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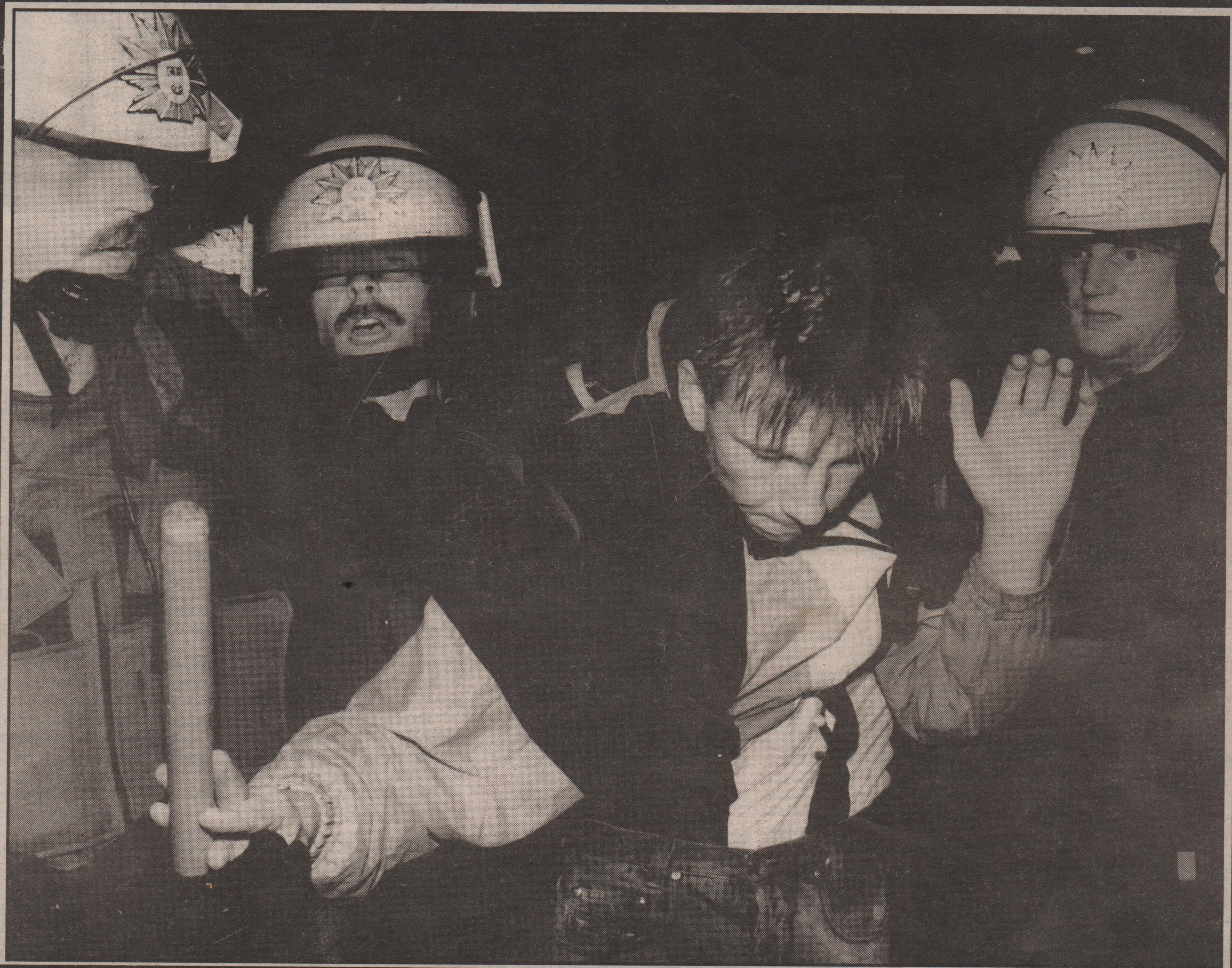
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socialist **OUTLOOK**

Rostock – the lessons for the left



Unite to beat back fascist threat!

**Pogrom in Rostock
– feature Page 3**

Irving at it again

No one on the international Nazi circuit has done more to encourage the re-birth of fascism in Germany than 'revisionist' historian David Irving. Irving has been speaking at Nazi rallies all over Germany, praising the rebirth of 'vigorous nationalism' among German youth.

These activities have already earned Irving a £700 fine in Germany, for contravening anti-fascist laws - claiming that the holocaust is a Zionist myth.

Now Irving is to speak at another revisionist seminar on 19 September. These closely-guarded events are presented in 'non-party' terms, but the attendance and organisation is heavily dominated by the fascist BNP.

Irving's last seminar concentrated on the holocaust; this time he is speaking on the 'race problem'.

The Committee to Stop Irving is organising another demonstration to protest the historian's activities. Meet 19 September 12 noon at 81 Duke Street, Mayfair from where it will proceed to the fascist meeting. For further details ring 071-277 0817.

Alessandra Mussolini, grand-daughter of the Italian dictator and very much a champion of his politics, is speaking at a fringe meeting organised by the sinister Western Goals outfit at the Tory party conference in Brighton. A demonstration is likely to be organised outside the meeting.

Germany Social democrats retreat as Nazis step up violence

A WAVE OF neo-nazi violence rocked Germany last week in the wake of six consecutive nights of fascist rioting in the Baltic coast city of Rostock. Copycat incidents were reported in Berlin, Cottbus, Eberswalde, Goerlitz, Leipzig, Stendal, Schwerin, Neubrandenburg and Eisenhuettenstadt.

Far right gangs have killed seven people so far this year in around 300 acts officially designated as serious violence, as against three fatalities in the whole of 1991.

Troubles flared up after 300 mainly western rightwingers converged on Rostock on Saturday 22. Intelligence sources knew of the plan, yet the authorities failed to take preventative action.

On the Monday night a hostel for asylum-seekers in the suburb of Lichtenhagen was torched down after police gave the green light by withdrawing for an hour, ostensibly to reinforce.

Local residents shouted encouragement from the balconies of their tower block flats, many giving raised arm Hitler salutes. Around 200 Romanian gypsies living in the building were subsequently evacuated.

The disturbances were the worst since those in Hoyerswerda in September 1991, which saw almost all foreigners driven out of town.

A nationwide anti-fascist mobilisation backed by local trade unions drew an estimated 20,000 to the city on Saturday 29.

Some 3,400 additional police

were drafted in to mount a huge security operation, baton-charging anarchist demonstrators at the end of the peaceful march in sharp contrast to their tacit co-operation with the fascists.

Meanwhile, the trial of five east German skinheads accused of murdering a black Angolan outside a nightclub in Eberswalde began in Frankfurt an der Oder last week.

A gang of 20 youths went out with a specific intention to 'slam niggers'. The ringleader testified: 'There wasn't one of us who didn't stomp him.'

With the right to asylum enshrined in article 16 Germany's constitution, over 500,000 refugees are expected in the country this year, twice the 1991 figure.

There is a growing clamour across the mainstream parties for immigration law to be tightened, fed by members of the governing CDU party frightened of losing electoral support to the far right.

Even Bjorn Engholm, leader of the left-of-centre opposition SPD, backtracked on formal party policy to declare 'immigration must be braked and controlled'.

Most of Germany's quality press has been critical of such responses. In a front page opinion piece, heavyweight weekly *Die Welt* commented: 'The asylum debate,

designed to serve infighting among conservatives, has only damaged them and was useful to the right extremists alone. The latest cave-in from the SPD - disguised by a thousand windy get-out clauses - seems to be feeble opportunism, and will prove as much an exercise in self-deception as in voter-deception.'

Initiative Schwarze Deutsche [Black German Initiative] London spokesperson John Amoateng-Cantara said:

'The most frightening thing about Rostock is not that nazi thugs attacked foreigners - that happens all the time.

The problem is that ordinary citizens in the street were applauding their actions. That is something that shocked me, as a German.

'I believe that they just waited for something like this to happen to say, "we've got too many immigrants, we've got to change the asylum law".'

Amoateng-Cantara contrasted the police response to Nazis with the heavy-handed suppression of anti-nuclear protesters in the late eighties, adding: 'Don't tell me the police are not able to protect 200 frightened foreigners. These people could easily have been dead by now.'

The Anti-Racist Alliance staged a picket outside the German embassy in London on Thursday 27.



Sieg Heil: Nazi's in the '90s

Manchester

Thousands march against racist murders

By Rachel Newton

Over three thousand people took to Manchester's streets on 22 August to protest the brutal racist murders of Mohammed Sarwar and Siddik Dada earlier this year. It was the largest anti-racist mobilisation Manchester has seen for many years.

The march was a highly militant display of anger. Slogans like 'Justice for families', 'No justice, no peace' and 'self-defence is no offense' were chanted in Urdu, Bangladeshi and English.

The march was joined by contingents from around the Greater Manchester area, and from cities further afield including Birmingham, Sheffield, Bradford and London.

Many businesses on the route of the march through the Asian community closed as a sign of support, and a minute's silence was observed. A wreath was laid at the spot where Mohammed Sarwar was killed.

The final rally was addressed by the recently-formed Black Peoples Alliance, Newham Monitoring Project, the Anti-racist Alliance and several

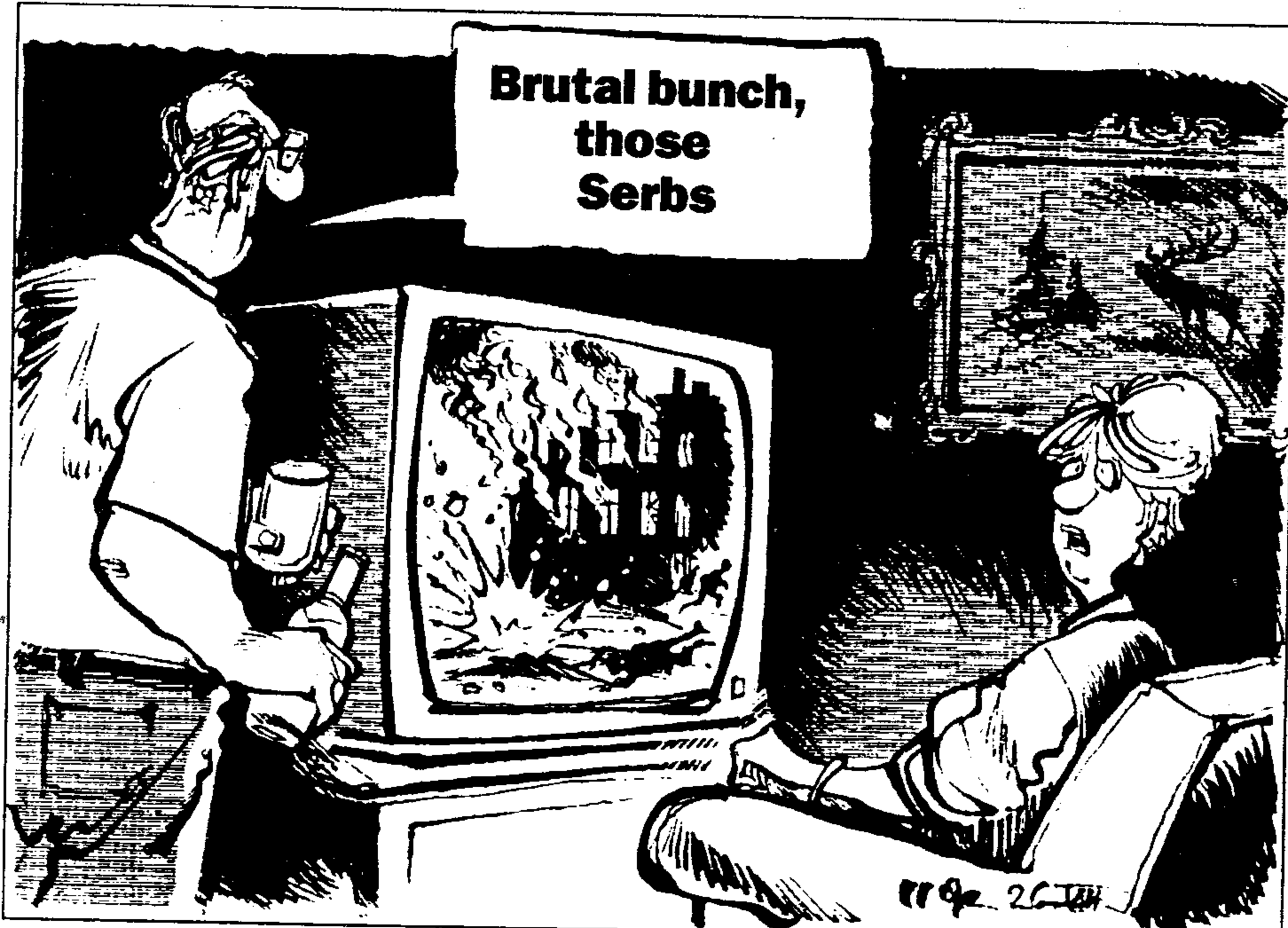
local campaigns.

The success of the demonstration was the result of several months hard campaigning. The Siddik Dada and Mohammed Sarwar Memorial Committee has provided an exemplary model for this type of campaign.

Firmly based on grassroots activists with black militants in the forefront, it managed to unite a wide range of forces under its banner. From beginning to end the bereaved families were placed at the heart of the campaign and fully consulted at every stage.

Despite attempts by the Anti-Nazi League and sections of the Anti-Racist Alliance to gain narrow factional advantage out of this serious campaign, a real working relationship, based on mutual respect, was forged between black militants and white anti-racists on the basis of co-operation and mutual respect.

Socialist Outlook supporters played a full role in this, and will continue working to build an anti-racist movement in Britain that is grassroots based and democratic, with a clear understanding of the need for black self-organisation and leadership.



... hey you, that's Rostock!

Rostock - the port they made redundant

ROSTOCK LOST much of the reason for its existence the day Germany reunited.

Alongside the nearby Polish cities of Szczecin, Gdynia and Gdansk, it functioned as an integral part of an international port and shipbuilding complex servicing the entire eastern bloc, with standards equalling those in the west.

Local shipping line DSR played in the international big league, operating joint services with Britain's Cunard Ellerman.

Massive shipyards, developed in the fifties to meet Moscow's demand for vessels as part of war reparations, provided work for 55,000. Some 30 ships a day called at the port while other vessels queued for a berth.

On October 3, 1990, the house of cards came down overnight. Real unemployment is

now around 50%; in some of the surrounding agricultural villages, the figure soars to 80%.

The western ports of Hamburg and Bremen briefly slashed prices just long enough to ruin Rostock's port. DSR is now a junior partner with the west's Senator Linie. Kvaerner, the Norwegian shipbuilding multinational that now owns Glasgow Govan, has suspended its bid to buy worldclass facilities at the Warnow shipyard, in an attempt to screw the price down further. The shipbuilding industry now employs just 5,000.

Meanwhile, Germany's finance minister Theo Waigel is calling for cuts in unemployment benefit and training and job-creation schemes. Small wonder the fascists 'they're taking our jobs' rhetoric is winning a response in Rostock's grey concrete tower blocks.

Pogrom in Rostock

From David Mueller in Berlin

AUGUST 25 was a truly historic day in Germany; two to four hundred fascists, cheered on by a mob of several thousand, burned down a hostel for asylum-seekers in Rostock.

And on the same day, the leaders of the opposition SPD let it be known they would support changes in article 16 of the German constitution, which stipulates that the politically persecuted enjoy the right of asylum.

It is just a year since Nazis in the town of Hoyerswerda were able to violently shut down a home for immigrants.

The CDU/CSU government had already made asylum an election issue, successfully using it to deflect attention from their lack of answers. But that time they weren't able to

exploit the question to build their own support. Militant neo-fascists, however, exploited the racist atmosphere to carry out violent actions.

This was even more the case in Rostock. The Nazis have now succeeded - through blatant terror - in influencing national politics for the first time since the Hitler regime.

The Nazis no longer 'only' confine themselves to breaking up left demos and intimidating immigrants, refugees and other 'un-Germans'. They now play a clear political role.

Bourgeois politicians and the CDU Mecklenburg-Vorpommern regional government, directly responsible for Rostock and its police, initially approved the terror.

This is demonstrated by the fact that at one stage on the 25th, only six Rostock police opposed over 200 armed Nazis, while hundreds of border guards stood inactively by, with no orders to intervene. It is little known that 60 per cent of those arrested were anti-fascists who tried to help the asylum-



'East and West, down with the Nazi pest'



Fascists flying the flag

seekers. The press and the bourgeois politicians talk of 'the helplessness of the police'. In plain speaking, this means they simply don't want to act. The self-same police chiefs and politicians readily mobilised over 3,000 policemen against the left's anti-fascist demonstration on August 29,

and arrested over 90 people even before the march.

The racist basic attitudes of the bourgeois politicians and the police leaders are well-known. They are out to enforce one concrete political aim; changing the constitutional right of asylum.

Additionally, the racist wave is important to the government, because it deflects attention from its lack of perspectives for dealing with the crisis bought on by reunification.

It's also no surprise that the bourgeois media and politicians on the one hand set themselves against 'the violence of the right and the violence of the left(!)'. They mean they don't want an independent, active fascist movement at this point, and want a hard hitting anti-fascist movement still less. But at the

same time display surges of understanding for the Nazis.

The whole spectrum of bourgeois politicians speak only of 'a solution to the problem through stopping the influx of asylum-seekers'. At the same time, CDU and SPD security experts use the situation in an almost macabre fashion to demand the creation of a 2,000-strong special police force.

It's easy to guess who it would actually be deployed against; Nazi terror leads directly to the strong state - against the left.

All measures bourgeois politicians seek to paint as directed against the Nazis actually play into their hands. Thus the asylum-seekers in Rostock are evacuated, the right of asylum is altered and the state re-armed.

Nazi success

The Nazis can count the whole affair a major success; even as the terrors of Rostock fade away, there are still five-ten attacks daily on Germany's refugee hostels.

It is disastrous that the SPD leadership has flipped its position, not only over asylum but on deployment of German troops in United Nations forces.

In a nutshell; the SPD leadership will participate in the production of refugees and then hinder their entry into Germany. One section of the SPD tops are flirting with thoughts of a Grand Coalition. The real background to the capitulation is the integration of the SPD bureaucracy into the apparatus of the bourgeois state and their cluelessness in the current situation.

The SPD has no more of an alternative to the conservatives than it did at the start of the Brandt era. The breakdown of stalinism did not hit the party as evidently as it did the stalinist-reformist left, but it gives way step by step to attacks from the right and, given the shift in the balance of forces to the right, does not even consider a counterattack.

The only opposition comes from the SPD's youth wing, but even they cannot muster the necessary district aggregate to force a special party conference.

The opposition is so dis-

persed that now SPD leader Engholm is even considering convening such a conference to put his politics over.

If the party continues to retreat, many young socialists will probably resign or go over to the Greens. Nevertheless, it remains the task of socialists to discuss with these comrades and build common activity against racism and militarism.

Broad support

The Rostock counter-demonstration was notably broad, ranging from district union federations to anarchists. There was considerable support among the 20,000 people for embracing action with the far left.

The left is still able to mobilise far larger numbers than the radical right. But the demo also revealed crucial splits on the left. One part of the reformist spectrum - above all people from the lower middle class but also increasingly the lumpen proletariat (for example, in Hoyerswerda) and apprentices - gives ground to the ideology behind the racist measures, for example calling for restrictions on immigration.

The opposite mistake is made by some 'radicals' that fiercely polemicise against racist ideology and organise militant resistance, but are unwilling to put forward social demands at the same time.

They don't believe that it is possible to win over a convinced racist through social questions. This is a big mistake when the source of much of the racism in the ex-GDR stems precisely from the unemployment and social devastation that has come with re-unification.

In order to build a left opposition, the anti-racist struggle for complete legal and social equality for everyone must be combined with a movement of immigrants and refugees putting forward social demands for all workers.

Only in this way can a left pole be created, constituting an alternative to racism. If we don't create it, for more and more people in Germany, 'foreigners out!' will become a political programme.





PROTEST: Two patients took time from their beds at London's Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women (EGA) to show their support for the union demonstration against NHS cuts on August 21. The EGA, which was first successfully defended against closure by the three-year 'work-in' in the late 1970s, beat back repeated threats during the 1980s. But it has now closed its doors to in-patients, becoming the first victim of what threatens to be a devastating wave of hospital closures in London. (See page 15)

Miners face new onslaught

THE TORY government is set to order British Coal to axe 30 of its 50 remaining deep mines, at a cost 25,000 jobs, in the run up to privatisation.

The 60 per cent cut in capacity would inevitably mean the closure of many modern and profitable collieries.

Ministers have instructed civil servants to draw up regional aid packages on a scale unseen since the decimation of British Steel in the early eighties, the *Independent of Sunday* reports.

Pits at risk include Easington and Vane Tempest in the North-East, Markham Main in South Yorkshire, Derbyshire's Bolsover, Parkside in Lancashire and Betws and Taffmerthyr in Wales.

Strongholds of the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers – which effectively broke the 1984-85 pit strike – will also be badly hit. Unemployment in its Mansfield heartland will soar to well over 20 per cent.

British Coal's commercial future depends on currently deadlocked negotiations for the renewal of contracts with National Power and PowerGen. The privatised generation duopolists buy 65 million tons of coal a year from BC, four-fifths of its entire output.

The electricity companies are seeking a full-scale switch to natural gas and cheap imported coal when the present agreement expires next spring, a move which would effectively scupper the chances of a successful BC sell-off.

The government may be forced to interfere with market forces to ensure a new deal.

National Union of Mineworkers executive member Billy Pye told *Socialist Outlook* that pits nearest the coast would be the first to face closure from imports, with inland collieries hit later. "In the end, you'd be looking at just five or six pits left."

Meanwhile, British Coal's smokeless fuel business, Coal Products, is set to be the first tranche to be privatised, with Coalite owners Anglo-United expected to beat off two rival consortia proposing management buy-outs. Anglo's main interest lies in shutting down plants to reduce overcapacity in the sector, with inevitable further job losses.

The NUM's anti-privatisation strategy centres on building an alliance with rail unions fighting the sell-off of British Rail. Talks between the NUM and RMT railworkers' leaderships are expected shortly.

Anti-Fascism Halifax demo bars path to Nazis

By John Kipling and Paul Hubert

THE PLANNED march by the Nazi BNP through the heart of the Asian community in Halifax was thwarted by the mobilisation of more than 500 anti-fascists on 15 August.

Despite a big police presence, the 80 BNPs had to be content with a brief harangue from fascist leader John Tyndall in an outlying park. Three anti-fascists were arrested when a breakaway from the main demo went looking for fascists in the town centre.

The Nazis were trying to capitalise on isolated attacks on white people in the area, which had been sensationalised in the local evening paper.

A big effort to build the anti-fascist demonstration was made by the SWP/ANL who brought people from around the town. A contingent also came from Anti-fascist Action, as well as Socialist Outlook supporters from both sides of the Pennines.

However the composition of the demonstration, and events on it, highlighted problems in the composition and orientation of the anti-fascist movement.

Organised labour movement support outside the far left was limited, although banners from Bradford, Leeds and Kirklees NALGO – and one MSF banner – were brought. A substantial majority of the march came from outside Halifax, although 70 members of the Asian community attended.

The final rally was marred by a disturbing incident. Yasmin

Alem, an Asian woman member of the SWP, raised from the platform the absence of any significant number of Asian women on the march, when there was a significant number of Asian men.

She went on to raise the question of the oppression of, and violence against, women in Asian Muslim households. This led to abuse from Asian men in the crowd, culminating in the disconnection of the microphone and her being physically assaulted when she came down from the platform.

SWP leader Rahul Patel took the microphone and defused the situation by leading the crowd in chanting anti-Nazi slogans. But neither he nor other SWP members were prepared to defend his right to speak; instead of being offered an opportunity to complete her contribution she was upbraided for being 'divisive'.

A few days before the demonstration a young Asian woman in Halifax had been murdered; it seems likely she was murdered because she had a husband in Pakistan (who she met once) and a boyfriend in Bradford.

Such questions have a powerful daily reality; it is impossible for anti-racists to put them aside in the name of the need for 'unity'.

This relates to the question of continuing anti-racist activity on the ground – or the lack of it.

The lack of a permanent framework for anti-racist campaigning has led some Asian youth to think that the best form of attack is random physical violence against racists.

Coventry purge of Labour left

SOME 127 Labour activists across all four Coventry constituencies have been suspended in the biggest purge of individual leftwingers in the party yet.

Charges centre on alleged support for independent socialist candidates in the April general election, when former Labour MPs Dave Nellist and John Hughes stood against official Labour candidates in the city after being expelled and deselected respectively.

Local activists claim some of those accused played no part in either campaign, while others who openly worked for Nellist and Hughes are not included. "In reality, it is every rightwinger's grudge list, going back over a

decade," said NUT activist Will Reese, who is named despite his prior resignation from the party.

Those suspended include well over half of regular ward meeting attenders, and up to 90 per cent of activists, he added. "It essentially amounts to the destruction of the Labour Party in Coventry."

Also on the list Nellist's partner Jane; ex-councillor George Ready (who was in hospital for heart surgery throughout the campaign) and former West Midlands County Councillor Dave Spencer.

One result of the witch-hunt has been the formation of a Coventry Socialist Alliance, open to people both inside and outside the Labour Party. The new group will hold a one day conference on September 26.

Pergamon strike called off

Minority fight against Elsevier

SEVEN participants in the three year-long National Union of Journalists strike at Pergamon Press – the longest dispute in recent British history – are to launch a new campaign for reinstatement and full trade union rights at the Oxford publishing house's parent company.

The dispute was officially ended last month after the 23 strikers took a majority decision to accept a derisory financial settlement. The £85,000 payment amounts to a mere £1,350 per journalist for each year of the dispute.

Using the NUJ's deep financial crisis as a pretext, the union's leadership progressively whittled strike pay down from 100 per cent to £40 a week

to zero, leaving many of the strikers with the feeling that eventual deal was the best obtainable. The chapel has been formally dissolved.

But all those who rejected the offer are to continue the fight for union rights at Pergamon's Dutch owners Elsevier, one of Europe's biggest publishers. The firm is planning to build a new plant in Oxford – and clearly its refusal to compromise on the Pergamon issue suggests unions will not be recognised there.

Print and general unions in Holland will be centrally involved in the ongoing campaign, and may be in a position to fund the work.

Pergamon striker Anna Wagstaff told trade paper *UK Press Gazette*: "There is scope for a strong campaign in the

Netherlands. This is not going to be the only dispute the Dutch trade unions are going to be dealing with.

"All industries are threatened by the fact that Britain's lousy trade union legislation means it is going to become the Taiwan of western Europe."

The campaign has already won support of many prominent militants in the NUJ. Following the election of Pergamon Father of Chapel Jim Boumelha as joint president of the union, official backing is likely to follow.

Contact Bill on 0865 724452 for more details. A meeting for supporters in London will be held at the Sols Arms pub, Hampstead Road, NW1 (nearest tube: Warren Street) at 6.30pm on October 7.

New court blow to union rights

UNION REPS who argue for a strike – however strong the justification – could now be breaking the law.

Last week's High Court judgement forcing striking council employees in East London back to work, simply because their union NALGO campaigned for a 'yes' vote before the ballot, may well prove a landmark in industrial relations history.

A Labour local authority's recourse to Tory anti-union laws has resulted in a further whittling away of workers' basic democratic right to withdraw their labour.

The ruling potentially opens the door for every employer in Britain to silence workplace militants in union positions.

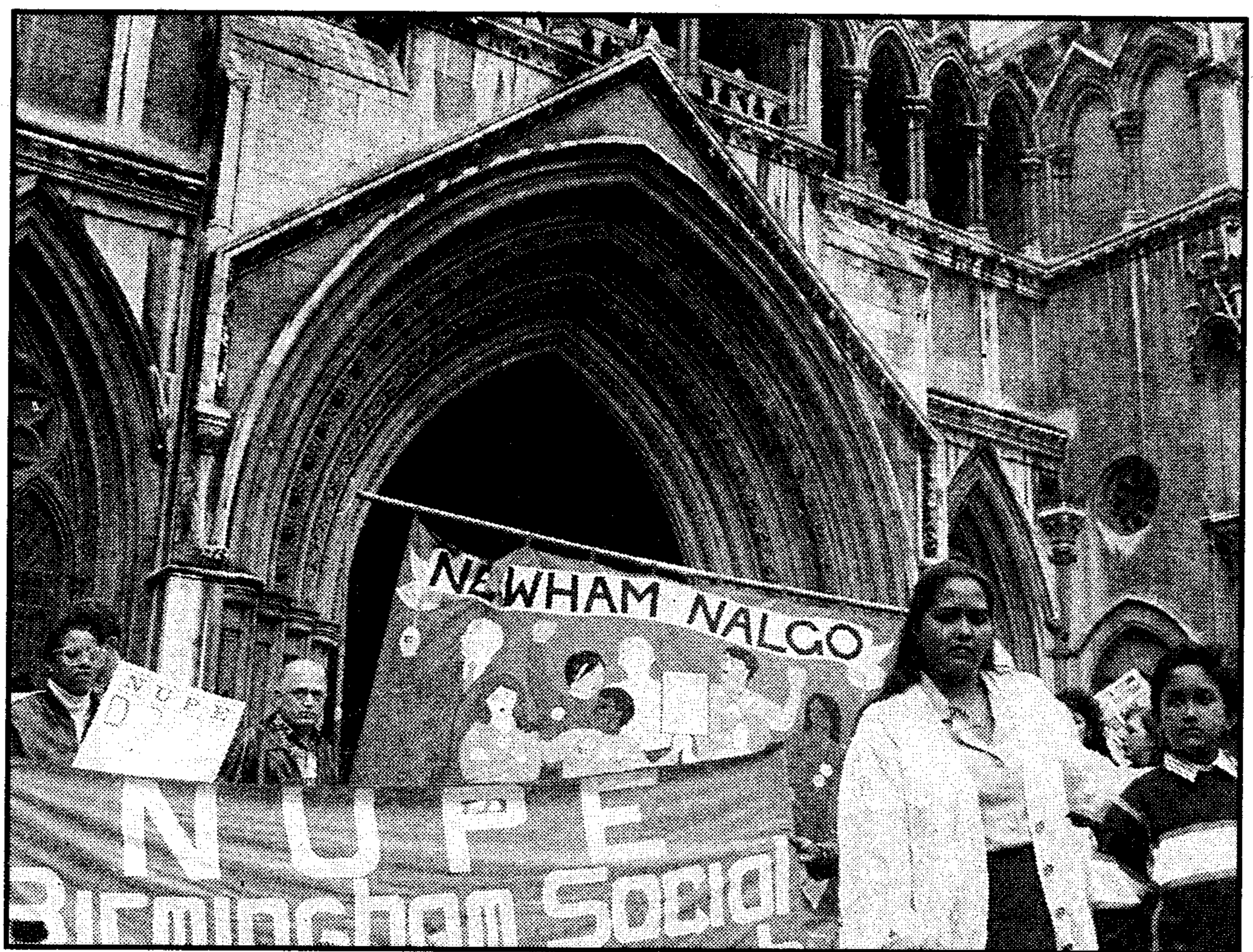
Local government workers in Newham went on strike on August 3 after a ballot of 2,500 NALGO members saw 63 per cent backing for all-out action against compulsory redundan-

cies in the poll tax collection department. On September 1, it took just one judge to overturn their decision.

Mrs Justice Ebsworth graciously conceded that a genuine trade dispute was in progress, and the strike itself was properly authorised. But she decided that it was 'clearly arguable' that NALGO had 'promoted' the strike before the ballot, and therefore breached the Employment Act 1990, which rules that there must be no call for action or authorisation of action before a ballot.

The 'balance of convenience' in deciding whether or not to grant an injunction to stop the strike therefore lay with the bosses, as the dispute was having a 'grave' effect on the performance of its statutory duties.

NALGO general secretary Alan Jinkinson immediately instructed members to go back to work and not even picket the



Newham NALGO banner outside High court to support Prakash Chavrimootoo and her son Prem who are threatened with deportation

council, in the belief that the ruling 'cannot possibly be what parliament intended in drafting section 7(3)A of the 1990 Employment Act'.

Yet the day after the court ruling, NALGO allowed the call for total repeal of such legislation – a policy carried at

last annual conference – to be composited off the agenda for this week's TUC conference in Blackpool in order to keep the peace at the august gathering. The probability is the Tories knew damn well what they were doing.

NALGO are appealing

against the decision. If it is allowed to stand, the consequences are obvious. What will it take to make the TUC take the fight against anti-union laws seriously?

Messages of support and requests for speakers; Newham NALGO, 081 519 0799.

Willis pushed aside New realists look to dump TUC

IT IS AN OPEN secret that TUC general secretary Norman Willis is living on borrowed time.

Top union bosses have told him to commit suicide or be forced into a humiliating plank-walking exercise. He will be replaced by his deputy, John Monks.

This does not, of course, mean that the message of the need to fight Tory attacks has finally got through. Rather, Willis is too much 'out of tune' to the needs of a 'modern' TUC.

Or in simple terms, he doesn't understand that, according to the new realists, the TUC is finished in its present form.

Workers in Britain are under sustained attack on all fronts. The Newham NALGO court decision is yet another major blow at the right to strike.

Unemployment is going through the roof, the welfare state is being destroyed, and employment rights are being crushed by the management techniques. Against all this, the TUC has done nothing.

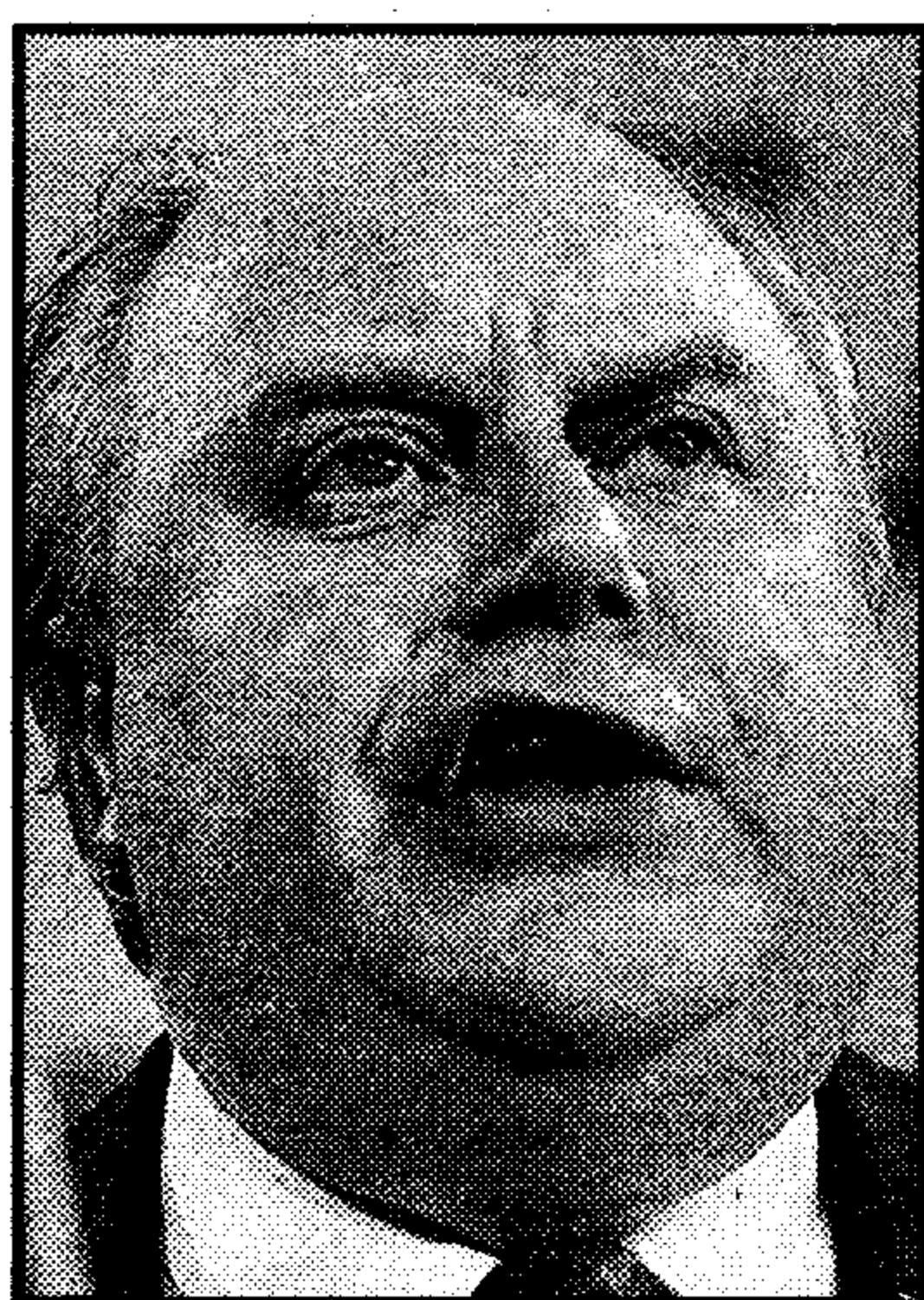
At the same time, the union race for mergers, especially the formation of UNISON and the likely TGWU-GMB merger, means the union movement is going to be carved up by three or four super-unions.

Their bureaucratic leaders want to squeeze the remaining smaller unions, to minimise any kind of political debate, and to maximise their elbow room in doing deals with the employers at the expense of their rivals.

This has already reduced the TUC to near impotence in its objective of preventing single-union deals and poaching of members.

The trend in the new world of trade unionism is clear. New realism is turning into simple business unionism, involving giant organisations progressively crushing internal democracy.

Labour is putting the union link into question. In the face of all this, who needs the TUC? To the union tops it



Graeme Cookson

Gives me the Willis

looks like an historical anachronism, a vestige of general strike days when wild leftists had delusions about a 'general staff' of the working class.

The TUC will survive, but with a much cut-down role, mainly of training, education, and as last resort for inter-union disputes.

Every change so far implemented – as the falling membership of affiliated unions has created a cash crisis – has in fact weakened the TUC's claim to play any useful role in the labour movement.

Even as the TUC staff were drastically cut back over the summer, Willis hired Kinnockite hack Charles Clarke on a short term contract for 'Parliamentary Liaison' – while Parliament was in recess!

From a socialist point of view the TUC has always been hand-in-glove with capitalism – its betrayals from the general strike to the miners – have been many and legendary.

It is hard to imagine a socialist campaign to defend the TUC – but the left has nothing to gain by assisting the right wing bureaucrats to ditch it.

Islington NALGO escalates action

By Doug Thorpe,
Vice-Chair,
Islington NALGO

This year has seen a summer of discontent for Labour councils; NALGO strikes against cuts and redundancies in Birmingham and Newham have been followed by action in Islington, Sheffield, Greenwich, Hackney, Camden and even Hampshire.

In Islington, 500 NALGO members came out on indefinite strike on 4 September against redundancies, bringing the total to 700. Ten of the council's neighbourhood offices were immediately closed; these provide 'frontline' services like housing, social services and rent collection.

The offices remaining open have been unable to provide more than a token service. The strike ballot was won by more than 2-1, on a return of 90 per cent, in the face of threats and legal action from the council.

After the events in Newham (see article on this page), and with nearly 3000 NALGO members on strike nationwide, it is vital that NALGO take steps to link up the strikes and call a national day of action.

In London where much of the action is taking place, activists from several branches are working together to build a day of action and demonstration in October.

For further details contact: Doug Thorpe, c/o Islington NALGO, 2 Orelston Rd., London N7 8LH.

GMB-T&G: lash-up of the titans?

TGWU and GMB, Britain's biggest general unions, are due to commence merger discussions which could bring about the biggest super-union yet, with a combined membership of over two million.

While a formal announcement is unlikely until the conclusion of this week's TUC conference, sources in both unions confirmed that talks – first predicted in *Socialist Outlook* last March – are now in the offing.

Areas of widespread common membership, including local government, plastics, clothing and textiles, chemicals, glass and food, would give fusion a strong industrial logic.

Yet a successful conclusion to the discussions is by no means certain; the two unions have traditionally been

at loggerheads in many of these sectors. In addition, TGWU and GMB are – in Congress House terms at least – on left and right wings of the labour movement respectively.

Nevertheless, relations have strengthened considerably since Bill Morris replaced Ron Todd at the helm of the TGWU in 1991. Morris is said to have struck a personal rapport with GMB chief John Edmonds. Earlier this year, TGWU and GMB put out their first joint statement for many years, on the need to improve training programmes.

The consolidation of British trade unions began in earnest with the merger of ASTMS and Tass into MSF in 1988, and continued with the formation of AEEU out of the AEU en-

gineers and EETPU electricians this April.

NALGO, NUPE and COHSE are set to form UNISON by July 1993. A need not to be outflanked probably looms large in Morris and Edmonds' considerations.

Another factor is TGWU's cashflow. The union spent £11m more than its income last year, and has since engaged professional consultants to manage necessary cut-backs.

Any eventual TGWU/GMB lash-up could create a pole of attraction for other unions. While TGWU talks on merger with the NUM are currently on ice after failure to agree what job miners' union president Arthur Scargill should be given, there is continu-

ing speculation that MSF is looking for a further partner.

For rank and file activists in TGWU and GMB, the key question in the merger will be that of union democracy. While neither union could be viewed as democratic, TGWU structures are marginally more open to shop steward influence, and Marxists occasionally even make it onto the elected lay-member national executive.

Formal positions for unilateral disarmament and the repeal of anti-union laws have been maintained.

In the GMB – very close to new Labour leader John Smith, who it sponsors – fulltime officials have even stronger control.



John Harris

Nothing to lose but your chains – bosses' lock-out 90's style

Why unemployment will be 5 million within a year

A socialist guide to the sterling crisis

The pound, as everyone who hasn't been asleep or on a foreign beach for the last month knows, is in deep trouble. Endless discussion of exchange rates strikes most people, even socialists, as deeply boring. Who cares?

But this time the pound crisis is going to have a big effect on the standard of living of the vast majority of British workers.

The root of the problem is the international recession which has lasted since 1989. The United States has low interest rates to try to get people to borrow money and get business going, so the US can get out of the recession; but Germany has high interest rates because it needs an influx of capital to pay for reunification.

The net result is that the flow of international capital is heavily towards Germany where the short-term return is best. In effect, international financial institutions are buying Deutschmarks. The result is the Deutschmark becomes strong and the dollar, and other currencies, become comparatively weak. So what?

The sting in the tail is that Britain is stuck in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). This means that the pound must be maintained at a certain minimum value, at the moment 2.77 Deutschmarks to the pound. To do that, the international financial markets have to be willing to buy pounds; today they would rather buy marks, at least at the present exchange rate.

In the end there are only two ways out of this situation for Chancellor Lamont; either the pound is devalued by realigning the ERM, or money is attracted back towards pounds by raising interest rates.

Devaluing the pound will make all imported goods and foreign travel more expensive. The price for doing this would be to add inflation to Britain's already near-slump economy.

Raising interest rates would give another twist to slump. High interest

rates are recognised by millions of people as meaning that their mortgages go up. But it means much more; money is expensive to borrow, and loans are much more expensive to pay back. Businesses, especially small businesses, go bust. Big firms don't borrow to invest. The economic recession gets worse.

Consumers respond to high interest rates by not buying on credit, with the inevitable result that high street trading slumps again.

Now the government has organised £7 billion in loans from foreign currencies to attempt to avoid raising interest rates. The irony is that in the end *both* may happen; devaluation of the pound, followed eventually by a rise in interest rates.

This is the classic deflationary spiral that the British economy is in. But 'belt tightening' is the least of it for working people: *this crisis will inevitably and inexorably hit the poorest in society.*

Real unemployment is running around 4 million (the official figure is 2.9 million). Now the poorest are going to be hit by massive slashing of government spending.

In a recession government incomes from taxes goes down. Last year the government spending deficit was probably £37 billion in real terms. That compares with the government actually

"Against such a background anyone would think that the Labour opposition would have a field day... But it got caught in the ERM trap."

being £10 or £12 billion in credit during the 1988/9 boom years.

Either the government prints money on a vast scale, to the tune of £40 or £50 billion a year causing massive inflation; or it cuts back.

Unemployment and social security benefits are certain to be a target, because if held at present rates they will bankrupt the government as unemploy-



John Harris

Nothing to offer but Keynes: new Labour leader John Smith

ment goes up. Already unemployment benefit has been cut to 6 months, ensuring that millions more are on income support, which is savagely mean-tested.

The other two big-spending ministries are Health and Defence. Defence is undergoing a rationalisation, but of course core spending is bitterly protected. The NHS is bound to suffer a further round of cuts. As with social security benefits, cuts are effected by just not increasing spending in line with inflation.

The job market is becoming quite desperate. Mass sackings of industrial workers are being compounded by the slashing of white collar jobs; government, local government, data processing, and 'professions' like journalism are all heavily affected.

This will now be redoubled by government plans massively to extend higher education, to take 18-21 year-olds out of the jobs market.

This of course prepares the way for an increasing number of unemployed graduates.

Against such a background anyone would think that the Labour opposition would have a field day. The problem is that Labour is caught in the deflationary political trap implied by the ERM and Maastricht treaty; indeed Labour was

demanding that Britain go into the ERM before the Tories actually did it!

If France votes against Maastricht on 20 September then European capitalist unity and with it the ERM is in danger of collapse.

But with or without the ERM British capitalism is stuck in a recessionary spiral which only the most radical social and political measures could break out of.

The sterling crisis means above all an attack on the working class. Indeed in the post election situation, far from Major having dragged the Tories towards the 'centre', the attack on the working class is just getting deeper.

The Labour and union leaders are paralysed by this onslaught; John Smith and his team have spent the whole summer in a stunned and complacent silence.

The whole working class is paying the price for the refusal during the 1980s to take effective measures to organise the unemployed, to fight back against unemployment by demands of banning overtime and job sharing with no loss of pay; and the refusal to anything substantial to defend the low-paid and the welfare state.

In this new situation it is not just employment and living standards which are under threat; it is the whole structure of the welfare state.

Bosnia: the facts behind the headlines

Why Milosevic is prolonging the agony

AFTER A YEAR of war in ex-Yugoslavia, the siege of Sarajevo and the onslaught against many Bosnian towns and villages shows no sign of ending.

In Bosnia alone two million people have been driven from their homes, and 700,000 Bosnian refugees have crossed into Croatia.

For the first time since world war two, there are concentration camps in Europe, and perhaps as many as 30,000 people have been killed.

Much of the press and TV reporting of the crisis has been vivid and highly accurate, especially that of the *Guardian's* Maggie O'Kane.

But many of the explanations in the West reek of racism; we are led to believe that irrational 'ethnic hatred', primitive survival of the Middle Ages, is all that can be expected from the 'backward' peoples south and east of Vienna.

And, regrettably, only slightly more sophisticated versions of this have been common on the left, where 'ethnic hatred' gets replaced by a uniform 'reactionary nationalism'. All such explanations ignore the real history of what has happened.

During the last years of Yugoslavia in the 1980s tensions developed between the various *republics*, not identical to ethnic groupings, over the allocation of economic resources.

Serbian nationalist offensive

But it was not inevitable that these should turn into massive ethnic clashes, let alone civil war.

That was determined by the political developments inside Serbia. The Serbian wing of the Yugoslav League of Communists, led by Slobodan Milosevic, transformed itself into the 'Socialist' party, and decided on a very precise programme for keeping itself in power: the regeneration of Great Serb nationalism.

The turning point in this process was not the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, but the military-police offensive by Milosevic against the ethnic Albanian population of the Serbia province of Kosovo.

The start of the civil war in was not some unexplained outbreak of ethnic hostilities, but the declaration of independence by Croatia and Slovenia, and the consequent military attack by Serbia.

After deciding, mainly for geographical reasons, that it was impossible militarily to subdue Slovenia, the Yugoslav army, together with Serb irregulars, set about trying to conquer as much of Croatia as possible.

Once Croatian areas had been conquered, the process of 'ethnic cleansing' began. It reached its apex after the six-month siege of the Croatian town of Vukovar, when hundreds of Croats were slaughtered once the town had been overrun.

The attack on Bosnia was a logical consequence of the Greater Serbia project. This was a particular tragedy in a republic in which Serbs, Croats and Muslims had lived together in peace for decades.

In the face of these developments, there is only one sensible reaction for socialists - a defencist attitude towards Croatia and Bosnia.

The socialist programme is for federation; we have no fetish of national borders. But federation cannot be imposed by force. Croatia and Bosnia have the right to self determination, and that means the right to independence and territorial integrity.

Ex-stalinist fuels nationalism

Republican elections in early 1991 brought ex-Communist bureaucrat Franjo Tudjman to power in Croatia. Tudjman is of course a reactionary nationalist; but not, as some simple souls on the British left have suggested, a 'fascist'.

Among the defenders of Croatia were certainly some semi-fascist *Ustache* elements, especially from the exile Croat population in the US, Canada and Australia, who flocked back to fight.

But they were a small minority among the fighters, who included ethnic Serbs.

Croatia's defensive campaign however involved many features which were indefensible, and indeed opposed by the small left wing in Croatia.

These included in many areas a 'tit-for-tat' attack on the Serbian minority in Croatia and an attempt to



Window in the crisis? Victim of Greater Serbia

drive Serbs out of Croatian-held areas. Milosevic's ethnic cleansing gave rise to its mirror-image in the attempt to create an ethnically-pure Croatia.

Undoubtedly in this process many atrocities were committed against ethnic Serbs, although of course nothing on the scale of the wholesale massacres carried out by the Yugoslav army and Serbian 'chetnik' fighters.

Croatia's attitude during the Serbian assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina has been determined by narrow nationalism. Thus, although a formal ally of Bosnia, Tudjman sanctioned the creation of 'Herceg-Bosna', the de facto linking up of Croat areas in Bosnia and their incorporation into Croatian territory.

Carve-up

As a result, Croatia made itself complicit in the carve-up of Bosnia, breaking the tenuous Croat-Bosnian alliance against the Serbian assault.

What has been the attitude of the West to all this? As usual in such conflicts there is a big gap between the rhetoric of the imperialist powers and their realpolitik actions.

Germany from the beginning has been a strong defender of Croat and Slovenian independence, believing that its economic interests lie in integrating these areas into its sphere of economic influence. These calculations of course have nothing to do with any principled positions on the right to national self-determination.

Under the pressure of public opinion, and exile communities, Bush and Major have adopted harsh positions against the atrocities of the Milosevic regime. But their refusal to do anything effective about the Serb assault stems from a practical calculation of their own interests.

Western interests

Not only are key strategic western interests absent, unlike the situation in oil-rich Kuwait, but the western powers probably feel that eventual stability depends on placating Serbia, the most powerful state in the region. Britain's role has been particularly cynical, through the agency of the indescribable Lady Chalker,

who has emerged at the forefront of those wanting to ensure that Bosnian refugees never make it into western Europe.

A consistent socialist position on the crisis must start from the understanding that the war was unleashed by the attempt to whip up Great Serb nationalism to keep the degenerate ex-Communist bureaucrats around Milosevic in power; and that Croatia and Bosnia have the right to national self-determination.

Self-defence

This logically entails the right of the Bosnians to defend themselves - against the Serb onslaught and Croat encroachment - and their right to have the arms to carry out that self-defence.

The UN relief operation into Sarajevo cannot be opposed; indeed it should be vigorously supported.

But the call for all-out military intervention by the West is another matter. Imperialist troops will not proceed according to the principles of self-determination, but according to the immediate needs of the West, which will involve supporting all the most reactionary forces in each region and installing them in power in the different republics.

In any case, in the real world, there are no western troops coming to the rescue to the besieged Bosnians. The London conference was a cosmetic operation which will change nothing on the ground.

The key to the situation is bringing down Milosevic's regime, and building the political forces, of the peace movement and the left, which can end the war.

In fact a powerful opposition exists in Serbia. Indeed it is probable that the reason for the prolongation of the war, in a situation in which the Serbs have already made 99 per cent of the territorial gains they can hold, is Milosevic's desire to maintain the siege and emergency atmosphere in Belgrade, to play the Great Serb nationalist card for as long as possible.

Milosevic's regime is indeed unpopular in Serbia, and in time it will go. Meanwhile the luckless people of Bosnia are being forced to pay the price for keeping his degenerate bureaucratic regime in power.

Portrait of a revolutionary

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

Penguin £6.99

Reviewed by Kathy Lowe

The best reason for reading the Autobiography of Malcolm X is offered in its pages by the author himself.

'Why am I as I am? To understand that of any person, his whole life, from birth must be reviewed. All our experiences fuse into our personality.'

Everything that ever happened to us is an ingredient.

With frankness and flashes of gentle, self-deprecating humour, Malcolm X tells his story to Alex Haley as a series of recollections and anecdotes intercut with his beliefs and political thought at different stages of his life.

He takes the reader through his 'nightmare' childhood... the racist murder of his father... his mother's mental collapse... the break up of the family, and on to his days as a Harlem hoarder which ended in a prison cell.

Behind bars, he tells us, 'I had never, up to then, been so truly free'.

With time on his hands and frustrated by his semi-literacy, he set about painstakingly copying out each page of the dictionary by hand.

He devoured books from the prison library, discovering the worlds of philosophy and literature. Above all he discovered history, in particular the horrors of the slave trade and the early struggles against colonialism.

Book after book showed me how the white man had brought upon the world's black, brown, red and yellow peoples every variety of the sufferings of exploitation.

He tells of his conversion in prison to the puritanical black separatist sect, The Nation Of Islam, and, on his release, of his ardent ministry in the service of its leader Elijah Muhammad.

'I was a zombie then', he was to say to a journalist just before his death... 'it cost me twelve years'.

Even before his transition from separatism to nationalism and his final break with the Black Muslims, his emergence as a national figure championing the poorest black people was already making Elijah Muhammad nervous.

He would publicly pour scorn, not only on the racist white society but on what he termed the 'fancy bourgeois negroes' who wanted to be part of it at any price.

In the last year of his life,

after the formation of his own group, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, and his visits to Africa, he was rapidly moving in a socialist direction.

His shadow writer, Alex Haley, who did not publish the book until after Malcolm X's assassination and who added his own lengthy foreword, has rightly been criticised for skating over this evolution.

Even so, the accounts of some of Malcolm X's last mass meetings, his speeches, and his public statements on a whole range of issues show something of the changes and intense questioning he was going through right up to the time of his death.

Most harrowing to read is Haley's description, in the foreword, of the weeks leading up to his brutal assassination in 1965.

Malcolm X had made clear to the press and to friends that he believed his life was in danger. In fact he expected to be killed at any time and was desperately trying to make financial provision for his wife and four daughters.

Harassment and death threats had become a daily occurrence. He was followed everywhere. His family narrowly escaped in a firebomb attack on their home.

His ideas and his stature as a black leader had made him too dangerous, not only to the Black Muslims, but to the state.

Haley describes how Malcolm X, just before his death, told him he no longer believed it was the Black Muslims who were out to murder him. Certainly, when he was gunned down that February afternoon in Harlem, the 20 police who had been supposedly assigned to his meeting to protect him were nowhere to be seen.

The Autobiography may be inadequate on its own as a tool for understanding the immense contribution of Malcolm X to the cause of black liberation and socialism. It does, however, provide an indispensable insight into his life and the deeply rooted racism of American society.

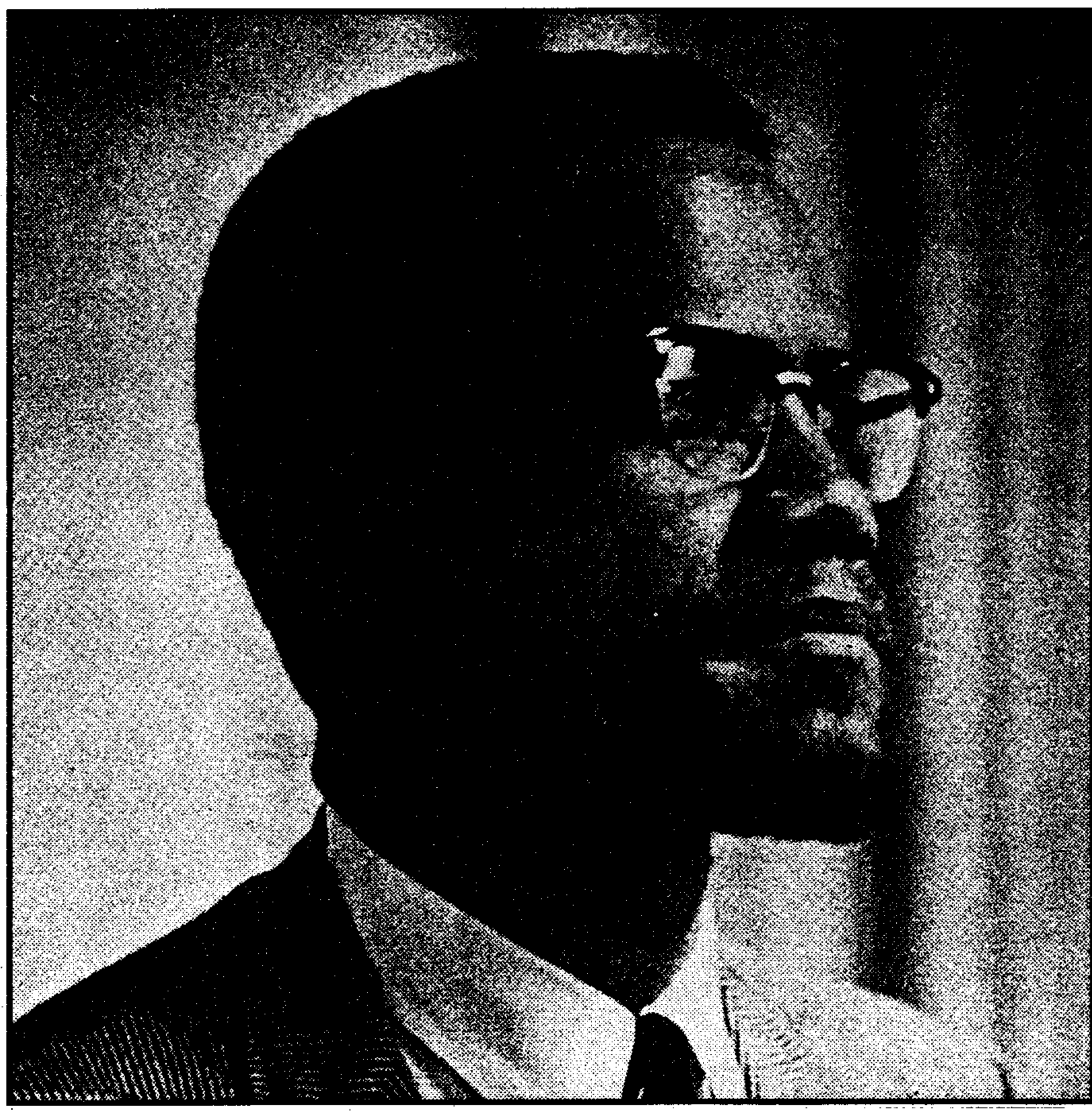
The revolutionary quality of Malcolm X

By Steve Bloom

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Evolving towards a revolutionary solution - Malcolm X



Reformist wing of the Black L

Why they killed Malcolm X

By Paul Clarke

SPIKE LEE's movie about Malcolm X has created a surge of interest in black America's most important post-war leader. Malcolm's assassination on 21 February 1965 was no surprise; in his last few months he lived in constant fear of assassination.

After a first murder attempt, which obviously relied on meticulous surveillance and planning, Malcolm suspected that state agencies were involved.

Despite the hostility of the Black Muslims to Malcolm after he left them, most likely the US state apparatus killed him. Because they were scared; scared of a charismatic leader evolving in an increasingly revolutionary, anti-capitalist direction.

The story of Malcolm's political evolution in his last fateful year is recounted by George Breitman in 'The Last Year of Malcolm X'. Breitman was a leader of the US Socialist Workers Party, then linked with the trotskyist Fourth International, at whose meetings Malcolm spoke several times. This account is based on Breitman's excellent book*.

By 1963 Malcolm X had been a member of the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) for 11 years. The Muslims, starting out as a small sect, grew rapidly as the civil rights struggle pushed forward the issue of racism.

The Muslims were black separatists, advocating breaking off contact with white society, and organising the black community on the basis of their own puritanical morality.

Because of his remarkable oratorical skills Malcolm became Muslim leader Elijah Mohammed's most famous lieutenant. Malcolm also

pushed the hardest radical message of black defiance and resistance, which created tensions with the Muslim hierarchy.

The split with Elijah Mohammed was provoked by the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963. Muslim leaders were instructed to keep silent on the issue, an injunction Malcolm broke in a famous statement about 'chickens coming home to roost'.

The implications of his statement were clear; the assassination of the leader of the white power structure was an issue which shouldn't concern black Americans.

Elijah Mohammed was outraged and ordered Malcolm not to speak for 90 days. Ninety days silence to atone for his bucking of Muslim discipline.

It was during this period that Malcolm decided that the message of the Muslims, that of black separatism, in reality meant passivity towards the struggle against racism and black oppression. Malcolm split from the Muslims and founded his own 'Muslim Mosque Inc.'

After the split and a visit to Mecca, where Malcolm became a follower of orthodox Islam, he said:

'No religion will ever make me forget the conditions of our people in this country. No religion will ever make me forget the continued fighting with dogs against our people in this country. No religion will ever make me forget the police clubs that come up 'side on our heads...'

Any time I have a religion that won't let me fight for my people, I say to hell with that religion. That's why I'm a Muslim.'

In fact Malcolm X did not come out of the Black Muslims with a worked out alternative; he was rethinking his positions on the run. What he did know

was that the Muslims were utterly passive in face of the anti-racist struggle. They faced a challenge to their popularity in the ghettos from the growing civil rights movement, and organisations like the Freedom Now Party.

During the first few months of Malcolm's 'independent' period, the 50 weeks between his split with the Muslims and his assassination, he moved gradually from the black separatism of the Muslims to black nationalism.

At first his nationalism was stated in continued religious terms, signified by the name of his new organisation, the Muslim Mosque Inc.

The black separatism of the Nation of Islam meant advocating a complete break with white society; black nationalism meant building unity among black people for a struggle with the white power structure. This in fact was the underlying difference which Malcolm wrestled with during the 90 days of silence imposed by Elijah Mohammed.

But there was a contradiction between the objective of black unity in the struggle for nationhood, and the expression of that struggle in a religious organisation - the Muslim Mosque. The recognition of that contradiction led to Malcolm's formation of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity in December 1964.

Throughout the last 50 weeks of his life Malcolm's thought was evolving. For example, in April 1964 his comments on a white pacifist minister killed by a bulldozer during an anti-racist demonstration were entirely negative. The white man's sacrifice, he said, was 'too late', given the centuries of white oppression.

But by December of that year, he had no hesitation praising



liberation Movement - Martin Luther King



Radicalised by the US imperialist war in Vietnam, black GIs demonstrate 1966

the two white students and one black man (Goodman, Schwerner and Chainey) killed by racist police during black voter registration in Mississippi (the murders are dramatised in the film *Mississippi Burning*).

He dropped his opposition to 'mixed marriages' - the Nation of Islam, of course, would never have approved inter-marriage between black and white.

During his last year Malcolm made two trips to Africa, which helped crystallise his views on major questions of strategy for black liberation.

Politics in Africa at that time was awash with left-inclined nationalist forces. Malcolm met many famous nationalist leaders, like Sekou Toure and Kwame Nkrumah. These people had a positive attitude to socialism, as they understood it, and admired the Soviet Union.

In particular he was influenced by meeting a leader of the Algerian FLN, the organisation which had just evicted French imperialism, who pressed on Malcolm the idea that white people could fight the racist system and be revolutionaries too.

The African trips helped cause a change in Malcolm's position on the three key issues; alliances with whites, separatism and the struggle against capitalism.

Much of the debate with moderate black leaders in the US went along the lines of 'integration' versus separatism. While breaking with separatism, Malcolm always fought the idea of 'integration'.

Integration, he said, was when the system gave a few token blacks jobs or school places; a sop to liberal consciences.

In fact his idea of black unity in struggle, against both tokenistic 'integration' or separatism, was the forerunner of the idea of Black Power, taken up by leaders like Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panthers.

On strategy Malcolm gradually evolved the idea that blacks could fight alongside whites. But they could not wait for white workers or progressives before building their own unity, developing self-defence

and launching their own struggle.

On this Malcolm had evolved the basic ideas of black self-organisation as a strategy for black liberation. He was a not a theoretician, but an activist, and above all an orator, a tribune for the grievances and determination of black America. But the basic ideas of self-organisation as a liberation strategy was fully developed in his speeches.

In the last few months of his life Malcolm developed an explicit anti-capitalism, and a growing understanding of socialism.

Questioned about whether capitalism could abolish racism, he replied 'Can a chicken produce a duck egg? It can't. It's just impossible.'

His statements on socialism were very guarded; he was feeling his way. He made favourable comments on socialism, saying it was 'no accident' that socialism was so popular among black revolutionaries in Africa. If you love black nationalism, he said, then you'll love revolution.

He spoke several times at meetings organised by the US

Socialist Workers Party (nothing to do with the British SWP). He granted interviews to their paper the *Militant*; and ordered copies of their International Socialist Review for some of his key supporters. Among his detractors there were dark rumours about his 'flirtation' with Trotskyism.

Malcolm's organisation of Afro-American Unity was never more than a few hundred strong. During his last months he was wrestling with the idea of what kind of organisation to build.

His main idea was that the OAAU would be a vehicle for unity among the different black organisations, not a rival to the established civil rights groups. But he never really had time to think the problem through.

By the end of his life, Malcolm had completed two stages of his political development; the first from separatism to black nationalism, and then towards being a revolutionary anti-capitalist, identifying especially with anti-imperialist struggles in the third world.

But he was not a socialist or a

Marxist; and speculation about whether he would have become one or the other is pointless.

While his OAAU never amounted to much, he had given a political profile and definition to black nationalism, embodied in an implicit strategy of black self-organisation and black liberation.

He thus was the key figure in freeing the black movement in America from the purely civil rights and 'integrationist' strategy of moderate leaders like Martin Luther King. He opened the door for Black Power to become a major force.

These political gains became for years the mainstream of black US politics; the idea that blacks should defend themselves and not be pacifists, that they had to organise themselves for struggle without waiting for white liberals, that blacks were fighting a whole power structure and system, not just individual backwardness and prejudice among whites.

In future issues we will look at the development of the black movement after Malcolm's

death. In the reactionary political atmosphere of the 1980s black politics has moved to the right, with middle class blacks being admitted to former white preserves (none more symbolic than General Colin Powell supervising the slaughter in Iraq), and black mayors in major cities channelling black aspirations within the system.

But Malcolm's ideas stood against all that, and are a permanent reservoir and example of another route - that of black liberation, with its inherently anti-capitalist dynamic.

A brilliant organiser and orator armed with a Black Power strategy, openly revolutionary and anti-capitalist - this was a challenge which US capitalism answered in its all-too-familiar fashion.

* George Breitman's book is published by Pathfinder Press. As the US SWP moved increasingly towards Castroism in the early 1980s, George Breitman remained faithful to Trotskyism and was one of many of the older cadres expelled, becoming a leader of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

Never mind the socialism? SWP distorts Malcolm X

Malcolm X,
Black
Nationalism
and Socialism

By Kevin Ovenden,
Bookmarks, £2.95

Reviewed by Ben Wolfe

The new booklet on Malcolm X produced by the British Socialist Workers Party shows that organisation at its absolute rock-bottom worst.

One can argue about the tactical wisdom of re-launching the Anti-Nazi League, what is beyond argument is that the SWP is clueless on the strategic question of black liberation and the self-organisation of the oppressed.

That is not a minor question for Marxists: it goes to the heart of revolutionary strategy.

Kevin Ovenden's book succinctly re-tells the story of Malcolm X, with one significant omission. No mention is made of the fact that Malcolm X spent several times for the then American Fourth International organisation (also called SWP). Or that at the end of his life he was in an effective dialogue with this Trotskyist organisation.

Now, given that this book is for a mainly socialist audience, wouldn't that be of interest to readers? To young people getting interested in socialist politics?

Presumably the author doesn't want to text encumbered with mention of other socialist organisations, which from the viewpoint of the SWP are the political equivalent of non-persons.

But perhaps it also reflects the

light in which they want to portray Malcolm's political development.

The basic argument on black nationalism presented by Ovenden is as follows. The way to fight racism is to build 'black and white unity against racism'. This means understanding that not all white workers are racist, and that workers struggle creates the basis for combating racism.

For example during the 1930s workers' struggle in the USA racism was effectively fought, and black nationalism was pushed to the margins.

Thus black nationalism is a 'divisive strategy', which has 'failed'.

The chapter on these questions is emphatically called 'Socialism or black nationalism?'. Simultaneously, because otherwise of course black nationalism is not a socialist strategy, workers unity against racism

cannot be counterposed to black unity and self-organisation.

Belabouring the ideological weakness of nationalism does not solve the question of black organisation and struggle.

Nationalists like Malcolm understood that black people couldn't wait on the white working class, they had to organise to fight for their own liberation.

That was quite correct. Pushing forward the black liberation struggle created much better conditions for raising the fight against racism including in the working class.

Marxists strive to create unity between the working class and all sections of the oppressed against capitalism. But that unity is unachievable on the simple basis of lecturing the oppressed about the need for socialism.

Revolutionary art of the static image

John Heartfield
with the Cutting
Edge

The Barbican Art
Gallery until October
18th
Entrance £4.50
Reduced admission
Monday-Friday from
5pm £2.50

John Heartfield's work
has shocked and
fascinated over the
years. This exhibition of
his work provides an
opportunity to
re-examine the man and
his art. CAROLINE
CARNEY takes a look at
the life that produced
such powerful images.

JOHN HEARTFIELD was
born Helmut Herzfeld in
Berlin in 1891.

It is said by friends of the
artist that he invented the
Anglo-persona John
Heartfield during the first
world war as a protest
against 'anglo-phobia' which
was expressed in greetings
such as 'God punish England'
which replaced 'good day' in
everyday usage.

In 1913 he enrolled in the
school of arts and crafts in
Charlottenburg. His original
ambition was to become a
painter but that changed in
1915 when his brother
Wieland Herzfeld(e) intro-
duced him to George Grosz



(born Georg Groß).

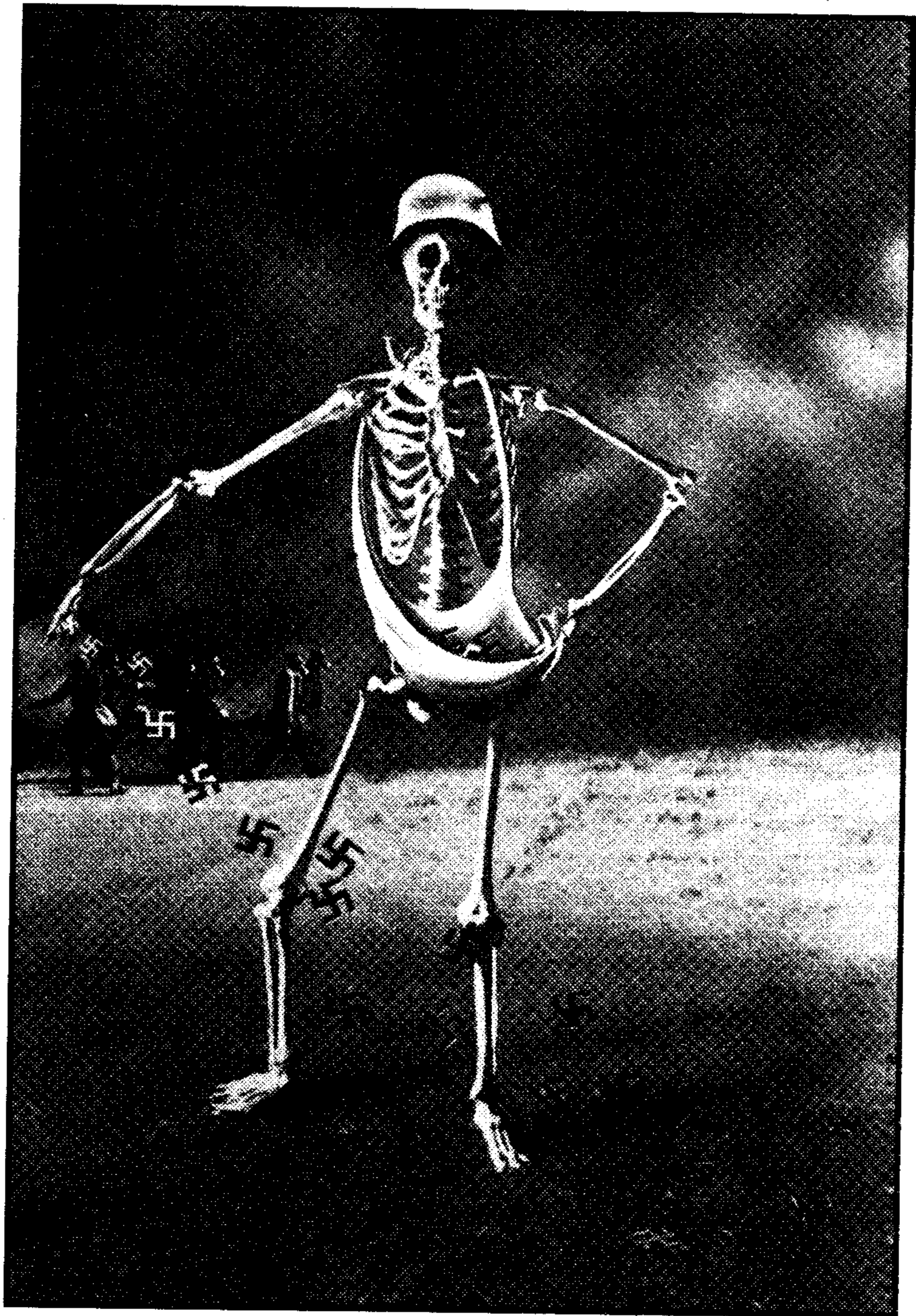
Both of the brothers were
entranced by the cynicism of
Grosz's art and attitudes, and
stunned by Grosz's artistic
achievements which were a
marked contrast to their own
expressionism.

Heartfield, Herzfelde and
Grosz became enthusiastic
Dadaists. The Berlin wing
was started in 1918 with the
opening of Club Dada which
had its high point in the Dada

fair of 1920.

The Berlin Dadaists were
anti-German politics and cul-
ture which they felt had been
manipulated and propagand-
ised to the extent that it had
contributed to the onslaught
of the first world war.

Inspired by the Russian
revolution of 1917, Heartfield
and friends joined the Com-
munist Party and a slogan
poster for the 1920 Dada fair
read 'Dada stands on the side



Art of the matter - On the Founding of the State Church (left) and The
Seed of Death by John Heartfield

of the revolutionary
proletariat'.

In 1930 Heartfield summed
up the approach he evolved in
the 1920s. He said, 'New politi-
cal problems demand new
means of propaganda. For this
task photography possesses
the greatest powers of per-
suasion.'

From 1930 to 1938
Heartfield worked on a
regular basis for *Arbeiter Il-
lustrierte Zeitung* (Workers Il-
lustrated Times). AIZ which
was founded by Willi Munzen-
burg in the 1920s.

Its name was changed to
Volks Illustrierte in 1936
(Peoples Illustrated). The
change of name was a reflec-
tion of the popular front
strategy against fascism
adopted by Moscow in 1935.

When Hitler took power in
1933, Heartfield and the AIZ
fled to Prague.

Heartfield escaped Prague
in 1938 and fled to London
where he lived until after the
war.

Even with his anti-Nazi
credentials he was briefly inter-
ned in 1940, but complaints in
the House of Commons meant
he was released on health
grounds.

Heartfield settled in the
GDR in Berlin in 1950 and
worked with Brecht and the
Berliner ensemble. He died in
East Berlin in 1968.

Part of the exhibition at the
Barbican is an exact recreation
of a room at the film and
photo exhibition that took
place in Stuttgart in 1929
which gives you a real feel for
the way Heartfield worked
and the way in which he
wished that work displayed.

Also part of the exhibition is
a video documentary by Goril-

la Tapes entitled 'Zygosis —
John Heartfield and the politi-
cal image'.

I think Heartfield's state-
ment on photography and
new means of propaganda is
still relevant today even in the
age of television because a
single static image is always
more powerful than one that
the viewer knows will soon
moving to another.

The continuous use of
Heartfield's work and of tech-
niques of photomontage by
other artists today to express
political dissent is surely proof
enough.

● The Cutting Edge
provides a complement to the
Heartfield exhibition and con-
tains work by Fanny Adams,
Spitting Image, Steve Bell,
Peter Brookes, Steve Dixon,
Jacky Flemming, Mona
Hatoum, Peter Kennard,
Karen Knorr, Ingrid Pollard,
Chris Riddell, Ralph Stead-
man, Trog, and Bill Woodrow.

Watch out for Trog's Bomb-
er Harris and Le Pen cartoons
and Ingrid Pollard's 'A trip to
Hastings'.

There is also a series of
short animation films which
start showing at 11am, 1pm,
3pm and 4.45 and include
'Send in the Clowns' by Steve
Bell, 'Revolution' by Bob
Godfrey, 'Daddy's little bit of
Dresden china' by Karen Wat-
son and 'Body Beautiful' by
Joanna Quinn.

At 4pm daily is 'The
Decision' by Vera Neubauer
which is 33 minutes long — so
you could spend almost a day
at these exhibitions and you
definitely get your money's
worth.

The exhibition will be showing
in Scotland and Ireland after Oc-
tober 18th.

Write in candidate for write-off elections? Black man for the White House

By Dave Osler

AMERICAN VOTERS are
being urged to ignore both
George Bush and Bill Clinton
in November's
presidential poll and send
controversial black
gangster rapper Ice-T to the
White House instead.

The latest issue of *Rock n Roll
Confidential* — an influential
radical US music newsletter —
carries a full page article en-
titled 10 Reasons To Write-In
Ice-T For President. Under the
American electoral system, it is
legal to amend ballot papers to
include additional candidates,
with all votes duly recorded.

Ice-T is currently at the
centre of a furore over his latest
album *Body Count*,
withdrawn by the record com-
pany after widespread
protests over a song titled *Cop
Killer*. But while the man is
possibly suspect on law and
order issues, *Rock n Roll Con-
fidential* is adamant he is the
perfect peace and justice candi-
date.

'Unlike Bill Clinton, he has
never personally overseen the
execution of any citizen, let

alone one with brain damage.
Unlike George Bush, Dan
Quayle, and Al Gore, he has
never instigated a purposeless
war where several hundred
thousand innocent people
died.'

Ice-T is the unity candidate.
He's a rapper and a rocker.
That means he's comfortable
speaking to both black and
white Americans — unlike
either of his opponents.

RRC argues an Ice-T
presidency would mean both
the most exciting inaugural
speech since Abraham Lin-
coln, and guaranteed social
change in America: 'The guy's
probably never so much as
voted himself, which means
none of the idiocy and corrup-
tion of our present govern-
ment is in any way his fault.'

There is, however, a serious
point behind this rather splen-
did joke. Most radical US pub-
lications are backing Bill
Clinton's Democrat ticket in
this autumn's presidential
election, against sitting
Republican George Bush's
right-wing 'God and family'
platform.

But RRC points out that Tip-

per Gore, wife of Clinton's
vice-presidential running
mate Al, is a central leader of
the Parents' Music Resource
Centre, the campaign that has
succeeded in getting ostensibly
obscene or blasphemous
records banned from most
mainstream outlets.

In an editorial slamming the
'lesser of two evils' position,
RRC argues: 'To vote for Clin-
ton and Gore is to agree that
America's health is declining
not because governors and
senators work to enrich the
wealthy and punish the poor,
but because rappers and rock-
ers say bad words on their
records.'

'If you want a morally healthy
America, tell Al and Tipper
and their friends ... to go fuck
themselves, and set to work
creating a system that features
real choices for a change.' Ab-
solutely spot on.

Interestingly, Ice-T himself
has not totally ruled out run-
ning. In the only known state-
ment of his political
philosophy, he succinctly
notes: 'We've got two options,
voting or hostile takeover. I'm
down with either one.'

The brutal face of US 'democracy'

The Un-Americans

BBC2, Wednesdays 9pm
Reviewed by Phil Hearse

HEAR THE word McCarthyism and you'll probably think of Hollywood stars being black-listed or Bertold Brecht playing cat-and-mouse with his inquisitors.

But, as the BBC *Timewatch* series shows, the 1950s witch hunt hit thousands of working people. Communists got up to 20 years in prison and a \$10,000 dollar fine (an enormous sum then), simply for their political beliefs, as anti-red hysteria swept the country.

In 1951 Steve Nelson, chair of the CP in Pittsburgh, got twenty years. Fourteen hundred lawyers refused to take his case, and he was forced to defend himself. During his trial, one of dozens of anti-Communist films was on show in Pittsburgh – and the main character was transparently supposed to be Nelson himself, a man who in the movie orders executions and sabotage.

Some Communists went underground; others had their children put in care. Many leftists of foreign origin were deported. The last imprisoned Communists were not released until 1962, and the threat of deportation hung over some until the 1980s.

These prosecutions took place

under the notorious Smith Act; this was the law used to imprison James P. Cannon and other leaders of the Trotskyist SWP during the second world war.

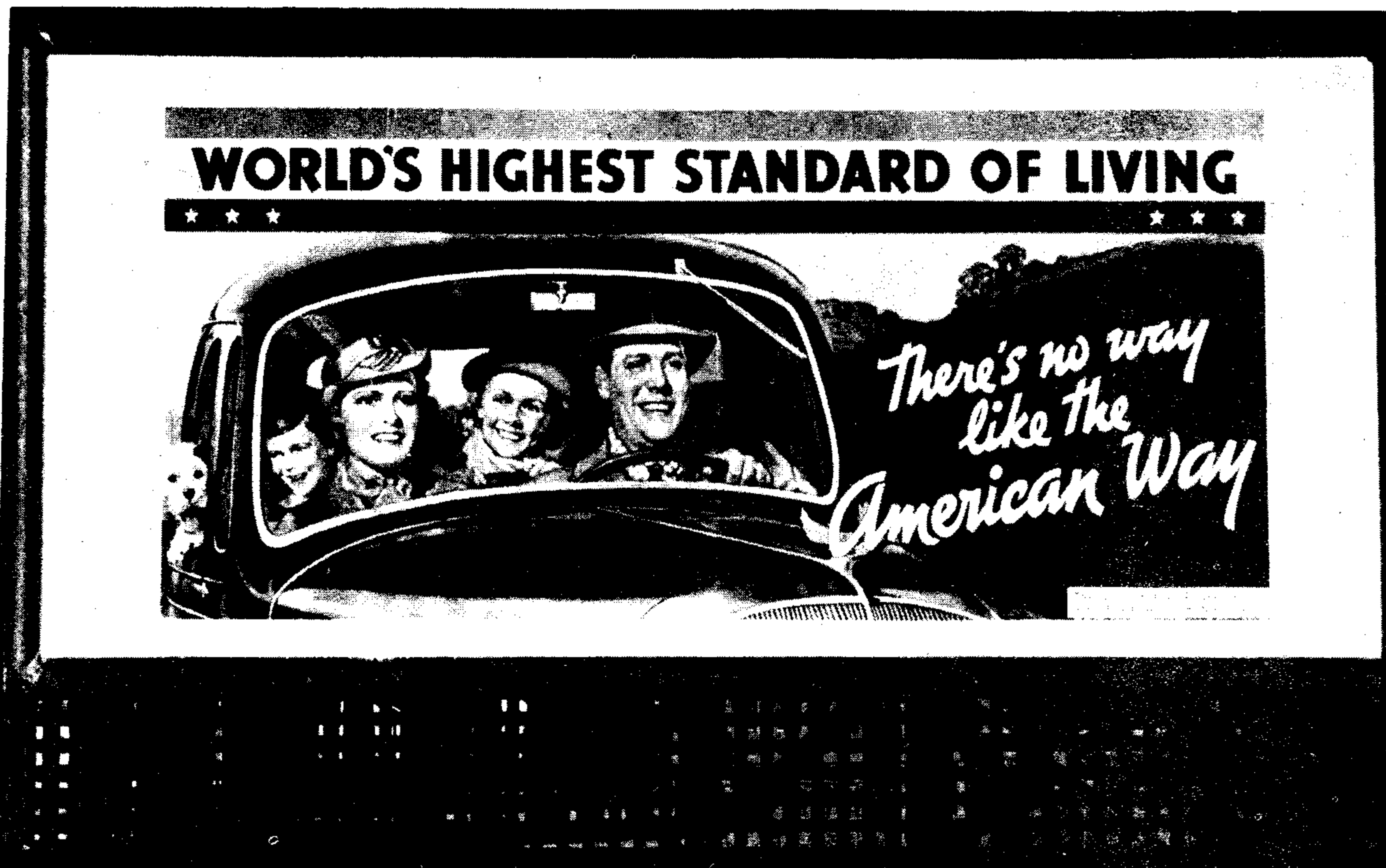
The *Un-Americans* vividly highlights the injustices done and the personal toll it took. It also shows, through the testimony of ex-Communists how the CPUSA was vulnerable to the charge that it was 'an agent of a foreign power' – with its un-wavering loyalty to Stalin.

But, at least in the first programme, the reasons for the witch-hunt are little explained.

The witch hunt was not just a product of the dawn of the cold war and the outbreak of war in Korea. It was first and foremost a result of the domestic class struggle, and it started with anti-union laws and a campaign against industrial militants.

After the second world war the US experienced the greatest labour upsurge in its history, far bigger than the famous battles of the 1930s. In 1945 six and a half million workers took part in strike action, in 1946 four and a half million. This compares with a maximum of two million during the great truckers', coal yard and other battles in the mid-1930s.

But as the post-war economy stabilised and the strikers were sold out, the strike wave rapidly declined; in effect it was over by the spring of 1947. The ruling class now moved in to try to crush the unions.



The fight against industrial militancy combined with the turn in the world situation; as the cold war started and Berlin was blockaded by the Soviet Union, anti-red hysteria developed.

Communist Parties worldwide temporarily abandoned the popular front and took a left adventurist turn, a mini-repetition of third period 'storm in the streets'.

US newspapers published long lists of the names and addresses of union activists, effectively driving many out of work. Gangs of right-wing workers roamed factories, looking for 'listed' workers to beat up. This of course hit the union fractions of the Trotskyist SWP, as well as the CPUSA.

Nonetheless, the Communist Party was by far the bigger organisa-

tion and the main target; in the early 1950s is still had 43,000 members. But its ability to defend itself was compromised by its politics, and its defensive approach sharply contrasted to that of the SWP.

The CP was deeply unpopular with much of the left and with many militants because of its 'patrioteering' anti-strike line during the second world war. And during the witch hunt, it judged that the US was on the verge of fascism, sending many of its second-rank cadres underground for long periods.

By contrast the Trotskyists determined to use every legal opportunity to defend themselves, to use even the smallest opportunities to build a united front, not to run in the face of the witch hunt and not to go underground.

Their most famous campaign was that in defence of the 'legless veteran' James Kutchner, fired from his government job with his pension revoked for the 'crime' of membership of the SWP.

This period of US history is full of lessons for socialists. It shows that generalised witch hunts start from periods of sharp decline in the class struggle, and that attacks on union rights prepare the basis for sustained attacks on all democratic rights – a point of obvious relevance today.

Capitalist democracy is quite compatible with selective and draconian repression of the left. And all the witch hunts in the workplace, and those perpetrated by the labour bureaucracy itself, prepare the basis for generalised hysteria against the 'enemy within'.

socialist
OUTLOOK



National Rally
75 years of the Russian revolution
In defence of
October

Ernest Mandel

(United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

Kingsway College
off Grays Inn Road,
London WC1

Friday October 23, 7.30pm

Welsh Assembly – will Labour pass the test?

By Dafydd Rhys

An elected assembly is once more on the political agenda in Wales. The idea has widespread support amongst working people and is the official policy of the Welsh Labour Party and Wales TUC.

Yet thirteen years ago it was overwhelmingly rejected in the devolution referendum. What lies behind this turn around?

These have been no ordinary thirteen years. Wales has never once voted Tory but has suffered four consecutive Conservative governments. The consequences of Tory rule have been particularly severe in Wales.

Body blows

The destruction of steel and coal dealt body blows to the economy and the much vaunted 'recovery' has been largely based on low-waged, low skilled jobs. Wales and Northern Ireland are now the poorest parts of the British state.

The decline of industry, has meant an increasing reliance on services particularly the public sector, to provide work. This makes the Welsh economy especially vulnerable to further cuts in

public expenditure.

As a consequence many Welsh workers feel increasingly dissatisfied with a British centralism which provides them with little benefit and over which they have no control. There is also a feeling that if the Scots can kick up a fuss, then so can we!

Developments in Scotland, be they positive or negative will have a big impact on the mood and confidence of those supporting an assembly in Wales.

Convention

The Wales TUC conference held in April passed an emergency motion on the assembly. It called on the Wales TUC to establish a Constitutional Convention, in collaboration with the Campaign for a Welsh Assembly. The general council is now divided over implementing this policy, with lack of money due to British TUC cuts being used as one excuse for inaction.

The Wales LP executive has since voted against participating in the Convention and has set up its own 'Policy Forum' on the issue. The Campaign for a Welsh Assembly is organising its own committee of the 'good and the great' to look and options for an assembly.

In this context the con-

ference on 'A New Agenda for the Valleys' called by Peter Hain MP is a welcome initiative.

The Neath Declaration, published to coincide with this event, poses some real questions about Labour and TUC policies in Wales to date: on foreign direct investment as the cure for economic ills; on Maastricht and its effects on Wales; on the assembly and its role.

Suffer in silence

One thing is clear: we can't suffer another five years of Tory rule in silence. We need an active and united campaign for a Welsh Assembly led by the Welsh labour movement.

This should demand an assembly elected by proportional representation, with small constituencies and quotas for women.

As for the powers such an assembly should possess – let the Welsh people themselves decide! Let them decide through their actions and through voting for the parties they support in elections to the assembly. Let the first meetings of that assembly, elected by the whole of the Welsh people, decide its own powers and its relationship to the British parliament.

Chinese regime retreats under workers' fire

By Zhang Kai*

MILLIONS of Chinese workers face the sack as a result of the government's privatisation programme.

Government propaganda has been calling for 'cracking the three irons' (iron armchairs, iron wages, iron bowls); but this slogan is rarely referred to because of the mass resentment it has caused.

Iron bowls refers to the 'iron rice bowl', the legendary job security of workers.

The target of iron armchairs is supposedly the secure positions and privileges of communist cadres in enterprises. What was proposed was the election of managers by workers. But instead of bringing about workers' self-management, the campaign was restricted only to shuffling lower and medium-ranking managers; higher managers have not been touched.

Attack

The cracking of iron bowls and iron wages is an attack on

workers' rights in general. Acute competition has been incited among workers - who are promoted or demoted according to their labour intensity, skills, performance and responsibility.

A few highly skilled workers get promotion and better wages; most workers get lower wages, and hundreds of thousands have been sacked.

In enterprises where the reforms have been conducted about 20 per cent of the workers have been dismissed.

Ruthless

In early 1992 a ruthless slogan was adopted of the 'iron first, iron heart and iron wrist' to push through reforms. An example of how the reforms work is Zhuzhou City, Hunan Province. Sixty enterprises here could not attain the set target of efficiency, and wages of workers were cut, some up to 20 per cent of their original values.

The China News Agency reported: 'this act caused serious consequences across the province'.



Deng applauds (above) as Capitalist roaders' queue for the recently opened Stock Exchange

In April the State Council granted the right to state enterprises to decide their own wage rates; a measure designed

to break up the standardisation of wages in the state sector.

In Shanghai, according to the journal Ming Pao about one million people are in the job without work, as a result of the reforms - which can only be a transitory period before unemployment.

This is in a city with five million workers, four million in the state sector.

According to the *China Daily*, quoting the Bureau on Economy and Trade, over 1.4 million workers have been dismissed this year. This is one per cent of the total urban workforce. There are estimated to be 10 million workers within state enterprises without work.

Contract system

Guangdong province is also trying to catch up with the reforms; last January they decided that a labour contract system should be fully introduced in the province within three years.

From the beginning the workers have opposed these attacks. *Chinese Woman* magazine quoted a woman worker in Shanghai as saying: 'The reform should bring workers a sense of security, otherwise it will not gain the support of the majority of workers.'

The magazine said most workers in state enterprises in Shanghai felt the same way. It said that some workers said they were forced to sign labour contracts 'flavoured with capitalism'. Some workers have responded with extreme actions.

Killed

In the first two months when the reforms were launched in Jinhua City, Zhejiang province, seven managers were beaten up by workers compulsorily transferred. A director of a biochemical factory in Hefei was killed when run over by a worker using a factory vehicle.

A factory worker in Yunan province ran amok in a car after being refused a wage increase, knocking down 34 people.

A worker in Houma fired a shot at a factory director after he was sacked. There were also reports of mass protests, beating up of managers and sabotaging equipment in Shenyang and

Shanxi.

In Jianjiang City, Liaoning province, Wang Fuqing, a worker at an oil refinery stabbed a factory manager to death, and was later sentenced to death, suspended for two years. The case caused local uproar, with more beatings of leading factory cadres and attacks on their houses.

But it was in Shanghai, the largest industrial city, that the reaction was strongest. There were strikes, sit-ins, protests and disruption of production. As a result, the slogan of cracking the three irons was dropped, and the reform process was slowed down.

In February the government announced that only 17.67 million workers had been involved in enterprises subject to the reform; this amounts to about 16 per cent of all workers in state enterprises.

Workers resistance has deterred the smooth implementation of the government's reform of wages and the labour system. Fiercer resistance will probably occur if moves are made to privatise the state enterprises.

Tradition

The Chinese working class has a tradition of struggle. Today the industrial working class is a staggering 145 million people; they are much better educated than 30 or even 20 years ago.

But long years of Stalinist repression have resulted in the weakening of their collective strength; and several attempts to organise independent unions, especially in 1980 and 1989, have been brutally crushed.

Industry has stagnated (although not agriculture) because of a combination of bureaucratic mismanagement and the reforms. Workers' enthusiasm has been shattered by the policy of attacking their interests and promoting those of the bureaucracy.

It is lack of organised resistance which has caused mainly individual acts of resistance and anger.

The only feasible alternative is workers self-organisation against the bureaucrats, corrupt officials, capitalists and mafia, to prevent the country's wealth falling into the hands of the privileged few.

*Zhang Kai is a member of *October Review*, Chinese supporters of the Fourth International.

Brazil faces 'campaign by coup makers'

By Joe Pass

Brazil is in the grip of political crisis, with the start of legal moves to kick President Fernando Collor de Mello out of office.

A corruption scandal - so far little more than an internal squabble within the ruling class - now threatens to explode into mass mobilisations against the regime.

The biggest demonstrations since the pro-democracy protests of 1984 have seen hundreds of thousands on the streets of all major cities, dressed in black to symbolise rejection of Collor's appeal to don national colours of yellow and green in support of him.

Some 70 per cent of all Brazilians now want Collor to go; as recently as July, 67 per cent thought he should stay.

Collor, an open admirer of Thatcher, came to power in 1990 in Brazil's first direct election in almost three decades, standing on a free market/clean government ticket.

Last May, his younger brother Pedro accused presidential campaign treasurer Paulo Cesar Farias - also Pedro's major business rival - of accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in kickbacks for government contracts.

Swimming pool

Collor is alleged to have received sweeteners including a swimming pool, money for alimony payments and \$1.8m towards 'home repairs'.

Both Farias and Collor flatly deny the allegations. Nevertheless, Brazil's congress spent three months investigating the two men's dealings. Impeachment moves are in the air.

Collor ominously refers to the scandal as 'a campaign by coup-makers'. A Brazilian political scientist summarises the affair as a simple dispute between those who have power and those who want it. If you line up the tanks, cannons and troops, you see that Collor wins.

The country has seen six military coups this century, and after recent events in Peru, an attempt to restore military dictatorship cannot be excluded. But for the first time, a powerful organised workers' movement is a factor in the political equation.

Fightback

The anti-Collor protests could trigger a working class fightback against the privatisations caused by well over two years of recession. Real wages have fallen by a third, with unemployment running at up to 30 per cent - some 1.3m people in Sao Paulo alone.

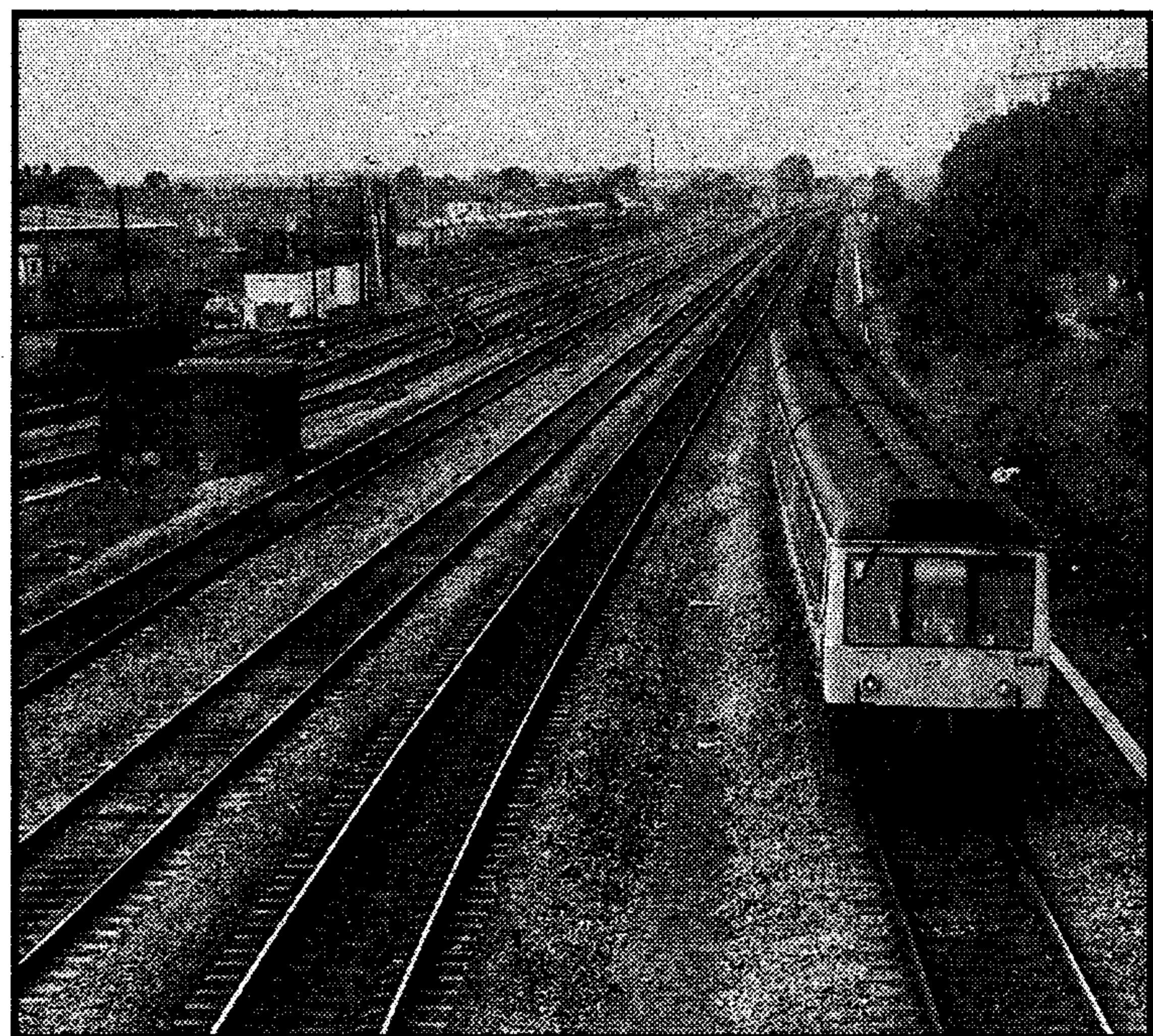
The government's only answer has been to implement International Monetary Fund austerity plans to ensure interest payments to western banks are met.

More than 40 per cent of next year's budget is devoted to debt servicing. Even economy minister Marcilio Marques Moreira remarks: 'It's incredible how things are not collapsing with the cuts we have made.'

While the leadership of PT, the mass workers party, has recently moved right, the revolutionary currents - including Fourth Internationalists - still command substantial minority support.



Collor negatives: Brazilians want President out



September 11 strike call

Manchester BR guards fight victimisations

By a railworker

BRITISH RAIL guards at Manchester Piccadilly staged an unofficial walk-out last month following the dismissal of four union representatives who sought to uphold existing working agreements.

The stoppage – in apparent defiance of Tory anti-union legislation – caused widespread disruption to rail services in the region, and further action is now in prospect.

The dispute has its origins in years of confrontation at the station, with RMT railworkers' union reps repeatedly forced to take on management high-handedness in a number of successful strikes in defence of

guards' interests.

On Thursday August 20, management broke a rostering agreement that had been reconfirmed only the day before. Bosses refused even to discuss the situation.

When guards remained in their mess room awaiting a union meeting, a manager arrived with dismissal notices in his pocket and handed them to the reps.

The immediate response bought almost all trains in the area to a standstill that evening and throughout the following day.

This action was reluctantly called off at an angry meeting on Friday 21, after promises of a ballot for official action which subsequently produced a two

to one yes vote. A initial one-day strike is planned for Friday, September 11.

Leaflets have been produced to inform all railworkers in Manchester what is going on, and visits arranged to other parts of the country to put over the guards' case.

The stakes in this dispute are massive for railworkers, one of the guards told *Socialist Outlook*. 'This is a determined attempt by management to break one of the best organised and best led departments in the area.'

'Success here will leave other sections of BR workers and their reps exposed to attack. If management do not back off quickly, RMT will hopefully expand the official action.'

Autumn offensive
£7,000
Development
Fund

We're back!

With our political batteries recharged after a successful Summer School and after the editorial team has spent the regulation ten minutes sitting in deck chairs, *Socialist Outlook* is back on the campaign trail, raring to go.

But as we resume fortnightly publication, we come up against the problem of technical and material resources.

We may be fresh and fit after our break – but our equipment is as old and knackered as before.

We need cash to replace our slow and increasingly unreliable computers, cash to improve our production quality and photo files, and cash to help us promote *Socialist Outlook* in the labour movement.

Norman Lamont may be able to float a £7.25 billion loan to bail out British capitalism, but as we fight to overthrow it, we have to fall back on the generosity of our supporters.

We need £7,000. So far we have raised enough to replace our deceased laser printer – but we need much more.

Please send a donation – as much as you can afford.

Meanwhile this year's Labour conference will bang home the fact that a fighting socialist left wing is more vital than ever. *Socialist Outlook* has a key role to play in this.

Why not help us spread the word by taking extra copies of *Socialist Outlook* to sell in your workplace, union branch, Labour Party or local campaign meeting?

Just fill in the form below, and we'll be in touch. Together we can build the resistance!

■ I enclose £..... donation to the Development Fund

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■ Please send me details of local activities

Name

Address.....

Telephone.....

Please send to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

RMT capitulate on negotiation machinery

By SR Driver

LAST MONTH the RMT leadership narrowly voted to accept a new Machinery of Negotiation for British Rail staff. Before the ink has dried it has become clear that the decision has seriously weakened the union.

Union reps have been told by BR that as old structures have been abolished so have all old local agreements. The dispute and Manchester Piccadilly is happening because management have been given the green light to move against anyone trying to protect those agreements.

The new machinery gives increased power to BR's new 'business sector' management structure. Rail workers who

previously organised together will find themselves split up and having to negotiate with what is now in effect dozens of separate companies.

In 1989 similar proposals were seen off after a token strike. BR knew that RMT members had been mobilised and were ready to fight. This time nothing has been done to explain the issues to ordinary rail workers.

Having managed to safeguard the role of national officials by retaining a semblance of continued national negotiation, the reality of local and regional negotiation has been abandoned.

Coming soon after the sellout of London Underground workers this new capitulation is a serious blow to the RMT. The union response to events in

Manchester underline the dangers – following legal advice it has been decided that no circular on the dispute will be issued to anyone outside Piccadilly.

RMT General Grades Committee (GGC) members are now saying the BR are going beyond what was agreed and that they would never have voted to accept the new machinery if they had realised this was what would happen.

If this is to be seen as anything more than a weak excuse after the event then the GGC must immediately repudiate the deal and start to mobilise the membership for a real fight. As a first step they could stand up to the legal threats and begin to organise some support for the sacked Manchester workers.

Labour and the unions

Fighting to keep the link

Steps are underway to establish a campaign in defence of the Labour Party-trade union link.

Immediately after Labour's election defeat, the right argued for the dropping of the union link and pacts with the Liberal Democrats.

This raised the question of the organisational independence of the Labour Party from the openly bosses' parties and its reflection of the organised working class and their ability to influence its policies.

While the issue of pacts has been put on the back burner (probably until the Labour Party comes up with a definitive position on electoral reform), there has been an ongoing debate about the link with the unions, with the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the right-wing unions (mainly AEEU) pushing most vigorously. Several mainstream unions (UCW,

NUPE, GMB) have opposed such moves.

The importance attached to the issue is shown by the 30-odd resolutions submitted to Party conference – more than most other subjects – with the overwhelming majority for retaining the link.

However, the NEC has set up a working party to review the issue and report-back next year. The majority of unions, including those which have submitted resolutions, are certain to support referral to the working party.

In time-honoured Labour Party fashion, this working party will send out a consultation questionnaire, the responses to which it will ignore and produce proposals which are a fudge. The same process on parliamentary selection has meant a procedure which undermines the principle of trade union input through its very unmanageability.

The task for the moment is to

build support throughout the labour movement for the principle of maintaining the link. At a later stage, detailed responses to any working party report will need to be discussed.

Meetings have been held with the aim of establishing a 'Keep the Link Campaign', and a wide range of Trade Union and Labour Party bodies and individuals are being circulated with and asked to endorse a general statement. A planning meeting is being held at Party conference at which it is hoped to establish a campaign.

Every effort should be made to raise the issue throughout the labour movement, getting endorsement for the statement and donations for the campaign. This should not be limited to the left but open to all those supporting retention of the link.

For copies of the statement, write to: 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB.

Brum protest over hospital closures

HEALTH workers and protesters marched through Birmingham on Saturday September 5 to protest at threats to close three local hospitals and axe 600 jobs.

The Save Our Services campaign is combating the effects of the long-term underfunding of Birmingham's health services, now compounded by the impact of the Tory government's new 'internal market'.

South Birmingham health authority merged last year with Central Birmingham, only to discover that the combined cash shortfall was a massive £16 million - mostly from Central Birmingham.

It then announced a draconian £7.5m savings plan which includes the closure of the Birmingham Accident, the Royal Orthopaedic and Woodlands hospitals, shedding 600 jobs over three years.

But even as protests gathered at these cuts, a further £2.6m shortfall has been revealed as South Birmingham is squeezed from both sides by the internal market system.

On the one side, neighbouring health authorities have pulled out of contracts worth £750,000 to buy orthopaedic treatment from South Birmingham's directly managed hospitals.

On the other, South Birmingham as a purchasing health authority has been prevented from withdrawing from contracts worth £700,000 with

Solihull Hospital and East Birmingham Hospital Trust.

To make matters even worse, the battered South Birmingham HA has been told that it must spend half its 'development' budget this year - some £1.2m - on repaying its old debts.

Health services in the city had already been thrown into turmoil by the controversial plans of the West Midlands Regional Health Authority to 'centralise' services through a wave of closures.

Now the Save Our Services campaign is calling for a public inquiry into government underfunding in Birmingham, and for the sacking of West Midlands regional health chief Sir James Ackers who has masterminded the closure plans.

Three local MPs (Richard Burden, Lynn Jones and Estelle Morris) have already lent their support to the campaign, which is pressing for support from the City Council and the local labour movement.

● The SOS campaign can be contacted c/o Joint Union Offices, Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6JD (Telephone 021-627-1627 ext 51503).

● JOHN LISTER of the NHS pressure group London Health Emergency will be speaking at a Birmingham meeting on the NHS crisis on September 15. The meeting will be at 7.30pm at the Queen's Arms, Essex St.



Now accident services are a casualty of the cuts

London NHS fightback

By Harry Sloan

2,000 health workers and campaigners joined a lively demonstration against NHS cuts and closures in London on August 21.

Called by all three merging health unions, COHSE, NALGO and NUPE under the UNISON banner, the day also saw lunch-time meetings and other indications of support from hospitals across the capital.

The march - which the unions regard as a springboard for further action at local level - went from the doomed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital to the Department of Health.

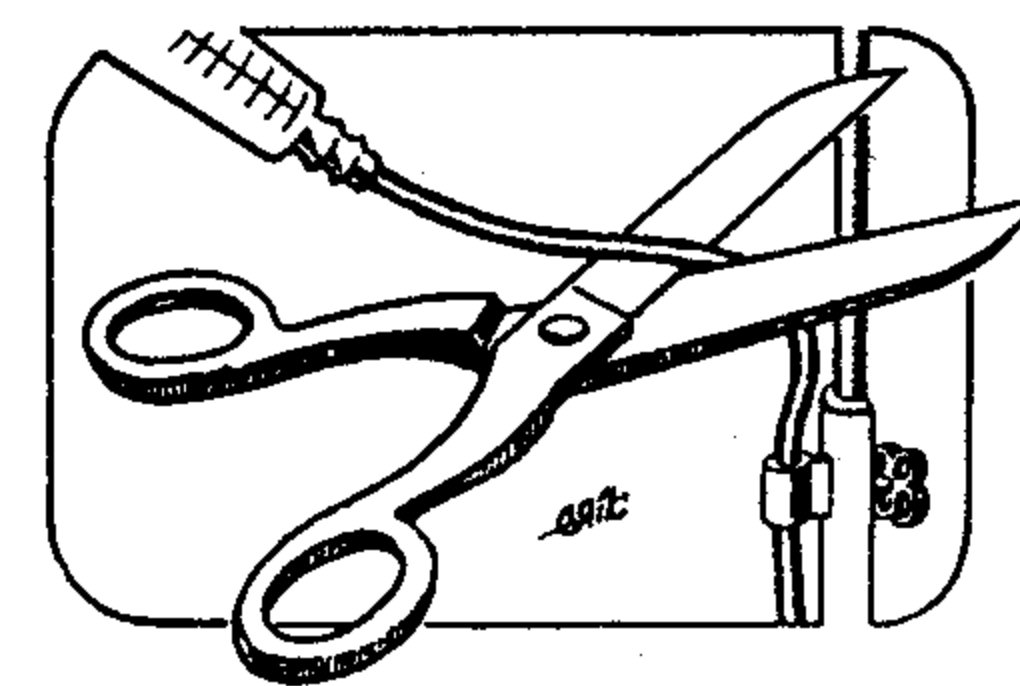
The protest has been triggered by the wave of cuts and closures which is sweeping away vital beds and jobs in health authorities and Trusts throughout the capital.

Already well over 1,000 jobs have been axed, and hundreds of beds have closed. At the beginning of August, technicians' union MSF staged an angry 3-day strike against threatened job losses in Riverside health authority.

But the march also sounded a warning that much bigger cuts are looming, as the Tory government's Tomlinson inquiry prepares to unveil its plans for restructuring hospital services in London in line with the requirements of the 'internal market'.

A detailed report researched for COHSE by London Health Emergency has warned that Tomlinson is likely to propose closures including three teaching hospitals - Charing Cross, St Thomas's and either the Middlesex or University College Hospital.

The Tories are being egged on by academics from the King's Fund, who suggest closing at least 15 hospitals. The media, too have parroted the Tory line that the capital (with 130,000 on



waiting lists) has 'too many' hospital beds.

Unfortunately the same arguments are also held by Labour's leadership, who under Robin Cook and now David Blunkett appear to have made wholesale closures into a bipartisan policy.

Meanwhile the desperate lack of resources for the capital's NHS has been further underlined by revelations of severe under-staffing of the London Ambulance Service, reducing even front-line accident and emergency work to little more than a skeleton service.

There is little time left for the Labour and trade union movement to force Blunkett and John Smith to ditch their wretched line of capitulation to Tory cuts and closures in London.

In the meantime it will be left up to the health unions and local campaigners to battle on alone in defence of London's health services.

Burnsall strike still solid

By Bob Smith

The GMB workers at the Burnsall electroplating plant in Smethwick near Birmingham are taking their strike into its third month.

GMB general secretary John Edmonds has arranged for them to address both the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

A demonstration and labour movement rally in their support, hopefully involving the black community - the majority of the workers are Punjabi women - will be organised in the near future.

However the GMB has refused to call for a mass picket to confront scabs and close down the plant, or a boycott of the firm's products which go to car manufacturers like Jaguar.

The strike started over extremely low pay, harsh shop floor discipline, compulsory overtime and dangerous working conditions. Even after 65 hours work, including compulsory overtime, wages were only £120 - with women earning £30 less.

The workers will be appearing before equal pay, wrongful dismissal and wrongful deductions tribunals soon.

Birmingham Trades Council is raising £2000 a week to support the strikers, and support



GMB chief John Edmonds

from other labour movement bodies and the black community is pouring in.

For support messages, donations and speaker requests contact: Joe Quigley, Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB, 2 Birmingham Rd., Halesowen B63 3HP. Telephone 021-550 4888

Strikers on speaking tour

STRIKERS FROM Burnsall are now addressing labour movement meetings across London, in a speaking tour organised by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, Solidarity Network and Trade Union News magazine.

The workers have been out demanding union recognition, equal pay for women, reduction of compulsory overtime, reinstatement of a victimised workmate, and action on safety.

A joint statement from the tour organisers insists: 'Success is possible.

Public support in the West Midlands is high, Burnsall's business operations are being damaged and even the health and safety executive has vindicated the strikers' concerns over safety.

'A victory for the Burnsall strikers would be a boost for all trade unionists and workers, but especially for black and immigrant workers.'

London union branches, Labour Party wards and community groups wanting to hear the strikers' case first hand should ring Mark 071 249 8086 (day) or 081 806 3109 (evenings).

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socialist OUTLOOK

Iraq faces more 'collateral damage'

With George Bush trailing Bill Clinton by up to 20 points in the opinion polls, a huge aerial bombardment of Iraq is being planned to boost presidential ratings. A prime objective of the assault, according to Bradford University analyst Paul Rodgers, will be to kill Saddam Hussein.

The US military build-up exceeds anything needed to police the 'exclusion zone' which covers a least of third of Iraq. Massive numbers of planes, including Stealth fighters and fighter-bombers, have been prepared. US bombers have been armed with air-launched cruise missiles. And a B-52 squadron in Louisiana has been put on alert to launch a long-range attack on Baghdad from the US.

A key part of the US arsenal is a new bomb designed for destroying hardened control bunkers. Twenty-five of the bombs are capable of blasting through 70 feet of earth and then 20 feet of reinforced concrete, are ready to try to wipe out the Iraqi leadership.

Bush is having difficulty creating the excuse for the attack. UN weapons inspectors have not been able or willing to create a significant 'incident' in their hide-and-seek attempt to track down Iraqi military hardware and technology.

Saddam Hussein has quickly got his planes out of the exclusion zone, and attacks on Shi'ites and the Arab popula-



tion of the southern marshlands have ceased, at least for the time being.

Key targets

But odds are that an attack will go ahead, excuse or not. Apart from Saddam Hussein, key targets will include government ministries in Baghdad, airfields, military bases, bridges and other 'strategic' installations.

Civilians and civilian areas will not be targeted as such; but planners apparently accept that more 'collateral damage' is 'inevitable.'

The crude cynicism of the Bush leadership in manufacturing a new 'crisis' is ob-

vious. Saddam Hussein's regime is, as the whole left argued throughout the Gulf war, a thoroughly despicable military dictatorship. Saddam's attacks on the Shi'ite population and the Kurds are obscene.

But the idea that George Bush is kept awake at night worrying about the fate of Saddam's victims is preposterous. Intervention or non-intervention is entirely a matter of the perceived interest of the United States. Military dictatorships are friends on enemies depending on temporary circumstances.

If George Bush were moved by the milk of human kind-

ness, US marines would have been relieving the siege of Sarajevo months ago.

Final calculations may ultimately mean that zapping Iraq again is just too damn obvious a ploy in the election game; but don't bet on it. The likelihood is still that some thousands of Iraqis are about to be slaughtered for the good of the Republican party.

Eighteen months after the Gulf war, the New World Order is getting into top gear. So far it has brought mass starvation in Africa, havoc in ex-Yugoslavia, the rise of fascism in Germany and more than a 100,000 deaths in the Gulf. Watch this space.