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socialist OUTLOOK

Scrap Trident

SO JOHN MAJOR is going to make defence a central election issue. More precisely the Tories will make a principle of building a fourth Trident nuclear submarine, at fabulous expense.

A fourth Trident submarine will ensure that Britain has a nuclear strike capacity of 4,000 Hiroshimas, as opposed to the paltry 3,000 it currently possesses. Doubtless millions of people will sleep more soundly knowing that!

The Tory proposal to buy a fourth Trident is loony – politically and financially. For this devastating arsenal of surprise attack, Britain will be paying £2 million a day for the next twenty years – £15 billion. Imagine what this extra money would do for the NHS, jobs and education.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the cold war arguments of nuclear deterrence are redundant. The hundreds of nuclear warheads will not be there to defend anyone, but to enable capitalist Britain to pretend to be a world power.

Labour will not build a fourth Trident. But the huge cost of the first three will continue to be borne and any saving will be spent on conventional weapons!

The case for billions spent on nuclear submarines is as dead as the Soviet Union.

SCRAP TRIDENT NOW!



Kick out Tory warmongers!

Support grows for Anti-Racist Alliance

By Sam Inman

ESTABLISHED IN November on the initiative of the Black Liaison Group – involving over 40 black organisations – the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) was formed to combat growing racism, rising numbers of racist attacks and support for extreme right and fascist political groups.

Ten national trade unions now sponsor the ARA: MSF, NUM, NALGO, UCATT, FBU, NUCPS, NAPO, NUPE and the NUJ – along with a wide range of black and jewish organisations, and celebrities.

Local and regional launches are also underway. In London initiatives are taking place in Lambeth, Greenwich, Southwark, Islington, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Camden, Hounslow and Haringey. Outside

London launches are planned in Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, Wolverhampton, Leeds and Scotland.

A 'Teachers' Anti-Racist Alliance' has also been established, and a London rally is planned for 9 March. Plans are already underway for a major national demonstration and carnival in the early summer.

It also looks as though there will be a national conference of the Alliance, again around summertime, after local groups have been given a chance to establish themselves.

The ARA rally on 29 January was a big success, attracting over 500 people. While the Asylum Bill was not really taken up enough by speakers, links were certainly made between the rise of Euro-racism and Fortress Europe, and also – importantly – between the Gulf War/New World Order and

rising racism.

The only disappointing aspect of the rally was that both Ken Livingstone and Marc Wadsworth used the opportunity to make a dig at, in Wadsworth's words, 'extremist left-wing splitters' – referring to the SWP's re-launch of the ANL.

Public rallies should aim to unite the anti-racist movement. Disagreements over tactics, even strong disagreements, should be discussed within the framework of an open and democratic movement.

The ARA should be encouraged to move in this direction. Disagreements will not necessarily come only from the left – they could equally come from other black organisations.

For information about local and national events contact ARA, PO Box 188, London, SW1A 0SG or telephone 071 607 3988.



Digs against the left: Livingstone

Rolan Adams campaign Left must not fail anti-racist test

'JUDGE THE Anti-Racist Alliance by their action' said Richard Adams at the London ARA rally at the end of January. He is the father of Rolan Adams, the 15 year old black youth murdered on 21 February last year by a gang of racist white youths on the Thamesmead estate in London.

Adams explained that since the British National Party moved their headquarters into nearby Welling, there has been a 140 per cent rise in racist attacks. Thamesmead's population is 90 per cent white, 10 per cent black. Since Rolan's murder, 20 black families have had to flee their homes on the estate because of racist violence.

The Rolan Adams Family Campaign, in conjunction with the ARA, have called a demonstration around the anniversary of Rolan's murder to 'Stop Racist Attacks – Close down the BNP HQ!'. Bexley council gave planning permission allowing the BNP to set up in Welling. They must be forced to shut it down.

Richard Adams' statement about judging the ARA is particularly important given the current hostilities within the movement. He went on to say that throughout the year of campaigning he has become sceptical of a lot of organisations. While sensationalising tragedies, most he said, 'had absolutely failed us'.

Adams linked racist violence to the racism endemic in the British state, citing the cases of the Tottenham Three, the Cardiff Three and Brian Moore – a black man jailed for two years for defending himself against racist attackers.

Fighting racism, he argued, meant doing 'whatever is necessary to keep our people free, keep them alive, and make sure our children are not vulnerable on the streets'.

Ensuring that white-dominated labour movement bodies take up anti-racist demands is a key task for every socialist. To do that, they have to work hand in hand with black organisations, community groups and campaigns.

Racist facts of British 'justice'

BLACK PEOPLE make up 4.4 per cent of the population of Britain yet...

- black people make up a third of all those appearing before magistrates courts
- 38 per cent of all remand prisoners in London are black
- black women constitute 25.8 per cent of the female prison population
- black youths are twice as likely to receive custodial sentences as their white counterparts
- by the age of 21, one in ten black youths have been sent to prison
- in 1989, one in five black youths were stopped by the police
- since 1980, 61 black people have died in custody or due to police actions – no-one has ever been charged
- in 1988, 5,294 complaints were made against the Metropolitan Police – only 166 were investigated by the Police Complaints Authority, of which only 22 resulted in any action

'In this country, if the Police say you're guilty, then you're guilty, especially if you are black or Irish'

Billy Power, Birmingham Six.

General strike against racism in Sweden

By Sylvia MacDonald

ON THE initiative of the Kurdish National League, fifteen immigrant organisations in Sweden have called for a one hour general strike against racism on 21 February. They are urging anti-racists to organise broad demonstrations outside Swedish embassies all over Europe on that evening.

Unprecedented racist violence has hit Sweden in recent months, especially in the capital city of Stockholm. In November, one Iranian student was murdered and five immigrant workers were injured after being shot by an armed racist – the so-called 'laserman' – who stalks the streets in and around Stockholm.

Bomb threats

The new year period saw a campaign of bomb-threats against railway stations and airports all over Sweden. One bomb exploded at Stockholm central station. The bombers were demanding the release of two members of the VAM – 'White Aryan Resistance' – on trial for armed robbery.

At the end of January there were five shootings within five days, in Stockholm and in the university town of Uppsala. One Turkish immigrant and one Palestinian were seriously injured after being shot in the head. Three other people were also shot.

These specific attacks have been accompanied by an explosion of racist violence and arson attacks against the black and immigrant communities. Especially threatened are people working alone in small shops and cafes. The racist

campaign of violence is now dominating Swedish politics. But while Stockholm is in a state of shock, black and immigrant workers fear for their lives.

The 21 February strike is supported by Riksförbundet Stoppa Rasismen – the National League to Stop Racism – and also, showing the impact of the escalation of racism in the country, by the government minister for social affairs.

Tense

At present the situation is very tense. The Swedish employers' federation is clearly opposed to the strike but, up until now, do not dare to condemn it. Trade union leaders are divided in their support.

Carl Bildt, the Conservative Prime Minister, is met with growing contempt following his public speculation that the wave of shootings may be connected to rivalry within the criminal world. So far though, only the Socialist Party (SP) – the Swedish section of the Fourth International – has called for Bildt's resignation.

In a new development in Stockholm, collective defence is being organised for black and immigrant people who work alone in shops. These 'guards against racism' have been pushed for by the SP, in conjunction with social democrats, the Left Party and Stoppa Rasismen. They also have the support of the local radio.

The initiative follows debate over whether or not individuals should arm themselves for protection. The SP argues that, while individual arming cannot be condemned, collective defence is a better solution in the face of the cynical role played by the Swedish police.

At present the '21 February Committee' is enjoying a relative 'honeymoon' period with the press and politicians. This could easily change overnight. News of support from anti-racist and labour movement organisations in Britain would be very important for morale.

Contact '21 February Committee' c/o Kurdiska Riksförbundet in Stockholm.

Tel: 010-46-8-6528585; Fax: 010-46-8-6502120.

**Remember
Rolan Adams!
Demonstrate
Saturday 22 February**

**Close down the BNP HQ
Assemble 12 noon, St Nicholas
Church, Plumstead High St, SE18**

Called by the Rolan Adams Family Campaign

Crisis in Scotland

The decision to close Ravenscraig steel plant and the hypocritical statements from some in the Tory party stating sympathy with Scottish independence, have thrust Scotland once again to the centre of British politics.

For a long time the Tories have been utterly discredited and unpopular in Scotland. The imposition of the poll tax in Scotland first only deepened hatred for the Tories. But Labour are losing credibility rapidly as well.

Labour's decision to denounce poll tax non-payment and demand obedience to the hated tax severely undermined its position, as well as giving a boost to the SNP.

Whatever the scale of support for full independence, the demand for a Scottish Assembly with full powers on domestic questions is overwhelming. Labour promises an assembly, but insists it will be subject to veto by the Westminster parliament.

The row over Ravenscraig has exposed the Labour leadership to ridicule. Kinnock could have finally sunk any Tory hopes in Scotland by simply announcing that Ravenscraig would be nationalised by an incoming Labour government. Or if Labour could not tolerate nationalisation, at least they could have said they would keep it open somehow—either by subsidy or even buying the plant. But Gordon



An unconvincing Scottish badge for Labour's Bryan Gould

Brown's statement that it was just a 'business decision' which could not be interfered with was a disaster.

The politics of Kinnockism, as carried through by the Ravenscraig shop stewards, have deeply disrupted the possibility of a serious fight to keep the plant open. In effect, they accept the 'inevitability' of closure.

At the next election there is bound to be a surge of votes for the SNP. The election of Alex Salmond as SNP leader, as well as radical policies against Trident, the poll tax and for the nationalisation of Ravenscraig, has given the SNP a left image—the accusation that they are 'tartan Tories' carries little weight today.

On present opinion polls, 850,000 Scots could vote for the SNP at the general election. On the other hand hundreds of thousands of voters will vote Labour with clenched teeth—to nail the Tories and for no other reason.

In this situation the intervention of the left of the labour movement is vital. But no one will be taken seriously in Scotland without a clear position on the national question. So how should socialists respond to Scotland's national demands?

Abstract denunciation of nationalism and simple-minded defence of the United Kingdom, in effect the positions put forward by the Militant tendency, are hopeless. The overwhelming majority of the Scottish people see themselves as oppressed by Westminster. The Scottish people

have the right to self-determination; and, if they want it, independence. Supporting the national demands of the Scottish people today means campaigning for a Scottish Assembly with full powers.

The political situation in Scotland is developing very rapidly. All those who limit themselves to supporting struggles against the poll tax and against job losses, but refuse to support the national demands of the Scottish people will be marginalised. And Kinnock is dealing grievous blows to Labour's standing; if that were translated into many Labour losses in the general election, it could end all hope of defeating Major and the Tories.

ANL yes, but back anti-racism

By Paul Clarke

TEN THOUSAND people turned out for January's demonstration against the Asylum Bill, organised by London NUS. According to Kevin Blowe, London NUS convenor, it was the biggest demonstration they had ever organised.

Events were soured, however, when SWP stewards seized control of the front of the demonstration for the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), hustling aside the banner of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). In fact, the intention of the organisers was that black and refugee groups should lead the march. Logically, black supporters of both organisations should have been among these.

These conflicts reflect deep divisions which go back to the original ANL in the late 1970s.

The launching of the ANL in 1977 was a good initiative, given the rise of the National Front at that time; in local elections the NF received 100,000 votes in London.

The fascists were a real danger. A combination of the ANL and the election of the Thatcher government pushed the fascists aside for a whole period. Thatcher captured the racist vote.

But the ANL tactic always contained within it the danger

that the struggle against racism would be reduced to fighting the fascists. It was a danger because the biggest threat to black communities in Britain was, and remains, state racism.

After 1979, the ANL wound up. But black communities remained besieged by new racist immigration laws, deportations as well as violent racist attacks.

Since 1979 it has generally been difficult to mobilise big demonstrations against this all-pervasive and systematic racism.

Of course, mobilising against the fascists aided the process of fighting racist attacks, which as Thamesmead has shown are often linked with fascist activity. But the idea of building an alliance against racism in all its forms, the idea that lies behind the ARA, is correct.

The huge 25 January demonstration against the Front National in Paris showed the importance of linking the fight against state racism with the fight against the fascists. Thousands of North African immigrants were mobilised on the march because it included demands against the immigration policies of the Mitterrand government, as well as the right to vote for immigrant workers.

Given the decision of the British National Party to stand candidates in the general election, there is a natural focus for anti-

fascist activity at this time. But by its very nature the ANL cannot be on its own the kind of anti-racist alliance that is needed.

There may well be problems of democracy in the ARA, although it is still far too early to draw final conclusions from this. But the ANL is hardly a model of democracy either.

One lamentable feature of the SWP's strong-arm tactics on the Asylum Bill march was its arrogant and authoritarian attitude to black groups supporting the ARA. Self-organisation of the black community in the fight against racism has to be central in any successful struggle.

Without self-organisation there can be no viable self-defence of the communities against racist attacks. Without self-organisation, the huge potential power of the black community as an influential factor in political struggle will be wasted.

Any political actions which attempt to exclude or marginalise self-organised black

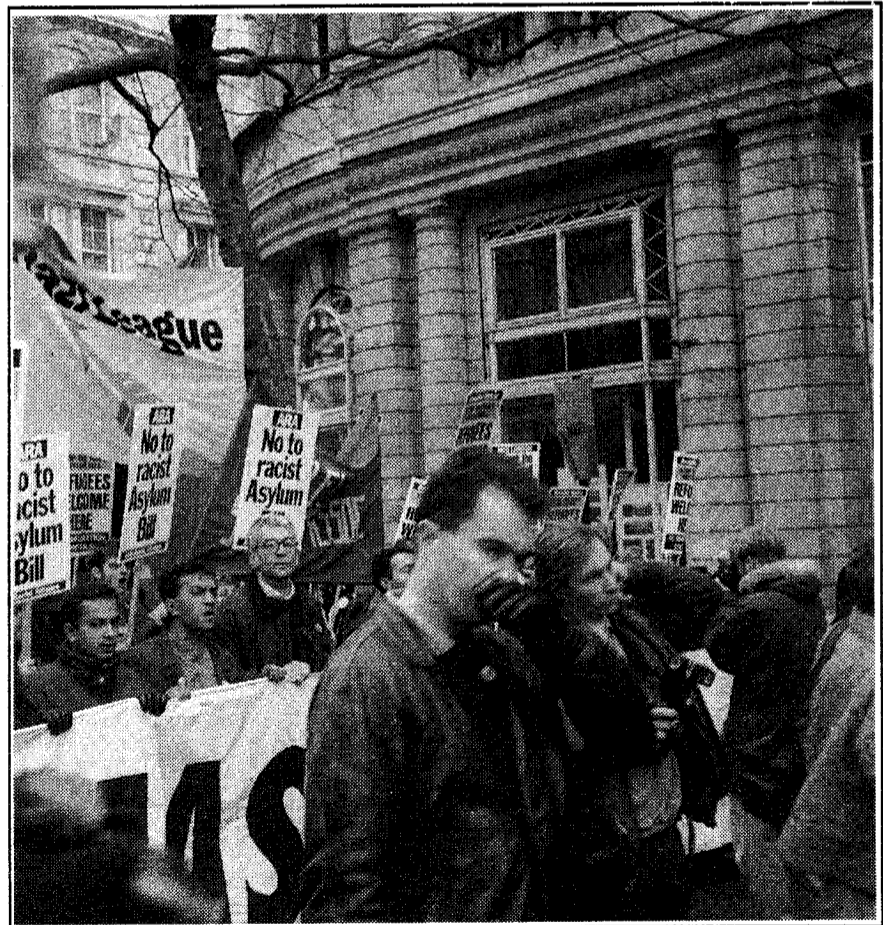
groups are utterly destructive to the construction of a broad alliance against racism.

Now there are four national organisations engaged in the anti-racist fight—ARA, ANL, and the smaller Anti-Fascist Action and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. Organisational rivalry between the former two is quickly becoming a no-holds barred fight for dominance. This is entirely unnecessary and self-defeating. At the very least they should form an umbrella co-ordination between them.

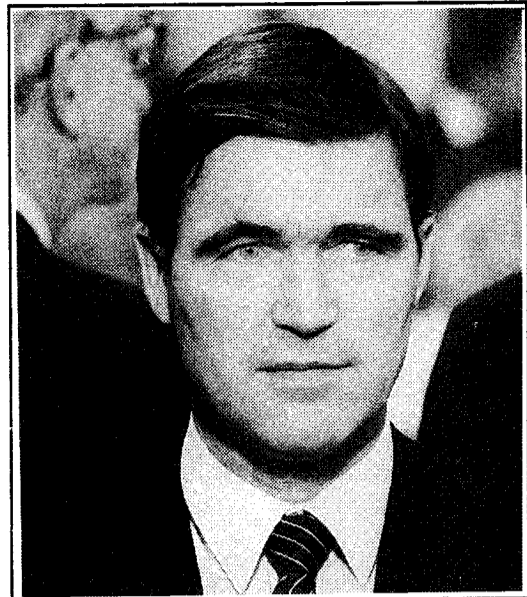
This is certainly a time to resume the fight against the fascists, but it is not the time to forget fundamentals, yet again, and collapse anti-racism into the anti-fascist fight.

Despite the increase in their activity, the fascists are still a marginal factor in British politics. Racism, above all state racism, remains the biggest threat to the black communities, and a critical source of division within the working class.

Photo: Sam Inman



AEU-EETPU merger vote Turn apathy into opposition!



Welcomed by bosses: AEU chief Bill Jordan

A MILLION ballot papers have now gone out after a vigorous campaign for a merger between the Engineering Union AEU and the notorious Electricians and Plumbers union the EETPU.

Now the two unions have invited others to join them.

Leaders Bill Jordan (AEU) and Eric Hammond (EETPU) have certainly pulled a few fast ones in their bid to form a new yellow bloc on the right of the TUC.

They have also had a hard job convincing AEU members that the EETPU is going to behave itself under President-elect Paul Gallagher, especially after recent EETPU poaching campaigns aimed at the building workers' union UCATT.

But their job has been made a good bit easier by the hopeless inactivity of the traditional AEU left around the *Engineering Gazette*.

It seems that 'left' AEU Executive member Jimmy Airlie and his pals learnt nothing from the 1990 cam-

paign, which defeated a similar merger move on the AEU executive. This time around, they have used the bizarre excuse of 'democracy' to explain their complete failure to stop the scab merger.

Democracy

'The executive have agreed the merger' they argue 'so we must keep quiet - we can't campaign against union policy'. Ironically, it is precisely on the issue of democracy that the AEU leaders want a blank cheque - and most believe that Jordan plans to introduce EETPU structures, doing away with any real rank and file accountability.

Of course, the reason for the 'yes' vote is that practically every left executive member has been given the boot, with only a couple coming out clearly against the merger.

One union that will surely be swept onto the sidelines if the merger goes ahead will be the Electrical and Plumbing Industrial Union (EPIU), the remnants of pro-TUC elements in the

EETPU. But when asked for their reaction to the super-union plan, they refuse to say a thing.

Despite silence from the EPIU and the *Gazette*, AEU activists on the ground have been waging a rearguard fight for a democratic union inside the TUC. Shop stewards in the North West have been organising a last minute campaign, printing thousands of 'VOTE NO! - We don't need a bosses union' leaflets.

Scabbed on AEU

These spell out the objections in a few hard-hitting points:

'The EETPU ...
'Scabbed on AEU members at Wapping. Of 5,000 sacked, 250 were AEU members.

'Were kicked out of the TUC for unprincipled behaviour.

'Have merged with scab groups (P&O strikebreakers) and now just completed talks with the scab UDM.

'Have no democracy - members have no say in leadership decisions. Full time officials are not elected but

this to be the intended structure of the new Union.

'Are a company 'union', where sweetheart deals are the order of the day hence the unbelievable company facilities given to Jordan and Gallagher as they tour the country, speaking at paid mass meetings on site and at joint AEU-EETPU stewards' meetings.'

Meetings of shop stewards and convenors in Preston, Newcastle and Scotland have come out heavily against the Jordan campaign. Massey Ferguson convenor Steve Taylor in Manchester said 'At our shop stewards meeting they told us there would be no problem with TUC affiliation or electing officials - we'd outnumber the EETPU.'

So we asked, what are they up to? Why not take the votes now? They

didn't have any answers. There's not much enthusiasm for the merger.'

The EETPU's agenda is obvious. Hammond may continue with the anti-TUC vitriol, but others want a far-right bloc inside the labour movement.

EETPU efforts to form a right-wing alternative to the TUC, regrouping the so-called Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) and others, have not come to much.

But a business-union bloc inside the TUC is the serious danger. The lack of enthusiasm for the merger on the ground must be mobilised into active opposition.

GEC strikers dig in for jobs A beacon of resistance

By Pete Williams

WORKERS at GEC Alstom make distribution switchgear for the electricity industry.

They supply the recently privatised electricity companies in Britain. They also manufacture kits for assembly in Malta, Mexico and Venezuela.

Like workers in manufacturing throughout the country, they have seen their area decimated by successive recessions and the Tories' policies.

Between 1979 and 1982 Greater Manchester lost 100,000 manufacturing jobs. Between 1982 and 1984 the region lost another 10,000. Since then there have been further haemorrhages, including losses at GEC.

But GEC workers have had enough. As a spokesperson for the Site Joint Trade Union Committee said 'We won't accept the principle of compulsory redundancies. We won't see people being sacked.'

Four hundred workers represented by the AEU, GMBATU, MSF, EETPU and APEX unions are on official all-out strike. They are receiving strike pay, but financial support is still vital.

Workers in other GEC factories in the area are beginning to organise a levy. All the strikers have received one top-up payment already, but delegations are now travelling nationwide to build support and raise funds.



GEC merged with the French firm Alstom in 1989. By the end of 1991 over 1000 jobs had been lost in the former GEC factories. Then came the drive for compulsory redundancies at Higher Openshaw.

Mismanagement

But there is a long history of mismanagement. As the union spokesperson told us 'The company maintain that they're losing a great deal of money - £5 million plus every year.'

They've put investment into this plant, but as far as we're concerned it hasn't been investment of the right kind.

We've had four different management teams on this site since 1981-82 and they've all said exactly the same thing - we're losing money hand over fist and we've got to redress it.

But having made their mistakes, they redress it by asking our people to make the sacrifice

of being put out of work. And as far as we're concerned, enough is enough.'

Japanese, Malayan and Korean firms are fighting to get a bigger share of the international switchgear market and the company has said that labour costs at GEC are too high.

Higher Openshaw workers reject this claim. The basic rate for a skilled man is £204 per week.

They rather point to the fact that there are between 200 and 250 management and so-called 'management review' staff at their site using a fleet of 83 company cars.

At the same time as demanding compulsory redundancies, a lot of work previously done in-house has been subcontracted out. One of the strikers' demands is that this work is brought back to Openshaw.

Solidarity unstintingly given in the past to other workers in the struggle like the miners,

Laurence Scotts, GCHQ and the ambulance workers is now being returned.

Solidarity messages have come from the CGT union federation in their sister factories in France. Local workers come down to spend a half hour on the picket line as well, to show the strikers that they aren't alone in what is now their sixth week of struggle.

Trial of strength

It is going to be a long fight, 'a trial of strength', but the atmosphere on the daily 50-strong picket line is one of quiet determination.

The basic trade union principle of 'one out, all out' is being bravely upheld in East Manchester. It is a beacon of resistance for the whole movement.

Messages of support and donations to: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton, Manchester M34 1AF.

Conference

Which way for socialists in the
trade unions?

July 18-19

Manchester Polytechnic Students
Union

Speakers include **Arthur Scargill,**
Tony Benn MP

Details: Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15

Major rearms as missiles go on the scrapheap

By Patrick Baker

'THIS DEEP and no deeper'. So says George Bush on arms cuts.

In the depths of recession, publicly humiliated in Japan, Bush is prepared to go anywhere for a few million bucks to prop up the USA's creaking public services - even if it means cutting the US bomb-dump to a measly 4,000 nuclear weapons.

But when Russian President Boris Yeltsin, having re-targeted his missiles, proposed cutting each superpower's arsenal back to 2,500 nuclear weapons, Bush, under pressure from the military lobby and US arms manufacturers, objected.

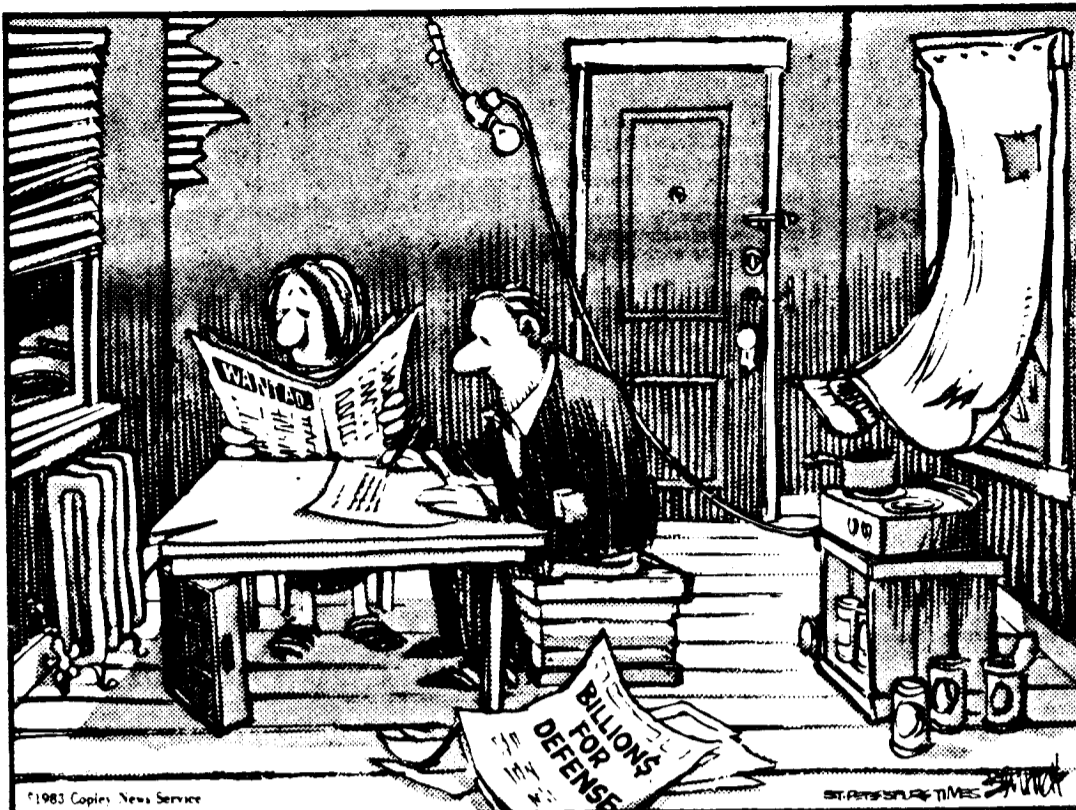
Even these machinations of the superpowers seem almost sensible by comparison with the pronouncements of British Defence Secretary Tom King.

The Tories aren't quibbling about how many missiles to cut back. They are in the middle of a colossal rearmament programme.

'I make absolutely clear the Government's commitment to Trident as Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent force for the 1990s and beyond.' He isn't quite sure why or how many warheads he wants, but he definitely needs the first-strike submarines, even if it will cost £2 million a day for the next twenty years.

This has now been taken even further by John Major, who has made the issue of ordering a fourth Trident a key election pledge, challenging Labour to say if they would cancel it.

Like Bush, the Tories are caught in a quandary. They can't think of a coherent argument to justify their gargan-



'Dear Mr Major: now that you've spent so much on defence to protect our way of life, maybe you could do something to make our way of life worth protecting...'

antuan defence budget, but their own politics, inherited from the Cold war, make it difficult to cut. But it leaves them wide open to a 'welfare not warfare' attack from anyone with an ounce of political nous.

The system, first ordered by Jim Callaghan in 1978, has been modified during the '80s to become more and more dangerous. Tom King has talked about reducing the payload of warheads on the system. But given that the full potential is the equivalent of around 4,000

Hiroshimas, he can afford to, despite John Major's latest revelation that Trident is a 'minimum deterrent'.

Timid Labour

Once again, Kinnock's crew has shown that it will miss out on any electoral opportunity if it risks the wrath of the Tory tabloids. Martin O'Neil, Labour's almost unheard-of defence spokesperson, has merely said that only three submarines will be ordered.

As a contribution to disar-

mament, increasing Britain's first strike capacity by only 3,000 Hiroshimas rather than 4,000 is hardly impressive. But only a handful of MPs have consistently defended the anti-nuclear policies that were common ground in the Labour movement a few years ago.

Socialists organising a left input into the no-policy elections are planning to put Labour on the spot, demanding to know why the whole system can't be junked, releasing millions for public investment.

Election smears: a growth industry Expect more from the dirty tricks department

By Dave Osler

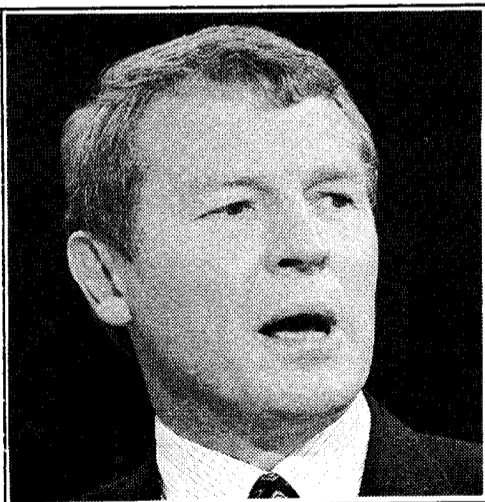
AFTER the 'Labour's Kremlin connection' and 'Paddygate' scandals, a spate of burglaries at MP's offices, and now apparent attempts by former Scotland Yard officers to link Kinnock to prostitutes, there is talk of the dirtiest general election campaign ever. But smear tactics are nothing new.

The latest Kremlin scam is a lineal descendent of 1924's so-called 'Zinoviev letter' from the Communist International to the CPGB, which somehow came into the possession of the Foreign Office, Conservative central office and - of course - the *Daily Mail*.

Forgery

The document, probably a forgery by anti-communist Russian emigrés, was published just five days before the first-ever Labour government faced re-election.

Labour had conceded diplomatic recognition, a commercial treaty and a money loan to



Smear victim Ashdown

the USSR; the fake letter claimed this objectively aided 'the revolutionising of the international and British proletariat', enabling the press to portray prime minister Ramsey MacDonald as an unconscious Leninist. Nevertheless the Party's vote increased by one million.

Labour lost not because of any association with Communism, but because of the historical trend of the former middle class Liberal vote to consolidate behind the Conservatives.

The myth that Labour was

'tricked out of office' provided a convenient excuse for the first MacDonald government's manifold shortcomings.

Political sex scandals are commonplace during election periods. In 1987, the *News of the World* alleged that Labour deputy leader Roy Hattersley's name appeared on the electoral register twice - once at the house he shared with his wife, and again at the 'four bedroom luxury flat' of a 'bachelor girl' publishing executive. Readers were left to draw their own conclusions.

Meanwhile the *Sun* - under the glorious headline of 'swim-pool fib by champagne leftie Brian' - gave us the shock revelation that shadow environment minister Bryan Gould had two homes, one with a swimming pool.

A probably fictitious 'jobless father of four' living in a council flat in Gould's constituency, 'working class Dagenham', was quoted as saying: 'He's taking the mickey out of us. I'm backing the Tories'. Expect plenty more such silliness.



Campaign fights intervention in Libya

THREATS of sanctions and/or military intervention against Libya have multiplied in recent weeks. The West has demanded that the two officials allegedly responsible for the 1988 bombing of flight 103 at Lockerbie be handed over.

But sponsors of a new campaign opposing the threats maintain that the British and US governments are flouting international law. They also point out that earlier claims that the bombing was the work of groups backed by the Syrian and Iranian governments have been conveniently forgotten since the regimes became Western allies over the Gulf war.

No Intervention in Libya! wants to ensure that the real risk of a repetition of the barbaric US attacks on Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986 is headed off by political pressure. NIL! also plans to publicise the disastrous impact that UN sanctions would have on the Libyan economy and the whole of the Maghreb region.

No intervention in Libya!
Public meeting
February 24, 7.30pm
Grand Committee room, House of Commons

Teachers plan fightback

By Roy Leach
(Secretary, Oxfordshire NUT)

Education is suffering an accelerating wave of cuts in services and jobs. But the cuts, caused by poll tax capping and cuts in government grants, are often devolved to local level by the effects of Local Management of Schools (LMS) – the delegation of funding to individual schools.

The response of the biggest teaching union, the NUT, is dreadful. Languishing in the grip of general secretary Doug McAvoy, overpaid full-time officials and a group of executive members who bizarrely call themselves the 'Broad Left', the union has failed to give adequate support to local anti-cuts struggles.

How to overcome this situation was the focus of a conference attended by more than 70 NUT activists in Oxford last Saturday. Delegated by 36 NUT associations, the conference

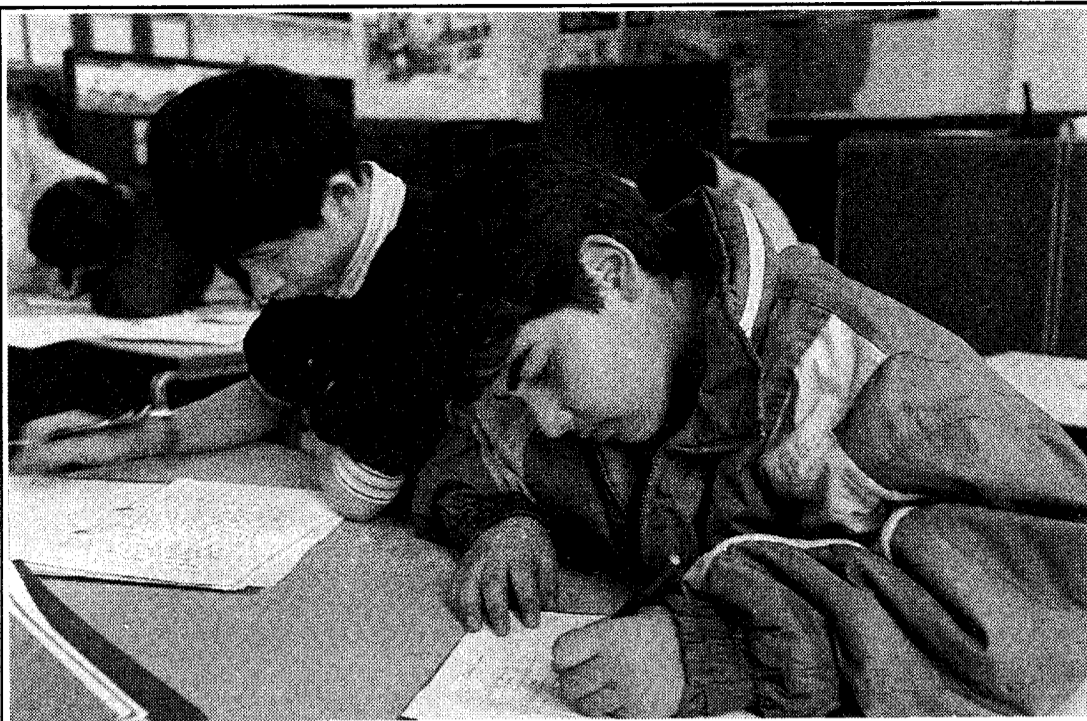
brought together activists supporting the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), the Campaign for A Democratic and Fighting Union, and non-affiliated left wingers.

Among those who spoke at the conference were union treasurer-elect Ian Murch, who stood on a platform of opposing bureaucratic corruption, and plundering the union's strike fund to pay for glossy booklets and useless advertising campaigns.

The organisers' aim was to break the isolation of the numerous current fightbacks. Local reports from delegates revealed a national picture of short-lived strikes, reluctantly sanctioned by the national union, but deprived of the support, publicity and national co-ordination they need and deserve.

A central concern of the conference, in addition to discussing strategies for fighting redundancies, cuts and lack of resources, was democracy in the NUT.

The McAvoy leadership is



Hit by new cuts: inner city schools with black pupils

one of the most authoritarian and anti-democratic in the trade unions. Last Easter's NUT conference saw numerous motions ruled out of order for being 'outside the aims and objects' of the NUT, and not even published, let alone debated.

The Oxford conference decided to launch a campaign

for a one-day national strike against cuts, something the NUT leadership has always refused, hiding behind the anti-union laws.

Another meeting will be called to co-ordinate the left's intervention at this year's NUT conference, and to ensure that cuts and redundancies take centre-stage there.

And a conference of black teachers and community groups to discuss the fight against the 15 per cent cut in Section 11 funding – money given by the Home Office to aid the teaching of children from the 'new Commonwealth'.

This cutback has hit inner-city schools with many black pupils very hard.

Bottom of the league

By Jenny Fisher

No, this is not a lament over Wrexham's sad departure from the FA Cup.

It's not *lament*, but *Lamont* will the Chancellor use the Budget to rescue Britain from the bottom of the European Childcare League?

Before 1990, any subsidy an employer provided towards childcare was counted as part of the worker's wages and was, therefore, taxable. In the 1990 Budget the then Chancellor, John Major, exempted employer's subsidy to workplace nurseries from taxation.

Women's groups and labour movement bodies had long campaigned for a change in the system which regarded childcare as a 'luxury' and the company car as a necessity.

However, realisation soon dawned that as tax exemption was restricted to workplace nurseries, only some 12,000 children would be affected. The campaign moved on to extend exemption to other forms of childcare.

Campaigners believe that Lamont is considering extending exemption to employers' subsidy of childcare vouchers. This would certainly be a cheap, popular move at a time when the Tories desperately need one; but

it is likely to affect only another 12,000 children.

The government is absolving itself from any role in coordinating childcare provision. The Tories argue that employers must provide facilities, and the government's role is merely to encourage 'good practice' by removing tax barriers.

Presumably women in rural areas, where provision is notoriously worse than in urban areas, should dutifully stay at home and look after their own children – unpaid.

Union role

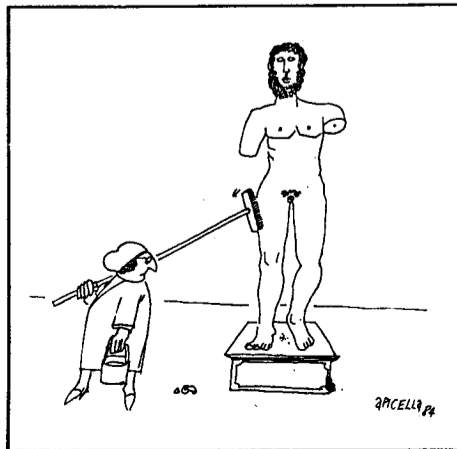
If Lamont does exempt voucher subsidy from taxation, it will be up to trade unions to integrate childcare into annual pay negotiations so that workers benefit from government 'encouragements'. Some unions are moving in this direction, notably MSF, and unions in the civil service, health and local government.

Meanwhile, all parents are taxed on the part of childcare costs they pay themselves, out of their wages. Women on benefit cannot afford childcare while they look for work, although they are debarred from Unemployment Benefit unless they have childcare provision available at 24 hours notice.

Training places seldom pay enough to cover childcare either. And the whole question of affordability is fast becoming academic in the face of the greater problem of finding a place at all.

Wrexham has pulled up to fourth from bottom of the Fourth Division; but Great Britain seems set for relegation.

Contact: Working for Childcare, 77 Holloway road, London N7 8JZ. Phone: 071 700 0281



Local government cutbacks 'Loony right' Labour councils slam workers and services

By Brian Gardner
(Secretary, Islington NALGO)

WHITE COLLAR local government union NALGO has launched a £2 million publicity campaign in defence of local government services.

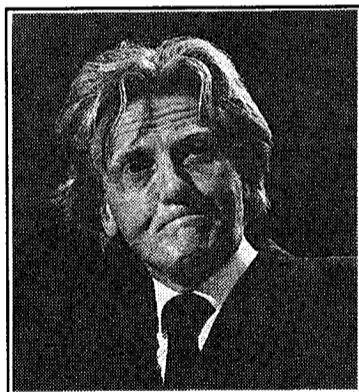
The campaign, which follows in the wake of its 1983 and 1987 'Put People First' and 'Make People Matter' campaigns, is bound to draw fire from the Tories in an election year.

But NALGO members will know that, with tens of thousands of local government jobs on the chopping block when this year's budgets come into force, a publicity campaign will not save them from the jobs axe.

In the election campaign so far, no party is making local government central – and no wonder. The Tories are trying to repair the fiasco of the poll tax and Labour's plans won't do anything to resolve the nightmarish chaos in the council chambers.

Through the Citizens' Charter, the Tories are determined to finish off democratically-elected councils with any real powers, through tight restrictions and privatisation.

Meanwhile a whole bunch of loony right Labour councils are bravely trying to out-Tory the Tories by cutting jobs and making massive numbers of



Setting Labour policy? Heseltine

redundancies. In Camden, where social workers have entered their eighth month of indefinite strike action, the council seems set to cut 200 more jobs.

Joining the fashion of slamming the workforce, Hackney is planning a ruthless new code of conduct, which make it a disciplinary offence to squat, not pay your poll tax, and to refuse to inform on colleagues guilty of similar disciplinary offences!

Crunch

Crunch time for NALGO comes this spring when up to 40,000 jobs could go, mainly through voluntary redundancies, to add to the up to 20,000 jobs which went last year.

Some NALGO branches are fighting back. The union's NEC has been forced to back escalation in Camden, while 1,600 workers are on indefinite strike in the huge Strathclyde region, to win the right to not

have to cover for posts made vacant by redundancy.

But local fightbacks can't disguise the fact that NALGO's anti-cuts strategy isn't working. It isn't working because the successive strategies over the past five years have been *enabling* tactics – a pledge to back branches that fight back.

But in the absence of nationally co-ordinated action, every branch officer and steward knows that it's extremely difficult, outside the most militant branches, to get a vote for industrial action to fight the cuts. That is the core of the problem; people are afraid of defeats which will make the situation worse.

The real policy of the NALGO leadership is to take cover and wait... for a Labour election victory. NALGO is deep in merger discussions with NUPE and COHSE which have undoubtedly strengthened the lines of communication with the Labour leadership.

But a Labour victory will not mean the end of the dismemberment of local government. Labour has no plans to stop Tory councils privatising everything in sight or end the cutbacks in jobs and services massacre.

NALGO's publicity campaign will tell people to remember public services when they decide who to vote for. It should also tell people to prepare to fight whoever wins.

Major disaster as recession becomes slump

By Andy Kilmister

'IF IT ISN'T hurting, it isn't working'. Well it's hurting. Why isn't it working? Why is the British economy failing to come out of recession?

There are two immediate reasons. First, the massive build up of private and company debt in the late 1980s. Second the effects of joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

In 1990, British companies' net borrowing was £27 billion, the highest ever, up from £21 billion in 1989. This compares with eight years of surplus before 1988. The build up of debt by households during this period, particularly mortgage debt, is also well known. In these circumstances high interest rates in 1990 and 1991 were bound to lead to a slump.

Joining the ERM was always meant to be a deflationary influence on the economy. France's participation in the scheme was followed by several years of rising unemployment and Spain now seems to be undergoing a similar process.

With the pound loosely fixed against the German mark, any attempt to expand the British economy faster than the German economy will lead to a rapid growth in the balance of

payments deficit as imports expand. That means interest rates will have to be kept high to avoid people selling sterling.

The ERM ties the other European economies to expanding domestic demand at roughly the same rate as the Germans. This is a very slow rate indeed.

It does not lead to such high unemployment in Germany, at least in the West, because of the ability of German firms to export their goods. But for weak economies in the ERM, such as Britain, which do not have such great export demand, high unemployment becomes the rule.

All this is understood very well by the government and by business leaders. They want to use the ERM as a means of disciplining workers; the threat of unemployment is meant to encourage low wage demands and deliver high productivity. But this means short term problems in terms of generating any pre-election boom.

Paradox

Debt and the ERM provide the immediate reasons for the slump. But why is the economy still refusing to grow even though interest rates have been cut? Part of the reason is the fear of unemployment growing. Another reason, paradoxically, is lower inflation.

As prices rise more slowly, the value of companies' and individuals' debts and interest payments rise in real terms, discouraging spending. Bourgeois economists such as the *Financial Times* have begun to talk a lot about this kind of 'debt-deflation' mechanism of recession.

But there are deeper reasons. The Tories' economic policies since 1979 have been designed to achieve two main things. First, a major increase in potential profitability, through lower wage rises and higher productivity.

Second, enough economic stability to ensure the realisation of that profitability. The current recession is the outcome of their failure in both areas.

Real wages have not been cut since 1979, unlike the experience of the late 1970s. So any increase in profitability has depended on increasing productivity. During the mid 1980s there was much talk of Thatcher's 'productivity miracle'.

This now appears largely to have been a 'productivity mir-



Face to face with failure: Major and Bush



age'. The rate of growth of labour productivity fell from 3.1 percent in 1987 to 1.9 percent in 1989 and 0.2 percent in 1990.

Demand

Even if profits can be made in the productive process, they have to be realised by selling goods. Here investment demand is crucial. In 1991, UK investment fell by 11 percent. Manufacturing investment in 1991 was about 6.5 percent lower than in 1979.

Other sources of demand are limited. Exports are weak because of the recession elsewhere in Europe. Even if the government wanted to expand its own expenditure, it is limited by estimates that the forecast government borrowing requirement of £19 billion for this year may be too small.

All this means that profitability is falling, by about 11 percent in real terms from 1990 to

1991. But companies have maintained their dividend payments as well as cutting back their borrowing. This means that there is less and less money available for new investment, and it is no surprise that the slump continues.

The current recession shows that the last thirteen years of Tory government have solved none of the underlying problems of British capitalism. In the short run, recent reductions in interest rates will have an effect.

Any attempt to reflate the economy above a certain level will lead to renewed inflation and balance of payments difficulties. Worse, if Germany raises interest rates as a consequence of the recent pay concessions to avert a steelworkers' strike or because investment in the East begins to boom, then the recession may only be beginning.

No help from USA More of the old bull from Bush

By Harry Sloan

ANY HOPES among John Major's ministers that a revival of America's economy could help tow British capitalism out of its slump have bitten the dust.

President Bush's failure to offer any significant improvement when he gave his keynote State of the Union Message to Congress.

Instead he outlined a timid set of tinkering changes, mainly directed towards placating the Republicans' disgruntled big business supporters.

The most wide-reaching proposal was tax concessions averaging \$3 per week to single people and \$6 to couples, to low and middle income wage earners. This will inject an extra \$22bn in cash "to help pay for clothing, college or to get a new car."

While this tax cut pushes up the federal budget deficit, a book-keeping fiddle will appear manipulate it downwards by \$38 billion. Some of this additional 'saving' is then to be spent on a John Major-style one-off boost to the housing market, offering first-time buyers a \$5,000 tax credit on homes bought before the end of 1992.

Super-rich

All the other giveaway measures outlined by Bush are targeted at the Republican super-rich. There are tax breaks for real estate developers, \$4 billion tax concessions for big business, and plans to cut capital gains tax - though 67% of the benefit of this will go to those earning over \$200,000 a year.

To make matters worse for Bush, it

is by no means certain that all these half-hearted measures will be endorsed by the Democrat-controlled Congress.

One measure known to be doomed in advance is Bush's half-baked effort to defuse the growing crisis in the US health care system, and offer some form of insurance cover for 37 million uninsured and 65 million under-insured Americans.

The Bush plan involves diverting money out of the federally-subsidised Medicare (for the elderly and disabled) and federally-funded Medicaid (for the poor and unemployed) schemes, and into tax credits to allow families or individuals to buy private insurance cover.

Bush proposes also to offer credits to the unemployed and those on pay below the tax threshold.

His theory is that once these people are covered by private insurance they will no longer make claims against the Medicare (\$118 billion) and Medicaid (\$68 bn) budgets.

In practice the scheme would siphon off billions from the already under-resourced hospitals which currently provide a fall-back service for the poor. It also offers a short-term cash windfall for the avaricious private insurers.

The discussion is academic, because Bush stands little or no chance of pushing this plan through Congress.

The paralysis on this issue, while both of the major parties moan at the soaring costs and embarrassing deficiencies of the privatised system, symbolises the problems of US capitalism.

Despite his appearance of strength, Bush has found himself hamstrung in domestic policies by his lack of support in Congress, and can find no escape from the gathering recession.

Instead, dominated by two capitalist political parties each shackled by a million links to the values and policies of the 'free market', the USA has seen its vast industrial corporations caught and overtaken in their global dominance by their more modern and productive competitors in Japan and Germany.

Pyrrhic victory

While Bush can claim a US 'victory' in the Cold War, the US economy has paid a heavy price for Ronald Reagan's massive arms spree in the 1980s. The federal deficit is now projected to be \$400 billion in 1992, 6.7% of the GDP.

One outcome of this is that having 'won' against 'communism', the USA cannot now bankroll any new Marshall Plan initiative to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe or the ex-USSR.

And having 'won' (and even profited financially from) the Gulf War, Bush knows that US military dominance is not enough to guarantee markets for US manufacturing industry. Multinationals

which for decades have traded on their monopoly of the giant US market now find themselves undermined by cheaper and better imports.

Even the efforts to roll this back with chauvinistic "Buy American" campaigns have run into the snag that many 'US-made' goods use Japanese or imported parts, or are made by foreign-owned firms based in the USA.

No idea

So now, with a hostile Congress and no real idea of what to do, the most powerful man in the most powerful and wealthy country is reduced to shutting his eyes and hoping for the best as he slides towards the elections.

The thinking is that if he puts proposals to Congress and they are rejected, then at least he will seem to have tried something, and can portray the Democrats as the obstacle.

A more sinister possibility is that he will resort to an election campaign based on rabble-rousing against welfare claimants - a tactic that recently won neo-Nazi challenger David Duke 40% of the vote in Louisiana.

But for Bush to pillory the victims of the slump he has presided over may rebound against him. Already bumper stickers in New Hampshire, where mass unemployment has preceded the first presidential primary elections, sport the slogan "Saddam Hussein still has his job. Do you?"



Central America after El Salvador deal

The end of an era?

In 1990 the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua was overturned at the ballot box, and a right wing government elected under Violeta Chamorro. Now the FMLN, the revolutionary front that has waged a guerilla struggle in El Salvador for ten years and more, has agreed to lay down its arms.

Patrick Baker from *Socialist Outlook* asked JAMES DUNKERLEY, author of such works on Central and South America as *Rebellion in the Veins*, *The Long War* and *Power in the Isthmus*, for his view of developments.

PB: The El Salvador Accords represent a turning point – either the end or a turn in a process unleashed in the late 1970s with the Sandinista revolution and the armed struggle in El Salvador. What is your assessment of the accords? Do they represent a capitulation by the FMLN or a tactical setback?

JD: It's still not clear, because any decisive victory or defeat takes time – it's a process. My inclination is more to say they're a tactical decision, although it's difficult to say anything's a tactic after 10 years of civil war. I think the Bolsheviks' Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is better than most historical analogies, though there aren't many precedents for this agreement.

There's been no significant or strategic change in the line of the FMLN in the past few years. You could even argue it's a partial victory. Anyone who's been to El Salvador knows that after November-December 1989 it was quite implausible that they would win by force of arms.

The United States was not going to allow that. You could fight, but not win. Any responsible political leadership was going to have to take decisions.

So I don't see it as a capitulation, particularly compared with the 1983-84 GAP accords [in which the liberation organisations proposed a 'government of broad participation']. I think it corresponds fairly accurately to the balance of forces within El Salvador, but much more importantly to the global balance of forces, for which the FMLN bears no responsibility.

PB: But the real question is: what are the possibilities of the accords being implemented, given that the whole

apparatus is riddled with the goons of the death squads? It's quite difficult to believe that the police and the army will be depoliticised, integrate both sides, and move towards a more or less liberal democratic state.

JD: Yes. That's clearly the case. It's also worth making the point that the balance is not the same as in Nicaragua, where the Sandinistas held state power. But some of the comparisons there are worth drawing, if only because some of the actors in El Salvador are looking at Nicaragua.

The accords are bound to be broken on a tactical level. But the question is whether there will be a major break by either the paramilitary or even the centrist right to sabotage them. That possibility is not negligible. The question is, is it inevitable or likely?

At the moment I think the FMLN's justified in saying there's a possibility it won't happen, and the guarantees in the administration of the accord give them some security.

It could go horribly wrong, nobody's disputing that. But the war had to end somehow, and if it's not on the basis of surrender, then there have to be deals.

There clearly needs to be a degree of trust – they've been shooting each other, and in the case of the right murdering thousands of innocent people and 'ideological enemies' for the last decade. So sure, it's not easy.

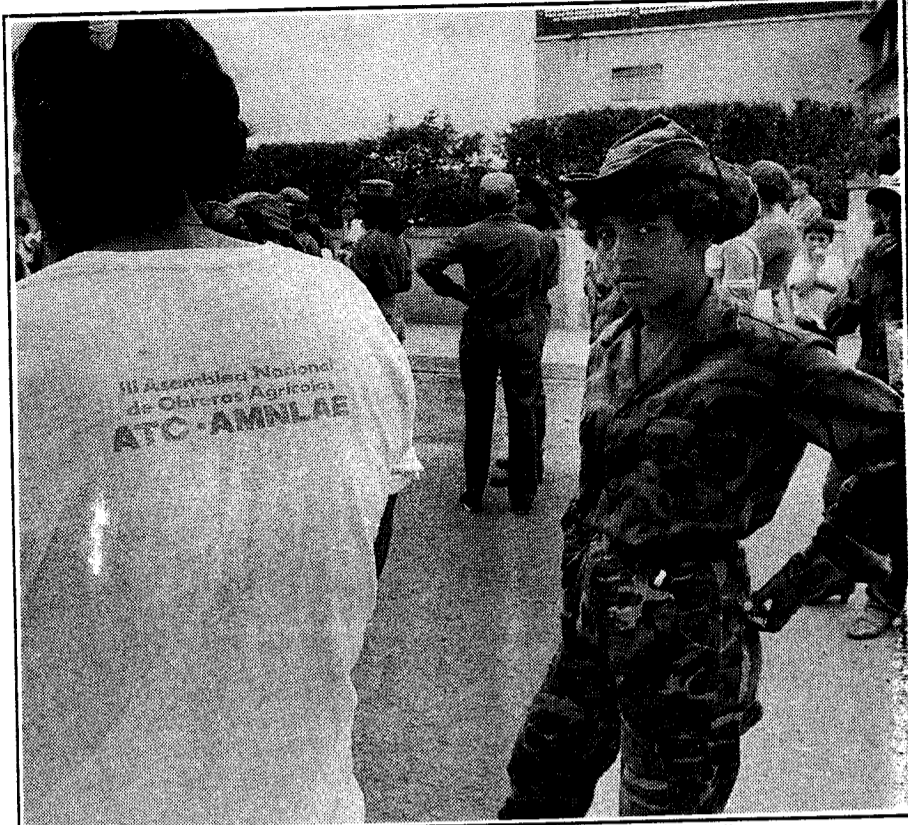
PB: It's not easy to imagine anyone trusting people like D'Aubuisson...

JD: But D'Aubuisson is dying and his influence inside ARENA and the spook network of the right in El Salvador is on the wane. These people aren't very romantic or sentimental and they know he's dying.

So what do you have on the right? No proper class analysis avoids dealing with the enemy first and foremost. You have a right which is no more pleasant – though with rather less blood on their hands – but which is prepared to listen to the USA.

The US has decided – particularly the State Department but even the Pentagon – not that they want a deal with the left, but that El Salvador is an inconvenience. The 'demonstration effect' of defeating the left in El Salvador has become negligible for them.

Photo: Bob Gammon



As in Nicaragua US strategy in El Salvador has forced the revolution to disarm

So any deal that involves just minor concessions is relatively unimportant in the imperialists' logic. Just as in El Salvador itself, you have people in the apparatus who would prefer to go for an all-out offensive against the FMLN. But after ten years, the purely military aspect shows the FMLN is capable of surviving.

The FMLN is divided on this point, because it's not a truly united political force. There is a faction which is for upholding a maximum programme for social change, not negotiation on civil democracy.

But it would lose significant popular support if it implemented that line. It wouldn't be able to engage in the battle of ideas, which is what the rest of the FMLN now wants to do.

PB: Going back to the links between the accord and what's happening on an international and regional level, those events at the end of the 70s – the Sandinista victory and the FMLN guerrilla conflict – have now come to an end. It doesn't look so long before Cuba will join them. So what many on the left saw as a chance for a real breakthrough on an international level seems to have fallen through. What do you think?

JD: The linkage between El Salvador and Nicaragua is interesting, because one took state power and the other didn't, but they're still suffering the same crisis.

I think this means that in this part of the world, holding state power doesn't always hold the same advantages that we've always figuratively assigned to it. For a lot of the Latin American left, the important thing was conquering the institutions of the bourgeois state. That may have been misconceived in many respects.

The balance in Latin America is mixed – you can accuse the Brazilian Workers Party of harbouring a mish-mash of all sorts of things, but within it contains some very important movements. And millions of people voted for it.

Similarly, millions voted for Cardenas in Mexico and there were elements in his campaign that were far from a sell-out. There were also elements that were even closer to the right than the PRI, the party in government. But there were movements there that showed that elements of the historic left programme haven't just been junked.

So I wouldn't say it's all downhill. I wouldn't say that the Latin American social balance necessarily measures up as negative, in the context of the region

as a whole. I think you're right that it's a matter of time before the Cuban regime collapses.

The big question – what's the new agenda – clearly involves a lot of reconsideration across the board. But with Latin America, I don't think it means throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

I think there are elements there in the past decade that are positive and creative means of organising civil society – maybe not the economy – which if established institutionally, would have proved the lot of the poor and the labouring masses.

Part of that has to be the indigenous American character of things, sometimes crudely put as 'nationalism', but republican nationalism.

Sense of identity is something very important in a region that has suffered acute imperialist oppression during the century. These features are important although they run a danger of being accused of modishness at the moment, in post-modernism.

But I think the left has been scared getting into these dangerous zones where we compete.

If we have to compete in areas which are ideologically dominated by the bourgeoisie, then we should have guts to do it. That's one area where left in Latin America has to get up and do something.

PB: An important factor in the case of Cuba's decline but also Nicaragua's is the withdrawal of Soviet aid, especially oil to the Cuban economy. That has an impact on standards of living, and I think there's no doubt one of the reasons Castro has maintained so much popular support is that standards of living have been remarkably high. But Soviet aid was a mainstay.

Given that, how do you think the downfall of the Soviet regime was seen by the FMLN, the FSLN and – a slightly different case – the Workers Party?

JD: Going back to Cuba for a minute, the kind of analysis of ordinary Cubans in the '60s and '70s would be through comparing the workers state of Cuba with the capitalist state beforehand through a memory of somewhere else. But it was their own, autonomous came from the masses.

Now that generation is old, it's not the bulk of the population any more. The majority compares this regime with

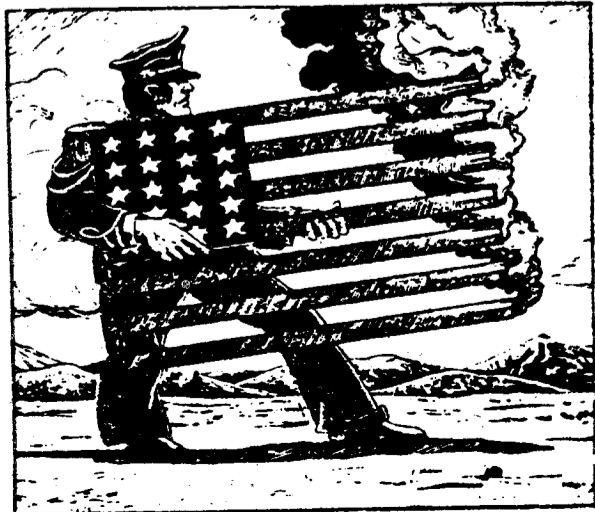




Photo: Bob Gannon



previous period of this regime and sees a tangible decomposition. And it's more amenable, because of its youth and the history of the regime itself, to the imagery of consumerism.

If you talk to other Latin Americans, they are much more concerned about Cuba than they are about the Soviet Union. If you talk to the average left-leaning Latin American – in Chile or in Mexico – most people have given up on Fidel, in terms of having the resources to survive this. On the other hand, they respect, admire and venerate him because he stands up to the north Americans.

Cuba stands for Latin American anti-imperialism, a beacon of oppositionism. Neither in the period of peaceful coexistence under Khrushchev, nor during the period of the Brezhnev doctrine, has the Soviet Union ever stood for that.

The Soviet Union was never seen as having an alternative, except as a counter to US capitalism. So with that gone, the impact is much more on Cuba logistically than the disappearance of what was called 'really existing socialism' creating an ideological trauma for the left in Latin America.

They didn't really see it like that. The groups coming up are the Brazilian PT, elements of Cardenismo in Mexico which profess to be socialist, the FMLN, the FSLN – these were almost all created after the Cuban missile crisis, after peaceful coexistence. So I think the collapse of the Soviet Union represents a shift in the balance of power, not an ideological crisis.

PB: The Soviet collapse, along with a string of events including the Gulf war, means that there will be a big global recomposition in terms of zones of influence. But South and Central America are still two regions where some mass support exists for a kind of revolutionary socialism. The question is how that support can be used to create a new breakthrough against Bush's New World Order, given that the left is on the defensive.

JD: These are peoples who, with the exception of Cuba, have a deep experience of capitalist management and economy and therefore are not duped. History has dealt them a very poor hand. But it does mean that they understand the changing nature of capitalism, that capitalism can take various different guises.

We should recognise the reality of where most poor people who labour are at – they move between very radical sol-

utions and survivalist ones. That's ideologically where their terrain tends to be quite broad, why in these very violent situations people are not continually on the left.

You have to develop, sometimes within the realms of theory, alternatives that are perceived by the masses as viable – not least because they should come, at least partly, from the masses' own practice. There is a certain internal satisfaction in being able to analyse, criticise and condemn.

But you have to take the next step, which is to propose an alternative which is perceived as viable. Of course they can't be viable unless the masses make them so.

No left wing activist is ever going to change the world for the good unless the masses are there to do it. But we have to believe in that possibility.

That's what the Sandinistas had in their bow, that's why I'm prepared to give the leadership of the FMLN the benefit of the doubt. Because the masses quite patently want peace, and would condemn the FMLN for failing to allow peace to take ahead, if they didn't sign the pact and go a risk.

PB: If we want to pitch the struggle on a different level – one that doesn't involve such direct confrontation, but is on a more ideological level – surely that presupposes a certain transformation of these societies, a liberal democratic framework.

But is it realistic, given the socio-economic reality of Latin America? These are tiny, poverty-stricken countries on the doorstep of the USA, and the world economy is in massive recession.

JD: Well, the ideal of liberal democracy has never been achieved anywhere. But that aside I think it is possible, because this is an economic question and capitalism in El Salvador is quite efficient.

The fact is it's efficient by exploiting the masses more – but it's far more efficient than in Nicaragua. But this is political economy.

At the moment, recession is driving people into poverty. But the paradox is it also producing a new upsurge of popular support and liberal democratic norms – again, a new historical experience for us.

It is not driving the right to the use of force of arms to suppress the masses – of course, there are exceptions, like Haiti. The historical conjuncture is perverse in terms of our old analysis.

But it is a new conjuncture – I agree that it won't last, but it will for more than a couple of years. Therefore we shouldn't say that it's going to go tomorrow.

PB: The pay-off – a gradual improvement in living standards – has been the common ground of Keynesianism and social democracy in the West. But it's difficult to see how much space there is for that in a semi-colonial country in Latin America.

JD: Structurally, there can be virtually none, I agree with you. But the problem is that that's not the whole argument. I think you could even get an increased pauperisation of the masses and they'd still buy the system, because of what they've lived through.

These people have watched slaughter, whole villages razed, their families cut to bits with machetes. These are people tired of war and death.

I think that's why the FMLN leadership has said 'The masses are tired of butchery. We cannot stop it by force of arms, only limit it. We can protect our own, but we can't liberate the whole. The masses as a whole know that. Why don't we engage with that?'

Of course this isn't a system that is going to significantly improve their lot in terms of economic factors. But it saves their lives, and I think that is what the Salvadorean people will go through for the next two to five years.



Class warrior women of the rainforests

Amazon Sisters

Directed by Anne-Marie Sweeney
Channel 4, February 3,
also on video

Reviewed by John Lister

AT LAST we have an alternative to those moralising environmentalist documentaries that blame peasant farmers for the devastation of the rain forests of South America.

Anne-Marie Sweeney's film *Amazon Sisters* centres on the vast industrial revolution that is turning an area bigger than Europe into a vast mineral extraction and smelting complex, leaving a lunar landscape of smoke and dust in the heart of Brazil's Amazon jungle.

Here giant ironworks, financed by the World Bank and by Japanese and European capital, use charcoal as fuel, regarding the forests as expendable raw material in the rush to exploit up to 18 billion tons of iron ore reserves.

Up to 900 square miles of forest each year could be burned simply to fuel this one complex, and leaving a perpetual haze of smoke and pollution over vast tracts of barren ground.

In South Pará, a huge hydro-electric dam called for the creation of a lake larger than some European countries. When contractors failed to complete the forest clearance on time, the floodwaters from the dam rotted the vegetation, spawning vast numbers of insects, among which are 28 previously-unknown strains of mosquito. This in turn has triggered an epidemic of malaria among the local people still trapped in near-by settlements.



As the malaria spread, so health care spending has been cut: now the environment minister has sanctioned spraying the area with insecticides including DDT - banned in Europe. Last time around, the spraying killed crops and even chickens.

Deforestation is itself big business. Around the regional timber capital Paragominas are 600 saw mills employing men, women and children working in clouds of noxious dust and using potentially lethal equipment.

On the edge of the sawmills, charcoal workers eke out a tough existence in makeshift shacks amid constant smoke and noise - the bulk of the work done by women.

Even the tokenistic Environmental Reserve has its ulterior motives -

owned by one of the most profitable firms in Brazil, known as The Vale. For Vale bosses, the issue is not the forest but their £3.5 billion scheme to exploit the minerals that lie beneath it. In the meantime the forest is 'protected' by strong-arm forest police evicting the peasant families who once lived there.

All this is the backdrop against which *Amazon Sisters* constantly focuses on the situation and courageous struggle of women - their fight to organise, their willingness to take action including strikes and land occupations, and, in significant cases, to win victories against overwhelming odds.

The women tell their own stories, face to camera, recounting the problems and the battles

of their lives with awesome cheerfulness. Many explain how central are their union organisations which have provided the strength and solidarity that enabled them to fight on.

As the film progresses, this positive message of resistance and class action emerges more consistently to the fore. One of the organisers recounts in detail the victorious land occupation led by women which in 1984-5 secured the 3,000-home settlement of Marabá-Libertação. The film shows the township that has been built up, the fruits of collective struggle followed by collective planning - again run by women.

Union action secured electricity supplies to the town; and action by the union also forced the closure of charcoal ovens which were polluting the air.

The film shows union organisers and activists, including a vigorous *lambada* fund-raising party that should teach some lessons to tedious organisers of 'socials' in Britain.

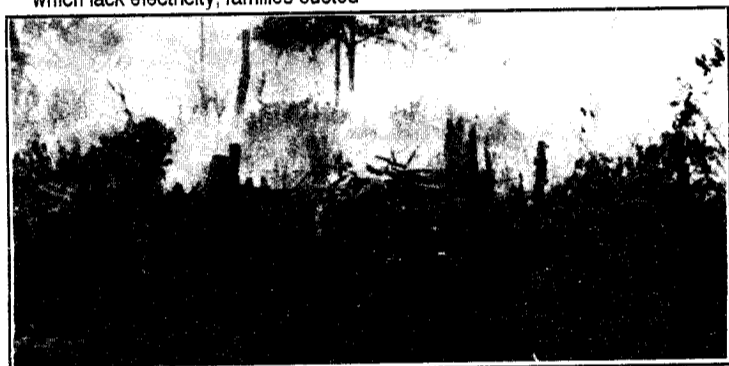
Visual images link with the words to point up the paradoxes of the Amazon: homes blighted by malaria caused by hydro-electric schemes which lack electricity; families ousted

by cattle-ranchers who can afford neither meat nor milk; the lush fertility of the remaining forest, contrasted with the dust-bowl created by capitalism.

With so many images, it may seem mean to point to two omissions. There is no sign of the employers' life-style or that of local management to counterpose to the poverty of those they exploit. And the exclusive focus on women leaves out any discussion of the role played by men in the struggles. The very few visual images of men appear to suggest most are cowed, passive, defeated, in contrast to the zest and tenacity of the women.

Yet it is this tremendous strength, the capacity of the women to fight back, developing a modern-day version of the fearsome 'Amazon' female warriors who struck fear into the hearts of the Romans, which is the abiding message of the film.

If you missed *Amazon Sisters* on Channel 4, make sure you or your organisation get hold of the video, available for sales and hire from Oxford Film & Video Makers, The Stables, North Place, Oxford OX3 9HY (0865-60074).



Lesbian and Gay liberation

Outrageous stunts not enough

By Lois Lane

'WE ARE totally pissed off with the way the government, the media, the police and the public treat us like shit! - join our campaign for "equality now"...join the Queers with Attitude'. Outrage!, the lesbian and gay direct action group, are on the offensive.

Their leafletting at school-gates, their illegal march on parliament have certainly caught the attention of the tabloid press. But do Outrage! seriously think they can build a movement for equality just by pulling off stunts?

Clearly, thousands of lesbians and gay men are more than fed-up with the oppressive heterosexism running rampant throughout the whole of British society - including the organised labour movement and the left. It grinds you down; it

demoralises you; it gets you sacked; it leads to losing your home, your parents, your children, your friends; you can be killed on the street because of it. But it ain't going to be fought by moralism.

Outrage! say that nothing has changed in the 25 years since male homosexuality was partially decriminalised. Why then, did the Tories feel it necessary to go on the political and ideological offensive with Section 28? Had they not thought of being reactionary bigots before then? Of course not.

Advances

The reaction came because real advances were being made by the lesbian and gay movement - made largely through working within the organised labour movement. The Labour Party leadership then predictably scrambled out as it drifted further to the right. Peter Tat-



Photo: Graeme Cookson

Peter Tatchell: making a principle out of being Outrageous

chell, a leading member of Outrage!, was one of many of the victims of the rise of this New Realism.

But do you fight it by getting out of the labour movement all together? No. In spite of Kinnock and the rest of the Labour leadership, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights has made advances - in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Of course, there is a real danger that promises will be broken, commitments will fall from manifestoes. That is precisely why pressure from within the labour movement needs to be stepped up - with no illusions. Working within the trade unions is one way of approaching this. And, again, real advances have been made within the unions around lesbian and gay rights.

Why then do Outrage! leaflet schools without trying to cooperate with NUT members? Believe it or not, lesbian and gay teachers do exist - even in Catholic schools - and there are even straight teachers sympathetic to positive images of lesbians and gay men within education.

Leaflets

Just bouncing in and handing out leaflets showing lesbians and gay men kissing, to somewhat bemused school students is not a serious campaign around positive images and anti-heterosexist education.

In fact it may not be just counterproductive in some cases, but could easily be dangerous for lesbian and gay students and teachers who may not feel their environment safe enough to come out.

Direct action certainly has a central role in challenging lesbian and gay oppression, but lesbian and gay workers and students have got to be collectively involved and not merely passive observers of this highly individualistic method of operating.

From the tone of their recent adverts in the lesbian and gay press, it seems Outrage! are frustrated by the passivity of the lesbian and gay movement. This passivity is not just confined to lesbians and gay men. After thirteen years of savage Tory government, and now with an appallingly right-wing Labour opposition, the vast majority of the working class is passive. Stunts, no matter how exciting, are not going to reverse this situation - electro-shock therapy never works.

An American coup?

JFK

Reviewed by Paul Wozny

OLIVER STONE'S controversial account of the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy indicts America's 'Military-Industrial Complex' for murder. The film claims the assassination was part of a secret coup. Its purpose - the promotion of war to boost profits.

JFK consciously imitates the style of 'Z' by Costa-Gavras. It is a thriller, but based on fact. The story of an honest investigator who diligently exposes the truth about the assassination of a charismatic left-wing leader by the state. Stone had a bigger budget, so his dramatic reconstructions are impressive. But he ends up using the standard Hollywood dramatic device of a courtroom summation to deliver a long, moralistic monologue - a terrible way to end an excellent film.

The Warren Commission was set up by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, to cover up the conspiracy. Two of its leading figures were Allen Dulles (ex CIA Chief) and Gerald Ford (Nixon's hand-picked successor as President). Their conclusion was that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone to assassinate the President.

Stone relentlessly demolishes the conclusions of the Warren Commission. As a direct result of his film there are moves in Congress to re-open the investigation.

Stone believes that 22 November 1963 shattered America's innocence, profoundly altering the course of American society and its role on the world stage. He also believes that Kennedy would have withdrawn from Vietnam if he had been re-elected in 1964. As a Vietnam veteran, angry and disillusioned by the war, Stone views Kennedy as a romantic hero.

It is Stone's idealisation of Kennedy which has prompted many on the left to attack JFK. Kennedy won the election as President by taking a more aggressively imperialistic stance than his Republican rival, Richard Nixon. It was Kennedy who launched the Space Race and accelerated missile production. Bobby Kennedy, JFK's right hand man and later the darling of the anti-war left, worked for Joseph McCarthy during the anti-red witch-hunts.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis it was Kennedy who brought the world to the brink of all-out nuclear war. It was also Kennedy who first sent troops to Vietnam and it was his government who organised the overthrow and assassination of the South Vietnamese President Diem.

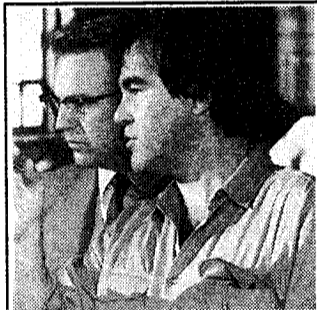
Kennedy is often credited with America's Civil Rights legislation. In fact, the changes came from Congress and the courts. His successor, the corrupt and reviled Johnson had a far better record.

There have been many conspiracy theories. The CIA, FBI, Mafia and Vice President Johnson have all been accused. Stone links them all together in a grand conspiracy aiming to destroy Kennedy.

No mention is made of Kennedy's close connections to the Mafia. That would tarnish the image of Camelot. Stone never considers that the cover-

up might have been used to protect the reputation of Kennedy and the American Presidency. Why has the rich and powerful Kennedy clan kept so quiet? What do they have to hide?

JFK is worth seeing - if you can sit down for over three hours. It is a powerful thriller. It is a devastating attack on a state cover up. But don't get fooled by the romantic image of Kennedy. There is more to being left-wing than being handsome and articulate. Remember there are still a lot more questions that remain unanswered; in JFK these are not even asked.



Oliver Stone with Kevin Costner



Midler and Caan strut their stuff

Film bombs after Gulf War

For The Boys

Directed by Mark Rydell

Reviewed by SEAN TUNNEY

Thanks to Odeon Cinema Brighton

WHAT IS the secret of comedy? Erm, timing. So, when is the worst time to release a musical comedy-drama which shows America how pointless fighting Korea and Vietnam really were? Yes, just after the end of the Gulf War. Hardly going to rate high on the 'feel-good' factor.

Such was the fate of 'For The Boys'. Still, it's not as if star and co-producer, Bette Midler, didn't have fair warning. Many soldiers who were extras on the film were called up for the war while it was being made. Needless to say, the film flopped in the States.

'For the Boys', details the career of song and dance team, Dixie Leonard (Midler) and Eddie Sparks (James Caan). They meet in 1942 with Sparks at the height of his fame, the force's favourite. Dixie is thrown in at the deep end to appear along-

side him, and through her nonsense sassy humour becomes an instant hit.

On demob, it appears that the only way is up. They star together in a 'Burns and Allen' type top TV show, only threatened when Dixie's bawdy humour flouts the censor. And when Korea flares up, it's only natural that the wartime heroes should again go out to entertain 'the boys'.

Instead of the fairytale WW2 is presented as, Dixie is faced with real deaths in a real war where there appears no real enemy. Koreans are being attacked for accepting Communist blankets to avoid the cold, as Dixie's scriptwriting uncle (George Segal) puts it.

Shaken, she returns to America, to find the duo's show subject to McCarthyism, which to Dixie's horror, Eddie is willing to accept. They split, only to be reunited, with Dixie's extreme reluctance, for a Vietnam nostalgia tour.

It is here that the personal tragedy of war is forcefully brought home to both of them. But still Eddie maintains an unthinking patriotism. Only in the last few frames of the film does he start to question the wars he

has spent playing 'for the boys'.

Baldly stated like that, the film appears corny and shamelessly sentimental liberalism. And indeed it is. Remember, it is very much Midler's film. And like 'Beaches' the audience is dragged through a rollercoaster of emotions, and I, for one, at times, felt manipulated.

Nonetheless, while Midler, in her too good to be true role, does intermittently veer towards the vitriolic, Caan gives an admirable, perfectly weighted, performance.

However, the real problem of the film, is not that it doesn't confront McCarthyism or America's involvement in Korea or Vietnam. It is that it doesn't confront them seriously, or provide any real answers. But that's as much as we can expect from Hollywood comedy-drama at the moment, I suppose.

Essentially, the movie is a big-budget musical. And the music, especially the '40s big band sound, which features prominently, is not to everybody's taste. But if you want a good comedy/weepy night out at the movies that is fairly political, then this is the one for you.

A new slant on the Soviet labour movement

Perestroika and the Soviet People

by David Mandel, Black Rose Press, £9.95p.

Reviewed by Paul Clarke

Discussion of the momentous changes in the ex-Soviet Union in the press and on TV revolves around the changes at the top, and the dramatic moments of coups and mini-wars. David Mandel's book starts the other way around. What are the effects

of the debacle of perestroika on the Soviet people? How has their political thinking progressed? What organisations are they building?

The author's assessment of these things is based on his wide travels in the ex-USSR and discussions with hundreds of labour movement activists and other workers.

At the heart of Mandel's analysis is the attacks on the working class through the move towards marketisation. His essays detail the 'mafiaisation' of the economy, the push for power of the pro-market liberals, the real character of the different political parties, and above all the progress made towards the creation of an inde-

pendent labour movement.

To be sure, this progress is slow and halting. The one major independent union which has been built is the Independent Miners Union (IMU), which now has about 60,000 members. Two chapters of the book are devoted to the 1990 miners strike and the March-April 1991 strike wave.

The leaders who took power in the different republics after the August 1990 coup are pro-capitalist market-liberals, almost without exception. But the consciousness of the workers about the meaning of marketisation and the move towards capitalism is contradictory and confused.

Mandel illustrates this in detail by

reference to the programmes and discussions of the miners. Often they support marketisation, while at the same time expressing opposition to price rises and capitalism! Every political idea in the spectrum can be found among those who support the market.

In addition to his overview of the political transformations, and his detail about the labour movement, Mandel goes into depth about the struggle in the factories, and the position of women under perestroika.

To make any assessment of the situation in the ex-USSR it is not enough to adopt general sloganising positions; you have to know about the real situation on the ground, the forces in motion and the abrupt chan-

ges in consciousness which are occurring. David Mandel has made an invaluable contribution to the raw materials for a serious analysis of the ex-USSR.

His conclusions are sober; there is no suggestion here of any rapid victory of a democratic socialist alternative. But he provides ample evidence of the determination, the inventiveness and courage of the new labour movement. And in that, a lot of good reasons for optimism about the long-term outcome of the crisis.

If your local bookshop doesn't stock this book, it can be ordered from Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84a Whitechapel High St., London E1 7QX.

The roots of racism

By Julia Stevens

Racism is a weapon used by capitalism to divide the working class. As with other oppressions, it diverts the anger of the working class at their oppression away from the ruling class and turns it on parts of the working class.

The whole working class suffers under capitalism and racism assists in the maintenance of the capitalist system. Fighting against racism is in the interests of the white working class, since ultimately attacking racism also attacks capitalism.

Benefit

But the reason that racism is such an effective tool for dividing the working class, is that in their everyday lives, white workers clearly benefit from it, because it is, in part, responsible for the cheapness of the goods that everyone buys.

White people benefit from racism in a number of ways. In very direct ways, for instance if two people apply for a job, and one is white, the other black, the white person is more likely to be employed.

But also in more indirect ways; tobacco, coffee, tea, sugar, chocolate, bananas, all these things that are in plentiful supply in our shops, are there only because they can be made very profitable through using very cheap labour.

The whole capitalist system survives because of the ine-

quality of economies between the rich, mostly white, advanced capitalist countries and the poor countries of the 'Third World'.

This inequality itself was created with the help of racism. Without it, the empire building of the 19th century would have been impossible.

Imperialism

The major imperialist powers, Britain, Spain, France etc, relied on the working classes of their respective countries to accept their actions abroad, and stirred up racist feeling to ensure that acceptance was forthcoming.

Although many of these colonised countries have now gained their independence, the legacy is one of poverty and reliance on exporting virtually all their goods to the advanced capitalist states.

Racism grew not only out of colonisation, but from the slave trade. Before slavery, most white people had only heard vague rumours of the existence of people with a different skin colour.

When slavery began to bring Africans to work on the plantations in the West Indies and America, the practice was justified by insisting that the slaves were not actually human, but a lower form of primate. Slave owners and traders, knowing



Racism in the US Army during the Vietnam War meant that for many black Americans the anti-war struggle was also about racism.

that they were dealing in human lives, maintained this myth to prevent the poor whites from linking up with the slaves to fight the imperialist system.

Just preventing a united attack was not enough however. And the slave owners, in constant fear of slave uprisings, used brutal methods to keep the slave population weak. The most minor of 'offences' were punished with flogging, mutilation, castration and branding.

Civil War

Although now, the American Civil War is painted as a great victory for humanitarianism, and the battle against cruel slavery, it was actually the outcome of a struggle between the

old southern plantation-owning oligarchy and the new capitalist class from the North who wished to expand their influence and markets.

Fighting against slavery was only a byproduct of the North's war campaign. And indeed, for a long time Lincoln tried to prevent this becoming an issue so as not to alienate the slave owners in the border states.

Racism is inextricably linked with capitalism and thus racism cannot be destroyed without the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Anti-racism

But the specific struggle against racism cannot simply be collapsed into the overall anti-capitalist fight. It needs a strug-

gle of the whole working class to defeat capitalism, but within that a permanent struggle against all forms of racism.

A struggle which includes, vitally, the self-organisation of black people, to ensure that racist poison is uprooted.

The self-organisation of black people is crucial to a powerful mobilisation of black communities. Without black people themselves taking the lead in struggles against racism, without the building of strong black organisations, the anti-racist struggle will be gravely weakened.

That's why self-organisation is not a tactical question or an added extra, but a crucial component of the struggle for racial equality.

De Klerk nails his (white) colours to the mast

By Charlie van Gelderen

AT LAST IT IS out. The end of apartheid (sic) does not mean the end of white rule. Not if FW De Klerk can help it.

This was quite clear from his speech at the opening of the white parliament on January 25. Before any new constitution, agreed by the 'Convention for a Democratic South Africa' (CODESA) could come into force, it would be submitted to a national referendum.

Not a referendum on the basis of one person one vote. The result of this would be a foregone conclusion. No! There will be a separate referendum for each national group as defined by the existing South African law - a separate referendum for Blacks, 'coloureds', Indians and whites. And the decision of the white electorate would be decisive.

This was underlined at a briefing to journalists before the President spoke by the Foreign Minister, Pik Botha, and Finance Minister, Barend du Plessis. When asked what would happen if the whites voted against the resolutions passed in the 19-party negotiation forum (CODESA), Botha said 'We would have to go back to the drawing board. There is no alternative.'

Gone are the illusions held by liberals, the ANC, and the Communist Party (SACP) that '(the white) parlia-



No end to white rule: De Klerk

ment is now a mere rubber stamp', as Hennie Serfontein, the political correspondent of *Vrye Weekblad*, put it as recently as January 17.

On December 20, John Carlin, the usually well-informed and perceptive Johannesburg correspondent of *The*

Independent wrote '... state power in South Africa will no longer reside exclusively in the hands of the white minority.'

'In practice, if not in law, the critical decisions concerning the future of the country will be made within CODESA. Parliament will be sovereign in name rather than substance. Power sharing is the name of the game.'

He went on to say 'And while CODESA itself lacks the power to transform decisions (adopted by CODESA) into law, the government has promised that such decisions will be, as one senior official put it, 'morally binding'.

Carlin and Serfontein are not the only ones who showed this pathetic faith in De Klerk and the National Party. On January 15 Nelson Mandela, President of the ANC, said that he had to keep De Klerk in power. 'De Klerk is essential for the negotiating process.'

Whether we like it or not, he is the de facto government of this country. We cannot normalise our political

situation without his cooperation. It is our duty that De Klerk remains in power so that we can cooperate on trying to bring about a new South Africa'.

This was of course in complete contradiction to Mandela's address to the ANC's 80th anniversary celebration in Bloemfontein on January 8. Here he warned that De Klerk did not share the ANC's objective of a democratic government 'by December' of this year.

It is this sort of double-speak, which has been characteristic of Mandela's type of leadership, which makes Neville Alexander, chairperson of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) ask 'Are the negotiators collaborators or liberators?'

In the same article he points out that the proposed interim government in which the ANC would participate alongside the National Party and Inkatha would compromise the struggle for the Constituent Assembly, to which the ANC is still committed in its programme.

Alexander does not share the faith of the ANC leadership that CODESA is a milestone along the road to the ultimate goal, or as the ANC General Secretary Cyril Ramaphosa put it 'We are walking the last mile'.

Indeed Alexander points out that Ramaphosa's Freudian slip may turn

out to be more significant than he realises. In normal slang 'walking the last mile' refers to the last few steps which the condemned person takes on the way to the gallows or the electric chair.

Putting WOSA's point of view, he emphasises 'The Constituent Assembly is our bottom line. We are probably not yet in a position to compel the government of the day to yield to the peoples' demand... We in WOSA and in other organisations insist that the struggle continues. A *lutta continua*. We are not prepared... to con our people into believing that CODESA is a part of the struggle.'

Indeed the CODESA process if left to itself will become the shortest route to burying the struggle for years to come. The critical question is, are the negotiators collaborators or liberators? Things will be clear in the next few months.'

The testing time has come even more swiftly than Neville Alexander anticipated. De Klerk has put his cards on the table. He is for the perpetuation of white minority rule. Mandela must make up his mind. Is he for De Klerk? Does he still consider it his duty 'that De Klerk remains in power'?

The people of South Africa, the victims of four centuries of white domination and the obscenity which was apartheid demands an answer. And they want it now!

Hidden hand of US in Haiti crisis

By Roland Wood

SINCE THE September 1991 coup which overthrew Haiti's elected president, radical priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the army and police have killed more than 1500 people. On 16 December, the first anniversary of the Caribbean country's first democratic elections, police shot dead one left wing MP and burned down the houses of two others.

Thousands of people have been fleeing the island to escape the repression, mainly heading for the United States. Intercepted by coastguards, 9,500 have been interned at the US base at Guantanamo, Cuba.

Repatriation

Now, the US government intends to repatriate these refugees, back into the hands of the army and the notorious Tontons Macoutes. The Macoutes were for decades the private army of dictator 'Papa Doc' Duvalier, and subsequently of his son 'Baby Doc'.

Bush's decision to send back the refugees contrasts starkly with the attitude of the US towards those fleeing Cuba, who are automatically welcomed in Miami.

Officially the US deplored the overthrow of Aristide; but many of Aristide's supporters

suspect that the State Department and the CIA gave the green light to the military plotters. The US is involved in a bizarre and elaborate diplomatic game to prevent the return and reinstatement of Aristide.

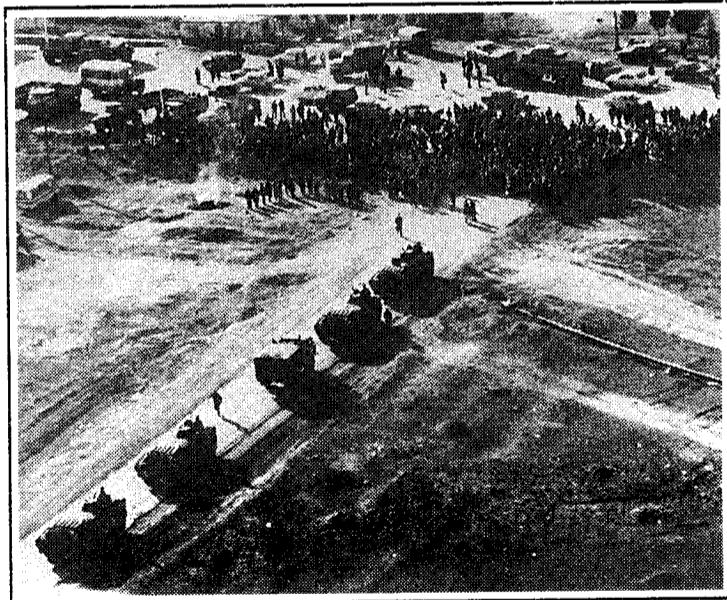
In a deal cooked up with US involvement, it appears that the military have agreed to install Communist Party leader Rene Theodore as acting prime minister, replacing the army's nominee Jean Jaques Honorat. Meanwhile the legitimate prime minister who served under Aristide, Rene Preval, remains in hiding in their French Embassy.

Buying time

The hidden aim of all this diplomatic activity is to buy time. Time in which the putschists can establish a position of strength, dismantle the popular organisations and terrorise the population. Thus when (and if) Aristide returns from exile, the bourgeoisie will be safe from any radical movement under his leadership.

The willingness of the Communist Party to go along with the US diplomatic game speaks volumes about its political line.

Who holds the real power was shown dramatically in January when plain-clothes police burst into Theodore's home and, beat him up and killed his bodyguard.



Azeri tanks close in on besieged Armenian enclave

Genocide fear in Ngorno-Karabakh

FOR MORE than three years there has been bitter political dispute and ground-level fighting over the future of Ngorno-Karabakh, the ethnically Armenian territory surrounded on all sides by Azerbaijan.

Since the surge of independence movements in the ex-Soviet republics, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have claimed the district. The people of Nagorno Karabakh themselves have made their position clear repeatedly: they are Armenian and want unity with Armenia.

Now the armed Azeri-Ar-

menian conflict is reaching crunch point. Karabakh is besieged and risks a crushing defeat by Azeri forces. The Karabakh capital Stepanakert is under daily bombardment.

Thousands of Armenian civilians in outlying villages have been murdered or driven from their homes by invading Azeri forces.

The issue of Karabakh has been systematically used by reactionary nationalist forces in Azerbaijan to build support. Prior to the fall of Gorbachev the conflict was worsened by the cynical divide-and-rule policies of the Kremlin leaders.

In 1989 a pogrom was carried out against Armenians living in the Azeri capital Baku. Moscow used this as an excuse to intervene with a massive and murderous show of force, in which hundreds were killed - an action which drove many Azeris into the arms of the ultra-nationalist Popular Front.

But in the wake of this attack, with the Azeri Stalinist leaders firmly in power, Moscow utilised the notorious OMON internal security police, and KGB troops, to aid the terror being waged against Armenian villages on the borders of the enclave.

production factories.

The moves towards setting up a Dniester Republic started in September 1990 when Moldovan leaders in the capital Chisinau expressed their support for independence. Communist leaders in Tiraspol accused Moldovan nationalists of 'dismantling socialism' and 'liquidating Soviet power'.

Armed workers

In response the Dniester leaders organised workers armed detachments based on the factories to fight against independence. These workers' units have since become a fully fledged 'Republican Guard', led by professional officers.

In the wake of the defeated neo-Stalinist coup, the Dniester communist leaders began a process of taking over government buildings, using armed 'workers detachments'.

In December they extended their actions to Bendery, a town on the right bank of the Dniester, in an attempt to extend the boundaries of their 'republic'.

In the south Moldovan area of Gaguaz, power has also been seized by Stalinist forces, and it seems likely that the two areas will attempt to link up, thus effectively seizing a swathe of southern and east-

ern Moldovan territory.

Units from the Fourteenth Army have increasingly weighed in to give support to the Republican Guard.

The Stalinist enclave in Moldova has become a focal point of support from neo-Stalinist and Russian nationalist forces throughout the ex-USSR.

Units of the notorious OMON internal security police are reported to have gone there from the Baltic states to fight with the Republican Guard. Extreme Russian nationalist forces have promised volunteer brigades to fight for the Dniester republic.

Cautious

The Moldovan government has been extremely cautious about a direct military confrontation with the Dniester rebels. However, the growing geographical spread of the enclave makes a direct confrontation almost inevitable.

The Dniester area backs directly on to the southern Ukraine, constituting an obvious threat to stability in the newly-independent republic. The Dniester forces could thus be effectively trapped in a pincer movement if a military conflict starts.



Demanding the restoration of the USSR East Moldovans defy nationalist leaders

Stalinist enclave threatens Moldova civil war

By Paul Clarke

After the ousting of Georgian president Gamsakhurdia, a new civil war is threatened in the republics of the ex-USSR. A 'creeping putsch' is taking place in eastern Moldova (formerly Moldavia), in the five administrative districts around the city of Tiraspol - the so-called Left Bank of the river Dniester.

In this predominantly Russian-speaking area local militias and army units have seized government buildings and proclaimed the existence of a 'Dniester Republic'.

The Dniester Republic leaders proclaim their adherence to old-style Soviet communism. Local reports say they have wide popular support. Mass rallies have been held in the Lenin Square in Tiraspol to oppose privatisation of industry and demand the maintenance of the USSR.

Coup

The attempted August 1991 coup in the USSR was enthusiastically supported by CP leaders and military officials in eastern Moldova. The area is heavily militarised, a centre for many army units and arms

Feedback

We welcome letters on any subject but please keep them brief. Letters over 350 words will be cut. Send your letters to: *Socialist Outlook* PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU

Gorbachev and the rush to market

'BY CONTRAST with Gorbachev, who still vaguely supports socialism, Yeltsin openly supports the restoration of capitalism' - Ernest Mandel, SO 15.

This would certainly have come as news, I think, to Mikhail and indeed every Soviet bureaucrat back to Stalin and the political revolution.

That such people paid lip-service to an ossified ideology of so-called 'communism' in the guise of Marxism-Leninism is of course true, but it hardly amounts to support for socialism, however vague.

The whole problem with the idea of socialism in the former Stalinist states is the perception by large numbers of the working class that what they had was socialism, and more importantly that it did not work.

Mandel's glib phrase only gives succour to this mistaken notion and credit (albeit I assume unintentional) to the man who sent tanks into Azerbaijan, who presided over the murder of

demonstrators in Georgia, and sold out countless struggles.

Perestroika may have started as a way of guaranteeing a section of the bureaucracy's privileges (hardly a socialist aim), but by the time Gorbachev dropped out of the limelight he stood for the reintroduction of capitalism. This should come as no surprise to trotskysts - it had been predicted in 'The Revolution Betrayed' over 50 years earlier.

There is not a qualitative difference between Gorbachev and Yeltsin - they both stood for the reintroduction of the market at the time of the former's fall. Their disagreement was over how to move to the market.

Trotskyists have a history of opposing both stalinism and capitalism - it is at best a mistake that when one has largely fallen and the other is in deep crisis such a misleading statement can be made.

Ian McLarty
London E10.

Bob Wood
Southall

Unsung victories in ex-USSR

I DISAGREE with the tone and some of the content of Patrick Baker's gloom-laden report on the ex-USSR in *Socialist Outlook* 14 (The Bitter Fruits of Marketisation).

The article was superficial and impressionistic rather than analytical. I will limit my comments to two areas: the national question and the price rises.

Patrick asserts that the victory of the struggle of the republics for self-determination arising out of the defeat of the August coup was an 'enormous step forward'. But he neglects to say exactly what this victory consists of. In fact, he doesn't have a single positive thing to say about it.

Instead, he goes on to assert that today the 'potential for destruction arising out of national conflict ... is almost limitless'. If this is the real outcome of the achievement of national independence then it should not be described as a victory at all.

In fact, it was a tremendous (although partial) victory for many reasons, not least of which is the fact that the achievement of national independence (including international recognition as independent and sovereign states) makes bloody conflict of the kind seen in Yugoslavia less likely.

This is tangible evidence of a victory: a powerful obstacle to the development of Yugoslav-style conflict has been created in the form of the achievement of national independence.

Remember that when the Serbian-dominated so-called

federal army attacked Slovenia and then Croatia its aim was to prevent secession from the unitary Yugoslavian federation of these republics.

The situation in the new Commonwealth is qualitatively different. There was an attempt in August 1991 to defend by force the unitary Soviet state: thankfully, it failed.

The stakes for Boris Yeltsin (or any future Russian leader) were he to attempt a military operation against another republic would be enormously higher than they were for Milosevic.

None of this is to say that the myriad conflicts involving the new states, nationalities and national minorities are over. But it is to disagree with the implication that the outcome of the defeat of the coup is the creation of 'limitless possibilities for destruction' in Patrick's cataclysmic phrase.

Space does not allow me to go into the many other concrete benefits of the achievement of national independence which ought to have been mentioned in the article.

The tone and content of the article is similarly out of proportion to reality when it discusses the price rises introduced in early January.

Incredibly, there is absolutely no mention of the mass resistance to the price rise. The fact that there were demonstrations, riots and strikes the length and breadth of the Commonwealth is not even referred to!

Not only did these strikes and riots take place they actually succeeded in forcing the

Whose terror?

Your article on Sri Lanka (Sri Lankan marxists rally to Fourth International, SO 13) was excellent and highly informative.

However, it was sad to note that Phil Hearse had apparently transposed the words 'terrorist' and 'terror' in describing the actions of the Singhalese organisation, the JVP, and the Sri Lankan state's response to their campaign.

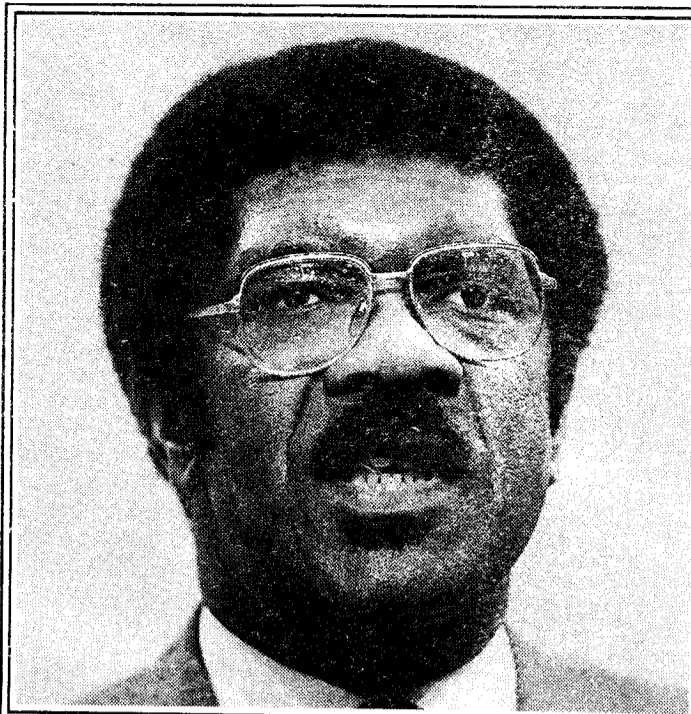
No doubt terror is part of the JVP's political armoury, just as it was for the Bolsheviks during the civil war after the 1917 revolution.

And no doubt the programme of the JVP should be subjected to the same kind of vigorous criticism we would direct against the Tamil LTTE, the Peruvian Sendero Luminoso or the late and unlamented Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

Unfortunately no other political characterisation of the JVP than 'terrorist' was available in Phil Hearse's account.

'Terrorist' is usually reserved by most of the press for activities in places like Belfast or Beirut. It is quite obviously a word to be used either with great care or preferably not at all - unless perhaps in describing state terrorism.

Many political organisations across the globe use wrong methods (and sometimes very dim lamps to light their shining path) in their struggle against imperialism. If we are to condemn them, our perspective must be entirely different from our common enemy.



'Left' TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris: where was his fight against de-recognition?

TGWU idle as Unipart smashes union

By Anthony Dixon

FROM APRIL 7th, Unipart's plant in Cowley, which at the moment has about 600 union members, mainly in the TGWU, will lose union recognition. The plant was once among the best organised of the Cowley car factories. Union organisation has been given up rather than taken away.

The management gave the unions six months notice. In that time they have been threatening and bullying workers into signing new contracts of employment, that mean that all their problems will be dealt with by a 'Forum', dominated by 'team leaders' and not through a trade union. This pressure has been successful and almost every worker has signed the new contract.

What have the trade unions done? Early last year the three senior stewards were sacked: the TGWU official argued against a strike. This was followed by the sacking of three other shop

stewards for 'undermining' a team-leader.

In all this time the trade unions, led by the TGWU have only issued three leaflets. They have not organised a single meeting and have simply argued that they are going through 'procedure' on union recognition. There has now been nearly a year without a membership meeting.

The final stage of negotiations on recognition took place two weeks ago. Jack Adams, top cars negotiator and newly elected TGWU deputy General Secretary led the talks, but got nowhere.

However, instead of meeting the membership, he has arranged to meet the company again on March 9th.

The unions have said that after this they will discuss with the membership. But in the meantime the workforce is getting weaker and weaker.

In the 300 strong Unipart workforce in the North Oxford Plant the company also gave six months notice and have now de-recognised the union with no organised opposition.

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Dave Shepherd
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Carworkers forge new international links

IN A WEEK which saw Ford UK management declare over 2,000 job losses, and more redundancies at Vauxhall, a seminar was held in Liverpool on the 'New Management Techniques' which are being introduced in the motor industry all over the world.

The seminar was organised by the Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE), who are the only people organising such meetings. They have held similar meetings throughout Europe.

Shop stewards from the Vauxhall plant at Ellesmere

Port assisted with the organisation of the day.

Car workers from Spain, Germany, Canada, USA and Britain attended and research workers from Japan, Korea and Britain were also there, with the British workers coming from Ford, Vauxhall, Rover, Rolls Royce and some component firms.

Canada

There were highly knowledgeable introductions on the new management techniques in Canada, where the attempts to change over to the new systems of operation have

not been as successful as elsewhere. 'Team leaders' and other measures have not been introduced in any of the 'Big Three' car factories, but only in a 'joint venture' plant, SUMA, which has been heavily researched.

'Greenfield' workers in this plant are gradually moving away from management and towards trade unionism.

There was also discussion introduced by a Japanese and a British researcher on the methods used by Japanese capitalism to organise its supply of components through the control of the component companies.

Opposition

There were lively workshops, particularly on how the opposition to the new techniques was presently organised and looking at how to proceed.

One of the Canadian organisers presented three alternatives that car workers faced: accepting without fighting; negotiate the best deal; or oppose all the new management techniques.

All three options had their supporters in the meeting but most favour negotiation. However, outright opposition is still taking place in Canada and in some factories in Britain.

Techniques

TIE should be congratulated for organising these opportunities to discuss the situation and how to proceed, and for providing such a wealth of information on the techniques being employed in the rest of the world.

The latest round of cutbacks in Ford companies in Britain demonstrate that the problems of new management techniques has not gone away, and there is a growing need for more discussion and action to combat them.

TGWU calls car seminar

The Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) National Automotive Committee has organised a national seminar for Senior stewards in the motor industry, on New Management Techniques on February 27th in Birmingham.

This arises out of a resolution from the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Cowley in Oxford. It will be the first national forum organised by any union on this subject and is a major step forward.

The TGWU, nationally, has been in the forefront of isolating plants, and leaving them to fight back against the new working practices plant by plant, almost always leading to defeat. This seminar should be the start of breaking that isolation.

When exchanges mean daylight robbery

SEASONED watchers of British Telecom (BT) have to be careful. Two things happen every time they blink: BT makes another £95 in profits and sacks a thousand more of their staff.

Alan Tuffin, leader of the Union of Communication Workers and a man better known for rhetoric than action, wasn't far off the mark when he said that BT was 'yet again putting obscene profits before people and their livelihoods.' Sadly, he didn't explain what he was going to do about it.

By 1996, BT will have sacked 90,000 workers since the decade began - more than a third of their workforce. It has announced job cuts each year, and sacked more than it announced every time. Last year 10,000 redundancies were announced; 18,800 were sacked. This year 16,000 is the projection; unions fear it will be over 22,000 in practice.

The only surprise in the recent revelation that more than 50% of BT workers are not proud of working for Telecom is that the figure isn't 90%.

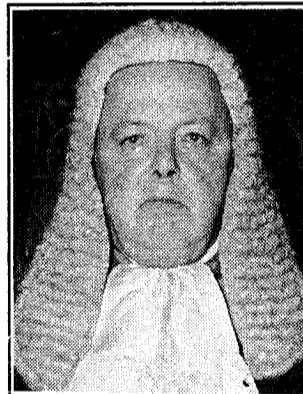


Judges languish in poverty

The Top Salaries Review Board (TSRB) are in a terrible dilemma: apparently they are having 'persistent difficulties in recruiting Circuit judges'.

Now the annual pay awards covered by the TSRB - senior civil servants, judges and the military brass - are to be put off until July. Perhaps they fear a wave of court occupations because the raises aren't enough? Well, not quite.

It's not that legal eagles are only getting the measly 6 per cent being offered to nurses. Actually it's because they are going to get raises averaging 40 per cent, on top of their six-figure salaries, which seemed a bit embarrassing during the election. Well, well. No wonder they've got recruiting difficulties.



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socialist **OUTLOOK**



Sinn Fein leader at Republican funeral. Last week three Sinn Fein workers were murdered by a deranged RUC man

Ireland: the killings continue

No internment!

No British

solution!

AS THE CATALOGUE of assassinations in Northern Ireland mounts, the knee-jerk cries for the introduction of internment and further repression intensify. Absent from the hysterical media coverage is any real analysis of what is happening, and why.

Both the press and TV portray the killings as 'tit for tat' reprisal killings, inexplicable but for the 'mad' and 'tribal' passions of the Irish.

People in the Six Counties know this is a primitive caricature. Random sectarian assassination is a weapon of the loyalist terror brigades, venting their hatred of the IRA on the nationalist population at random.

Republican attacks have been overwhelmingly on military targets. But it has to be said the Trebane bombing, which killed seven Protestant workers working on a military base, was tactically disas-

trous. It played into the hands of the loyalist assassins and the British state.

It is 23 years since the present round of the 'troubles' began. Thousands of deaths later the war goes on, for the simple reason that its basic cause, the national demands of the Irish people, remain unresolved. Ireland unfree will never be at peace; and internment will bring neither peace nor freedom one bit nearer.