One is that of the rise of black professionals, and the choices they have to make between joining the white system or retaining their roots. Another is the corruption of a situation where it is necessary for politicians to need business support to win elections. Also highlighted is the domino effect of police harassment, as in the case of Desmond and Tito.

Indeed, the issues dealt with have a great affinity with those currently being explored in the new wave of black films. This shows the influence that a year, in which more films with black themes were produced than in the previous ten, is having on a wider range of conscious film makers.

However, it is not just black films that have influenced Sayles in this movie. The aggressive pace at the start of the piece is redolent of Hip-Hop in the way it attempts to stimulate the audience. This extends to the dialogue through the film, which is racy, intelligent and seasoned with wit, if peppered with the occasional self-conscious slip into melodrama. As the film progresses, the initial speed slows, and the moviegoer settles in to enjoy the powerful, naturalistic, un-stereotyped performance.

City of Hope and films like it, present a challenge to America to accept the complexity of its multi-cultural experience. Rather than the typical depiction of Italians or Afro-Americans merely in the form of gangster films or showbiz musicals.

Tory threat to teacher training

EDUCATION Secretary Kenneth Clarke, author of repeated attacks on the teaching profession, has now decided that teachers need far less training.

Already groaning under the burden of having to implement the National Curriculum, teachers are now going to have to redirect yet more time away from education into training the next generation of teachers.

Clarke's latest move suggests that student teachers should spend only 20% of their training in college, spending the rest of the time 'in the classroom'. Clarke's plan amounts to an attack on any idea that there is a methodology behind teaching, replacing this with simply bashing in the 'Three Rs' by rote.

The response from the biggest teachers' union, the NUT, has not stretched beyond a few pious words deploring deprofessionalisation. But those involved in teacher training, mainly organised by the higher education unions, NATFHE and the AUT, have been very critical of the move. An attack on teacher training is clearly the logical follow-up to Clarke's plans.

Meanwhile NUT activists have been organising around budget cuts and performance-related pay in the run up to the union's Easter conference. Teachers have taken action over budget cuts in a whole number of areas, but so far the action has remained isolated.

Now NUT activists have organised a

conference in February to try to generalise the action. But they face a tough fight in the face of underhand manoeuvres from the union leadership.

As usual Doug McAvo, NUT General Secretary, has been only too pleased to respond to demands from Labour Education spokesperson Jack Straw not to rock the boat as the elections looms. But the union leadership has had to resort to bureaucratic manoeuvres to get its way, having lost much of its support to the left over the last five years.

They have tried to marginalise calls for industrial action at the coming union conference by making it a separate agenda item, cut off from all policy debates. The item is likely to be a closed session, hidden away from the public eye. Such moves mean that preparation by activists to take on McAvo and his cronies is at a premium.

Teachers' Conference

For nationwide action against budget cuts called by Oxfordshire NUT

February 8, Oxford Town Hall

Union fights London NHS hit-list

By Harry Sloan

AMID grim warnings of a new 'flu epidemic that could put huge strains on hospital services, health union COHSE is warning that the Tory government are planning drastic cuts to London's NHS.

A new report *Under Pressure*, researched for COHSE by London Health Emergency shows that despite the closure of almost 7,000 (22%) of London's acute hospital beds between 1982-89, ministers are looking to close another 2,000 beds or more, including at least one teaching hospital, as part of their new 'market' reforms.

Knowing that to announce such cuts now could spell disaster in the general election, Health Secretary William Waldegrave has staved off the hour of decision by launching an 'inquiry' into the capital's hospital service, to be headed by Sir Bernard Tomlinson. This will amount to little more than drawing up a 'hit list' for instant closure if the Tories are re-elected, and will not report until after the election is over.

The COHSE report challenges the

view argued by ministers and by many health chiefs and academics, that London is "over-bedded" and over-resourced.

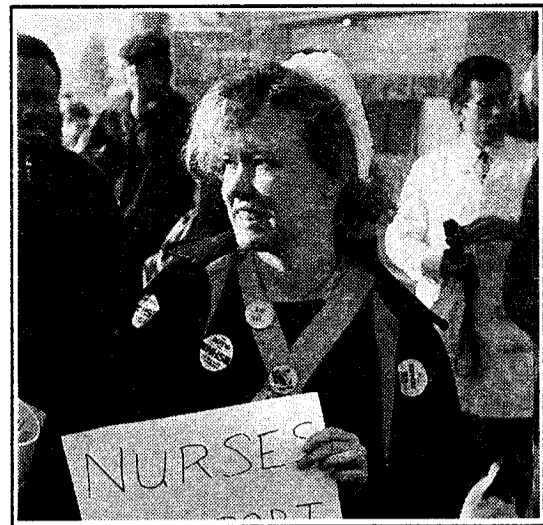
It lists up-to-date figures to show that the numbers of acute patients had risen by 1990-91 to almost 50% above the planned level for 1993-4. Meanwhile waiting lists have risen by over 40% since 1982.

Far from being over-resourced, London has faced a decline in resources in relation to inflation and demand for health care: the capital's health budget has fallen over £600 million below the level required to match 1982 spending.

Despite the concentration of costly teaching hospitals in London, and the

costs of London weighting, health spending per head in the South East is only 11% above the national average, and almost 20% below per capita spending in Scotland.

The COHSE report, submitted as evidence to the Tomlinson inquiry, opposes hospital closures and the Tories' chaotic market reforms. It calls instead for increased resources and for a new strategic planning body - a London Regional Health Authority - to take long-term responsibility for health care in the capital.



Facing new closures? London's nurses

MPs to call conference of Labour Left

By Pete Firmin

IT SEEMS certain that the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, together with left organisations in the Labour Party will be calling a conference of the Labour Left in Leeds on 29 February.

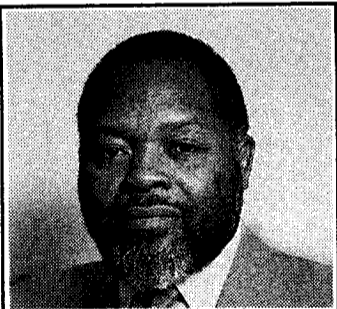
It has come about, primarily from the disagreements within the Labour Left over last year's slate for the NEC elections. Disquiet came after the Campaign Group failed to consult outside of its own ranks in seeking women and black candidates for the constituency section in the elections. It resulted in different slates being supported by different parts of the left.

For the first year of One Member One Vote, and at a time when the Labour Left is weak, this was a division the left could have done without.

Several meetings between the Campaign Group and left organisations, both in the party and the unions, have taken place in the meantime to discuss how to prevent this from happening in the future.

Unfortunately, a section of the left, around Labour Left Liaison and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, has stood out in favour of mere 'consultation' among the leaderships of left organisations in London. Decisions are supposed to emerge by some miraculous process of 'consensus'.

They opposed tooth and nail a proposal from Labour Party Socialists, Labour Briefing and others, that the whole process should



Conference call: Bernie Grant MP

be moved out of smoke-filled rooms and should involve the whole of the left in the party as widely as possible. Not least, because if you want to mobilise the vote under OMOV, people need to feel committed to the candidates they are trying to win support for.

After much tortuous discussion, and little agreement, the Campaign Group has at last decided to break the log-jam by calling February's conference. Unfortunately, at present, the date clashes with *Women for Socialism's* AGM - something yet to be resolved.

The conference will not just consist of a discussion of who to stand in the various sections of the NEC elections - and on what platform - but it will also have a major session that is provisionally called 'The Unions and the General Election'.

Clearly, such a conference is a major step forward in organising the Labour Left. But it needs to be seriously built for in every CLP and union branch around the country for it to be a success.

RSI: Action needed to back up court victory

THREATS OF dismissal still hangs over the heads of sufferers of repetitive strain injury (RSI), despite an important victory in the courts.

The injury, commonplace among computer operators, has led to numerous threats of sacking, particularly among journalists. But five British Telecom computer operators decided to take a test case to court, insisting that their employer was to blame for the injuries.

In December it was announced that they had won more than £6,500 compensation for pain suffered as well as compensation for loss of potential earnings. A flood of similar claims is now likely to follow, with 83 cases from Telecom workers in the pipeline already.

But action by journalists at the Financial Times has come to a standstill. After a 70 percent vote for strike action in support of nine RSI sufferers facing the sack, management used delaying tactics to try to avert action. They claim to be 'consulting medical records' but have not withdrawn the threat.

Journalists need to demand that management backs down, or implement the mandate for action that they have.

The principle won in the Telecom case - that management has to take responsibility for injuries that are its fault - must not be allowed to slide into the background.

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socialist **OUTLOOK**

20 years after Bloody Sunday

Get British

gunmen out of Ireland!

Demo January 25th

12 noon

Assemble Hyde Park

March to Quex Road, Kilburn



TWENTY years ago, on Bloody Sunday 1972, British paratroops cold-bloodedly opened fire on a demonstration of unarmed civilians in Derry. 13 died, and the long struggle for Irish liberation lurched into a new, more violent phase.

20 years later, British imperialism has learned nothing and forgotten nothing. The nationalist people and republican movement have not been crushed by the one-sided 'official' repression meted out by British troops and the orange-led RUC and Ulster Defence Regiment; nor have they given way to the freelance sectarian killings of the Loyalist paramilitary gangs.

A new republican offensive, striking at economic targets in

Ireland and Britain is again being met by repression, with the dispatch of yet more troops and the call-up of more UDR part-timers.

The repression will fail now, as it did in 1972, to stem the tide of nationalist revolt.

The only answer is to rid Ireland of its British problem, by the withdrawal of British troops to allow Ireland the same right of national self-determination that John Major's government now cynically claims to endorse in Eastern Europe.

BLOODY SUNDAY FEATURE: PAGE 12

INSIDE: STUDENT OCCUPATIONS PAGE 6