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# *socialist* OUTLOOK

**Demonstrate 13 July!**



## Support the struggle against the debt!

In a little over a week, the leaders of the seven richest capitalist nations assemble in London to review the world economy. Bush, Kohl, Mitterrand and the rest will gloat over their Gulf war 'triumph'. They will lay down demands to Gorbachev to speed up privatisation and marketisation in the USSR.

They will *not* do anything, however, to relieve the victims of what Brazilian Workers Party leader Lula has called the 'undeclared world war'. That war is the ferocious impoverishment of less-developed countries through pumping out money to pay off the debt to Western banks and governments.

Unlike the 1950s and '60s, the less developed countries are getting poorer - both absolutely and in comparison with the West. The human consequences are the millions who starve each year, the millions forced out of employment to become street pedlars or beggars, the street children in Brazil murdered by police and

gangsters because they are an embarrassment.

Every aspect of life in the poor countries is worsened by the debt. Health and the environment deteriorate, leading to new epidemics like the horrible cholera outbreak in Latin America. The burden on women increases, as they struggle to support families thrown into desperate poverty. Millions starve in Africa because the aid they get is a pittance compared with the tribute paid to the West.

On 13 July the Campaign against Debt will mobilise to say to the West's leaders that this war against the people of the poorer countries must stop. And this is just the beginning, part of an international campaign. Contingents from other European countries will be there. Show the capitalist leaders that, while they gorge themselves and pat one another on the back, the hundreds of millions they condemn to misery will not be forgotten.

# Women and the debt

Debt affects both women and men in 'Third World' countries – but the sharing of that burden is unequal. The poverty caused by debt reinforces the existing sexual division of labour. But the role of women in anti-imperialist struggles – and their struggles within 'Third World' societies – is often overlooked.

While it is true that the position of many women has improved since the days of direct colonial rule, the oppression of women is still deeply rooted in 'Third World' societies. And in many ways, the situation is worsening.

An understanding of the relation between the oppression of women and indebtedness, requires an analysis of the development of capitalism following struggles for independence.

In Africa, white settlers relied on cheap, Black male labour as mineworkers, farmworkers, and later in manufacturing industry. Women's labour was only required towards the end of colonial rule – as domestic

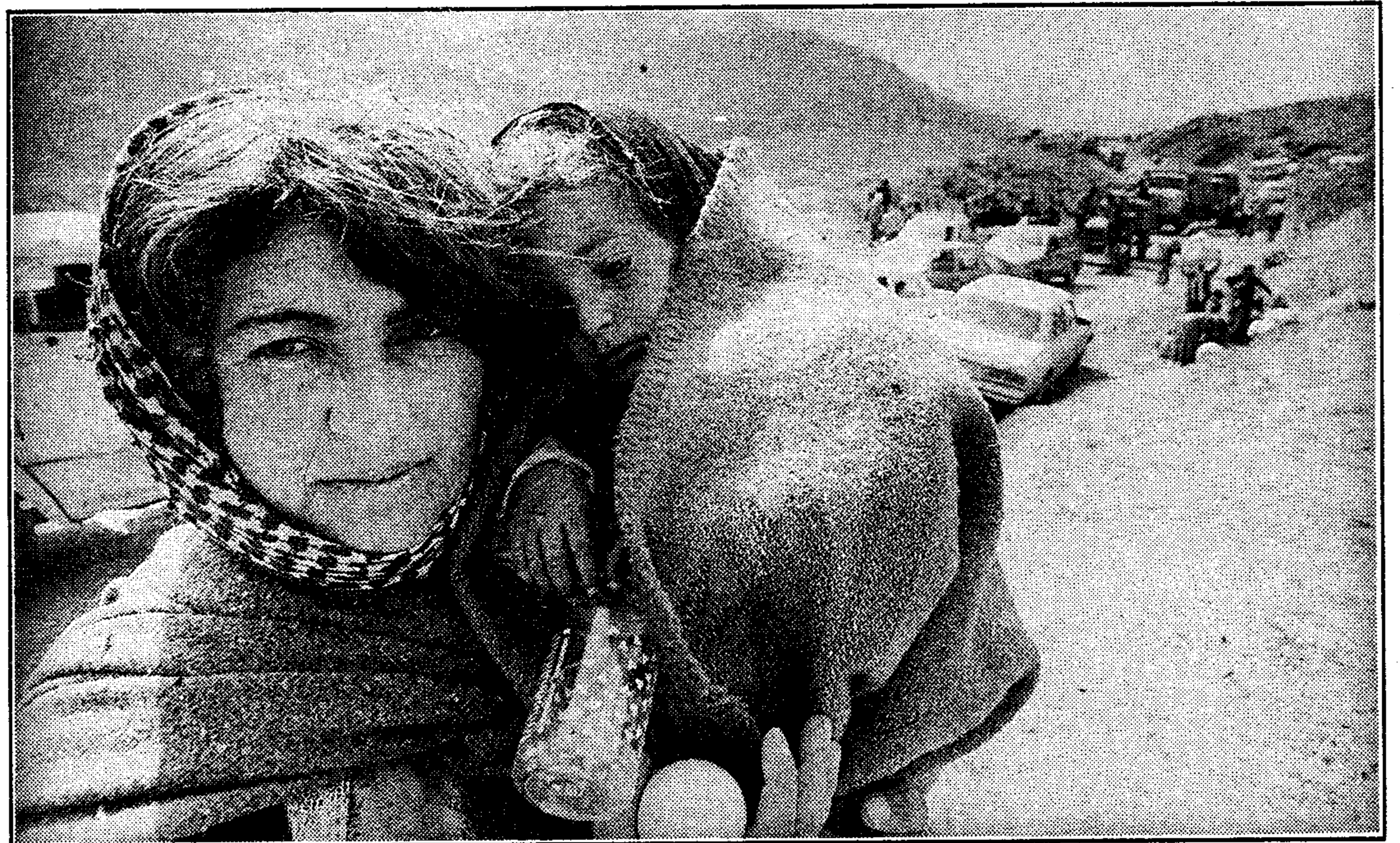
workers.

Migrant workers generally lived hundreds of miles from their families. Women would be left in the countryside with children, surviving on subsistence crops.

In Zimbabwe (by no means the poorest or most indebted African country) the colonial expropriation of land resulted in the establishment of 'reserves', where women, children and the elderly were forced to live. Traditional systems of agriculture broke down, and the pattern of environmental degradation began, leading to widespread impoverishment.

It was these factors that led to women playing a prominent role in the war for independence. After the war, the position of black women in the labour market improved. In 1981, white women comprised 54% of the female workforce, and black women 46%. By 1985 the position had reversed, so that black women comprised some 83% of female workers.

However, the worsening economic situation – a product of indebtedness – meant that the proportion of women in the



workforce as a whole fell from 14% to 12%.

The relation between the exploitation of women and the debt is starkly demonstrated in the case of Thailand. In 1984 the country's debt totalled \$14 billion, equal to that of Peru. A major source of foreign currency for the country is the 'hidden economy' – its thriving prostitution industry.

Young girls (and boys) are sold to brothels for rich tourists by families desperate for money. Prostitutes in Thailand

are super-exploited, and exposed to a high level of danger from violence and disease.

And in the Philippines, the remittances paid from the domestic labour of Philippino women working as servants in the West, make up a large proportion of the hard currency that goes to pay the country's foreign debt.

Latin American women have countered their marginalisation with the development of a major movement. Through taking up 'women's issues' such as

abortion, forced sterilisation and domestic violence, women have been able to make an impact on trades unions and other workers' organisations.

Women in 'Third World' countries frequently find that they face battles on many fronts. The rise of religious fundamentalism – christian, muslim, hindu or jewish – that is accompanying the world recession, demonstrates the importance of linking the struggle against debt with the fight for women's liberation.

# What debt does to the environment

The debt has imposed environmental destruction on the less-developed countries through the pattern of development which grinding poverty imposes. While the details of how this happens differ from country to country, there are common factors throughout much of the 'third world'.

First, there is water pollution, air pollution and toxification – linked to the use of chemical products, especially pesticides. Water pollution often stems from rapid urbanisation; peasants driven off the land by poverty have been forced into large urban shantytowns. Among other things, the shantytowns are poorly equipped with sewage facilities.

Because of the closeness of water wells to cesspools, there is constant bacteriological contamination of the water. The effects of this have been seen dramatically in the last few

months in the cholera epidemic which has broken out in Latin America. Starting in Peru, where thousands have already died, the epidemic has spread to Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, and Brazil. The epidemic is directly caused by the lack of clean water; it is not just a health problem, it is an environmental problem, caused by poverty.

Because industrial processes in the less-developed countries are more antiquated, and because of the lack of government regulation, urban industries give rise to much more pollution than in the advanced countries, disrupting normal ecological cycles. Toxic metals like mercury and lead are regularly pumped into water supplies; cases of poisoning from drinking metal-contaminated water abound.

The worst air pollution anywhere is in the major third world cities like Sao Paulo and Mexico City. In Sao Paulo the daily toll of pollution is enor-

mous; amongst the poisons pumped into the atmosphere are 90 tons of sulphur dioxide, 5000 tons of carbon monoxide, 500 tons of particle materials, and 1200 tons of hydrocarbons and hydrogen dioxide.

The overall effect of this contamination goes well beyond the cities. City pollution in Latin America stretches out into the countryside and even as far as the coast of the Caribbean.

Toxic contamination in the third world is also intensified by the use of many pesticides forbidden in more developed countries. Such pesticides enter the food chain, in particular affecting cows milk, with inevitable effects on babies.

Every year the world loses twice the amount of agricultural land as is added. An area the size of Britain is disappearing annually. The UN Environmental Programme has estimated that in the next 20 years some 60 million hectares of agricultural land will be lost due to erosion, urbanisation and other forms of soil degradation.

The desert is advancing in many areas, but especially in Africa between the Sahara and the Sahel. This is not solely due to climatic factors, but also to deforestation, overgrazing and improper land management. During the first eight decades of this century more than half of the forested areas in developing nations has been destroyed. Indiscriminate tree felling for industrial purposes, for providing firewood or simply for clearing land would, at the present rate, completely destroy the forest in fifty years from now.

Deforestation causes soil erosion, because the natural protection against rain is lost; the torrential rains in tropical



areas wash the topsoil off into rivers, irrigational canals and then into the sea. In turn, obstruction of drainage facilities causes progressive salinisation of the soil. The wind then completes the destructive pattern.

Part of the forest destruction can be directly attributed to the greed of big companies. But it is also the consequence of the extreme poverty of many rural groups, who have constantly to cut down the forest for the firewood to cook and keep warm, and also so they can clear the land and plant subsistence crops.

With the advance of commercial agriculture and ranching, large numbers of the im-

poor rural population are pushed towards the forest and mountainous areas, advancing the process of forest destruction.

Just part of the spectrum of degradation of the third world environment has been outlined here. The root cause of it all is poverty. The masses of the third world need land, not being driven off the land by urbanisation and big ranchers. They need fresh clean water. They need industries that do not wreck the environment. They need an end to toxic pesticides and the dumping of waste from the advanced countries. That means an end to the debt and a new pattern of economic development.

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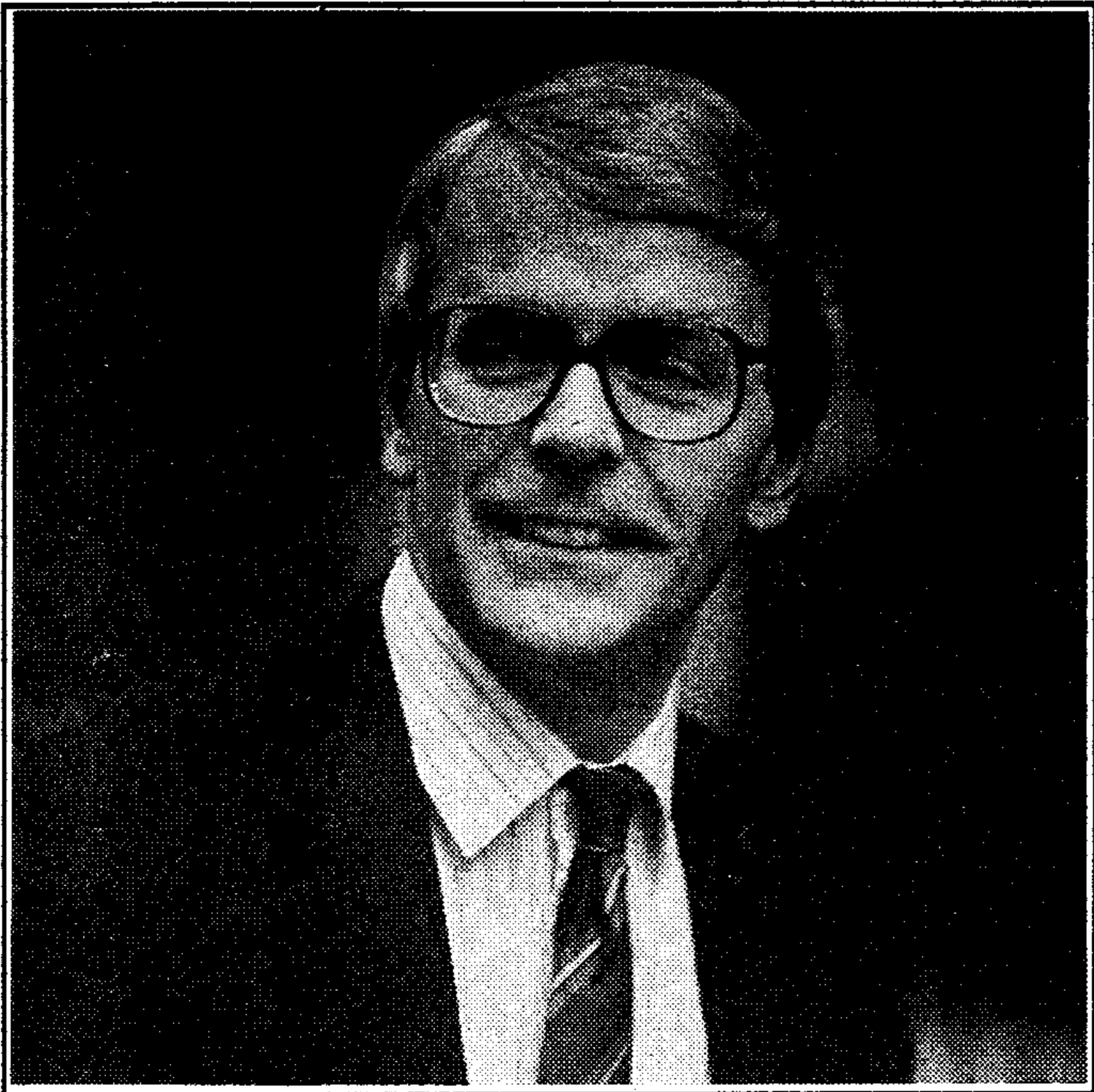
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Major, Kohl and Bush will all be there, but none of their victims from the debtor countries

# The Great Money Trick

Next week the leaders of the seven richest nations ('G7') arrive in London to discuss the management of the world economy. High on their agenda will be assessing how much more they can squeeze from the world's indebted nations - in Asia, Africa, and above all Latin America. How were the chains of debt bondage forged?

The origin of debt crisis is in the explosion of oil prices following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Western banks were flooded with 'petro-dollars' from the oil-rich states. Desperate to recycle these deposits at maximum profit, the banks scoured the world to

lend money.

For the ruling elites in the so-called 'third world' countries, this seemed a golden opportunity to boost their economies, or at least their own bank balances. As an orgy of borrowing took place, vast amounts were salted away in Swiss bank accounts and wasted on 'prestige' projects. Very little found its way to the people of the poorer nations.

Borrowing heavily, for states and individuals, is no problem so long as you can keep up the repayments. But economic developments in the West sabotaged the ability of the debtors to pay. First, between 1980 and 1982 the US economy was sharply deflated. Imports of raw materials from the poorer

nations slumped. Commodity prices fell sharply. The result was a collapse in export earnings to finance debt repayment.

When the US economy turned around on the basis of massive borrowing and a huge budget deficit after 1983, US interest rates shot up. But the third world debt was tied to US interest rates. The repayment of the interest on the debt grew to staggering proportions.

The next act in the tragedy was rescheduling the debt. In effect, this meant the debtors had to borrow yet more money - but at a massive cost. Not only banks were involved in rescheduling but the world's 'lenders of last resort' - the international money cops of the IMF and the World Bank. In ex-

change for rescheduling the debt they demanded grinding austerity.

The great money trick of the debt has imposed a Catch-22 situation on the borrowers. For the first time in the post-war world the less-developed countries have become *net exporters of capital*. The transfer of funds in debt repayment from the poor to the rich nations increased from \$7 billion in 1981 to \$74 billion in 1985. But this conceals the real figure because the rich in the debtor countries have exported huge amounts of capital back to bank accounts in London, New York and Switzerland.

Like home owners stuck with variable mortgage rates in Britain, the less-developed

countries are the victims of floating interest rates. High interest rates since the early 1980s ensure that the debt will be repaid *many times over* without any substantial inroads being made into the capital sum owing. The figures are staggering. It has been estimated that Brazil paid a total of \$33 billion in 'excess' interest between 1973 and 1985.

The debtor nations have been mugged. They are victims of a loan-sharking operation, which does not differ in any way from the operation of loan shark mafias in New York or Manchester. But more than that they are the victims of economic recession and financial instability in the advanced capitalist countries.

## How should the debt be fought?

Why don't the debtor nations refuse to pay the vast interest rates which condemn their countries to indefinite poverty? Surely the obvious solution for Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Nigeria and other large debtor nations is to simply default? Indeed, this would be the best solution, turning the tables on the IMF, World Bank and the corporate loan sharks like Citicorp and Barclays.

The reason they don't is political. It is extremely difficult for an individual country to default. Foreign credits and loan rescheduling are vital to gain the foreign currency - especially dollars - needed to finance imports. If one country defaulted the response from the West would be immediate and massive. When former Peruvian president Alan Garcia declared a 90-day moratorium on debt payment, Peru was hit by devastating financial sanctions.

To be politically effective, default would be better carried out by several countries acting together. The issue is one of political will - the willingness to

have a head-on battle with imperialism.

If a revolutionary working class government came to power in one country, especially in a strong country like Brazil, refusal to pay the debt, at least in its present form, would be essential. But the consequence would be an immediate confrontation with the imperialists. It would mean having to fight to mobilise support in other debtor countries, and fighting for political solidarity from the workers movement in the West.

The ruling classes in the debtor countries dare not contemplate a fight with imperialism over the debt, *because they are dependent on imperialism themselves*. In any case it is not the rich elites who suffer from the debt crisis, but the poor. The rich can get their money out of the country. Their whole livelihood is linked to trade and financial deals with the United States and other imperialist nations. Repudiation of the debt, which means a revolutionary mobilisation, is directly against their own interests.

Repudiation of the debt is therefore highly unlikely without the revolutionary conquest of power by the popular

masses in the debtor nations. What role is there then for an anti-debt campaign in the West?

It would take a truly gigantic campaign to force cancellation of the debt, when so much is involved for the banks and financial institutions. But campaigning against the debt, raising it as a central issue in the labour movement, will create the conditions to support movements for fighting the debt burden in the third world. A big campaign against the debt will pressurise the G7 loan sharks, making it more difficult to impose harsh new conditions.

The fight against the debt has to be a dual fight - against the ruling elites in the third world and against the IMF debt squads in the West. The Cancel the Debt campaign in Britain is a small step towards what must become a much larger campaign. Next year's G7 summit is in Germany, and already preparations are being made for an international demonstration.



## Support Brazilian plantation workers

Rubber giant Michelin has dismissed 45 workers at its plantation at Camamu in Brazil. Camamu was the site of a strike in April and May, and many of the workers dismissed were leading activists in the strike. All the dismissed workers have been told to vacate their houses on the plantation, and they will now have to find housing in nearby slums.

The plantation workers union has condemned the dismissals as illegal, and has decided to take Michelin to court.

The union has appealed to workers internationally to put pressure on Michelin to reinstate the sacked workers. Send letters of protest to:-

Michelin Fazenda Tres Pancadas  
Rodovia Itubera - Camamu Km 5  
Caixa Postal 2, CEP 45442  
Itubera, Brazil

Send copies to:  
Sindicato de Trabalhadores Rurais de Camamu  
CEP 45444 Camamu, Bahia  
Brazil

# Walton by-election Why we're not backing Mahmood

The decision of the Broad Left to stand Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election against official Labour candidate Peter Kilfoyle has caused intense controversy on the left. Socialist Outlook, while blaming the Kinnock and the Liverpool council leadership for the division, says the decision is a mistake. SEAN TUNNEY spoke to a member of Liverpool Labour Party who is also in the Broad Left, but who opposed the decision to stand Mahmood. This is his explanation.

The decision to stand Mahmood came in the wake of the victory of five Broad Left candidates in the local council elections. The five were successful for a number of reasons. First, it was a genuine vote against the cuts and redundancies strategy of the Harry Rimmer leadership of the council. Disillusion with the council made many Labour voters abstain - Labour's vote city-wide went down from 80,000 to 50,000.

The five successful Broad Left council candidates called themselves things like 'Anfield Labour candidate' and so there was a lot of confusion. But also, some of the Broad Left candidates were the sitting Labour councillors, and that compounded confusion.

The Broad Left threw a lot of resources into the elections - they had up to 70 people canvassing for each candidate, an enormous number for a council election here.

*The response to the council elec-*

tions was euphoria in the Broad Left. Two weeks before the local elections they had decided not to form a separate Broad Left group on the council. After the election, suddenly they reversed the decision. They thought they could take on the world. They'd defeated the Poll Tax, and beaten Labour in five local seats. They thought they would be the official opposition on the council within a week and win a majority on the council within a year.

I think the council victories went to the heads of the Broad Left. What they should have said is: "Wonderful, we have won a victory in the local elections. Now we are going to turn this back into the Labour Party locally. We are going to demand the reinstatement of the suspended Labour councillors. We are going to link up with those Labour councillors who are not in the Broad Left but who oppose cuts and redundancies. We are going to fight for a Labour majority against Rimmer's strategy".

Instead of doing that the Broad Left went for forming

their own council group and then made the decision to stand in Walton. They drew the wrong conclusions from their council election victory. In Wirral a fight to reinstate suspended Labour councillors has been successful.

One argument used in favour of supporting Mahmood is that Kilfoyle is an imposed candidate. But he is not - he beat Mahmood in a selection contest. As for winning unfairly, lots of candidates have 'unfair' advantages. Jeremy Corbyn has a strong advantage in Islington as a sitting MP. No serious charges of irregularity have been made about Kilfoyle's selection.

It is important to understand the character of the Broad Left in Liverpool. It is an invitation-only organisation; it has about 420 people in its city-wide group. Though Militant is not dominant numerically, it is politically. Many people outside Liverpool have the illusion that the Broad Left is massively popular amongst trade unionists fighting the redundancies, or that Mahmood's candidacy is deeply linked to that fight. But that is really an illusion. The Broad Left has some support in GMB, but in other unions it's much weaker. For example, Morning Star supporters lead NALGO, but by default because the Broad Left/Militant have had such a sectarian attitude, for a long time regarding NALGO as some kind of middle class outfit.

The attempt to make an identity between the council



fightback and the Mahmood candidacy weakens the united front approach which is necessary to build the maximum unity in the workforce against the cuts and redundancies.

It remains an open question whether Militant supporters will try to extend what they've done in Liverpool across the country. At a Broad Left meeting they explained that there would be a temporary break from the Labour Party nationally, to form a new Labour Party which would replace the old one - the rest of the Labour Party would just become a shell.

If this is what they really want to do, then it's a complete misreading of the present situation and of history. Socialists are in the Labour Party not because of it currently has a left wing or a right wing policy - anyway that can change. They are there because it is the mass party of the working class, and because of its links with the unions.

When the ILP split from Labour in the 1930s, they had 16,000 members and at least 17 MPs - and in five years they had virtually disappeared. So if the Broad Left are really going to try to make this a national development, they are misreading the situation today. We are nowhere near a split which would create a new and viable socialist party.

The programme and concerns of the Broad Left are politically limited and parochial. All they put forward is opposition to redundancies and the poll tax, with occasional references to the NHS. And all of it is limited to Liverpool. In particular they don't raise at all the issue of racism. The black community in Liverpool is ghettoised in Toxteth, and Walton is a nearly all-white constituency. Militant has a really bad

record on this issue, especially in Liverpool where many people remember the Sam Bond issue and Militant's opposition to Black Sections. When Martha Osamor stood for selection in Riverside constituency Militant supported the sitting MP Bob Parry as the 'class struggle' candidate; immediately after his selection he turned his back on the Broad Left.

When it was first talked about, the SWP dismissed standing candidates as irrelevant, but they were taken back by the size of the Broad Left vote in the council elections. Now they've gone gung-ho for the Mahmood campaign, which is logical from their viewpoint of counterposing an alternative party to Labour.

I think Socialist Outlook should be saying to Militant supporters across the country that this candidacy is a mistake, and that they're going to get their fingers badly burned by it. Of course for socialists this is a tactical question, but this candidacy is a very bad tactic. Instead of demonstrating the strength of opposition to Kinnock, they've chosen a tactic which will minimise it.

I think we should be arguing that the key task is to prepare, in the unions and in the Labour Party, for the outcome of a general election. Either Kinnock wins and we have a right wing Labour government; or he loses, and Kinnockism has been a failure. It would be a mistake, at this point, to believe a national alternative socialist party can be set up. And because it lacks national credibility, it lacks credibility in Liverpool as well.

After the election, there will be mass expulsions from the Labour Party in Liverpool. We shall have a really tough battle on our hands to fight this witch hunt.

## Socialist Organiser and Liverpool

This paper has argued that the Broad Left Lesley Mahmood candidacy in Walton is a mistake - a tactical mistake, not an error of principle. But we have placed all the blame for the situation of two labour movement candidates where it belongs - on Kinnock, the Liverpool council leadership and the rest of the witch hunting gang.

*Socialist Organiser* has responded rather differently. Its two-page coverage in *Socialist Organiser* 490, under screaming banner headlines of 'Vote Labour in Walton', verges on witch hunting of *Militant*.

Two examples. They say 'Newcastle and Glasgow accents were prominent among Broad Left canvassers'. So what? Is *Socialist Organiser* going to join forces with the Kinnockites against 'outside agitators'? Every candidate in a by-election gets help from canvassers from outside the constituency. In an interview with a thinly-dis-

guised *Socialist Organiser* supporter they demand that Lesley Mahmood be 'humiliatingly defeated'! That of course is just the right note to strike with Broad Left comrades who have made a mistake!

The crucial error of the Broad Left in Walton is that they have chosen a tactic which will minimise, rather than maximise, the demonstration of political opposition to Kinnockism. Many workers opposed to cuts in jobs and services in Liverpool will vote for Kilfoyle to keep out the Liberals. A by-election under the national spotlight cannot be a re-run of the local elections, where the Broad Left won five council seats.

But instead of taking up this tactical debate, *Socialist Organiser* addresses the Liverpool Broad Left as if they were the key enemy. That is the typical response of the hopeless and mindless sectarian. We prefer to reserve our hostility for the Kinnockite witch hunters.



Council workers 'struggle: will it produce votes for Mahmood?

# Still in crisis over Europe

Margaret Thatcher's intervention in last week's parliamentary debate on Europe showed the Tories' divisions on this issue are getting worse. Ditching Thatcher has not solved the divisions in Tory ranks. Britain's isolation over the further integration of capitalist Europe never stemmed from Thatcher's personal hostility to all things European: it is based on the dilemma which British capitalism faces over its fundamental orientation in foreign policy.

Talk of a 'federal' Europe scares the pants off Major and big sections of the capitalist class, because it involves moves towards not just a common currency, but a common defence and foreign policy as well. This is a dagger at the heart of the priority which British capitalism has accorded for decades to 'Atlanticism' - the alliance with the United States.

The dilemma facing British capitalism is this. The capitalist world is moving towards a three bloc system - a North American bloc, a Japanese-dominated Asian bloc and a European bloc. But British capitalism's role doesn't fit easily into any of these blocs. An increasing proportion of Britain's manufactured goods are exported to Europe. But Britain's world role, which underpins its substantial overseas investments, depends on its relationship with the United States.

Britain has access to many forums, and much

world influence, on the basis of being a nuclear power. But that is solely because of the good will of the US; it is the Americans who supply Britain's nuclear hardware.

The foreign policy concerns of Britain differ from those of most of the rest of Europe because of the world outreach of British capital. Between 20 and 25 per cent of profits of major British corporations come from investment abroad - way out of proportion to every other European economy. The strongest European nation, Germany, has its defence and foreign policy concerns concentrated on central and eastern Europe, at complete variance with those of Britain.

The proposal for a common European defence policy is absolute dynamite for the USA. Since the second world war NATO been a central channel for US influence and political domination in Europe. A European defence network would render NATO redundant, something the Americans would fight against with all possible means.

A further conflict between Britain and the Franco-German axis in Europe is over the role of sterling. The role of the City of London as Europe's major financial centre is based on sterling being an international trading currency. A common European currency would undermine the standing of the City. The financial centre of Europe would shift to Germany.

The dilemma for British capitalism is chronic and insoluble. Trying to straddle Europe and

the north American axis is ultimately an impossible balancing act - if the Europeans succeed in forging the kind of united economy and politics which the Germans and French would like.

The problem facing the Europeans in their long-term economic battle with America and Japan is that Europe is a collection of imperialist nations with partially conflicting interests. Japan is absolutely dominant in the Asian capitalist economies, and the USA towers over the North and Latin American economies. The role of European leader falls naturally to Germany, by far the biggest European economy. But Germany's capital resources are bogged down in the re-unification process.

Capitalist integration in Europe is vital to fight off the US and Japan. But it will be a long and difficult process to achieve it. The Tories will remain crisis-racked on the issue, because there is no easy solution which will serve all the needs of British bosses. Europeanism and Atlanticism both offer a future of further decline for British capitalism.

The myth which needs to be fought in the labour movement is that capitalist Europeanism is in some way more progressive than capitalist Atlanticism. Fortress Europe under German domination would be just as reactionary as the 'special relationship' with the US. Workers have no interest in supporting either.

## Victory for Randle and Pottle

Congratulations to Michael Randle and Pat Pottle, who last week were found 'not guilty' by an Old Bailey jury for helping super-spy George Blake to escape from Wormwood Scrubs in 1966. The prosecution of the two occurred because of a vindictive campaign by the right-wing Freedom Association, backed by 100 Tory MPs.

Interviewed by *Socialist Outlook* last year Pat Pottle was pessimistic about being acquitted. He said: 'Sometimes I dream about it. I get this idea that we tell the jury what we did and they'll say "Oh yeah, we agree with that - that was great". But being realistic, every attempt we make to tell people what we did and why we did it, the judge is going to tell us to shut up. I think we will be found guilty'.

Which all goes to show that dreams do come true, even for left wingers!

The outcome of the trial, in which the two defendants admitted their part in the escape, shows the importance of fight-

ing to maintain the jury system. In this trial the judge virtually ordered the jury to find Randle and Pottle guilty - but they openly defied him. Instead of thanking the jury at the end of the trial, he dismissed them with a curt 'Please clear those seats - I've got another case to try.'

The case casts an interesting sidelight on the genuine radicalism which sections of the peace movement displayed in the 1960s. Randle and Pottle were both leaders of the Committee of 100 which organised mass sit-downs against the threat of nuclear war. They were imprisoned under the Official Secrets Act for organising sit-downs at US nuclear bases.

Bruce Kent, who only came top prominence in CND in the 1980s, commented that the actions of people like Pottle and Randle were a 'diversion' from the issue of nuclear disarmament, and that he would 'never have dreamed' of doing anything like freeing George Blake. Quite.



Prakash Chavrimootoo and her 8 year old son Prem are fighting against deportation. Prakash married a British citizen and came to Britain with her husband in February 1989. Having suffered domestic violence, Prakash sought safety with her brother in Birmingham. But the Home Office turned down her application for permanent stay on compassionate grounds, despite the fact that she had employment as a home care worker. A picket of the Immigration Appeal Hearing on 18th June was organised by the West Midlands Anti Deportation Campaign.

PHOTO: Mark Salmon

## No justice yet for the Maguire 7

After 16 years fighting for justice, the Maguire family are angry at the way in which the Court of Appeal recently overturned their convictions.

The three judges threw out all but one of the six grounds of appeal put forward by the Maguires. The only one conceded was that their hands may have been 'innocently' contaminated by nitroglycerine.

Still leaving a slur over the

Maguire's name, the judgement also contradicts Sir John May's findings from last year's public inquiry. His conclusions formed the basis of the appeal. His report was highly critical not just of government scientists - who concealed evidence - but also of lawyers, the trial judge (Lord Donaldson, now Master of the Rolls) and the judges at the first appeal in 1977.

May is reconvening the inquiry into the miscarriages of

justice involved in both the Maguire and Guildford Four cases in September. There is no doubt that last week's judgement is intended as a warning. May, who is also involved in the Royal Commission established to examine the criminal justice system, no doubt trod on a few distinguished toes. But it is also a warning to campaigners fighting to overturn other miscarriages of justice - 'don't expect too much'.

### ★The 'Write it off' event★

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Nr Holborn tube)

13 July, 7-11pm

Entry: £4 Waged, £2 OAP/Student/UB40

Speakers: Bernie Grant MP, Caroline Loucas (Green Party), Martha Osamor Chair: Theresa Hayter

Stalls, food and drink, African and Latin American music

Organised by the Socialist Movement

# Sandinistas face tough questions

## Divide or rule?

by Gareth Mostyn

From 19-21 July, 400 FSLN delegates will meet for the first congress in the party's history. 'We are not going to deny that there's a vigorous struggle for political power now that the elections and the Congress are coming up' says ex-President Daniel Ortega.

The FSLN was severely rocked by their electoral defeat last year - they were not prepared. The reasons for their defeat plus the new, harsh and complex situation has led to considerable soul-searching. There are no clear tendencies in the debate, though there is a wide, sometimes contradictory, spectrum of opinion.

There is a left and a right, though many leading figures seem to aim for the centre. Tomas Borge, a member of the seven man National Directorate, is a radical. Rosario Murillo, ex-general secretary of the Sandinista Cultural Workers is seen as the leader of the 'principlists'.

### Pragmatists

The right wing known as 'pragmatists' or 'modernists', are led by Sergio Ramirez, ex-vice President, though some believe that General Humberto Ortega will take over when he is relieved of his post as Commander in Chief of the army. At

present he absents himself from both the National Directorate and Sandinista politics.

The issues debated are limitless - the result of a first congress taking place in a period of change and struggle. Key issues include whether the party should define itself as anti-imperialist; and whether it should be a vanguard party of the workers and peasants, or an electoral front attempting to win votes and represent the majority of society.

Questions of the economic power base of the FSLN, including ethical questions of personal property, are also being discussed. Finally, the debate includes the question of the degree of support to give to the present government.

The congress itself will be debating two texts - 'The principles and program of the FSLN' and the statutes of the Front. Given the debates that are raging, they have gone for a damage limitation process.

The author of the 'Principles and program', Jaime Wheelock, does not deny that that it focuses on the present and does not define the FSLN's strategic goals. He explains that 'this moment is strategic' - if the gains of the revolution are not defended now, the revolution is lost.

The 'front vs vanguard' debate is complex, given that the Sandinistas have implemented elements of both and that the National Directorate

has endorsed both. But while the FSLN in government tended to block membership for the super-rich, some now argue that the Sandinistas themselves should aim to be millionaires.

As to the debate over 'ethics', the FSLN used to argue against the ownership of private property by their membership; it went with the assumption that they could not lose an election. But when the defeat occurred, houses, vehicles, land and money were distributed in large quantities.

### Corruption?

Was this corruption or common sense? Sandinista leaders suddenly became wealthy, owning large houses, while transport workers owned their vehicles and peasants the state cooperatives in which they worked. Others got nothing and slid into deeper hunger and poverty.

Chamorro has legally reversed many of these measures. But the Sandinistas believe that their survival depends on property changes associated with the revolution. Hundreds of thousands of the poor - particularly FSLN supporters - face eviction from their homes or repossession of their farms or factories. The Sandinistas fear that they will lose their base if they cannot defend them, as well as seeing a massive shift in wealth and power to the rich

minority.

Sandinistas have organised mass demonstrations, as well as armed actions, in defence of their property rights. Daniel Ortega is facing potential imprisonment as a result of his call for self-defence to defend the gains of the revolution. But some Sandinista deputies, such as Rafael Solis, have denounced FSLN backing for such actions as 'destabilisation'.

But the FSLN is not only interested in the welfare of the poor - it also wants to develop a 'revolutionary economic group' - it is defending some 35,000 acres of the most productive coffee and cotton farms.

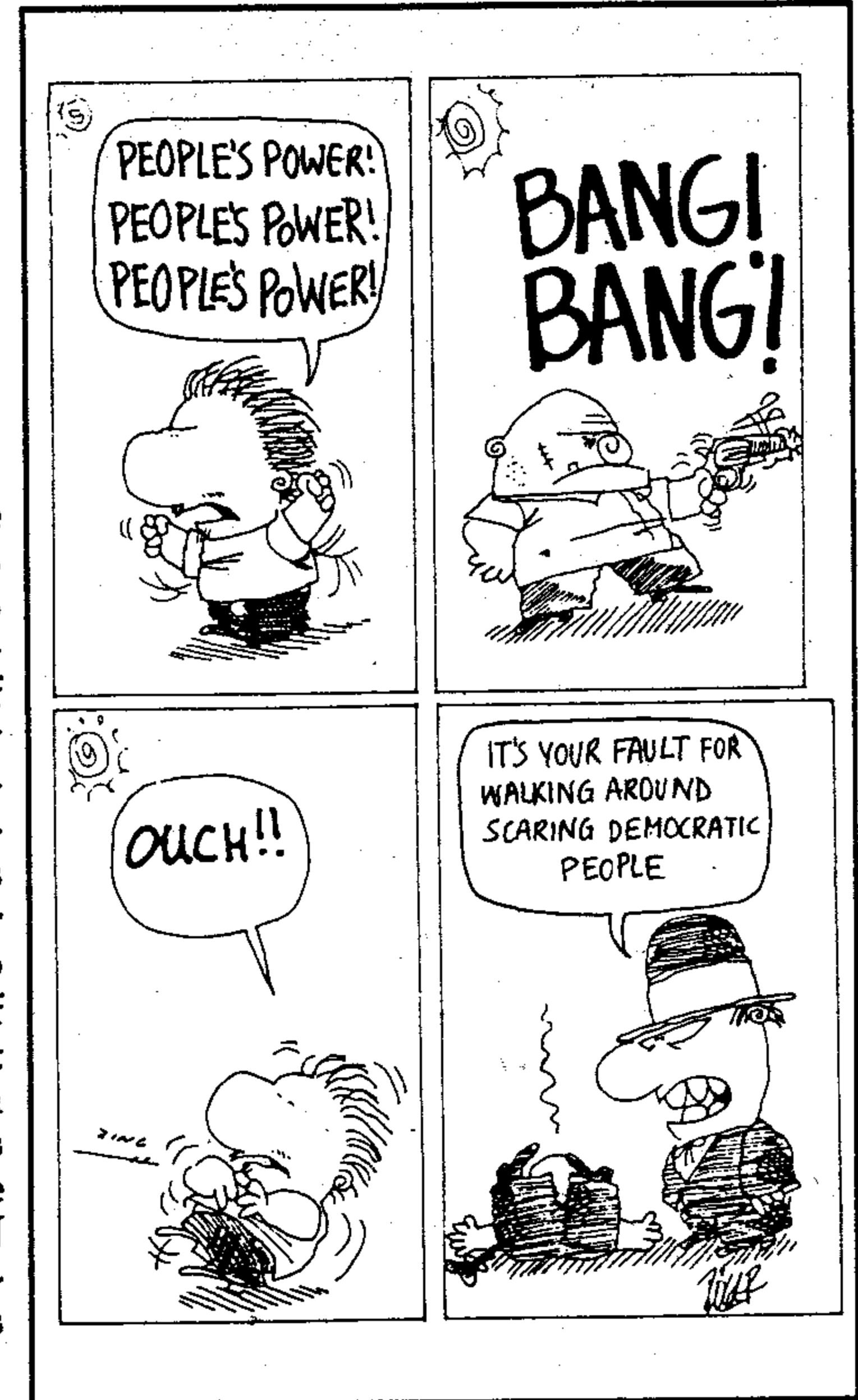
It has reacted to privatisation by the UNO government by ensuring that ownership passes to the workers, attempting both to defend them and, controversially, to develop its own resources.

But the congress is unlikely to produce very significant change. The present leadership will be expanded, and the policy of struggle against Chamorro's government, to curb the worst excesses, continued. At the same time, support for UNO against the extreme right is like-

ly to be maintained.

The Sandinistas are keen that the congress should not see a split. But the tensions are considerable, given that the pro-Sandinista police and army are being ordered to evict FSLN supporters and break up strikes, while leading deputies oppose self-defence against Chamorro's government.

However, increased democracy in the FSLN may lead to a greater response to rank and file demands. This should strengthen the chances of maintaining a basically anti-imperialist framework for the Front, whatever the fudges and pro-capitalist compromises reached at the Congress.



# No imperialist road to women's liberation

by Rebecca Fleming

The sharply contrasting images of sunburnt female GIs in combat gear and veiled Arab women presented during the Gulf war are the continuation of an old imperialist theme. The juxtaposition of women in the West and in the colonial and semi-colonial world has long been used as a justification for maintaining foreign domination.

The British claimed to be a progressive force in India, particularly for women, and pointed to legal reforms such as the prohibition of *sati* (the practice of widow's immolating themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres) to support this. They used women's anger to suggest that India was unfit for self-rule.

The debates raised by Black women in the western women's movements have been informed by this history. They challenge racism in feminism and ask whether it is a white, First World ideology, at best irrelevant to, at worst actively oppressing, the peoples of the 'Third World'.

This merits more discussion than it receives - there is an interrelationship between imperialism and women's oppression and thus a link between feminism and anti-imperialism.

First, the myth of western women's liberation, illustrated by their part in Desert Storm, may be easily disposed of. The position of women in the US army reflects their oppression in the imperialist countries, not the reverse.

Women comprise 11% of the US military, almost 50% are Black. They have joined up, not from a sense of liberation, but largely in a desperate attempt to escape traditional female jobs - low paid and demeaning - and to avoid unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

However, the gender segregation of jobs extends through the military - women do clerical work or nursing. A recent survey showed that sexual harassment and assault are rampant. Even those women who enter as officers are blatantly discriminated against - only 0.9% of the 1000 top officers are women.

Imperialism's claim to have advanced the position of women in its colonies also collapses under scrutiny. Even such examples as the suppression of *sati*, are in reality ambiguous and contradicted by other actions. *Sati* was only outlawed in 1829 after a battle against the British Tory government. The ban had limited effect and did not apply to 'independent states'.

The British destruction of the traditions maintained by the Nayers in Kerala provides a

striking counterweight to imperialist arguments. Family property was owned collectively, and both sexes controlled their sexuality within limits.

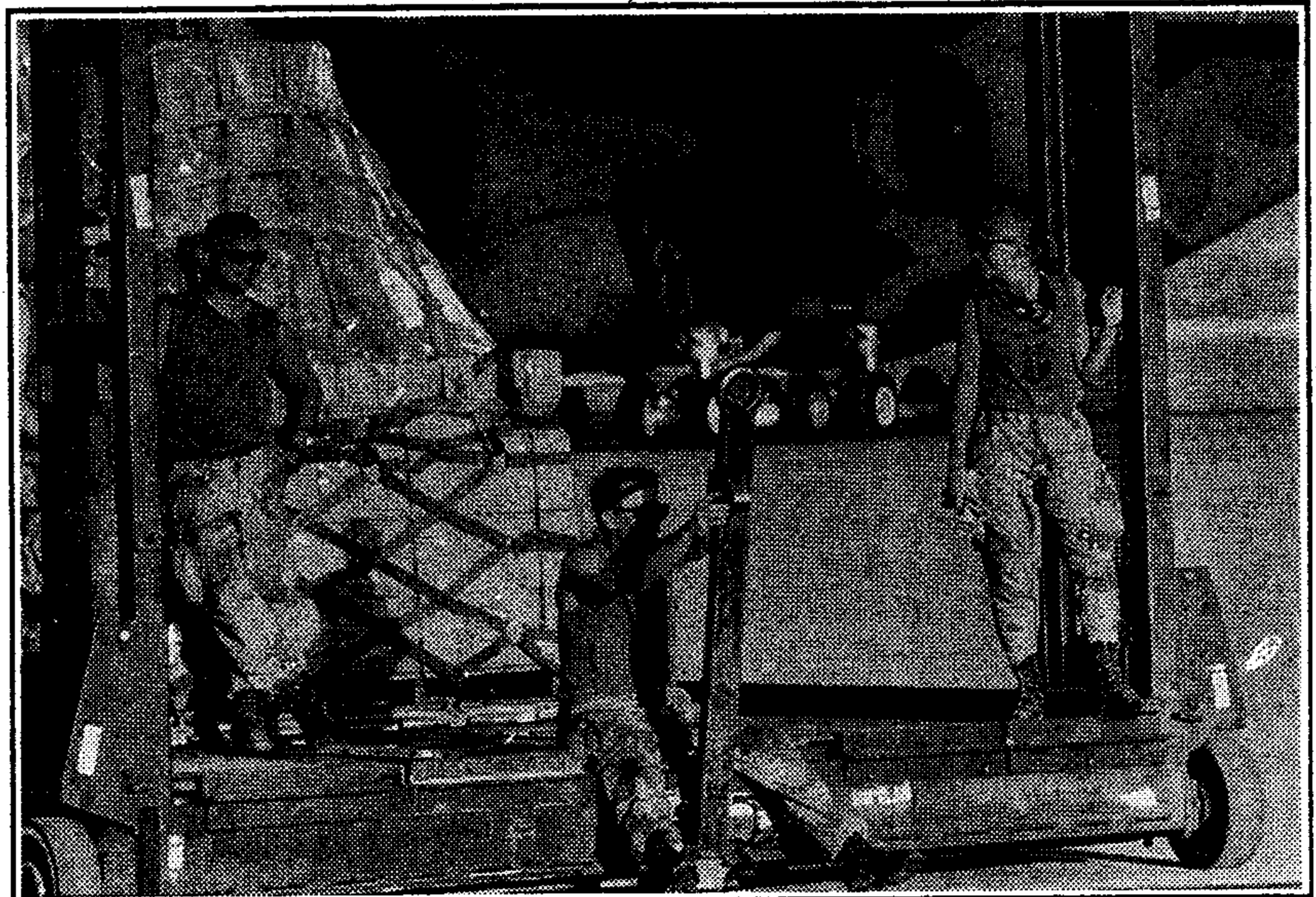
This was opposed to the patriarchal structure of both the North Indian Brahmin family and that of the British. They saw the sexual freedom of the women as promiscuity, and viewed collective ownership through the female line as the dispossession of males.

So, from 1868 to 1933 the British passed and strictly enforced reforms on marriage and inheritance aimed at eradicating this and replacing it with a patriarchal form.

Previously, the rigid interpretation of Hindu Personal Law by British born and educated judiciary had imposed the moral constraints and economic dependence of upper-caste women on all others. Similarly, British rule in Burma attempted to eliminate the female dominated family and shared family property.

These examples belie the supposedly emancipatory role of imperialism for women, and illustrate the frequent alliance of the colonial power with the local ruling class on questions of social organisation.

An opposing alliance was



sometimes made between women from the oppressor state and those under colonial rule. The first three Indian women's organisations were established largely by British women. Most of them supported women's suffrage, which brought them into opposition with the British government.

The emergence of nationalism across the colonial world had a contradictory impact. The struggle against imperialism involved millions of women, not only for self-determination, but also increasingly for equal rights for women, and their right to fully participate in the rebuilding of their countries.

This articulation of demands for women's rights as a part of the national struggle encouraged nationalists to take them seriously. Independence often saw the achievement of some of their aims.

After the revolution in Turkey led by Attaturk, the state was secularised and women's status improved, especially in the towns. In India formal equality in politics and employment followed independence.

But elsewhere, the development of national consciousness, defined partly by strengthening traditional culture and religion, played a different role. Arab women suffered from the integration of Islam as a central element of bourgeois national consciousness.

These contradictions serve to underline the interrelationship between imperialism and the position of women - the oppressive role of the West in the colonial world. Thus international solidarity - with the struggles in Palestine, Kurdistan, and elsewhere - is an important task for the women's movement in the West.

## World Order

### Algeria - tanks on streets as fundamentalists split

The Algerian Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) appears to have split in two, while troops and tanks have recently flooded the streets of Algiers, killing at least eight protestors.

The FIS has taken advantage of a wave of protests and then took control of most Algerian towns in recent local elections. But this was a double-edged victory: the FIS took control of local councils starved of funds by the central state in the midst of massive poverty, unemployment and a housing crisis.

Forced to impose austerity on the masses, the FIS have also failed a number of other important tests. An appeal by the FIS to ignore a general strike against falling living standards called by the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) was largely ignored, with the action winning 95% support.

And a strike called by the fundamentalists on May 25 to protest at gerrymandering by the Chadli regime in the legislative elections was a patent failure. Demonstrations attracted only a few hundred and only handfuls stayed away in large factories.

But the youth of Algiers, particularly in the Bab El-Oued area, mobilised in large numbers against the Chadli regime. It is this, as well as some large fundamentalist demonstrations, that has forced the split in the FIS into the open and brought the regime's tanks out onto the streets.

The split between FIS leaders Fakir Bachir and Abassi Madani appears to be a disagreement over tactics towards the Chadli regime. Madani advocates a continuation of the strategy of mass mobilisation on the streets, while Bachir calls for negotiation with the regime. Whatever the result, the public split should weaken the reactionary fundamentalists.

But the lack of a mass working class party in Algeria will make it difficult for the mass rejection of Chadli's austerity to be channelled into a positive alternative to the government's pro-Western stance.

Supporters of the main far left party, the Socialist Workers Party, have called on all anti-capitalist forces to unite in a Workers List in the June 27 elections to provide an alternative way forward for the mass movement.

### New left party for Italy

MORE THAN 150,000 members of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), recently renamed the Party of Democratic Socialism, have left to form a new, anti-capitalist organisation.

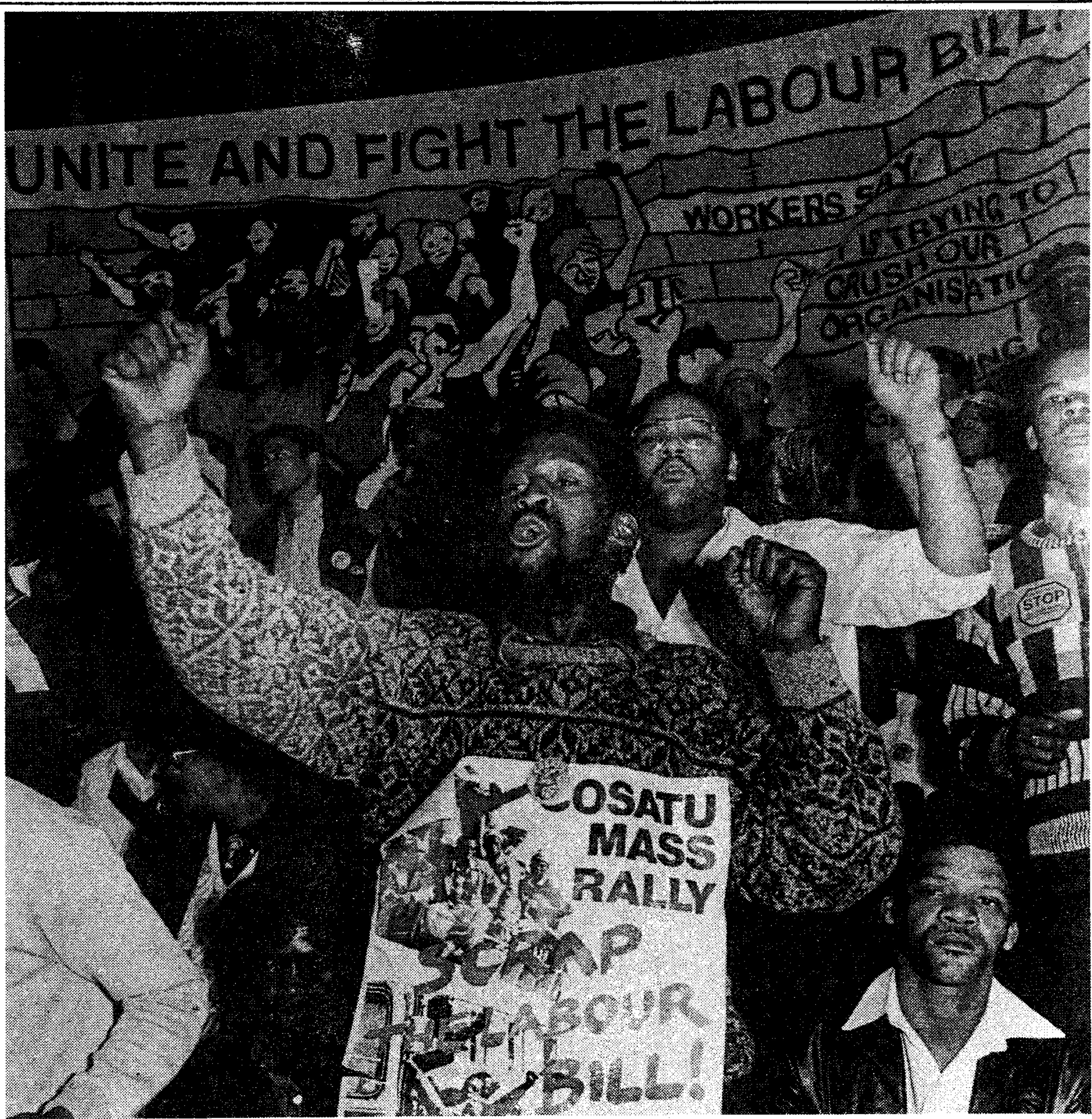
The Movement for Communist Refoundation (MCR) was launched at a congress at the beginning of May, followed by a public meeting attended by 15,000 people.

The group's 12 senate representatives have now formed a common group with those of the far left Democrazia Proletaria (DP), as well as winning between five and sixteen per cent of the vote in recent local elections. The organisation of the joint parliamentary fraction prefigures the merger of the two organisations, scheduled for June 1991 after DP's congress.

The MCR, led by Sergio Garavini, a prominent leader of the CGIL union federation, and Armando Cossutta, a well-known leader of the Italian communists, remains unclear on many political issues. But speeches by its leaders indicate that the organisation intends to promote the politics of class struggle, while rejecting many of the PCI's past positions.

Cossutta described the foundation of the MCR as a 'denunciation of the abandonment of a class identity, of an anti-imperialist tradition...'

The MCR leader went on to explain his view of eastern Europe: that the pre-1989 regimes in Berlin and Prague had 'no foundation in the consciousness of the workers'. But '1989 has not freed the world as Ochetto and his PDS comrades said; today there exists... a strong capitalist domination.'



## Apartheid - the last hurdle?

by Charlie van Gelderen

The repeal on June 17 of the *Population Registration Act*, the law under which every South African had to be racially classified at birth, has been hailed by De Klerk and his imperialist backers as marking the end of apartheid.

This was the last of the draconian laws put on the statute book by the National Party government after it came to power in 1948. In purely legislative terms it could be said that there was now no legal basis for apartheid.

But the vast majority of South Africans suffered racial discrimination from the day the first white men - the representatives of the Dutch trading oligarchy, the Dutch East India Company - established their requisitioning station at the Cape for ships on the way to India. This was long before the word 'apartheid' attained its present international infamy.

In the years of a more 'liberal' administration, what is now Cape Province was a British colony, and the franchise was based on educational and economic attainments. But though a few thousand Blacks managed to get the vote, they were subject to restric-

tion of movement (Pass Laws), right of residence and employment.

There were separate facilities for Blacks in restaurants and cafes, in bars and off-licences, hotels and other places. In employment they were subject to vicious exploitation.

The repeal of the apartheid legislation undoubtedly marks a step forward. It will be that much easier now to organise political activities, although the security forces still operate as if nothing has changed.

But De Klerk's declaration that 'the vast majority of the population would be rejoicing' will not be echoed by the black people shivering in their unheated shacks in Khayelitsha, not many miles away from the white parliament which passed those laws. Nor will there be celebrations among the inhabitants of the townships on the Rand, racked by inter-tribal violence, encouraged and assisted by the security forces.

Real power in South Africa, political and economic power, remains firmly in the hands of the six million whites where De Klerk is determined that it should remain. Blacks will not be allowed to vote in any by-election that may come along prior to a new constitution. Nor can they be conscripted into the

defence forces, which remain exclusively for whites. The educational system is also still structured along racist lines.

The liberation forces will now be concentrating their efforts on the fight for a Constituent Assembly to draft a new, non-racial constitution. Nearly all the parties in the liberation movement now call for a Constituent Assembly, but there are nuances in their approach.

There is still some ambiguity in the ANC's position. It agreed at the recent meeting with the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in Harare to reject any further negotiations with the regime until all obstacles to talks - the freeing of political prisoners, return of exiles, repeal of security legislation - have been removed.

But it still seems to be prepared to enter all-party talks in the hope that it can win the other parties over to the wisdom of holding elections to a constitution-making body. The ANC and its allies are also calling for an interim government, once obstacles to negotiation have been removed and serious negotiations begin. Such an interim government, drawn from the major parties, would rule by decree and would be responsible for drawing up the procedures for the

election of a constituent assembly.

The PAC, along with the Azanian Peoples Organisation (AZAPO) and the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), reject this idea. They reject it on the grounds that they do not want to be responsible for administering apartheid, even for an interim period.

The South African Communist Party is also said to be uneasy about this, though it does not want to clash openly with its ANC ally. There is some fear in Communist Party circles that the ANC leadership is conceding too much to the government, a view shared by the ANC Youth League. AZAPO and WOSA believe that a constituent assembly can only be won in struggle.

De Klerk knows that to keep up the momentum of reforms, which his imperialist allies will insist on, he must make some move towards enfranchising the Blacks, some time in the not too distant future. He probably has in mind the Namibian model, where the constituent assembly, once elected, sat behind closed doors to work out the constitution, and lost all contact with the electorate.

The ball is now at the feet of the parties in the liberation movement. It has everything to play for, and very little to lose.



National struggles like this in the Ukraine further destabilise Gorbachev

# Gorbachev grovels towards a market economy

by John Arnold

The past 18 months in the Soviet Union have witnessed an amazing juggling act by Mikhail Gorbachev as he manoeuvred between the forces pressing for the maintenance of central control and radicals bent on as rapid a transition as possible to a capitalist economy.

At times it has appeared that Gorbachev has personally embodied the contradictory pressures exerted on the Soviet bureaucracy – continued maintenance of its privileges deriving from the nationalised economy or transformation into a class through the reintroduction of capitalism.

## Worsening economic crisis

Despite all the discussions over alternatives, the Soviet economy is effectively rudderless. Against a background of republics seeking independence from the centre, bits of previous reforms have been implemented, elements of autonomy have been introduced, and Gosplan, the State

Planning Agency, has been replaced by a new Economics Ministry. The result has been *institutional chaos*.

According to official figures, Soviet industrial production declined 5.4 per cent between April 1990 and 1991, although many estimates put the figure at closer to 10 per cent. In the same period, coal production was down 20 per cent – hardly surprising given the coal strikes in March and April this year – oil production, one of the leading hard currency earners, was down 9 per cent, timber 13 per cent, and non-ferrous metals 18 per cent. Perhaps more alarmingly for the short-term stability of the country, meat production fell by 13 per cent in the four months from January to April.

The level of Soviet foreign debt is also dramatically increasing. As a risk, the USSR has shifted from being one of the world's most secure, to being on a par with Mexico or Venezuela and is sinking fast. Hard currency liabilities were 124 per cent of exports in 1990, making the Soviet Union totally dependent on the west for hard currency.

## Gorbachev's new scheme

Gorbachev laid out his stall more than a year ago when he talked about utilising his newly gained Presidential powers to push through the 'formation of a normal full-blooded market' and a 'controlled transition to market relations'. There then followed a period in which competing plans for the transition to a market economy were banded about.

The most well-

known of these was Stanislav Shatalin's '500 days' programme which envisaged a staged transition over that period to a market economy.

The '500 days' programme was opposed by the then Prime Minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov, backed by the still powerful central ministerial bureaucracy, so Gorbachev ended up cobbling together elements of both Shatalin's and Ryzhkov's plans – a move which led Yeltsin to compare such an operation as trying to 'mate a hedgehog and a snake'. The resulting compromise bore a stronger resemblance to the '500 days' but its implementation never got under way.

Despite the undeniable personal antagonism between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, the basic compatibility of their views has become more apparent. In May they issued a joint declaration which constituted a step towards granting the six most critical republics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Georgia, Armenia and Moldavia) independence, while at the same time indicating that such a step would leave the republics open to paying world prices for all commodities, including energy.

The new plan involves a 'twin-track' approach of domestic 'anti-crisis' measures and appeals to the G7 group of most developed capitalist countries for a massive injection of Western aid over five years, to enable the transition to a market economy to be achieved.

## 'Anti-Crisis' measures

Unlike the previous programme, the 'anti-crisis' measures have received the support of Yeltsin and the leaders of the eight other republics likely to sign the new Union Treaty.

The measures aim to establish a 'special regime' in key economic sectors. This involves prosecuting strikers while providing compensation for loss of the right to strike, improving management rights over the workforce and increasing enterprise autonomy.

The bureaucracy's inability to push through such a programme in the face of working-class resistance was almost immediately revealed however. Civil aviation personnel threatened to strike for better wages and conditions. The government only averted the action by almost immediately conceding a 60 per cent pay rise and improved benefits.

The ability of workers to elect management was severely curtailed in the 1990 Law on the State Enterprise, but a Supreme Soviet proposal to give managers the right to hire and fire at will without consulting the factory trade union committee, was vetoed by Gorbachev and amended to include only workers guilty of indiscipline. The second element is more controver-

sial. Gorbachev had to use all his political skill to defeat an attempt to transfer all his powers to Prime Minister, Valentin Pavlov. As yet there is no agreement on the precise details of a reform programme, although such agreement will be crucial to obtaining Western credit.

One programme to attract Western aid has been formulated by Grigory Yavlinsky, one of the main architects of the Russian Federation's version of the '500 days'.

## 'Buddy can you spare a dime'

Yavlinsky is currently ensconced in that bastion of socialist economic thought, Harvard University, with a number of leading US economists such as Jeffrey Sachs, who appears to be the inspiration for virtually every privatisation programme now being implemented in Eastern Europe, although he denies this whenever anything goes wrong.

Yavlinsky's plan is a two-stage affair. It is envisaged that in the first stage the Soviet Union will become an associate member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Over the course of five years prices will be liberalised, there will be a transition from small-scale to large-scale privatisation, the rouble will become completely convertible. During the whole five years, Western aid from a combination of governments and commercial banks will run at \$20-35 billion per year subject to negotiations.

The vacillations of Western governments over how much aid to give to the Soviet Union and under what conditions reveal a careful weighing up of different options.

On the one hand is the desire to impose the most stringent conditions on the

Soviet Union, so that Western capital can obtain the most favourable circumstances to take advantage of the comparatively cheap labour supply and potentially vast Soviet market. On the other is the danger, if aid is too late in coming or is insufficient, of the emergence of an anti-Western regime which would once again close off the Soviet Union to capitalist penetration.

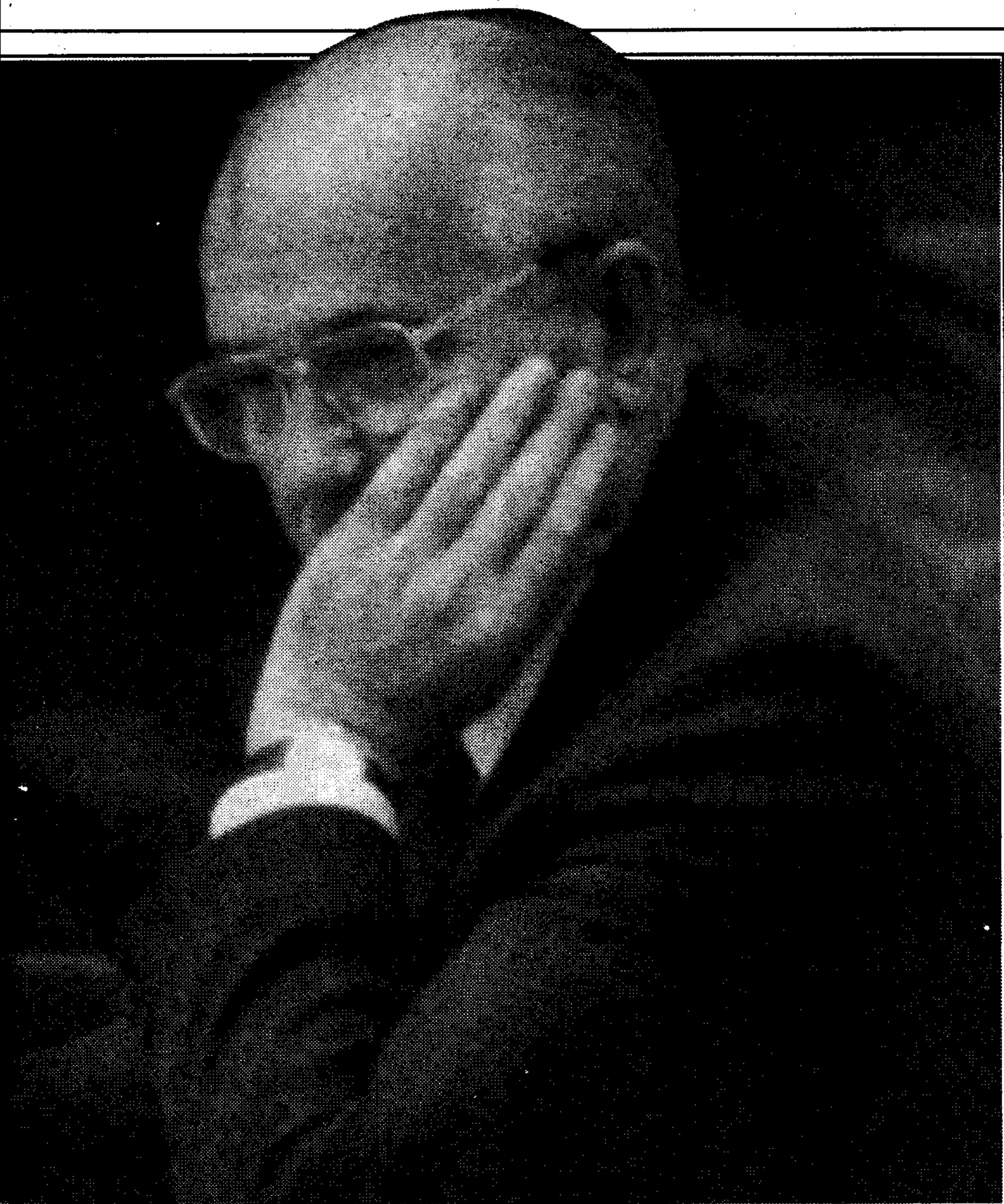
Another factor, not directly related to the Soviet Union, concerns the different interests of the competing imperialist powers over who controls the Soviet market. Germany and France have been much more responsive to Gorbachev's plea for aid because they stand to make much quicker gains than the more recalcitrant United States.

## The popular attitude to market reforms

It is undeniable that in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since 1985







There has been a popular desire for some ill-defined 'market' to solve all the problems associated with the legacy of bureaucratic command planning. In conditions of shortage any solutions which promise shelves full of goods and of superior quality to the indigenous Soviet variety have a strong appeal. But this desire is immensely contradictory.

To coal miners struggling in conditions of appalling neglect and lack of basic facilities, where it is impossible to obtain the necessary wherewithal from the centre and the rouble has become virtually worthless, it seems natural to call for the right to compete on the world market to obtain the necessary hard currency to buy food and basic goods and to be able to invest in the future of the industry.

At the same time, however, the miners have been singularly unwilling to put up with the inevitable consequences of facing world competition. Rationalisation, unemployment and the decimation of whole mining communities are not high on their list of priorities when it comes to demands on the central authorities. Instead they have demanded the doubling of wages, even though production has declined in the past year and in certain instances the increasing of state orders so that they have guaranteed buyer for their produce.

Undeniably, much faith is placed in Yeltsin and his encouragement of neo-liberal advisers. Yeltsin is seen as a figure who has fought the party bureaucracy and won and someone who will release the Russian people from the stultifying hand of the centre. Yeltsin's continued hold over the miners and, by extension, the increasingly independent workers' movement is not, however, guaranteed.

In the Russian Presidential elections, despite his crushing victory, Yeltsin failed to obtain a majority in Kemerovo, at the heart of the Kuzbass coalfield. There he was beaten into second place by the chair of the local soviet, Aman Tuleev, who argued that Yeltsin had betrayed the radical cause by signing Gorbachev's anti-crisis package.

Recent poll results show that those in favour of private ownership of large enterprises were only six per cent of the electorate in January 1991, with 55 per cent opposed. In October 1990, only 12 per cent favoured foreign ownership of factories (down from 35 per cent in November

1989) with 49 per cent opposed (up from 37 per cent).

These figures offer little comfort to Gorbachev (or Yeltsin) in his efforts to attract Western investment which could be seen by many people as placing the Soviet Union in hock to foreign capital.

### The socialist response

The use of the terms 'left' and 'right' in the Soviet Union does more to confuse than to clarify. Depending on one's viewpoint neo-liberals, Stalinists and revolutionary socialists can all be placed on the 'left'. I therefore prefer to refer, although this schema is also open to criticism, to conservatives (those favouring the retention of the old system), radicals (those wishing to transform the system through the introduction of a market economy) and socialists (those wishing to establish a democratic socialist system).

The most important current development among socialists is the formation of a bloc, calling itself 'People's Self-management' between the Socialist Party, anarcho-syndicalists, greens and the Marxist Platform within the CPSU. The evident disagreements between these currents are being subsumed under the urgent need to develop a basic programme to meet the needs of the crisis.

Placing support for workers' struggles at the forefront of its activity, 'People's Self-management' argues for the maintenance of soviet power through the regeneration of soviet democracy and for workers' self-management in

the factories. The bloc considers that the formation of a labour market in the Soviet Union is inevitable and that control by the trade unions is therefore essential. To combat goods shortages and the control of supply networks by the 'mafia', consumer associations should control distribution and, as a transitional measure, rationing should be introduced.

The ability of Soviet socialists to advance their views is severely limited. So-called 'liberal' journals are often as loath to publish socialist articles as were the old stalinist ones. The Socialist Party's current project is to produce its own regular newspaper and Western hard currency is crucial to its success. Details of where you can send aid with definitely no strings attached will be in a future Socialist Outlook.



Croatian militia prepare to resist federal troops

# Yugoslavian tragedy

THE CIVIL war in Yugoslavia, as army units smashed their way into Slovenia and fighting erupted in Croatia, is the culmination of a long process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.

In these columns four weeks ago, Michele Lee predicted the death of Yugoslavia and warned it would not be a pretty sight. This prediction has been confirmed with devastating accuracy.

Modern Yugoslavia was forged in the revolution led by Communist partisans under Tito during the second world war. Always a patch-work of nationalities, it was formed on the basis of complex constitutional arrangements to attempt to ensure equality between them. In particular, a joint presidency representing the six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro) and two provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina).

### Crisis

In a period of economic crisis, and against the background of the collapse of other east European regimes, the Yugoslav federation has been thrown into crisis by the response of the leadership of the former Communist Party in Serbia, led by Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic has attempted to consolidate his power by whipping up Serbian nationalism, and attempting to build a 'Greater Serbia' which would dominate most of the provinces and regions and perhaps drive Slovenia out of the federation.

### Presidency

The Serbian leadership threw the whole federation into crisis by blocking the normal rotation of the collective presidency, which would have given the chair for 1991 to a Croatian, Stipe Mesic. Milosevic encouraged armed rebellion by Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the province of Kosovo, which is ruled by Serbia but has a majority ethnic-Albanian population, repeated rebellions have been savagely put down by Milosevic. This year arms have been distributed to ethnic Serbs in the province.

In the current situation there are three fundamental forces in the political leader-

ship of the republics and provinces. First there is Milosevic, and his stooges in the leadership of Vojvodina and Montenegro. Their project is the creation of Greater Serbia.

Then there is the central government of federal prime minister Ante Markovic, trying to maintain the federation and the power of the central government against Milosevic. For the moment Markovic appears to have the support of the army. But he is buffeted between Serbia and the new nationalist governments in Croatia and Slovenia, bent on independence.

### Croatia

Next to Serbia, the largest and most powerful republic is Croatia. It has a right-wing nationalist government, the product of the Serbian onslaught. Indeed the prospects for a new settlement between the republics has largely been undermined by Serbian intransigence.

Despite his nationalist demagoguery Milosevic is faced with a powerful opposition inside Serbia: Last March there were huge demonstrations and a strike of 700,000 workers. But the Serbian opposition unfortunately has given its complete support to Milosevic's nationalist hysteria, a fatal weakness which has undermined its positive impact.

### Socialist response

What now should socialists say about the invasion of Slovenia and the fighting in Croatia? Socialists support the right to national self-determination. This does not however mean we advocate independence as the solution in every case.

There are powerful reasons to support a unified Yugoslavia, on the basis of equality between republics, as the socialist way forward. The small republics and tiny provinces are hardly viable as separate states. However, no socialist can support the forcible incorporation of any nationality into a federation against its will.

In the current conflict socialists should demand the withdrawal of the army from Slovenia and Croatia. Tanks will only ensure the break up of Yugoslavia, and play into the hands of Milosevic's increasingly right wing government in Serbia.

Photo: David Stewart-Smith (Inflight)



Class against class: the Poll Tax battle in Trafalgar Square

# Defending Marxism

## Divided Societies

By Ralph Miliband  
Oxford University Press, £7.99

Reviewed by Paul Clarke

IDEOLOGICAL turmoil on the left has followed the East European revolutions, the fall of the Berlin wall and the crisis in the Soviet Union. Revolutionary socialism, any form of 'class politics' and Marxism itself have come under intense fire not only from the right, but from within the left.

In fact, the ideological swing rightwards in Britain had been going on a long time before the East European events. From the late 1970s onwards an assault, spearheaded by Marxism Today, has been launched which has attempted to break the left from 'dogmatic' and 'fundamentalist' Marxist notions.

### Under fire

Under fire have been the ideas that the central contradiction in capitalism is that between classes; the notion of socialism as involving the overthrow of capitalism; and commitment to social ownership and national planning as central to a socialist and egalitarian economy.

Ralph Miliband, one of the founders of the Socialist Movement, and long-time editor of the yearly *Socialist Register* has stood out against this trend with commendable determination, dubbing the whole rightward move on the left as the 'new revisionism'. The paperback publication of *Divided Societies* is a welcome and eloquent defence of Marxist basics.

Miliband's book is a wide survey of class conflict in advanced capitalist countries. First he refutes claims that class contradictions are lessening, or that the working class is disappearing.

Much attention has been paid in recent years to the 'recomposition of the working class'. In most advanced societies the proportion of workers involved in industrial, manual labour has declined. Extravagant ideas saying 'goodbye to the working class' have based themselves on this.

The increase of the number of workers

in the service, distribution and white collar sectors of the economy has not fundamentally reduced the size of the working class. What is true is that new sectors of workers are often poorly unionised and lack the militant traditions of long-established industrial sectors like miners and dockers.

### Restrictive

Miliband rightly rejects restrictive definitions of the working class, like those of Poulantzas, which only include those 'directly producing surplus value'. Instead he counterposes Marx's notion of the 'collective labourer' – those forced to sell their labour power, and whose work is directly or indirectly essential for the production of surplus value.

Poulantzas' definition would exclude bus drivers or low-paid local government workers. Miliband's (and Marx's) does not (although I'm not sure that Miliband is entirely consistent about this in the 'class map' diagram he includes).

The definition of the working class has important strategic implications. If the working class is a small minority then its ability to become the leading class in society, the motor force of radical social change, is restricted. There is often a hidden agenda behind those who want to theoretically minimise the weight of the working class in late capitalism.

Miliband's position is implicitly counterposed to the theorists of 'radical democracy' – in this country most notoriously Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. These authors in their book 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy' argue that the Marxist project is marred by 'classism' – the irrational prejudice of the left in favour of the working class as opposed to others. They argue that the real contradiction in capitalism is that of 'power', authority and hierarchy which suffuses society and is relatively independent of class.

### Overthrow

The strategic consequence of this line of argument is to reject the struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in favour of the struggle for a radical democratisation throughout society. This struggle will be carried out by a variety of social agencies, but in the first place the 'new social movements' – for example the women's movement, black movements, pro-ecology movements and so on. Moreover, they argue that these movements have no spon-

aneous or necessary focus of alliance between themselves. Such an alliance can only be created through the political construction of a 'discourse' on radical democracy.

While of course they fight for democratic reforms, marxists reject this strategic line. First, they reject the view that specific forms of oppression, or hierarchy and power in general, are totally divorced from class society and capitalism. 'Power' in capitalist societies, even the authoritarianism of the bureaucracy in the labour movement, cannot be divorced from existing class structures.

Second, even where a specific form of oppression and hierarchy long pre-dates capitalism – most notably in the oppression of women – the revolutionary destruction of capitalism and the capitalist state is a precondition for defeating it.

It is this fact which creates the objective basis for an anti-capitalist dynamic in all the struggles against hierarchy and oppression. The task of Marxists is to fight to make this objective process conscious, by fighting to win the labour movement to the struggles of the oppressed, and by fighting for an explicitly socialist consciousness in the autonomous social movements.

Miliband's defence of a socialised economy as central to socialism is very welcome. In recent years, deference to the 'magic' of the market on the left has reached obscene proportions. At the heart of much of this discussion has been a mystification – that a socialised economy must necessarily mean bureaucracy and inefficiency. The logical result of saying this is that only the market can create democracy and efficiency.

### Irony

One of the ironies of this is that revolutionary Marxists long opposed the type of bureaucratized economy which existed in eastern Europe, and bureaucratic nationalisation in capitalist countries, while many non-Marxist radicals had illusions.

Deification of the market has at its root an extraordinary social and historical

pessimism. It says in effect that the economy can never be brought under conscious human control; that greed and self-interest must remain the motor forces of innovation and progress; and that the profit motive is the highest form of development of human civilisation. This is a classic 'illusion of the epoch'; the self-consciousness of a particular historical period being projected onto the whole of future human history.

Miliband has some tough words for the Communist parties in advanced capitalist countries, seeing them, especially since the advent of Eurocommunism, as essentially reformist parties who have made their peace with the status quo. Ironically, in many of these parties the crisis of Stalinism has deepened the rightward shift, reproducing within them many of the rightist attacks on Marxism mentioned above.

### Weakness

Miliband's weakness is his own discussion of strategy and agency. Miliband has long been the advocate of building a new socialist party, and of a 'revolutionary-reformist' strategy which rejects the idea of the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist state as hopelessly utopian.

Miliband regards existing far left organisations as 'sectarian' and 'too narrow'. Be that as it may, they are broader than the new socialist party, which alas doesn't exist. The point is of course that a new socialist party, even a small one with 15-20,000 members, could only come about as a result of giant upsurges in the class struggle. Outside of such developments Miliband's strategy is just as 'utopian' as that put forward by Leninists. When and if we get that kind of class upsurge, we shall see who is right on strategy.

Despite these disagreements, Miliband's general approach is a model of common sense. In periods of intellectual reaction it is vital that those who stand by classical Marxism stand up to the barrage of right-wing dross and intellectual quackery and fight their corner. Every socialist will benefit from reading this book.

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## Video preview

Coming out in  
NicaraguaSex and the  
Sandinistas

Written and Directed by  
Lucinda Broadbent  
Showing on *Out on  
Channel Four*,  
Wednesday 17 July 1991  
at 9pm

Reviewed by Rebecca  
Fleming

'Homosexuality in  
Nicaragua is about  
courage', one gay man says  
in *Sex and the Sandinistas*,  
and courage certainly over-  
flows from this video  
documentary, along with  
the strength, vibrancy and  
creativity of the  
Nicaraguan lesbian and  
gay movement.

It tells a simple and inspir-  
ing story – the story of the  
Nicaraguan revolution told by  
lesbians and gay men who  
have been a part of that  
revolution from the outset and  
who continue to fight for the  
freedom it stands for, constant-  
ly asserting that their struggle  
for liberation is an integral  
and central part of the revolu-  
tionary process.

The voices of Nicaraguan  
lesbian and gay activists  
speak loud and clear through  
the video. They joined the  
FSLN very early on – making  
Molotov cocktails in their  
back rooms, fighting in guer-  
rilla cells – motivated by the  
desperate poverty and oppres-

sion all around them under  
the US-backed Somoza dic-  
tatorship.

Some were expelled when  
they came out as lesbian or  
gay, others hid their  
sexuality, considering it a  
secondary issue after the ur-  
gent and overriding task of na-  
tional liberation.

But after the victory of 1979,  
lesbians and gay men found a  
new space to explore and give  
time to themselves and their  
specific concerns amongst all  
the dramatic economic, social  
and political upheavals of the  
time. There was no sudden  
transformation in their situa-  
tion.

Lesbians and gay men did  
not wake up one morning to  
find that they had been  
liberated. The weight of the  
Roman Catholic Church and  
the traditional machista cul-  
ture remained entrenched and  
powerful, but not unchal-  
lenged, and small, informal  
lesbian and gay activist and  
social groups began to meet  
and organise.

Ironically, but not without  
precedent, it was the AIDS  
crisis which provided an open-  
ing both for the more public-  
and formal establishment of  
lesbian and gay organisation  
and for the beginning of a  
dialogue between the nascent  
lesbian and gay movement  
and the Sandinista leadership.

Though the majority of the  
HIV and AIDS cases were,  
and remain, amongst the  
heterosexual population, it  
was lesbians and gay men,

after contact with lesbian  
brigadistas from San Franc-  
isco, who first took up the issue  
and who began to hold safer-  
sex workshops.

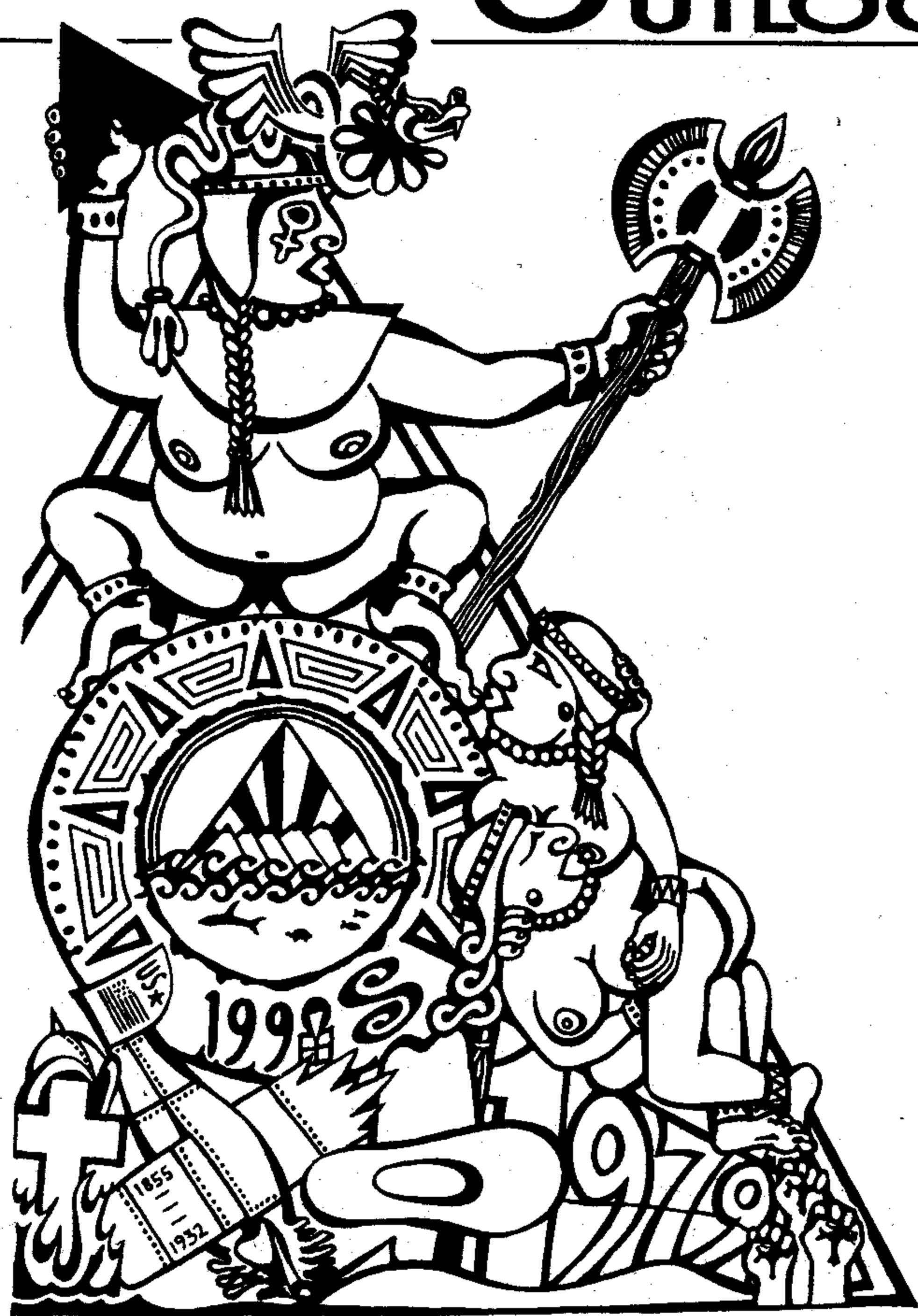
These developments  
prompted an immediate and  
supportive response from the  
Sandinista Minister for  
Health, leading to the setting  
up of CEP – SIMA, the Collec-  
tive of Popular Educators on  
AIDS.

Of course it is impossible to  
talk about HIV and AIDS  
without discussing sexuality,  
including lesbian and gay  
sexuality. And as activists  
gained experience and con-  
fidence they started to estab-  
lish separate lesbian and gay  
collectives, going beyond the  
ambit of the AIDS education  
work and increasing their ef-  
forts to put lesbian and gay  
politics specifically and clear-  
ly on the Sandinista  
programme.

This battle has not been  
easy, but it has borne fruit as  
the interview with Sandinista  
leader Daniel Ortega in the  
video testifies. 'The struggle  
must include the whole of  
society' he repeatedly states.

And as Rita Arauz, one of  
the lesbian activists featured  
in the film explains 'The big  
advantage we have is that we  
are able to sit down with our  
leaders and at least speak the  
same language. Our dis-  
course is of liberation, oppres-  
sion, anti-discrimination,  
equality.

'When we speak the com-  
paneros have to say – "yes,



## SEX AND THE SANDINISTAS

you're right, I can understand  
your arguments. It's just that I  
am machista and it's very hard  
for me to accept'. We won't  
get rid of their homophobia  
easily, but at least there is com-  
munication.

'Whilst the gay movement  
in San Francisco think they're  
very strong, they could never  
sit down with George Bush  
and find themselves agreeing  
on principles, speaking the  
same language of freedom.'

Recognition of the achieve-  
ments under the Sandinistas in  
the arena of sexual politics  
was also made in the course of  
the documentary by Cardinal  
Miguel Obando y Bravo,  
Archbishop of Managua, who

said in condemnatory tones  
that the Sandinista era had  
been a time of 'excessive  
sexuality and family  
breakdown' as well as witness-  
ing an explosion of 'illicit  
pleasures'.

After the electoral defeat in  
1990 it is his voice and the reac-  
tionary chorus of the rest of  
the Church hierarchy that the  
UNO government listens to.  
Measures, including police  
raids, have been taken to try  
and 'clean up' the cruising  
areas in the centre of  
Managua, and though the  
video was shot by a  
Nicaraguan crew from the in-  
dependent Managua video  
production company –  
Videonic, it will not be public-  
ly shown in Nicaragua.

However, the strength and  
progress gained from the  
revolution and the period of  
Sandinista rule remains. The  
lesbian and gay movement is  
confident, not crushed. It con-  
tinues to grow and demand in-  
ternational solidarity.

The documentary presents  
the diversity of lesbian and  
gay culture in Nicaragua –  
from the gay cruising ground  
in the shell of Managua  
Cathedral, ruined by an  
earthquake, to the historical  
heritage of an indigenous les-  
bian warrior goddess, from  
the drag queens working in  
the market in Managua, to  
safer sex workshops involving  
condoms and bananas. It  
gives an uplifting picture of a  
fledgling lesbian and gay  
movement born out of and  
firmly situated in the centre of  
the revolutionary process with  
which their struggle for libera-  
tion is inseparably entwined.  
It is an experience the western  
movements have much to  
learn from – make sure you  
see it!

Big Ben does  
it again!

## Gridlock

Written by Ben Elton

Reviewed by Kate  
Ahrens

Ben Elton's new book,  
'Gridlock', is based on a plot  
in the mould of it's excellent  
predecessor 'Stark'. It revol-  
ves around a new hydrogen  
engine, which it's inventor,  
Geoffrey Peason, hopes will  
revolutionise public  
transport.

In addition Geoffrey, a  
cerebral palsy sufferer, hopes  
that it will help him to chase his  
heartthrob, Debra. But, as in  
Stark, the forces of evil quickly  
begin to plot to thwart his plans.  
When Geoffrey attempts to  
patent his invention, the plans  
are passed on to the Transport  
ministry, and thence on to Sam  
Turk, a car manufacturer. Dol-  
lar signs quickly appear in the  
businessman's eyes, as he im-  
agines the profits to be gained  
from oil companies and others,  
in return for keeping the inven-  
tion quiet.

A struggle then begins for  
control of the plans. Geoffrey,  
Debra, and her flatmate 'Toss' –  
a black traffic warden, begin a

slapstick race against time to re-  
invent the plans before the bad-  
dies find them.

At the same time, the Tory  
government is scheming to win  
support for a massive expan-  
sion of road building. When  
Geoffrey is shot, Debra who is  
quadraplegic, ends up in a  
wheelchair-chase in a colossal  
traffic jam (engineered by the  
Tories) to win back the plans.  
And in the process, they are  
destroyed.

There are some hilarious  
scenes and some shocking ones,  
and the book does a commen-  
dable job at focussing on char-  
acters with disabilities, without  
those being the main facet of the  
characters. And Geoffrey's  
positive self-assertion is hand-  
led convincingly, from his Hells  
Angel leather with 'Geoffrey  
Spasmo' to his 'Hi! I'm Geof-  
frey, I'm a spastic'. But the joky,  
laid-back reaction of 'Toss' to  
racism is perhaps a little over-  
played.

In the end, Stark was a much  
better effort in a number of  
ways. As a comic plot, Gridlock  
gets just a bit too close to reality  
to have the same comic impact  
as Stark, where the evil plot was  
so ludicrous as to be incredible.

And as a result, the total  
defeat of Geoffrey and his allies



Ben Elton

leaves the reader with a feeling  
of hopelessness. This contrasts  
with Stark, where at least the  
evil bosses get theirs, even if the  
plan to avert catastrophe does  
fail.

In addition, the fact the in-  
vention around which the plot  
is based is not so far from reality  
(it has in fact just been  
produced), means that the  
plot's credibility is rather thin.

## PRESENTE!

The British lesbian and gay group in solidarity with  
the Nicaraguan lesbian and gay movement can be  
contacted via the London Lesbian and Gay  
Centre, Cowcross St, London EC1, and can  
provide copies of the video for hire. Their next  
meeting is on Thursday July 11th, 7.30pm at the  
LLGC.



The face of imperialism: American troops in Vietnam

# What Marxists mean by 'imperialism'

In popular language the term 'imperialism' often simply means powerful nations oppressing weaker ones, generally by invasion and conquest.

Marxists use the term in a more specific way, to denote the structure of the world economy and world politics which emerged from the end of the 19th century onwards. This involves the world economy being based on the exploitation of the poor countries by the few rich nations.

How did modern imperialism emerge? After the industrial revolution, which took

place in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries, the development of the capitalist economies was concentrated at home.

## Pillage

It is true that, starting in the Middle Ages, Britain, France, Holland and Spain pillaged Africa, Latin America and Asia - for gold and silver, slaves and spices. That pillage created part of the wealth used for the industrial revolution.

Still, up until the late 19th century the big expansion of the capitalist economies was at home. Through industries

based on coal, the railways and the steam engine, capitalist Britain, America, France and Germany generated huge amounts of money capital.

The 'race for empire' which started in the 1880s was based on a simple fact; the recognition by capitalism that higher profits could be made on this capital by investing it abroad, in the poorer countries, where the cost of labour power was much lower.

Britain, France and Germany vied with one another to conquer new colonies, especially in Africa and Asia. The capitalists realised that profits depended not just on the strength of industry at home, but on the super-profits to be gained in the 'third world'.

## Red

Whole sections of the world map were coloured red (or pink) as Britain conquered by far the biggest empire. From the beginning imperialism was based on the import of cheap raw materials from the colonies, and the export back of manufactured goods from the imperialist heartlands. Native industries, like the Indian textile industry, were destroyed in the interests of the imperialist nations.

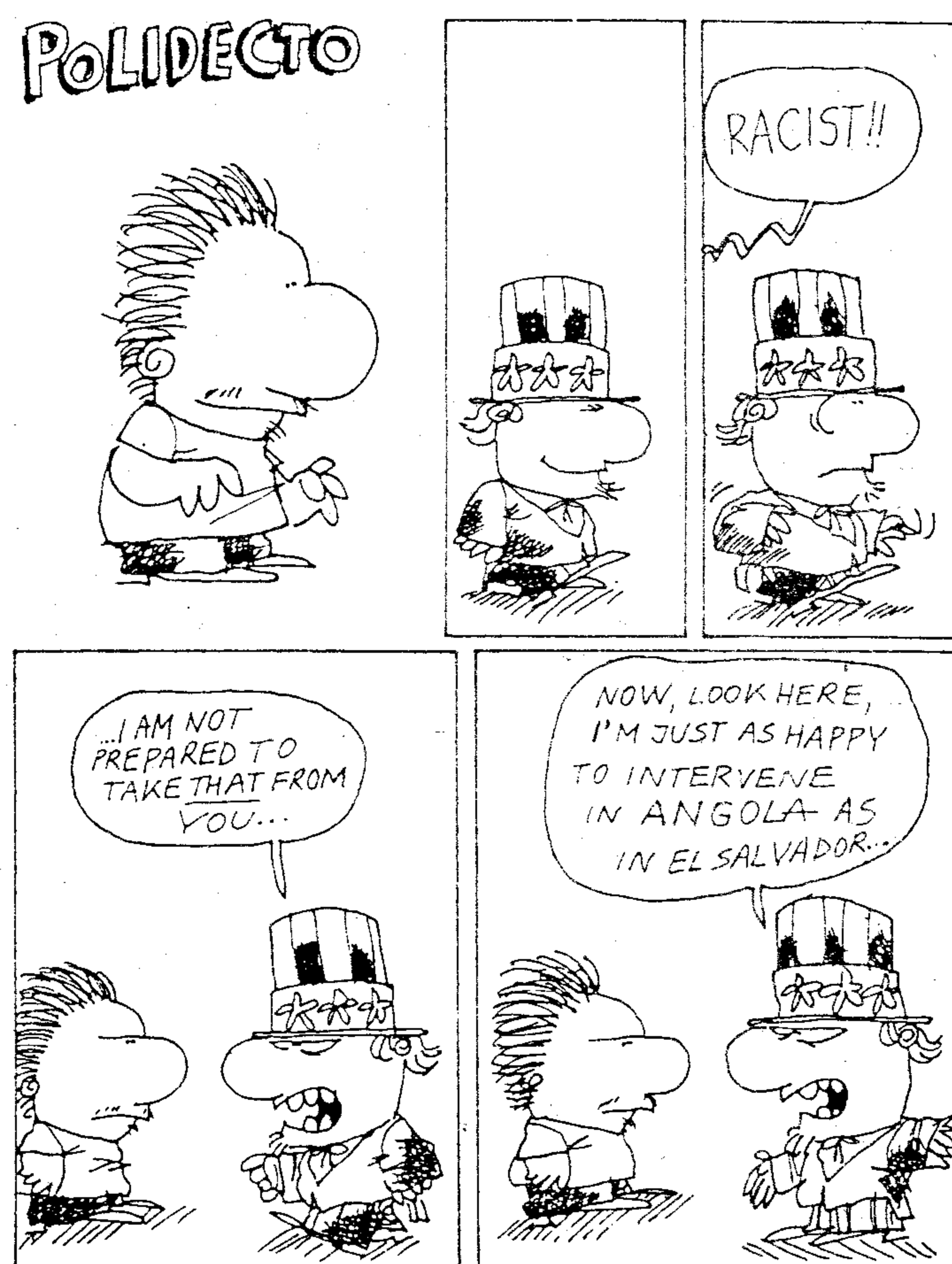
Imperialism gave rise not just to the exploitation of colonies, but to intense inter-imperialist conflict as the major powers battled for control of world markets. The first world war stemmed directly from this new stage of capitalism.

In the last century imperialism has been through major economic and political changes. The upsurges of anti-colonial struggle in Africa, Asia and Latin America, forced the major capitalist powers to change their form of domination.

Formal independence has been granted to most former colonies. But control of the world economy still rests with the major multi-national corporations. This new arrangement is described by Marxists as 'semi-colonialism'.

In most ex-colonies the local capitalist class, which gains its own rake-off from imperialist profits through trade, subsidies and bribery, forms the government. With the exception of a

## POLIDECTO



tiny group of countries like Korea and Singapore, imperialist control of the world economy has ensured that the so-called 'third world' remains under-developed economically.

## Multinationals

Starting in the 1960s, multinational corporations began to relocate some of their production in poorer countries. The old system of importing raw materials and exporting manufactured goods to the colonies began to be modified.

For example, it became cheaper for some American car manufacturers to export 'kits' of car parts to Brazil or Argentina for the final assembly than to do it in Detroit. Because the price of labour power is much lower in those countries.

This underlies the emergence of a few 'semi-industrialised' countries. But even these countries are not independent centres of capital accumulation. They are still economically dominated countries.

The oppression of the semi-colonial countries is multifaceted. They suffer not just economic repression, by the violence of direct military intervention, but are forced to be the dumping grounds of the toxic waste of the imperialist countries, and are forced to 'export' labour in the form of immigrants and suffer all the consequences of racism. The debt crisis and the Gulf war are just two of the latest examples of imperialist oppression.

To break out of this cycle of imperialist domination, it is not just enough to have formal national independence - a national flag, a home-grown government and a seat at the UN. It is necessary to break imperial domination of the economy. That is a truly revolutionary task, which involves socialist revolution.

Only countries like Cuba and China where the anti-imperialist struggle has grown over into conquest of political power by the working class has the imperialist stranglehold begun to be broken.

Anti-imperialist revolution, as Che Guevara said, will be either 'socialist revolution, or a caricature of revolution'.

## Super-profits

Both the world wars of this century started as inter-im-

perialist conflicts. Despite the growth of transnational corporations, which have a worldwide outreach, capital is still fundamentally national in its ownership. Most great corporations - Phillips, Siemens, Ford, Dow Chemical - are based in one country. The struggle for world markets and imperialist super-profits is a permanent feature of imperialism.

However, after World War II, in the epoch of cold war and nuclear weapons, the extension of inter-imperialist conflict into war was prevented.

Faced with a militarily powerful non-capitalist bloc, and with the prospect of war leading to mutual destruction, an inter-imperialist war would have been suicide for the whole world capitalist system. In any case, the 1950s and 1960s saw the absolute dominance - militarily, politically, economically - of the United States.

The development of the long period of capitalist crisis during the 1970s fundamentally altered the situation. Each world crisis has involved a re-division of labour between the imperialist powers.

This crisis has seen the rising economic power of Japan and Germany, vis-a-vis the United States. The crisis and collapse of the Eastern bloc has deepened the rivalry between the three strongest nations.

While the United States has upped its use of militarism, so far this has been against the less-developed countries. But despite nuclear weapons, the danger still exists that as the economic crisis worsens, a catastrophic new inter-imperialist war could occur.

How is imperialism to be destroyed? Spectacular struggles against imperialism in the semi-colonial countries, like the Vietnam war in the 1960s, gave rise to many illusions on the left that imperialism could be besieged and defeated 'from the periphery'; by a series of third world revolutions.

But the recent experience of the Gulf war shows that the basic question determining whether imperialism can be thrown back is that of the balance of power between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the workers in the advanced capitalist countries. Without revolution in the West, the defeat of imperialism is a pipe dream.

## agenda

## Activist's Diary

### July

5th  
Bop against Debt. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, 7.30pm. Entrance £3/£1.50 concessions.

6th  
Women for Socialism social, Conway Hall, London, 7.30pm.

6th  
Picket of Pentonville prison in support of Poll Tax prisoners. Meet at main gates, Caledonian Rd., 2.30pm.

11th  
Mass picket in support of NUJ strikers at Marshall Cavendish, IPC and Haymarket. Outside Marshall Cavendish, 119 Wardour St., London WC1, 1pm.

13th  
National Cancel the Debt demonstration. Assemble Imperial War Museum 12 noon. Rally Trafalgar Square 2.30pm

13th  
'Write it Off', social and

meeting, 7pm-11pm, Conway Hall, London. Speakers: Bernie Grant MP, Martha Osamor, Theresa Hayter. Followed by live music. Organised by the Socialist Movement.

14th  
Bastille Day picket of Wandsworth Prison in support of Poll Tax prisoners. 2.30pm

### August

24th-30th  
Socialist Outlook residential summer school, North Wales. Contact Socialist Outlook for details.

### November

23rd  
Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee conference on 'Women in the Unions - Fighting for our Rights'. 10am-5pm, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, WC1.

29th-Dec 1st  
Socialist Outlook rally on 'Crisis in the Third World'. Socialist Outlook supporters note change of date.

# Feedback

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



Who will be left holding the baby after the by-election?

## Plaid's challenge

Readers may have gained the wrong impression of our view of Welsh nationalism from our article in SO 2. We feel that the essential point about Plaid Cymru is that the Welsh nationalist movement, of which Plaid Cymru is a part, represents a new challenge to the British left.

Whilst we believe that Plaid is not an alternative to Labour, it is not enough to baldly state this as some kind of definitive, finalised fact, which is unfortunately the practice of most of the left.

Our approach must be to address the issues that have created Welsh nationalism, recognising both its weaknesses and its progressive content, and engaging Plaid activists in an open dialogue. It is in this context that our remarks on Campaign Group Students in Wales make sense.

We argue that they do exactly the opposite: they adopt a chauvinistic, anti-Welsh language, anti 'all nationalisms' stance, which is coincidentally that of Neil Kinnock. The contrast between this and their slavish support for the ANC is stark but illuminating.

We hope that this letter clarifies our arguments.

**Cofion chwyldroadol,  
Dafydd Rhys and Ed  
Madden.**

## Fresh rail unions' retreat

Regarding the contribution to the debate over the calling off of the LUL strike by the two RMT members writing in SO 3.

It was surely no surprise that most LUL workers were relieved when they were told by their leaders, national and in LUL, that they did not after all have to strike in defence of jobs; indeed that they have already won a substantial victory. This was not a wages strike where a hostile reaction would be normal, but the difficult issue of the defence of jobs. The positive vote for action was the result of popular demand but achieved by a campaign by the RMT leadership on LUL.

The question is whether the rank and file of the RMT on LUL would have been prepared to continue with the action they had already voted for a by a two to one majority if their leadership at its various levels had continued to urge them to do so?

My answer to that is that I don't know. I do know that the move into strike action, after all the normal hesitations which precede it, normally has a strengthening dynamic.

However, whatever the actual situation, the only people who could have given the real

## Walton: should left just accept the 'accomplished fact'?

Like Liam Mac Uaid I would disagree with the recent editorials on the Walton by-election.

It is true that serious tactical objections could be made against the Broad Left's decision to stand but by themselves the objections raised by the editorials indicate a strong adaptation to labourism.

The question as to whether standing was tactically correct cannot be reduced to how many votes Mahmood might win or whether it would create a pretext to intensify the witchhunt, though important, these questions are secondary.

The decisive question was whether Mahmood's candidacy could be used as an effective means of intervention into the class struggle and par-

ticularly as a focus to build an opposition to the cuts and privatisations currently being pushed through in Liverpool. This was what the editorials should have posed as the main focus for debate.

Faced with the accomplished fact of two labour movement candidates in Walton and given that the most politically advanced workers will support the Broad Left, Socialist Outlook should have called for a vote for Mahmood irrespective of whether it regarded the decision to stand as tactically correct.

Of course it is correct to argue against a generalised policy of standing unofficial labour candidates but no-one has argued this and the argument as such has no relevance.

**Patrick Scott  
Enfield**

## Replacing the family unit

Matt Lee argues for a working class or socialist version of the family, on the grounds that it often provides emotional and economic support. Rebecca Fleming replies that the family must be 'abolished' because it oppresses women, youth, lesbians and gay men.

I disagree with both Matt and Rebecca. They, and the Supplement on lesbian and gay liberation which sparked the debate, do not look at the *whole* process through which the family is constructed.

There are strong material reasons why people form and stay in families in present day society: they are by far the most practicable way of caring for children; they can provide financial back-up when you're unemployed; and they promise stability of emotional support.

This is the strength of Matt's point. People *don't* mainly form families because they have been bamboozled by ruling class ideology, as the Supplement on lesbian and gay liberation implied.

Nor do people get support from the family merely 'as individuals' as Rebecca argues; the family systematically, as an institution, gives this support.

However, what Matt misses is that people meet their needs through families because of a wider institutional setting. The absence of collective child care is crucial. The instability and competition of the job market forces people to move and thus breaks up non-family networks.

The nastiness of society puts a particular premium on apparently stable, institutionalised emotional relationships. Its crushing of creativity puts a premium on the creativity of parenthood.

Socialism can get rid of, or greatly reduce, these constraints. It can thus enable the needs presently met by the family to be met in other ways, which do not have the oppressive characteristics emphasised by Rebecca. Matt's vision of a socialist family is therefore conservative.

Socialist strategy should, then, be to *replace* the family. We should not propose to *abolish* it, as Rebecca does, since this would mean that many vital needs would go unmet. To talk of abolition is sectarian towards the powerful, valid reasons that people chose - within present constraints - to live within families.

**Alan Nettle  
London N4**

**Jamie Gough  
London WC1B**

**Kate Ahrens  
London N22**

## Partial view of G.B.H.

I was saddened to see that you have fallen into the same trap as the rest of the left press in your review of Alan Bleasdale's *G.B.H.* (SO 3).

For socialists, reviewing fiction has always been a treacherous path to tread, and far too often in the past, as in this case, the quality of the work has been ignored in the pursuit of judging its political 'right-on-ness'.

Although I would not suggest for one minute that the answer therefore is to take no account of the political viewpoint that any fictional piece puts across, the method of only addressing this aspect of the work gives a partial and often misleading view of what value such a piece may have.

I don't agree with the political messages that have so far been presented in *G.B.H.* but I do think that it is a very well-written, directed and acted piece of drama. I will continue to watch it, not so that I can be suitably outraged about the latest inaccurate portrayal of the left, but because I enjoy it, and I am interested in what happens to the characters.

Socialists do, and should, enjoy fictional work that doesn't necessarily present only an orthodox marxist view of the world. The whole of the left would be a lot more miserable if that was not the case!

But all too often, left journals, this one unfortunately included (but not as often as the rest, thankfully!), seem to feel obliged in their reviews, to condemn out of hand anything that shows the smallest deviation from that orthodox view.

Let's have a little more honesty comrades!

**Evan Pritchard  
Manchester**

## Student struggles

Paul McGarry, in his letter in SO4, complains about my articles on the National Union of Students (NUS). But he agrees that two Left Unity (LU) supporters did sign a petition calling for the banning of 'Return'.

The two were also leading supporters of *Socialist Organiser*, and held important positions in NUS. No attempt was made by either LU or *Socialist Organiser* to distance themselves from the actions of the two.

Second, Palestine was to be debated in the NUS conference on the Gulf war. The possibility of winning a good position on this was defeated by the joint action of LU and Labour students (NOLS). A bureaucratic manoeuvre meant that it was the last amendment to be discussed - and a filibuster by NOLS meant that it was not discussed.

In terms of the elections to the NUS executive, McGarry criticises the decision to vote for the SWP, rather than to reopen nominations to allow Labour Students to win. He claims that the SWP have no strategy for NUS - presumably suggesting that NOLS do.

Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* left LU, as did Green students, independents and supporters of *Workers Power*, because it had ceased to be a united front.

**Andrew Berry  
Bristol**



Roger Lyons

## What's going on in MSF?

By Alison Miles and Glenn Sutherland (MSF London Region)

THE CONFERENCE of the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union (MSF) in May graphically revealed a real struggle for power which is going on in the apparatus of the union.

At the conference, results of the election for the new General Secretary to replace Ken Gill were announced. Roger Lyons, Assistant General Secretary and ex-ASTMS 'left winger' beat Barbara Switzer, ex-TASS 'left winger' by 73,000 votes to 42,000.

What did this result reveal? Roger Lyons was the candidate of 'MSF for Labour' - a coalition of ex-ASTMS full-timers and NEC members, who want to bring MSF firmly into the Kinnock camp. Switzer was the candidate of 'Unity Left', which is the successor of the old TASS Broad Left.

The fact that Switzer was seen by the media and by many MSF members as the 'left' candidate is called into question by her record on the Labour Party National Executive. Only once

has she voted with the left - on the Gulf war.

If 'MSF for Labour' want to move the union firmly to a pro-Kinnock line, there should be no illusions about what the Ken Gill 'Unity left' leadership has meant for the union. Its Broad Left predecessor was formed originally in DATA, the Draughtsmen's (sic) union, in order to fight for leadership against the right wing which then controlled DATA. Having succeeded in this objective by electing Ken Gill and winning the majority of the executive, the Broad left batted down the hatches.

### Electoral machine

The Broad Left became an electoral machine, leaving little or no room for real political debate. Taking up generally left wing positions after the union became TASS, the BL operated in any extreme bureaucratic way, with little rank and file participation.

The legacy of an extremely bureaucratized, but 'left' union leadership, found its expression in the election outcome. For many MSF members there seemed little to choose between

the two candidates.

At the May conference while many of the main planks of left policy supported by the union remained intact, the character of the Ken Gill leadership was shown by its inability to respond to the real challenges facing the union. Massive jobs losses have been declared in virtually every sector in which MSF recruits - in engineering (with redundancies and closures threatening in Rolls Royce and British Aerospace); the finance sector, with many banks and insurance houses slashing jobs and freezing pay as well as shedding union recognition; and in the NHS.

In response to the bureaucratization and lack of fight in the union, a small grouping to fight for union democracy - Network 90 - has been set up. It is opening a fight for accountability (in MSF) of the NEC and full-timers leading up to the next rule-change conference in 1994. It will also campaign for the implementation of important policy initiatives taken at this year's conference.

Network 90 can be contacted c/o Lucy Maxwell Scott, 1 St. James Drive, London SW17 6JY

## TGWU leaders aim for fudge on anti-union laws

by a TGWU activist

At its first conference since the defeat of the dockers' strike, the TGWU leadership looks set to fudge the issue of opposition to anti-union laws.

In an otherwise uncontroversial agenda, nearly forty branches and districts have submitted motions on anti-union legislation. The majority clearly demand the repeal of all anti-union laws, with some also calling for support for the Campaign for Free Trade Unions. But a minority reiterate the position of the Labour Party document 'Looking to the future', which retains many of the most important restrictions on action imposed by the Tories.

But rather than have a debate between the two positions, the Todd leadership has gerrymandered the agenda, so that the T&G leadership can get away with supporting both positions. This means that the only way that a policy of consistent opposition to anti-union laws could be won would be by overturning the conference agenda, requiring a two thirds majority; or by overturning the Labour policy document.

This fudge is consistent with

Ron Todd's record on anti-union legislation. The dockers strike was sold out just a few weeks after Todd had promised that a major dispute would result from the sacking of a single worker. And at last year's TUC congress, the TGWU delegation voted for both the NALGO motion calling for repeal of all anti-union legislation, and the GMB motion supporting Labour policy.

The agenda has been so arranged that support for the Labour position will follow Kinnock's speech to the conference. But the fact that both policies will be passed will allow the Morris leadership to maintain one of Todd's traditions - a veneer of radical rhetoric, and a practice of support for Kinnock's 'new realism'.

But the union's Broad Left is not organising any challenge to this carve-up. Rather, it is focussing its public meeting on the election for Bill Morris' successor as Deputy General Secretary.

A group of left-wing union activists, the TGWU solidarity group, will be organising a meeting at the conference to discuss a way forward after Morris' victory.

## Yorkshire miners 'disgusted' at Kinnock

SEVEN YEARS after the police riot against the miners at Orgreave, they have ad-

mitted that it was them, not the NUM, that started the violence. This was just days after the case against miners' leaders Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield was dropped.

Instead of continuing to try to jail 39 miners for life for their part in the Orgreave mass picket, the police have paid them £425,000 in an 'ex gratia' payment. A South Yorkshire cop admitted that 'things we did in those days ...make me shudder even now...I can still hear the screams...'

What was the reaction of Labour leader Neil Kinnock? A final admission that he should have backed the miners against the police, after years of vitriol against the NUM?

Instead Kinnock, true to form, compounded his lack of support for the miners in the past by presenting the *Daily Mirror* journalists that hounded and vilified the NUM leadership with a 'Reporters of the Year' award.

The Yorkshire NUM Council pronounced itself 'disgusted'. They will certainly be joined in their reaction by any socialist worth the name.

But the vindication of the miners in the courts is not the only reason for the left to celebrate. Elections to the executive of the NUM shortly after the legal victories produced a solid left majority for the first time in many years.

## Rail workers defy Tory anti-union laws

THE MAIN rail workers union, the RMT, has decisively rejected Tory anti-union laws at its conference. Delegates agreed that the union should fight for the right to strike and to secondary picketing.

And in a cliffhanger later on, the conference decided to maintain the union's policy of refusing to accept government funds for postal balloting. But when the rail delegates came to vote on the issue of backing the anti-Poll Tax campaign, the motion was lost by just two votes.

In a move that will dismay the Labour leadership, the union leadership suffered a massive defeat on the issue of unilateral disarmament. Now the conference will go on to discuss the issue of pay, in the aftermath of recent climbdowns by the union leadership over strike action.

## Shell runs illegal blacklist

by Dave Osler

Shell UK is running a computerised blacklist of participants in last summer's North Sea oil rig sit-ins, Offshore Industry Liaison Committee (OILC) activists have told MPs.

The company is even making information available to its rivals, stopping some workers finding employment anywhere in the industry, they claimed. If true, this would contravene the Data Protection Act.

### Survey

Initial results of a survey of applicants to the unofficial inter-union body's hardship fund were tabled as written evidence to the Commons energy select committee last month.

Out of 52 respondents unemployed since the dispute, 47 had been working fields operated by Shell, mainly indirectly through contractors such as Wood Group and Press Offshore.

All but one felt they were being victimised for their activities during the industrial unrest, motivated largely by demands for improved safety in the wake of the Piper Alpha disaster, which killed 226 people in July 1988.

OILC alleged blacklisting occurs through Shell's Offshore Personnel Information System (OPRIS) set-up, which allocates a unique permanent number to all offshore employees.

### Tabs

OPRIS is used to keep computerised tabs on exactly who is where at any given time, which is both a legal requirement and essential for health and safety purposes.

But the system obviously identified all those taking part in last year's occupations. In an industry where most work comes on short term contract, activists can soon find themselves unemployable.

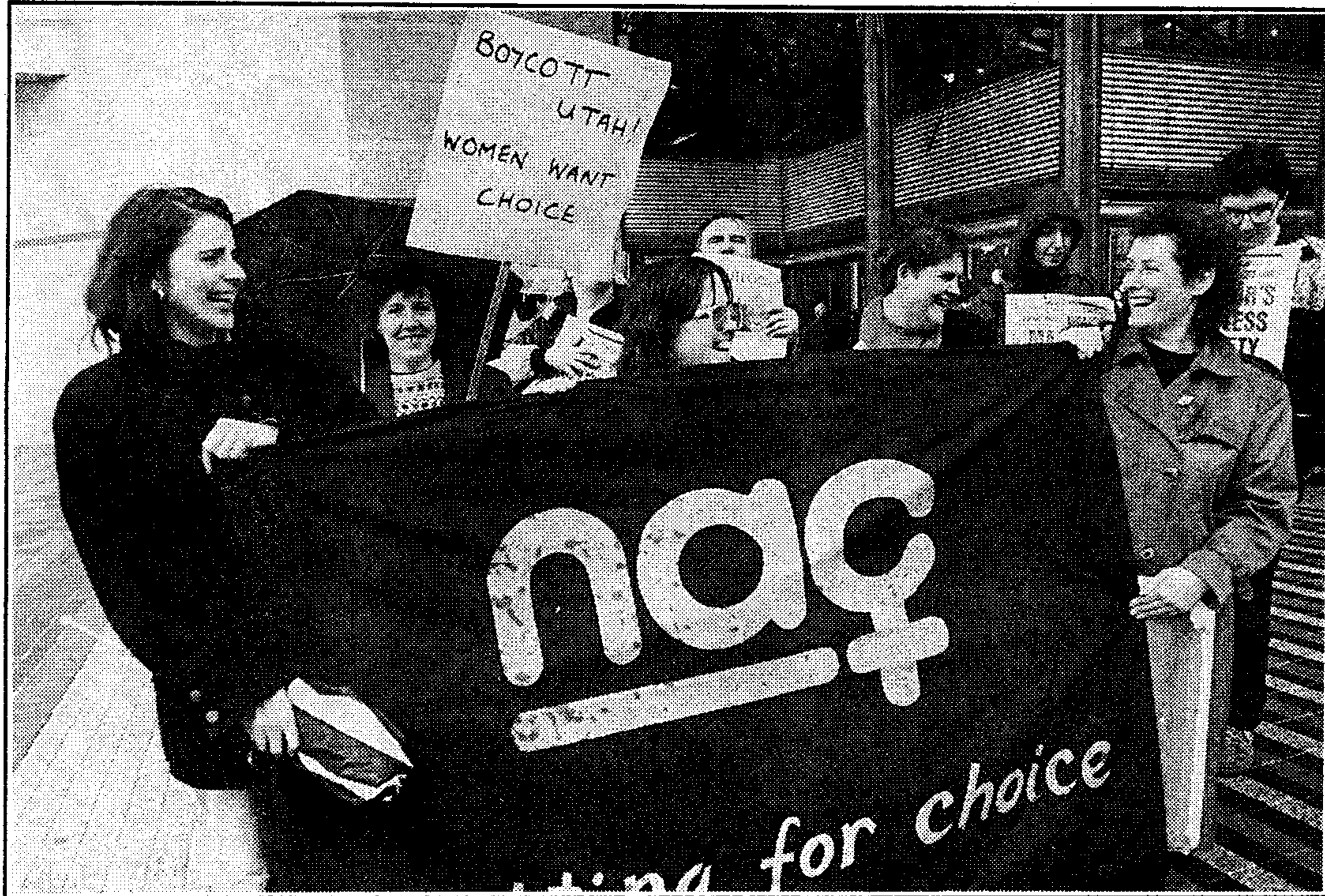
OILC suspects that Shell is sharing industrial relations information with competitors,

who often ask potential employees for their OPRIS numbers if their CV indicates employment with Shell. Other companies have no obvious use for such details, OILC points out, as the system is entirely internal to Shell.

### Activists

Ronnie McDonald, OILC chair, claimed that anyone could ring Shell House in Aberdeen and ask for OPRIS information: 'The OPRIS system is being used to single out trade union activists', he stated.

A spokesperson for Shell in Aberdeen admitted that what he called an 'OPRIS bar' was imposed on some 473 individuals who had occupied installations last year, but was lifted on December 21 1990. He categorically denied that such information had been made available to competitors. 'Whatever else we do, we observe the law of the land', he stated.



A picket was called of the International Olympics Committee meeting in Birmingham in support of a call to boycott the state of Utah. Utah was bidding for the 1998 Winter Olympics. The boycott was called for after Governor Norm Bangert signed into law the US's most restrictive abortion law.

## New attack on reproductive rights

One of the only two organisations to provide donor insemination to women on a non-discriminatory basis – the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) – has just announced that this service will close after July.

The withdrawal of these facilities will badly hit lesbians and single women who are

denied access to DI in the NHS and the vast majority of the private health sector. It marks a particularly significant blow to women's reproductive rights in the wake of the debates around the Embryology Act, and the ongoing court battles over the rights of lesbians to foster and adopt.

Though Ian Jones, director of BPAS, has stated that the abolition of the service is not related to the 'virgin births' controversy, there is a discriminatory policy underlying the move.

This was revealed by a BPAS spokeswoman who said 'Abortion is a fundamental human

right, but access to reproductive technology – although it is desirable and should be freely available – is not.'

The decision was also clearly influenced by market forces and the economic strictures that BPAS is currently operating under. It was felt by the majority of the management committee that the number of women using the DI services did not justify the human and financial resources that they require. This is a situation which would be worsened by the regulatory demands of the Embryology Act.

### Free Patrick McLaughlin!

A campaign has been started in support of Patrick McLaughlin, an Irish prisoner framed on 'conspiracy' charges in 1986. McLaughlin was sentenced to life imprisonment, despite very contradictory evidence and considerable confusion on the part of the judge.

McLaughlin was convicted of 'conspiracy to cause explosions' after an unexploded bomb was found outside Chelsea army barracks in November 1985.

The evidence against him rested on three points: that a fingerprint was found on a bag inside the bomb; that his name was found on a magazine in a van allegedly used to transport the bomb; and that he had a conversation with a police officer in which he said that he

was aware that a bomb was being made at a flat in North London.

But other fingerprints were also found, though the police refused to identify them. McLaughlin claimed that the magazine was planted in the van. And he denied that any incriminating conversation took place. In addition, one police officer said that he never heard McLaughlin mention anything about a bomb.

Conspiracy charges are frequently used against Irish people, particularly when the charges are political and there is a lack of real evidence.

Leicester Trades Council are now urging that the labour movement should campaign for McLaughlin's release.

### Teachers force retreat on cuts

by Bob Whitehead

Teachers have forced Sandwell Labour council in Birmingham to retreat from threatened redundancies, following a strong vote for strike action.

Sandwell has long portrayed itself as a caring Labour authority, but this image was destroyed with the recent threat of ten redundancies among teachers, late in the term.

Fortunately, this was met with a strong response from the National Union of Teachers. A

well attended general meeting voted unanimously for strike action. This was followed by an 82% majority for a three day strike in a ballot.

This produced a U-turn from the local education authority – all remaining redundancy notices were withdrawn. After years of poorly attended union meetings, such a rapid and decisive move in defence of all teachers is a positive sign. The role of the hard left Socialist Teachers Alliance in the local union leadership was a key factor in the campaign.

## Tide of struggles against NHS opt-outs

By HARRY SLOAN

THE JULY 5 Day of Action called by NALGO in solidarity with sacked NHS clerical staff victimised for taking strike action against Oldham health authority coincides with a rising tide of local activity in defence of the health service.

Rallies are being held in many hospitals, challenging the Tories' reactionary NHS 'reforms'.

### Campaigns

Campaigns against the second wave of over 100 would-be hospital opt-outs across the country have gathered strength and urgency from the revelation that hundreds of jobs were axed in April by two of the Tories' flagship 'Self Governing Trusts', Guy's and Bradford.

Now the plans to cut more nursing posts – including senior nurses and midwives – by the opted-out North Middlesex Hospital will add further impetus to already active campaigns.

In London, health workers and local community organisations are linking up to fight opt-outs, with especially active campaigns in Ealing, Barnet, Waltham Forest and Parkside.

The Hands Off Our NHS

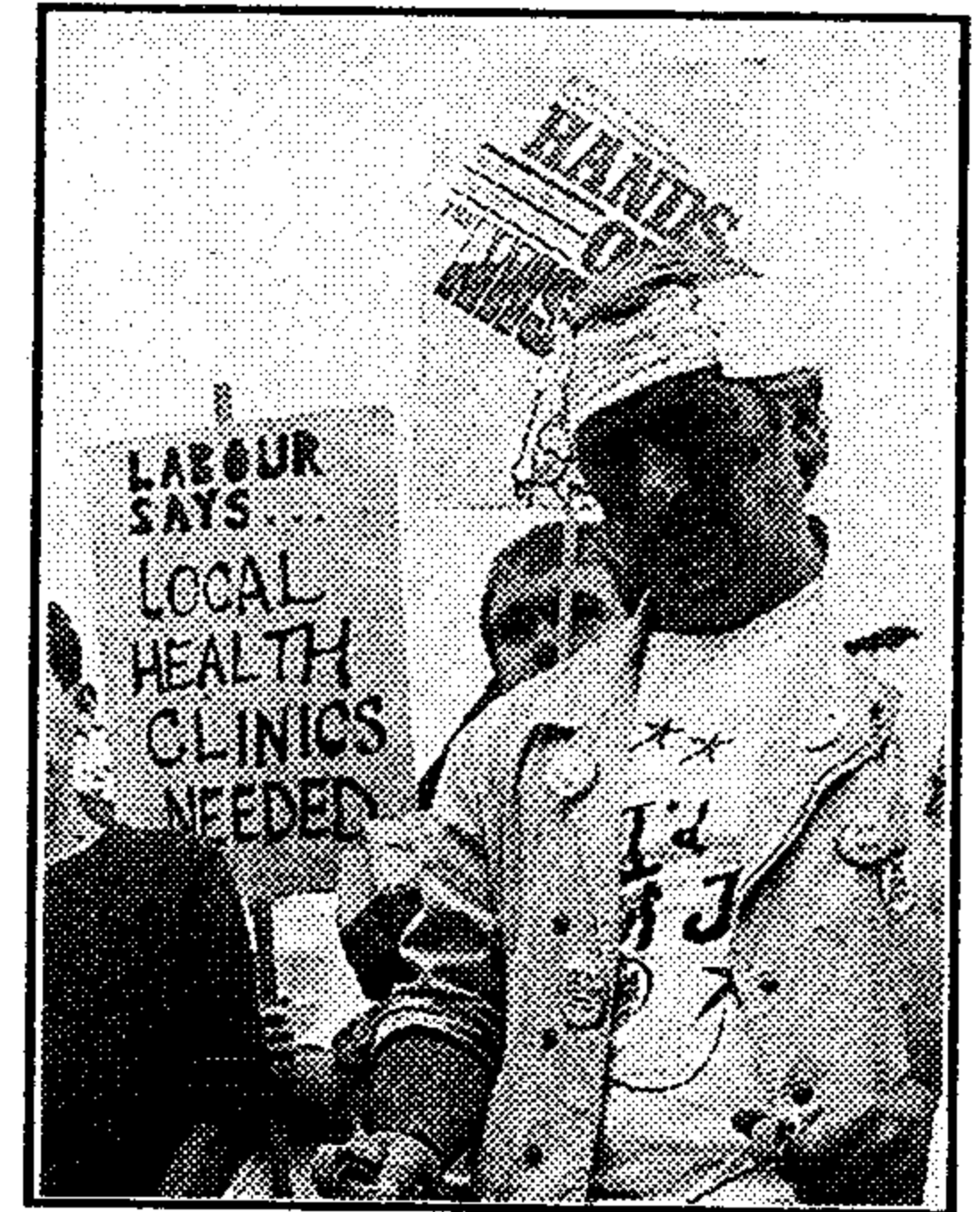
### Nazis attack left

The National Front have stepped up attempts to establish a presence in West London. A group of from the 'Flag' faction of the National Front organised an attack on left-wing newspaper sellers in Hounslow on June 22.

The attack follows a failed attempt by the nazis to hold a demonstration in Uxbridge recently, which was met by a determined mobilisation of the left and the Black community.

Fascists have not attempted to organise on the streets in the area in five years, though they have a history of standing in council elections.

Inaction from the police means that continued vigilance from the left and the Black community will be necessary.



Campaign reports that campaigners from many other parts of the country have been ordering leaflets and material against opt-outs.

In the Oxfordshire region, TUC health unions covering the four counties of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire have joined together to publish a special campaigning leaflet, and a detailed attack on management's plans to opt out eight units.

The report *Reasons to be Fearful* shows that two of the Trusts would be in deficit for at least two years, and five hope to make 'surpluses' ranging from 0.06% to just 1% of their annual budget. The eighth (Milton Keynes General Hospital) has submitted no financial information, while it has already slashed back its ambitious plans to open up new beds and expand its workforce – in effect staging a preemptive Guy's-style cutback.

### Bitter reality

With Trusts now a concrete, bitter reality rather than an abstract future threat, and with many of the first-wave Trusts already facing financial problems, the battle against 'opting out' is likely to continue throughout the summer.

Now is the time for the unions to raise the profile of the campaign: if the Oldham NALGO strikers are to be defended, and Trust managers deterred from attempting similar union-busting tactics, the unions must show themselves ready to fight back in defence of jobs, conditions and union recognition.

Hands Off Our NHS can be contacted at 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS.

### Hounslow council threaten cuts in jobs and services

by a Hounslow NALGO member

Hounslow council are threatening a cuts package of some £12 million in the next financial year. NALGO members are preparing for action.

Jobs and services have already been pared back to a minimum, following £10 million of cuts in the last two years. The ruling Labour group have made it clear that 'nothing is sacred', and are clearly prepared to consider cuts in any area, in an attempt to keep the Poll Tax to a minimum.

NALGO members fear up to 100 redundancies, the removal of nursery provisions for under-5s, and increased charges for services such as Meals on Wheels. But as NALGO members were preparing for action against these cuts, it was announced that a £1.7 million overspend on social services would lead to still more cuts.

The number of hospital social workers has been drastically cut and two new day centres have been 'put on ice'. Consultation is being kept to a minimum. NALGO members are now preparing to ballot for strike action.

Given that the council Labour Group are clearly prepared to do the Tories' dirty work, immediate strike action across the council is necessary to defend jobs and services.

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# *socialist* **OUTLOOK**



## **Hands off Slovenia and Croatia!**

The attack on Slovenia by the Yugoslav federal army threatens to throw Yugoslavia into an uncontrollable civil war. If it continues it will inevitably spread to Croatia and then the whole federation.

As we go to press reports suggest the Yugoslav army is continuing attacks, including ter-

rorist attacks in the Slovene capital Ljubljana, despite the ceasefire.

Slovenia and Croatia have been provoked into the declaration of independence by the strong-arms tactics of the ex-Communist leadership in the Serbian republic.

Serbia's thuggish boss, Slobodan Milosevic, aims to create a 'Greater Serbia' - dominat-

ing the other republics and repressing national minorities like the Albanians in Kosovo.

### **Dirty work**

Federation prime minister Ante Markovic is carrying out the dirty work of Milosevic by sending in the army. The army itself, although keeping its distance from Milosevic so far, is

Serbian dominated.

The emergence of right-wing nationalism in Croatia and Slovenia is directly the responsibility of the Serbian leadership. Milosevic himself has no intention of defending even Stalinist-style 'socialism'.

His regime is increasingly right wing, allying itself with semi-fascist Serbian militias.

The Yugoslavian crisis cannot be solved in the interests of the working class by military action against Slovenia or any other republic demanding independence.

The attacks by the Yugoslav army have included terrorist air raids against civilian targets, trying to intimidate the republic to drop its demands.

A socialist federation in Yugoslavia can only be built on the basis of equality between the republics. Equality implies the right of independence, which is currently the will of the overwhelming majority of Croats and Slovenes.

A new federation could only be built via recognising the right to independence for all republics and provinces, and by the overthrow of the Milosevic regime in Serbia.

The immediate task for socialists is to demand that the Yugoslav army gets out of Slovenia, before a terrorist attack is turned into a bloodbath.

*Yugoslavian tragedy - see page 9*

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