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Socialist OUTLOOK

SUPPLEMENT
theory + practice

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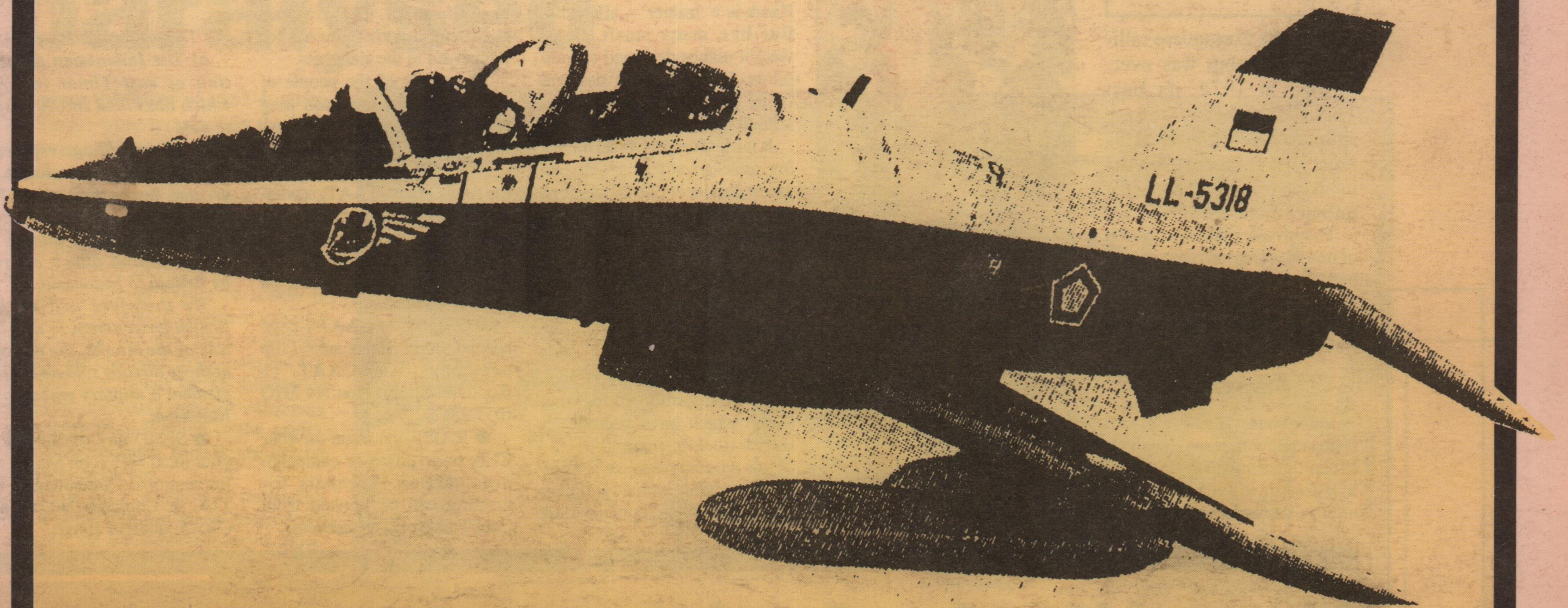
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No. 57, February 26, 1994



**Stop selling
arms to
Indonesian
butcher regime!**

BRITISH HAWKS

FUEL TIMOR SLAUGHTER

WHILE the genocidal regime in Jakarta continues its slaughter of the people of East Timor, British capitalism is happily cashing in, according

to the latest *Air Force Monthly* magazine:

"Indonesia plans to acquire the means to build combat aircraft and has signed an agreement

with British Aerospace for collaborative production of up to 144 Hawks – mostly the light attack variants – to follow 20 trainers previously delivered

from UK production. A commitment to 24 new Hawks has already been made ..."

■ STOP the arms to Indonesia – see PAGE 2

Stop British aid to Timor slaughter

By Paul Walker

WHEN the Portuguese military dictatorship was overthrown in 1974, its East Timor colony began the transition to independence. This process was stopped by the invasion of the Indonesian military dictators in 1975.

The invasion and occupation of this small nation ranks in barbarity with the crimes of the Nazis and Pol Pot. One third of the 600,000 population have been slaughtered.

Slaughter

Indonesian dictator Suharto is no stranger to mass slaughter. When the army came to power in Indonesia in 1965 at least one million supporters of the Indo-



Indonesian troops

nesian Communist Party (PKI) were killed.

But Suharto is a friend of the West, and especially the US and Britain. Now John Major's government, and before him Thatcher's, are supplying weaponry to help the Indonesian army fight the Timor resistance - FRETILIN.

Britain supplies a fighter

plane called the 'Hawk' made by British Aerospace. The Hawk is a 'trainer' - allegedly. But like many small, light-weight planes designed to train pilots, it is in much demand from military dictatorships around the world.

It is ideal for low-level bombing attack, for flying between mountains; it is one of the most feared weapons for the Timor resistance.

Arms deals

Indonesia, like Malaysia, is a recipient of British government aid, a way of ensuring arms deals. But British interest goes beyond the sordid 'aid for arms deals' which have become a British stock-in-trade.

For an area of the sea called the Timor Gap, which should be under the sovereignty of East

Timor but is controlled by Indonesia, is being explored for oil by Indonesia, the US and ...Britain. Another reward for British aid to the slaughter.

The plight of the people of east Timor has been too long ignored by the British labour movement.

Now the Campaign against the Arms Trade (CAAT) is waging a major campaign, ably aided by the indefatigable John Pilger whose sensational film on East Timor was shown on ITV on 22 February.

● ORDER the CAAT 4-page special on the Hawk sales (10p per copy) from CAAT, 11 Goodwin St., London N4 3HQ (071 281 0297).

● RAISE the issue on your CLP, trade union or campaign organisation. Speakers for meeting can be booked from CAAT at the above address.

● MOVE this model resolution for labour movement bodies

"This organisation notes:

a) The Indonesian occupation of east Timor in 1975 which has killed 200,00 people to date

b) These killings represent on third of the population, a greater proportion than Pol Pot killed in Cambodia.

c) The intended sale of 40 Hawk ground attack aircraft by Britain to Indonesia.

We therefore call on the British government to stop the sale of the Hawks, the delivery of those already sold and to implement a military embargo of Indonesia."

● SEND any resolutions to your local MP; John Major; the International Committee of the TUC at Congress House, and CAAT, address above.

New UN deal with Serbs threatens Bosnia carve-up

by Geoff Ryan

WHAT are NATO's threats of air-strikes really designed to achieve? Will they stop the dismemberment of Bosnia?

The answer to the second question is simple: 'no'. Because the real aim of the threats is to pressure the Bosnian government into accepting the division of Bosnia on ethnic lines.

For several months western governments have regarded the Bosnian government and the multi-national resistance as the major obstacles to a 'settlement'.

They have viewed with alarm the recent military successes of the Bosnian defence forces.

NATO has stepped in to prevent further military successes for the Bosnian army. News coverage has focused on threats against Serb forces but the NATO resolution also demands that the Bosnian government surrender its far fewer heavy weapons or face NATO air-strikes.

In effect the Bosnian resistance are being asked to give up their arms and hope the UN will protect them. Acceptance of such demands will lead to political, if not actual, suicide. For once Sarajevo is under UN and NATO control then pressure for a 'settlement' will be stepped up.

This is even more the case now that Russian troops are moving into Sarajevo. The Russian Parliament recently voted by 280 to 2 to call for the lifting of all sanctions against Serbia. Pro-Serbian Russian troops will ensure that the Bosnian army is unable to re-gain any territory around Sarajevo.

Escalation

Whilst the UN and NATO are trying to disarm the Bosnian resistance moves to escalate the war are taking place in both Serbia and Croatia.

Slobodan Milosevic, fresh from his electoral victory, is attempting to conscript Bosnian Serbs, including refugees, living in Serbia.

The call up involves all Bosnian Serb men as well as women under 45, including those with children over seven. Those who refuse to serve are branded 'deserters' - a charge which, if pursued, would result in the death penalty.

Milosevic has also poured large numbers of tanks and other heavy weapons into northern and central Bosnia, accompanied by units of the so-called 'Yugoslav' army.



This has taken place under the noses of UN observers. Milosevic clearly isn't too worried about western threats.

Franjo Tudjman keeps threatening to send the Croatian army to intervene in Bosnia. Everyone knows Croatian troops have been involved from the start of the war. Ignoring their presence, however, allows the Italian arms manufacturers to sell large amounts of weaponry to Croatia.

Conscription is also being introduced for Bosnian Croats, particularly for opponents of Tudjman's regime. One of the first to be drafted was Viktor Ivanic, editor of the anti-Tudjman 'Feral Tribune'.

Tudjman and Milosevic are, increasingly, attempting to settle their differences - even if only temporarily. In January they met in Geneva and agreed on 'normalising' relations.

A Milosevic adviser recently visited Zagreb. Plans are under way to re-open the main Zagreb-Belgrade highway.

However, both Milosevic and Tudjman have problems with some of their erstwhile supporters. Mate Boban has resigned as President of the Croatian controlled 'Herzeg-Bosna' and has withdrawn from participation in the Geneva talks on the partition of Bosnia. The reasons are not at all clear but it is likely they reflect major disagreements between Boban and Tudjman.

Milosevic had to overturn the results of three ballots for President of the Krajina before his nominee Milan Martić eventually defeated former Milosevic ally Milan Babic.

The 'rapprochement' between Zagreb and Belgrade is partially determined by the need to deal with their respective internal critics. But it is also an attempt to join forces to finally defeat the Bosnian resistance. Such aims are entirely consistent with the policies of the imperialist powers.

Bosnia needs all the help we can give if it is to survive the combined threats from NATO, the UN, Croatia and Serbia.

ANTI-MILITARISM

Just Out!

New and updated edition of

ARMAGEDDON IN EUROPE

Why we defend multi-ethnic Bosnia

By Geoff Ryan, 48pp

Send £2.10p (inc p&p) to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

A government in decay, an opposition paralysed

Not since the fiasco of 1963-4, when the Tories were wracked by the Profumo scandal, has a government been so unpopular and discredited as John Major's current crew. The Thatcherite 'revolution' has created a Britain of poverty, economic decline, job insecurity and deep corruption.

The corruption aspect of course is nothing to do with the personal morality of Tory MPs, and everything to do with the corrupt use of power. Sixty thousand Tories and their friends get fat salaries for sitting on unelected 'quangos' managing everything from housing to the media. And their business friends get the fat contracts doled out.

That is just a symptom of deeper decay. Figures out last week showed not only that the economic recovery is slowing, but the conditions of the British workforce are the worst of any major capitalist country. New jobs are disproportionately low-paid and part time; and that is one reason why this year, for the first time ever, there will be more women in the workforce than men.

Ever since 1979 Tory policies have hit the poorest section of the community worst. In the past decade, the poorest 10 per cent of the population have become a staggering 14 per cent worse off. In real terms, there are nearly 5 million unemployed.

The VAT and other tax rises coming in May will hit not only the poor, old and unemployed, but wide sections of the employed workforce and the middle class as well. The 2-3 per cent pay offers to public service workers covered by pay review bodies, like nurses and teachers, will amount to a *pay cut*. Worse, the government's refusal to cover the cost of these awards mean that pay increases will mean job losses and cuts in vital services.

Hidden decline

All this is the end-product of 15 years of Thatcherism. In the 1980s the chronic economic decline was all hidden by the US-led mini-boom, North Sea oil money and the enormous revenues from privatisation of key industries. But now almost everything has been sold off the accelerating destruction of Britain's industrial base is clear for everyone to see. Britain is becoming a low-wage, service-based economy.

Against this background, the costs of mass unemployment are forcing the Tories to an inevitable conclusion: to stabilise state finances they have to dismantle the welfare state at national and local level. They hardly bother to deny it - that was the main reason for their ill-fated 'back to basics' campaign in the first place.

If the Tories are merely very unpopular, John Major is finished. The person who proclaims 'we go on with back to basics' is a political clown who must soon be dumped even by the people who inhabit the Tory back benches. The pressure for this will rocket when the Tories suffer crushing defeats in the local and European elections in May and June this



But where is the Labour Party? Even a pledge to repeal VAT on fuel is deemed too radical by Smith's timid opposition

year.

But here is the paradox. A very weak government, presided over by someone with the political acumen of a dim-witted jellyfish, hugely unpopular, scandal-ridden, and ridiculed by the mass media every day of the week. How can such a government go on and on with its attacks and survive?

There are two connected reasons. The first is the low level of industrial struggle, but this is beginning to change - albeit in small and modest ways.

New mood

The weakness of the government and the divisions among the new realist union leaders are creating a new mood; as is the simple need for many workers to fight back. There are still big wages fights to come in the public sector this year.

But the overwhelmingly most important reason for the Tories hanging on is the complete and dire passivity of the Labour leadership and the weakness of the Labour left.

Why doesn't Labour wage a campaign to kick the Tories out? What doesn't it say loud and clear that the Tories have no mandate, and demand a general election?

Labour could take some immediate and minimal steps which would hugely boost its popularity. It could declare immediately that it will reverse the VAT on fuel measures. It could say that it will launch a nationwide house-building scheme using state funds. It could promise that new Labour councils elected in May will bring in needs-based budgets and defy the government.

Labour could pledge that the manic and crazy rush to build more roads will be scrapped in favour of public transport, and that the nationalisation of British Rail will be stopped.

It could promise that pensions in future will be indexed with average earnings, not inflation, so that the elderly don't get poorer than everyone else. It could pledge to scrap prescription charges and inject new cash into the NHS.

"What kind of Labour leadership is it that regards full employment as some kind of old fashioned ideological quirk?"

Labour could promise to use state investment to boost jobs and to reestablish wages councils along with introducing a national minimum wage.

In other words why doesn't Labour commit itself to break from the market economic consensus, lock, stock and barrel?

Part of the answer for why they won't do this was given by the sudden decision by Bryan Gould to leave politics in Britain. Gould was a key Kinnockite lieutenant through the 1980s, a key figure in the grey tide of new realists which swept out the Bennite left wing challenge.

Yet this same this same Bryan Gould is now regarded as a dangerous and subversive leftie by people like John Smith and Gordon Brown - for daring to argue

for full employment! What kind of Labour leadership is it that regards full employment as some kind of old fashioned ideological quirk?

It is a leadership deeply wedded to free-market ideology, which - contrary to what the 'modernisers' think, is one of the most old-fashioned economic theories available. Anyone who thinks that Adam Smith is more 'modern' than Marx or even Keynes is useless as a labour movement leader.

Elections

The current tragi-comedy of official British politics cannot possibly continue. Pay battles and elections in May and June await the Tories. The wrath of millions who see their living standards falling cannot long be held off. The anger of around 100 Tory MPs who are worried about their seats awaits John Major.

And to prepare for these developments, in every section of the labour movement the demand must be raised for the Labour leadership to break with the free market consensus and adopt policies of full employment and defence of the welfare state.

TUC

unite

against

RACISM

join the TUC
in a national
demonstration
on saturday
march 19

racism is an evil
which should have
no place in society

Assemble: 11.00 am
Spitalfields Market
(off Commercial Street)
London E1
March: 12.00 noon
Rally: 2.00 pm
London Fields
(off Mare Street), London E8

EDITORIAL

School saved

THE CAMPAIGN to stop the closure of Dick Shepherd School in Lambeth won a partial victory on February 3 when a proposal by Cllr Greg Tucker to keep the school open until after the May elections was passed by Lambeth Education Committee.

Teachers, parents and local residents have waged a strong campaign to reverse Lambeth Council's decision to close the school including a one day strike by Lambeth NUT.

The school was to be a victim of cuts and 'market forces'.

Cllr Tucker said, 'we should reject market forces in schools and see what we can do as an education authority to help this school develop'.

He was backed by Lambeth NUT rep, Dick North.

The campaign to save the school will continue.

SMTUC defends welfare state and internationalism

By Alan Thornett

Nearly two hundred and fifty trades unionists attended the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee's (SMTUC) successful conference on 5 and 6 February.

Two plenaries featured workers in struggle from a range of industries. A campaigning document was presented to the conference which assessed the situation of the British trade unions today, and proposed the SMTUC's working priorities for the coming year.

Speakers from Sinn Fein, the Turkish Solidarity Campaign and International Workers' Aid for Bosnia addressed an internationalist evening rally along with a Parisian member of the

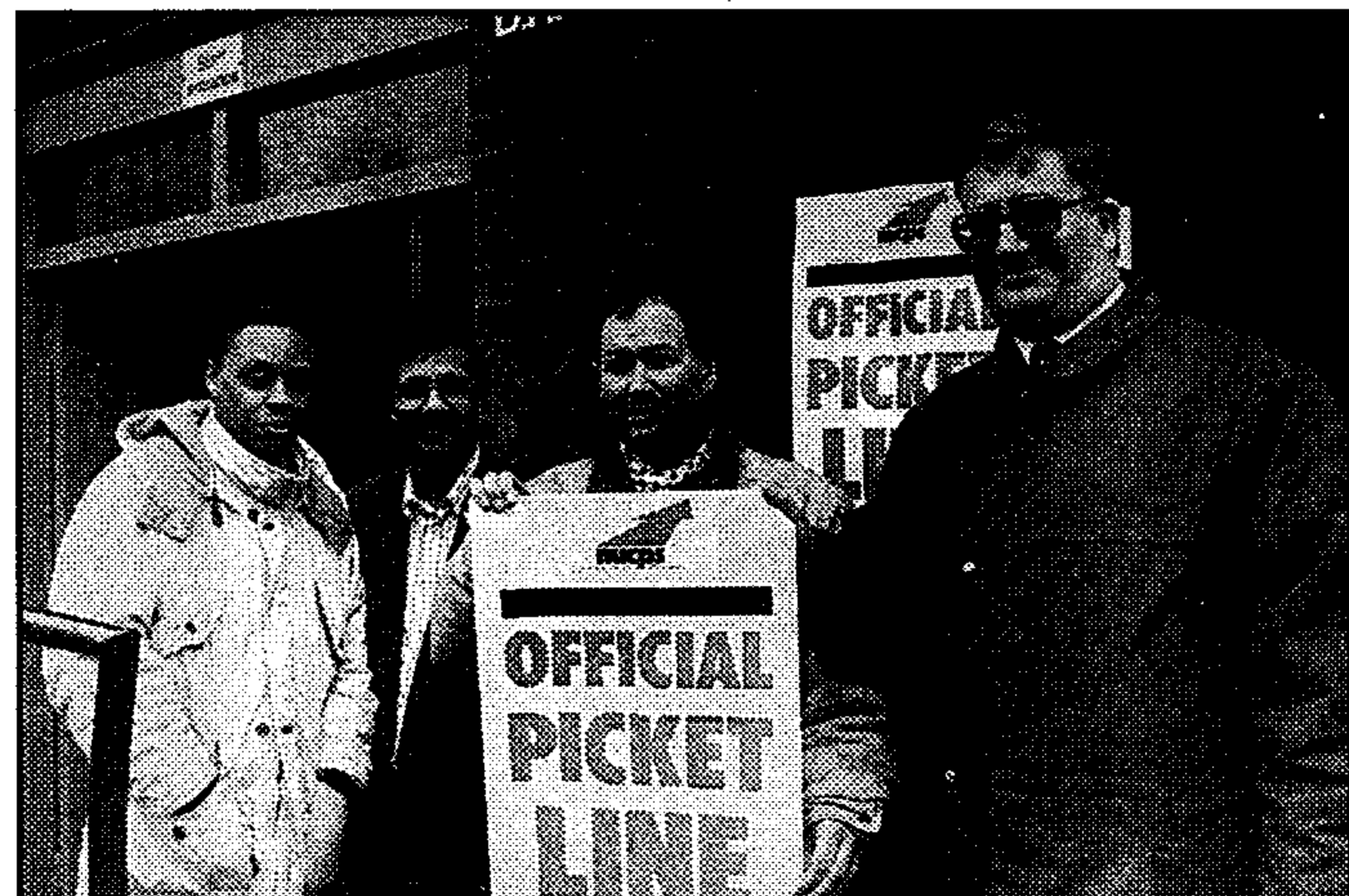
CGT-led strike at Air France and Jaide De Barrios from the Workers' Party in Brazil.

The conference passed a resolution outlining a campaign against the government's proposed public sector pay freeze, including synchronised action against the pay freeze, cuts and privatisation and opposition to attempts to trade jobs for pay.

The incoming steering committee has been asked by the conference to consider organising a major conference in defence of the welfare state, jointly with other campaigns, as the SMTUC's next major event.

The conference will make a radical input to the debate and put forward practical action to be taken.

The SMTUC also called for a general election as the Tory government is clearly discred-



Birmingham civil servants struck against Tories in November

ited, and for a campaign for a vote to Labour at the election.

Broad Lefts will be approached by the SMTUC for a

conference late in the year on organising socialists in the unions.

Profiteering Vickers sinks shipyard jobs

By Hyder Prodhan

VICKERS Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited (VSEL) in Barrow-In-Furness has historically dominated the local economy with a peak core workforce in 1989 of 14,000 workers

In March 1991 VSEL Chief Executive, Noel Davies announced the massacre of over 5,000 workers jobs as part of an ongoing redundancy programme. This came shortly after the announcement of pre-tax profits of £33.4 million!

In the VSEL strategic plan of 1991 (the company response to forecast reductions in government defence spending) Davies claimed the lowest level the workforce would fall to would be around 7,000.

Subsequently he has suggested it could fall as low as 4,000. Shipyard workers are extremely bitter at the betrayals of VSEL bosses and the Tory government who promised secure employment well into the next century.

Privatised

Since the Tories privatised Vickers in 1986 the company has waged war against the trade unions in the yard. In 1988 there was an 11 week strike, ostensibly about fixed versus floating holidays, but in reality about the bosses' attempts to smash the unions.

Yard workers have described the atmosphere inside the cradle of the British nuclear arms industry as 'akin to an army camp' where workers must stand to

attention and account for their every move when the bosses are around'.

1992 saw the completion and naming ceremony, performed by Royal scrounger Princess Diana, of Britain's first Trident missile armed nuclear submarine, HMS 'Vanguard'.

In the same year VSEL Chair - ex-Labour Foreign Affairs Minister - Lord Chalfont awarded himself a nice fat pay rise, £117,000 to £127,000, whilst thousands of workers were being sent down the road.

June 1993 saw the announcement of annual profits of £34.6 million, a rise in excess of 16 per cent. This came shortly before the July 30 news that VSEL's sister yard, Cammel Laird was to close, slamming the door on 165 years of shipbuilding expertise. September 1993 saw the roll-out of the second Trident submarine 'Victorious'.

Increased profits

VSEL's recent half-yearly review revealed an increase in profits after tax of £18.4 million, a company turnover of £233.2 million and a cash balance of £270 million (£38 million in 1989!). The current book order stands at £2.8 million.

Chief executive Davies envisages some 2,500 employed in the future on submarines, 1,500 on surface ships, several hundred involved in land systems and a few hundred more on various commercial products.

The traditionally arrogant and incompetent VSEL attitude to diversification was summed up by Davies, 'the cash is more useful in our balance sheet than frittered away on things that are

not certain to succeed'.

He omitted to mention the destruction of working-class lives he and his super rich pals have presided over or the fact that Trident will have enough firepower to cause up to 4,000 Hiroshimas at a cost of millions per day for the next 20 years.

Share price high

1994 has already witnessed the record high VSEL share price of 953p on January 11 and a couple of days later the local press was full of reports that VSEL is poised to launch a £10 million 'venture fund' to 'boost the economy'.

Crumbs from the table of those who have spent generations extracting massive profits from the town's workers. Current employment levels at the yard are just over 6,500 with more sackings to come.

Shipyard trade unions leaders have singularly failed to build for any kind of workers' fightback, as has the politically inept local Labour Party.

The situation in the shipyard cries out for a fightback. Redundancies proposed must be fought by strike action demanding a shorter working week and division of all work amongst yard workers without loss of pay.

Labour and union activists must raise the call for renationalisation of VSEL under workers control and for the conversion of the company to socially useful production.

Any effective local fightback must link up with all those defence workers nationally and internationally facing similar job cuts. The SMTUC will be pleased to support any such

Lambeth puts boot into local democracy

By Expelled Labour Councillor Steve French

FOLLOWING our report in the last issue that Councillors have been prosecuted for voting against cuts when in poll tax arrears, Lambeth Council went off to their favourite QC James Goudie for legal advice.

Red Jim opined that councillors who refuse to pay their poll tax should now be banned from voting on financial matters (ie nearly everything).

This flies in the face of the legislation which insists that councillors must declare an interest, and face prosecution if

they vote. The new advice proved to be a great way to collect the poll tax - 13 councillors paid up on the spot.

Labour ignored *Outlook* supporter Steve French's protests and banned his vote.

But when Labour lost an amendment to the Liberals, they turned tail and passionately (and successfully) argued with the Chief Executive that his vote should be counted because an amendment didn't count.

This all goes to show that weak social-democrats are incapable of defending even bourgeois democracy.

Donations to pay the costs of the convicted Councillors should be sent to Defend Local Democracy, c/o Councillor Greg Tucker, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London SW2.

Campaigning Leeds

by Bob Wood

WITH ITS AIM firmly fixed on left unity, the Leeds Campaign group determined its priorities for the coming year at its recent annual general meeting.

As a first step, the Group has already called an informal organising meeting in an attempt to co-ordinate the city's response to the national TUC anti-racist demonstration in March.

All the various organisations involved in anti-racist or anti-fascist activity in Leeds were invited, including Youth Against Racism in Europe, the Anti-Nazi League, the Anti-Racist Alliance and Anti-Fascist Action. Leeds Trades Council is also holding a public meeting to mo-

bilise in support for the demonstration.

Other meetings already planned by the Campaign group, which meets on a monthly basis, include a discussion on Ireland and a speaker from the Anti-Nazi League. Later in the year there will be a public meeting with Campaign Group MPs and the local group will continue to support the national Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network.

Although the AGM was slightly down in numbers this year, and the city councillors who nominally support the group were most noticeable by their absence, the group has a healthy active base. And one of its leading supporters, is also likely to be elected to the council in May this year.

HOME NEWS

Piccadilly Four – a small step nearer victory

By a railworker

DEMONSTRATING rail workers in Manchester this week witnessed a step forward in their campaign for reinstatement of four of their RMT colleagues sacked 18 months ago.

The Industrial Tribunal they had come to lobby ruled that the action which led to the four's dismissal was 'official action' in terms of the anti-trade union laws.

Settling this technicality opens the way for further argument at the IT and increases the chance of ultimate victory. Before the IT can proceed however British Rail plan to appeal this ruling.

Minor dispute

The four rail union activists at Manchester Piccadilly were

sacked after a minor dispute. BR management wanted to send a message throughout the rail industry.

Without any warning, breaking all the proper machinery, the four were handed dismissal notices without even being given the opportunity to defend themselves before a hearing.

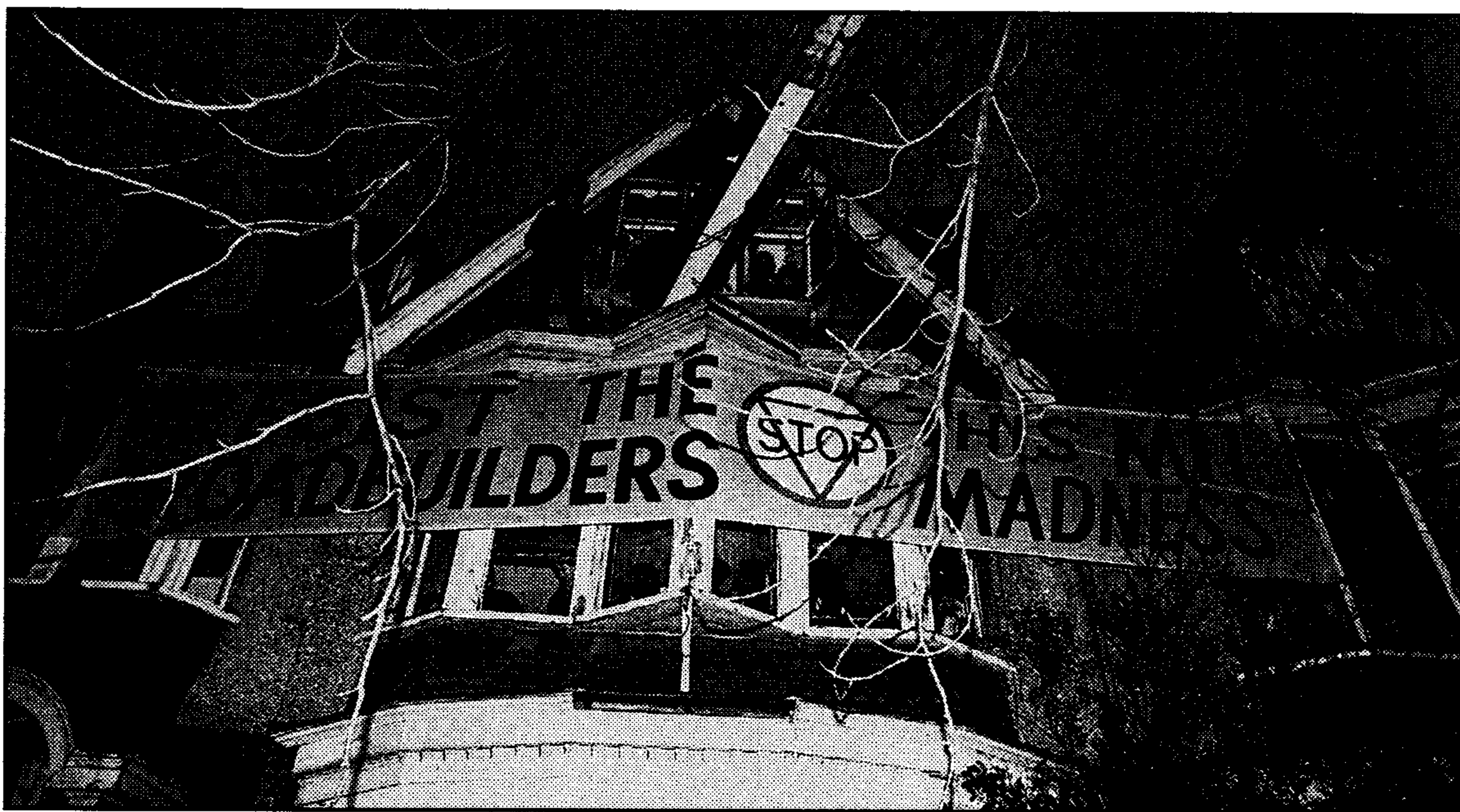
Despite winning a ballot for strike action their union, the RMT, caved in when BR won a court injunction.

Instead of an industrial campaign the four have been forced to settle for defence through Industrial Tribunal. Last week the case finally reached the IT.

Packed support

The hearing was packed with rail workers from across Manchester who had come to support their comrades.

Whilst the Tribunal heard how guards at Piccadilly had taken action to defend local



Tory transport policy under fire: M11 motorway protestors challenged 700 police and bailiffs in East London

agreements, the key arguments centred on technical definitions of whether the dispute was 'official' or not.

After nearly two hours of deliberation the tribunal found in favour of the union on this point. This now opens the door for a full hearing on the merits of the case.

However, BR immediately indicated they would appeal this ruling, up to the High Court if necessary. Even if the union wins against this appeal this meant that the tribunal hearing

had to be postponed and will not reconvene until the autumn at the earliest.

By then one of the four will have reached retirement. No doubt BR will continue to find ways of delaying the issue.

Already the Piccadilly workers have drawn one conclusion. They should never have listened to the union's national officers when they told them to stop their original industrial action to rely on the legal machinery. Instead their best hope of winning lay in their own hands.

NCU/UCW near to merger

By a post worker

The UCW special conference on NCU/UCW merger took a step closer towards the creation of one communications union.

There were 228 amendments submitted for discussion to the merger document. The large number of amendments were an attempt to retain democratic traditions from the UCW within the merged union.

However the veto by the NCU clerical section will be retained in the merged union despite strong opposition within the UCW.

As John Ireland from Merseyside Amal and a Communication Workers Fightback supporter said, in opposing an amendment to the instrument of amalgamation, 'the veto is the cost of the merger'.

The left actively campaigned within the conference for a merged union to unify all the grades below management in the Post Office and British Telecom in one industrial union.

Removing the veto will be part of a fight to fully democratise the merged union.

Dearing report boosts Tory education plans

By David Wahl

LAST SUMMER'S successful boycott of the government's discredited national curriculum tests was a major victory for teachers and parents, but it is premature to suggest that the victory is complete.

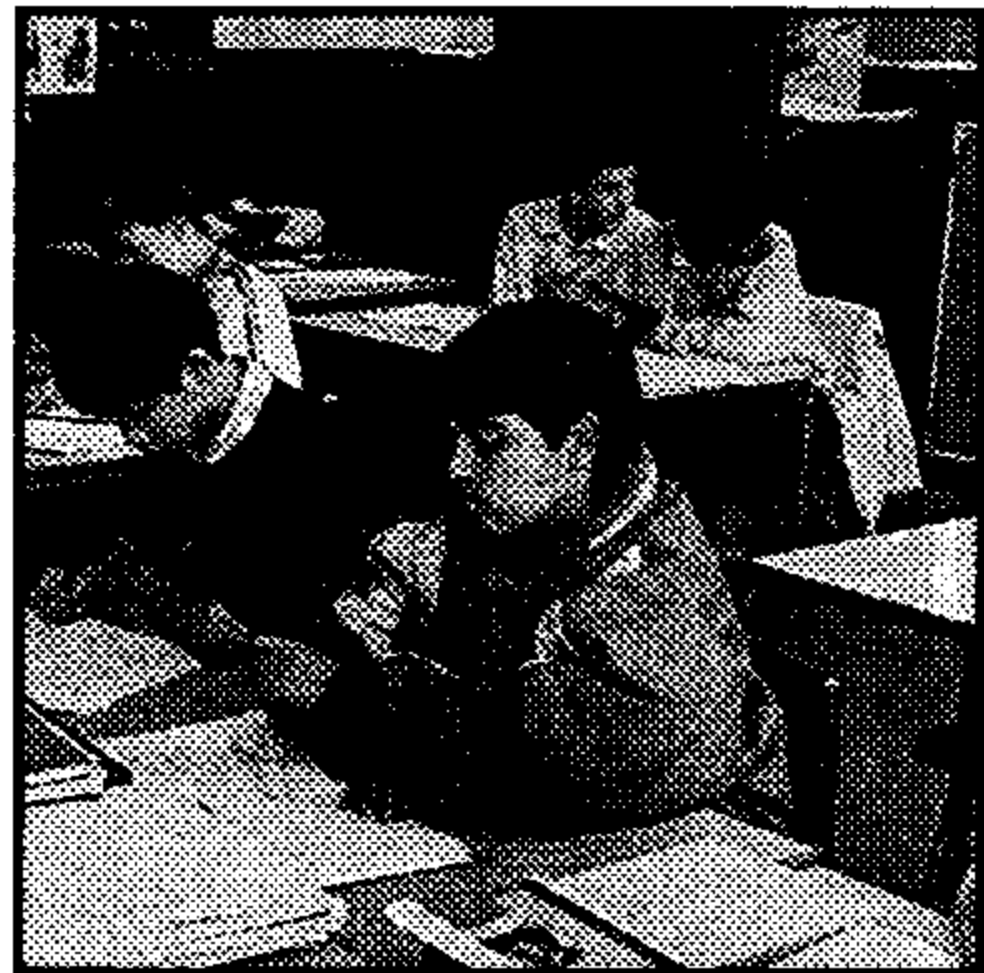
The recently published Dearing report, readily endorsed by John Patten, is clearly designed to regain the initiative for the Tories following their humiliating climbdown.

There are already worrying signs that Dearing is having the desired effect with the leaderships of the ATL and the NAS/UWT advising members to carry out this year's tests; although the NAS/UWT is refusing to do the associated teacher assessment.

Only the NUT, the largest of the unions, is holding firm following a survey of members opinion showing overwhelming support for a boycott. (9 out of 10 members were opposed to the tests).

It is vital that this resistance to the Tory agenda for education continues given that the Dearing Report challenges so few of its assumptions.

At first glance it appears that the complaints of teachers have received a sympathetic hearing. The national curriculum will be slimmed down to release more lesson time to be used at teachers' discretion.



Nothing to gain from Tory tests

The curriculum statements will be reduced and the administrative burden eased. The tests themselves will be simplified and will be restricted to the core subjects of Maths, Science and English.

Lip service is even being paid by recording continuous teacher assessment, although this will appear in pupils' records alongside test results which will appear to be more 'objective'.

Teaching to tests

However since the curriculum will still be tested, the danger is that teachers will teach to the tests and pupils will have a very reduced curriculum. For example in English the teaching of media studies will no longer be tested. As a result this may be dropped to ensure that grammar and punctuation, which will be tested, are adequately taught.

Unsurprisingly, Dearing offers no real challenge to the Government's commitment to the publication of league tables at 11 and 16. Schools will still be

obliged to publish, and journalists will inevitably put these together to form new league tables.

With funding following pupils the temptation to "teach to test" is obvious. However, equally insidious is the government's intention to allow some secondary schools to become selective. There are legitimate fears that the tests at 11 will be used to re-introduce, by the back door, the reviled grammar/secondary school divide.

This assault upon comprehensive education and equality of opportunity is consistent with the Tory attack on GCSE courses. They have done away with any syllabus which allowed pupils' grades to be based completely upon coursework, seen by many teachers to lend itself to mixed ability teaching.

In place of 100% coursework, boards have been forced to institute tiered exams in which teachers enter pupils for different exams, so promoting streaming and increasing the likelihood of failure for many pupils.

Dearing's support for the development of vocational courses for the less academic at 14+ underlines the move towards a two-tier system of education. His proposals for two paths into vocational education must be seen in the light of the Government's dismal record in this area.

In this country vocational education continues to be associated with accommodating edu-

cational failure rather than promoting occupational success.

In this context Dearing can only serve to increase the academic/vocational divide; while A levels dominate the curriculum and are seen as the only true hallmark of educational success, this divide cannot be overcome.

Clearly, it is essential that the boycott of the tests is maintained. However there is also a pressing need for socialists to engage in the formulation of an alternative strategy for education. This is an important debate that has yet to begin in earnest.

Royal Mail staff vote to reject productivity deal

ROYAL MAIL's attempt to force through a productivity deal in the Post Office has been narrowly rejected in a membership ballot.

The rejection is a big setback for the UCW leadership, who tried to by-pass conference decisions demanding the union campaign for a shorter working week before agreeing to any productivity deal.

The leadership issued a spe-

cial branch circular asking for branch committee recommendations to their membership and any local leaflets produced.

The left must respond to the Executive's lack of leadership by stepping up the pressure for the shorter working week demand.

This means the left on the EC making a clear call for the shorter working week, backed by a campaign in the branches.

TRADE UNION NEWS

From fastback to fast buck

The great

Rover rip-off

THE sale of Rover to BMW is a massive subsidy to British Aerospace, courtesy of the party that doesn't prop up lame ducks, reports DAVE OSLER.

BRITISH Aerospace was illegally handed a nationalised company at a heavily subsidised price, without the competitive tendering that would accompany a council bog-cleaning contract, and flogged it off at a fat markup.

In National Audit Office-speak, the £150 million BAe paid for Rover in 1988 'fell significantly short of the real value of the company', which was worth an absolute minimum of £206.5 million.

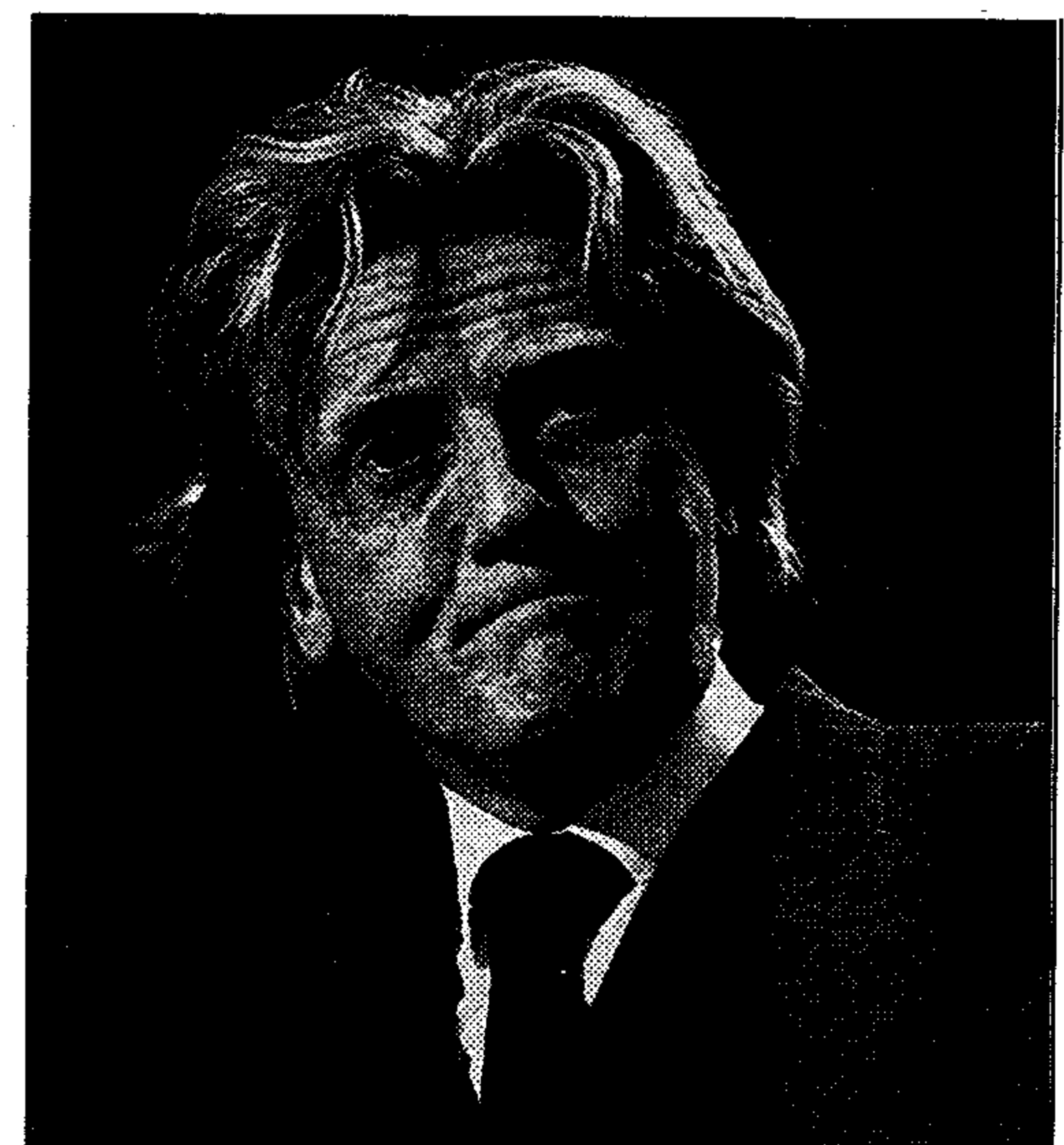
It had surplus assets, such as disused sites, worth at least £250 million; BAe realised £126 million of them by the end of 1989. Furthermore, Rover had shareholdings in associated companies, such as Unipart, worth up to £144 million.

The state wrote off £547 million of Rover debt, offered BAe £25 million in tax concessions, and then threw in more sweeteners than the average saccharine factory, collectively worth £44 million. Appropriately enough for a second-hand car deal, BAe was able to defer payment of the meagre asking price, saving £33.4 million in interest. The Government even funded £9.5 million of BAe's acquisition costs.

Leaked correspondence proved that Lord Young, then trade secretary, and Professor Roland Smith, then BAe chairman, discussed how to hide de-



Thatcher's arms sale policy aided BAe



Heseltine: did he meet the prince?

"The Rover sale is just one example of the Tories' astonishing largesse to Britain's largest manufacturing company, which announced a loss of £1,200 million, the biggest in UK corporate history, in February 1993. It is in marked contrast with the treatment of the coal industry"

tails from parliament and the European Commission.

The German car manufacturer is now paying £800 million for 80 per cent Rover, and shouldering £900 million of debt. BAe shares have risen 30 per cent since the news, adding a further £500 million to its

value.

Meanwhile, it holds on to an unspecified amount of Rover's land and property assets, and pockets the money raised from the sale of a 20 per cent stake to Japan's Honda in 1989.

Defenders point out that BAe invested £1,000 million in the car manufacturer, but that capital expenditure was financed by Rover operations. Much of it was borrowed money, with repayments simply passing to BMW.

The Rover sale is just one example of the Tories' astonishing largesse to Britain's largest manufacturing company, which announced a loss of £1,200 million, the biggest in UK corporate history, in February 1993. It is in marked contrast with the treatment of the coal industry.

In another rigged privatisation, BAe bought Royal Ordnance, the highly profitable state-owned munitions, explosives and guns manufacturer, in 1987.

BAe got an operation with a book value of £235 million for just £190 million. Some £69

million had only just been spent on 'rationalisation', while another £40 million had gone on cleaning up a polluted site in Waltham Abbey.

Intellectual property rights, including drawings, designs and data packages for missiles, together worth at least £50 million, went to BAe for just £1 million. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence agreed to a further state investment of £12 million, and gave BAe a five-year contract worth £1,500 million.

Through Royal Ordnance, BAe bought Heckler and Koch in 1991. The former managing director of the German small-arms manufacturer, Walter Lamp, currently faces trial in Rottweil, home of the eponymous dogs, on charges of supplying weapons to Iraq, Nicaragua's Contras and East Germany's Stasi.

The prosecution will argue that Royal Ordnance provided false end-user certificates to skirt embargoes. It is unclear whether the alleged events occurred when Royal Ordnance was owned by the Government or by BAe.

Meanwhile, UK Customs and Excise has denied reports that it has supplied the Scott inquiry into British arms sales to Iraq with documents indicating that the Royal Ordnance channelled explosives to Iraq, Iran, Argentina and South Africa, acting as part of a cartel.

But the Scott inquiry has already touched on BAe's attempt to sell £5,000 million worth of Hawk trainer-light at-

CENTRE STAGE



Carworkers are not the only victims of BAe's asset-stripping exercise: thousands lost their jobs in 1992

theory+practice

Can Marxism Survive? Interview with Michael Löwy



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Can Marxism Survive?

Marxism, modernism & a new century

After the fall of Stalinism there is an enormous debate on the left about the validity of traditional Marxist concepts.

This debate involves questions about the role and nature of the working class, the

environment, women's oppression, planning and the market and what production and consumption will look like in a socialist society.

Here Michael Löwy, well-known author of numerous works on Marxist theory and

a leader of the Fourth International, attempts to answer some of these questions.

What is the impact of the transformations which are developing in capitalism through the collapse of stalinism on marxist thought?

The impact, for now is, fundamentally negative.

As the dominant tendency, we frequently come across accelerated ideological decomposition. We are seeing a revision which is not only theoretical, which is good, but also political, philosophical, and ethical, and all these things dilute the fundamental values (which justify the marxist inspiration of the workers' and socialist movements) leaving them an empty shell.

In this field, on one side we have, frequent attempts to reconcile marxist thought with aspects of bourgeois thought, like

utilitarianism, rationalism in its individualist version, positivism, or political and economic liberalism. This tendency is attractive to a number of currents or mass political parties, from the Italian PDS (ex communist party), to small intellectual groups in Europe and Latin America (for example, so-called analytical marxism).

On the other side, there is a strengthening of dogmatic positions, though this is not the dominant tendency. This involves mechanical reaffirmations of fundamental principles of Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, and Trotskyism, rejecting every attempt to consider the new reality, current events or changes. A certain vulgarisation of Marxism is being reaffirmed. Faced with anything new which questions established theories, it replies with abstractions. Some sectors of the left are looking for simple, dogmatic, classical and monolithic truths which don't cause problems.



But is there a movement to renew Marxism?

Yes, there is a certain renewal. A quite positive element is the rediscovery of the Frankfurt School. There is an evaluation by a new generation of intellectuals from Europe, the United States, and Latin America, of the critique which made it the western paradigm of modernity. This implies a deepening and radicalisation of Marxism, away from negativ-

ity, as opposed to its weakening and reconciliation with bourgeois thought. Marxism needs to confront current problems, to radicalise its critique of modernity, of the paradigms of western, industrial, modern, bourgeois, civilisation.

The ecological question is another factor which radically alters perspectives and also re-invigorates the Marxist vision

of the world. That is extremely important; we are questioning many ideas, like the development of productive forces being positive, or the domination of humans over nature forming part of our emancipation from work. These ideas were inherited from the Enlightenment and the ideology of progress amongst Marxists, and are being questioned today.

This has very important political consequences. The current ecological crisis is a direct threat to the survival of every lifeform on the planet, not only to our little biped mammal homo sapiens. This is a new problem, which Marx and Engels were unaware of. Because of this, we need to review, for example, the concepts of productive force, progress,

technology, as a neutral element, and the idea of domination over nature.

A re-evaluation is needed, but one which leads to a radicalising of our critique of modern industrial civilisation and a strengthening of opposition to it. There is sense of urgency in this: our civilisation is leading us to a mass suicide.

Declining importance of labour?

What do you think of the fashionable theory, which characterises the new stage of capitalism by the decline in the importance of work?

There are two aspects to this. The first is economic, with the increase in organic composition - science, technology, machinery, robotics and computers now have more importance - and the progressive decline of variable capital and of wage labour.

This is a process which has been developing for a long time, with the so-called third industrial revolution.

But to deduce sociological consequences from this, as Andre Gorz has done - he says that the workforce no longer has any role, that it has disappeared - descends into economism. These visions confuse the working class as a whole with a specific part, the industrial workers and with the classical production line; this position becomes more and

more anachronistic, and its political consequences are very dangerous.

There still exists a large working class but, nevertheless, capitalism is continually penetrating, on an unprecedented scale, numerous fields from which it was previously absent.

[Ernest] Mandel is right when he says we are seeing an enormous expansion of the working class, of those who are forced to sell their labour in order to live.

The second aspect is that there is a large underclass of people becoming marginalised by the system. In Europe, as in the First World as a whole, there is now a large number of people living on the margins of society. The uprising in Los Angeles is an example of this.

But the problem is much greater in Latin America and the Third World as a whole.

Today it is clear that alongside the growth of the working class there is also a growing number of poor people, people perma-

nently or temporarily excluded from production, consumption and society as well.

There are people who make a living from small businesses, as itinerant traders, as self employed, or from prostitution, crime, and the drugs trade; everything is getting worse.

This is a big challenge not only to the theory but also to the practice of liberation. The problem is to get unity between these groups of people, which I call the 'pooretariat', with the organised working class.



An outdated 'modernism' image?: Police attack 24 November demonstration in Lisbon. Photograph: Pedro Mendes for *Combate*

Socialism and the western industrial paradigm

In what way can socialism be considered part of industrial modernity, western thought, sharing its vision of the world, its values and its perspectives?

That is a complex question. The idea of Marxism is that the working class is the inheritor of the most advanced gains of the bourgeoisie, of rationalism, the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

The working class movement will achieve the promises that bourgeois progress did not carry out. That idea is legitimate so we cannot understand socialism without this element from the Enlightenment. As Ernest Bloch says, concepts such as liberty, equality and fraternity contain a utopian excess which goes far beyond the bourgeois perspective and which will be realised by socialism.

On the other hand there exists, within the socialist movement and within the whole thought of Marx, a vision in which the continuity between modern industrial civilisation and socialism is understood in an excessively one sided fashion.

The necessity for a break with this model of civilisation is not sufficiently understood.

Socialism does not just consist of making the existing productive, industrial and economic system work in a more rational and efficient manner; it doesn't consist of developing the productive forces just through planning.

This concept is not sufficiently critical of the western paradigm of instrumental rationalism and the system of production as it exists. One quite well known example of this is the view of Lenin and other Marxists that Taylorism was an excellent in-

novation and they introduced it into the USSR.

In this there is an insufficiently critical vision in relation to the technical and productive apparatus and the overall relations of production compared to the critique of private property.

It is not only a problem of continuity of the productive apparatus but of a question of how to make urban life more civilised, of relations between people, of the relationship to Nature.

The problem is to know whether socialism itself represents a new paradigm of civilisation or merely a perfecting of existing society.

The place occupied by the motor car in modern society is a good example of what is said above. It is incredible that the whole of economic, social and urban life, housing, leisure time, ideology, and so on are

determined by the existence of the motor car.

It is a type of divine being that demands human sacrifices: every week-end, in every capital city of the world, there are infinite lists of casualties from accidents, a slaughter of men, women, children which is accepted as inevitable, as a natural phenomenon.

There are more deaths than in many wars. There are certain models of consumption, endemic within modern society, that are lethal from an ecological, human and social point of view.

This leads to another set of problems. In the way in which socialism is an attempt at creating a new model of civilisation is contained the idea of rebuilding, rediscovering or reformulating elements from the pre-capitalist past that was destroyed by bourgeois moder-

nity. That is what I call a Romantic element of Marxism, which exists within the overall philosophy of Marx and in part of the Marxist tradition of the 20th century.

It is not a question of returning to the past but of imagining a future in which valid elements from the past - from a human, cultural, social and ethical point of view - which were destroyed by capitalist modernity, can be re-established, though obviously with a new form.

Marx himself speaks about this when he writes about the communal society which existed in the past and was destroyed by capitalism and private property. Socialism will be a new communal society, but naturally not the same as primitive communism. That also applies to other phenomena of cultural and social life.

Communal alternatives to capitalist individualism

But is this not in contradiction with the idea that socialist thought is enlightened, scientific, rational and demys-

tifies the world? And did not capitalism dissolve, in practice, the values which gave a feeling of community to human existence?

Socialism is both the inheritor of rationalism and the Enlightenment and of the Romantic criticism of the philosophy of the Enlight-

enment and modernity. These two components are present within socialist thought. Ernest Bloch is right when he says that two currents exist within Marxism: a 'cold', purely rational, analytical, merciless, scientific, objective current concerned with what capitalism is, how it functions as a system function and what its contradictions are.

The other current, which he calls 'warm', is based on the principles of hope, utopia and regeneration of the world. These two dimensions are equally necessary and complementary.

A tension exists between them but it is a positive, dialectical tension which must be continually kept under review by Marxism in order to avoid falling into a positivist 'scientificism' or a sentimental romanticism.

Concretely, in relation to the element of community, the logic of capitalism is the logic of atomisation, of the destruction of communal links, of the isolation of the individual, of the glorification of separation, egoism and utilitarian interests. It is not just ideology but the whole workings of the system which confronts individuals. To return to the example of the motor car; just by entering an avenue, an individual, whatever their subjective views, enters a war of everyone for him or her self.

There are points of resistance. Originally the whole workers'

movement presented a communal alternative to individualism based on values of solidarity and collectively recreating in practice communal relationships. That was the case, for example, with the trade unions that created a more profound human relationship between workers from the same factory. Equally, this can be found in the ideal concept of the revolutionary organisation. Nowadays, the base communities of the Church, neighbourhood associations, women's groups, cultural movements are seeking to become communal alternatives to capitalist individualism.

These communal structures base themselves on, at least to some extent (depending on the country concerned and its traditions) patterns of thought and elements of previous communal memory, looking back to premodern, precapitalist, mainly rural traditions.

In the Third World, where the majority of the population has rural origins this communal potential can be revived by the trade unions, parties, tenants associations, and movements at the base.

These organisations or movements are not simply an association as a result of certain common interests; they are these things but they need to be much more; they must stimulate types of communal relationship, relationships of solidarity.



International Marxist Review 14

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Working class counter-culture in retreat

But today we are seeing a retreat of working class counter-culture. Capitalism is destroying references to pre-capitalist life. In Brazil, in one or two generations, this will have disappeared.

That is true. But the overall functioning of capitalism is provoking, as a reaction against atomisation, a

searching for communal life. It is obvious that this searching often leads nowhere.

This is one of the reasons for the enormous successes of the Protestant sects in Latin America, who give a sense of communal identity to the individual abandoned in this capitalist desert, where they don't feel part of anything. It is up to us to offer other alternatives.

Scientific socialism and revolutionary 'utopianism'

What is the challenge we face in re-establishing a socialist project and a utopian perspective, with the credibility and social weight to be a reference point for the transformation of society?

Marx and Engels lived at a time when the problem of a utopia appeared an anachronism: for them the most important question was to develop the contradictions within capitalism, the class struggle.

That remains true. But today we are no longer in a situation where we can say 'we don't know what socialism will look like'. We can't maintain this attitude in the face of the terrible burden of 70 years of 'actually existing socialism'.

The credibility of the socialist project demands of us the production of an attractive vision of socialism, explaining that it has nothing to do with the so-called 'actually existing socialism'.

To return to Ernest Bloch, today scientific socialism has also

to be utopian socialism, in a quasi-etymological sense, which does not exist anywhere at present.

If we want our answer to be credible, we must explain what this thing we call socialism is, how it differs from a more human face of capitalism or the pseudo 'actually existing socialism', why it is worth risking our lives in this struggle.

We have to give an explanation to our militants, to workers, women, youth. Without revolutionary utopianism there will not be a revolution in practice. We need to go much further along this road.

Obviously we don't start from scratch. There is a wealth of knowledge accumulated by Marxism itself which we need to develop. There are also historical experiences with all their limits and mistakes, with all our discussions about the nature of socialist democracy in the transition to socialism, etc.

But we must be open and prepared to learn from others such as the utopian and various other socialists, and anarchists.



The urban poor have come to the fore in a number of anti-capitalist struggles. The task is to ally them with organised labour. Photograph: Santiago de la Iglesia, *Vento Sur*.

They have ideas and experiences which are important for the discussion about the kind of socialism we want.

We have to relate to these ideas, as well as new problems that arise, such as ecological questions and feminism.

We need to start to elaborate - whether in a programmatic or a literary form - thoughts, reflections, projections, dreams made

reality, as Bloch says, what a socialist future would be.

It is important in this rediscovery of the utopian dimension of some Marxist ideas; for example, in what way will production under socialism be for use values and not exchange values; this is an idea with tremendous utopian potential

What does this mean for production, for consumption? The

problem is how to abandon an established viewpoint and try to see things from a different point of view. And, finally, we must recognise that we don't have answers for everything, on some questions we are just fumbling around in the darkness.

• Michael Löwy was interviewed by the editorial team of *Em Tempo* (Brazil).

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"As Europe's biggest defence contractor, BAe gained massively from Thatcherism's arms sale driven foreign policy"

tack aircraft, and the factories to make more of them, to Saddam Hussein.

The Foreign Office banned MoD salesmen from visiting the Baghdad arms fair in April 1989, after the uproar following the use of chemical weapons against Iraqi Kurds.

At the time, a former BAe executive, David Hastie, was on secondment to the MoD's Defence Export Services Organisation. He had been hand-picked by DESO's head, Sir Colin Chandler, who was BAe group marketing director.

To get round the ruling, Hastie was released from his secondment for a few days and despatched to Baghdad as a 'BAe representative'. Thus, when Labour MP Tony Banks later asked Alan Clark, then defence minister, if any MoD official had attended the fair, he could safely be told: 'No.' Talk about economical with the actualite.

As Europe's biggest defence contractor, BAe gained massively from Thatcherism's arms-sale-driven foreign policy of the eighties.

Pergau Dam

On a visit to Kuala Lumpur in September 1988, Margaret Thatcher, then prime minister, explicitly linked aid for the Pergau hydroelectric dam with the Malaysian Government Malaysian spending £1,000 million on BAe Tornado fighter-bombers.

The Malaysians subsequently cancelled, but placed an order 28 Hawks, worth up to £400 million, instead. The dam project, at a cost of £234 million to the British taxpayer, has proved totally unsuitable for the country's development needs. Meanwhile, neighbouring Indonesia is buying 24 Hawks, assisting a military effort that includes the illegal occupation of East Timor.

BAe is also the main winner from the gigantic Al Yamamah Two arms deal with Saudi Arabia, worth £20,000 million over

"BAe's links with government remain close. Lord Hesketh, former minister of state in Michael Heseltine's Department of Trade and Industry, was appointed to the board only last December"



End of the line for more than half of Rover's Cowley works. What was the longest production line in Europe will give way to a Tesco's

15 years, and probably the biggest export contract of the century. An initial memorandum of understanding was signed by Thatcher and Prince Bandar, Saudi ambassador to Washington, in Austria in July 1985. Sir Colin Chandler, the ex-BAe man, handled subsequent negotiations.

After a period when the Saudis threatened to opt for American equipment instead, 1988 saw the signing of the Al Yamamah Two (AY2) deal, the subject of another NAO report. Scandalously, this one has been suppressed.

Concern centres on commission payments of up 30 per cent to British middlemen, including Thatcher's son Mark, and members of the Saudi ruling families, described as 'exceptional commercial expenses'. One wonders what Michael Portillo makes of it all.



Land Rover workers in struggle in 1988: their plant is key prize for BMW

Clive Soley, the Labour MP, has also claimed that Prince Bandar met Michael Heseltine, defence secretary at the time the original deal was struck, in London just before the last election, and donated £7 million to Conservative Party election funds.

In January 1993, John Ma-

scaled-down version of the European Fighter Aircraft, is set to commence.

Eurofighter 2000 is further testimony to Tory support for BAe. German defence minister Volker Ruehe tried to kill the four-nation project in 1992, arguing that it did not suit western Europe's post-USSR defence needs. Only British insistence stayed his hand.

BAe's links with Government remain close. Lord Hesketh, former Government chief whip in the Lords and minister of state in Michael Heseltine's Department of Trade and Industry, was appointed to the board only last December. Presumably his remuneration is not inconsiderable.

TGWU manoeuvres smoothe path for new Cowley bosses

by a Cowley worker

The 'democracy' of the right wing has been smoothed up by the series of elections that have taken place in the Rover plant in Cowley, Oxford.

First came the election for the branch secretary of the main TGWU branch, 5/60.

This position has sometimes been elected at branch meetings, and sometimes by ballot. The ballot method of election of a TGWU branch officer is unique to Cowley: it was originally imposed on the old Morris' branch in Cowley by the Regional bureau in the late 1970s, as a device against the left.

The 5/60 right wing decided to hold this election for branch secretary at the December meeting. As the meeting came closer it became clear that the right wing branch secretary, Roy Edney, was going to lose.

So in the week running up to the election the right wing started circulating a petition within the plant, which achieved 300 signatures. This called for changing the election to ballot.

But the rules of the union are clear; it is the branch that decides the method of election, and both the November, and then the December meeting, decided to elect at the meeting. The right wing then tried to change this at the election meeting itself.

They were defeated, and then had to run the election, with left winger Tony Richardson being elected by 26 votes to 3.

Mass meeting

The following week the right wing declared they would not accept the result and, completely against the rules, they called a stewards' meeting followed by a decision making mass meeting.

The amazing thing about this mass meeting was that

the company stopped production for one hour, and told the membership to attend. It is estimated that they lost in the vicinity of £1-2 million of production.

Strong support

What surprised the right wing was the strength of support for Tony Richardson. His supporters thought that he had won, but the right wing chair declared it was 'too close to call'. He then divided the meeting - only to repeat the same declaration. This was followed by the announcement that he was calling a ballot.

The right wing were in complete control of the administration of this ballot, and it was subsequently announced that Roy Edney won by 688 votes to 588.

All of this breached TGWU rules, and complaints went to the Regional office, but of course the investigation only took place after the ballot. The result is not

known.

At the same time the elections senior and deputy steward were taking place in the plant.

The votes for senior steward were 1001 for Tom White, 712 for Roy Edney and 654 for Roy Richardson. The run off was 1468 for White and 917 for the sitting Roy Edney. For deputy the votes were 1542 for Bernard Moss and 948 for Tony Richardson.

Dissatisfied

Edney's defeat was a clear indication of the dissatisfaction felt by the membership over the lack of opposition to 'Rover Tomorrow', the new draconian discipline procedure, the introduction of short term contracts, and many more issues relating to New Management Techniques.

The contortions to which the TGWU has been prepared to resort to exclude a left wing candidate suggests that more tough times are ahead for the Cowley workforce.

CENTRE STAGE

Bosnia issue divides the comrades

Will Militant Labour support Workers' Aid?

Jeff Lowe and Paul Clarke

MILITANT Labour's line on the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia is in chaos and confusion. The reason is not hard to find: in union branches up and down the country Militant supporters have been forced to decide how to respond to resolutions supporting International Workers Aid, which campaigns in defence of multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Militant supporters have supported, opposed and abstained on these motions – sometimes in the same meeting.

The point of analyzing Militant's line is not to score cheap points. Some Militant Labour members have given strong support and this is to be welcomed. *Socialist Outlook* would enthusiastically welcome the wholehearted support of Militant for the campaign.

Militant's gyrations are symptomatic of wider debates on the left about the national question.

Last summer Peter Taaffe clarified Militant's line. He argued that all communities under attack had the right of self-defence, but socialists could only support arms to the Bosnian resistance if they were 'under control of democratically elected workers committees'. Militant's 28 January issue changed this position.

Right to fight back

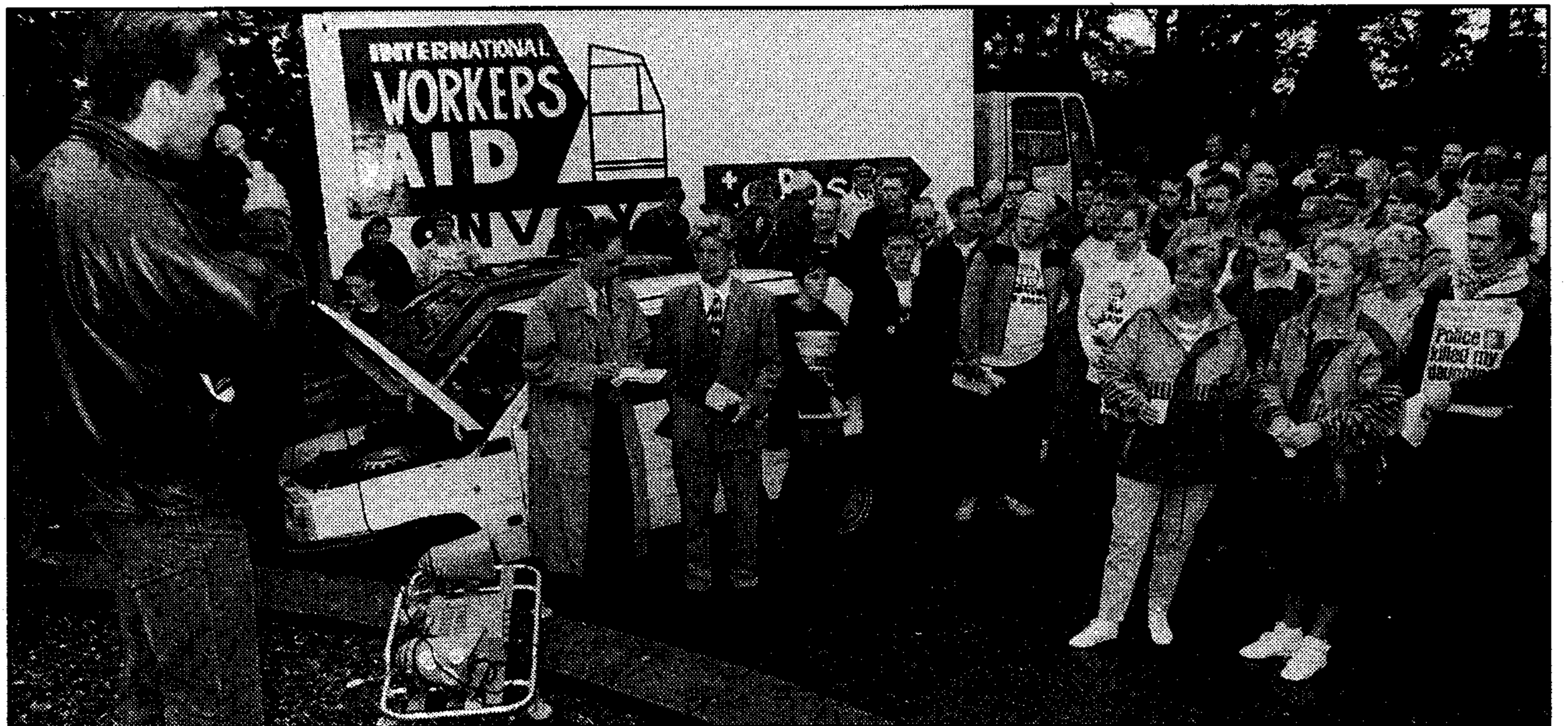
Now we learn: 'In former Yugoslavia we support the right of all communities to defend themselves against attack - the right to arms. The Bosnian Muslims have this right.' The 'democratically elected workers committees' precondition has been dropped. So far, so good.

However, the same editorial immediately opposes the lifting of the arms embargo. It says:

'The principal political and military forces on all sides are pro-capitalist nationalists. It is ethnic warlords, including Muslim warlords, who would receive the benefit of lifting the arms embargo'.

This is plainly contradictory. The only community under attack which is the victim of the arms embargo is the multi-ethnic community of Bosnia (which is not just a community of 'Bosnian Muslims').

INTERNATIONALISM



Tommy Sheridan from Scottish Militant Labour speaking in support of the Bosnia convoy at the Dundee Timex factory

The Bosnian Serbs have the weapons of the former Yugoslav army. Huge amounts of arms are being sold to Croatia by the Italian arms industry. The UN arms embargo is against Bosnia.

This embargo is not a workers' embargo, it is enforced against Bosnia by international imperialism.

Whilst Militant support the imperialist arms embargo against Bosnia they call for the lifting of imperialist sanctions against Serbia. There is clearly a contradiction here. Either you are for or against imperialist intervention. You can't have it both ways. Unless, of course, you think there is something progressive about the Serbian regime or Serbia is the major victim of imperialist policy.

Which is precisely what Militant's supporters in France do. They prioritise campaigning against 'The Crime of the Embargo' and organising an aid convoy to Serbia. They prioritise links with Serbian trade unions. These campaigns, endorsed by Militant, do not imply a 'neutral' position. *The logic is support for Serbia.*

The overall solution to the war presented by the Militant editorial, despite some correct positions, misses the main point. It is worth quoting at some length:

'...the international labour movement's priority must be to develop independent class action; to assist the organisations of the working class in Bosnia that can cut across religious and racial divisions....Socialists must build support across sectarian divides. Salvation for the working classes of Bosnia lies in creating unity between Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim peoples. There is a solution. It lies in the potential power of the regions' working class which can overthrow the nationalist leaders....A combination of workers' movements could unite under the banner of the struggle against poverty, unemployment, rampant inflation and for peace. Forging democratic defence committees could protect communities, combat the nationalist murder gangs and would not be seen as a threat by other communities. It would be this that would lay the basis for workers' unity and a socialist federation of the Balkans.'

The war is not a religious war between Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim peoples. Slav Muslims are primarily a na-

tional, not religious, entity. Nor is it a war between competing 'ethnic warlords'. It is a war launched by the degenerate bureaucracy of Serbia against Kosova, Slovenia, Croatia and now Bosnia, to whip up national chauvinism as a mechanism to stay in power. At stake is the right of self-determination of nations.

To regard multi-ethnic Bosnia as simply the 'Muslim people' is a massive betrayal of the tens of thousands of Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins and others who continue to defend the towns and cities of Bosnia. To present the fight for national self-determination, and the heroic resistance of multi-national communities like Tuzla and Sarajevo, as the activity of Muslim 'warlords' and the 'murder gangs' on the 'Muslim' side is absurd.

Militant's editorial makes favourable reference to the article by Ken Loach in the Guardian (31/12/93) which mentioned the resistance of multi-ethnic brigades in Tuzla. But those brigades are part of the overall defence of Bosnia against Serbian and Croatian aggression.

Working class

It is in the urban areas - that is, amongst the working class - that commitment to multi-national Bosnia is strongest. It is precisely the 'organisations of the working class of Bosnia that ...cut across religious and racial divisions'. Nationalism and religion hold sway in the backward, rural regions or amongst the more recent arrivals in the cities.

Defence of Bosnia is not counterposed to a working class solution: the very existence of a Bosnian working class depends upon the right of Bosnia to exist. That is why the Bosnian working class - of all nationalities - is in the forefront of that fight.

In the long term there is no solution in ex-Yugoslavia other than the building of solidarity between the peoples, which means building independent class organisation. But a precondition for solidarity between the peoples is the ending of aggression and mutual recognition of the democratic right of self-determination. *The road to an eventual socialist federation of the Balkans goes through the fight for self-determination - for Bosnia as much as Serbia and Croatia.* Indeed, how can Bos-

nia be part of a federation if it no longer exists?

Confusion and self-contradiction on the arms embargo, sanctions and self-determination is topped off by confusion about International Workers Aid's convoys. They say: 'International Workers Aid has organised convoys of humanitarian aid to Bosnia which has attracted support from trade unionists. But even they admit that the UN has tonnes of supplies stashed in warehouses. There is no lack of food and medicines...Together with aid, the international labour movement's priority must be to develop independent class action...'

Does the 'together with aid' part of this passage mean Militant supports the convoys? When Tommy Sheridan spoke at the outset of the first convoy it seemed the answer must be 'yes'. The 'no lack of medicines and food' seems to imply...no.

The convoys of International Workers Aid are acts of political solidarity. Through the convoys practical links with workers organisations in ex-Yugoslavia have been made, including the SSSH - the largest trade union federation in Croatia - which openly opposes the war against Bosnia. They help rebuild the tradition of international workers solidarity in Europe as a whole and within the former Yugoslavia.

Socialist Outlook has no illusions in the UN or imperialism. We are against western military intervention. We are against the economic blockade of Serbia, which is not hitting the Milosevic gang, only the Serbian working class.

We are for the rebuilding of independent workers organisations, and pan-Balkan workers solidarity. But the first step is to stop the war against multi-ethnic Bosnia, and that means the right of the people of the country to defend themselves.

Comrades of Militant Labour should know by now that it was not us who invented the idea of the 'right of nations to self-determination' as a key part of the arsenal of Marxism. It was VI Lenin, who you claim as your inspirer as much as *Socialist Outlook* does. It is time to end your confusion and back up your comrades in the labour movement who have come forward to support International Workers' Aid.

Marxism and the Irish Question

The Communists and the Irish Revolution, edited by D.R. O'Connor Lysaght, and available from *Socialist Outlook* (£9) reviewed by DAFYDD RHYS

WITH SO MUCH talk of peace, agreements and reconciliation it is easy to lose sight of the grim reality of Northern Ireland; to underestimate the scale of reaction that exists in the six counties.

In England, Scotland and Wales we see the boots and clubs of the British National Party as a serious menace, but in the North, armed neo-fascist gangs roam the streets and kill Catholics at random.

These gangs have links with the security forces and sections of the Unionist bourgeoisie – the most reactionary section of the British bourgeoisie which commands the support of a large section of Protestant workers.

The Northern Irish trade unions are solidly right wing. Nothing is changed by the announcements and agreements of the last few months. This continues to be the 'carnival of reaction' that James Connolly predicted over 70 years ago.

Timely collection

Publication of *The Communists and the Irish Revolution* edited by D.R. O'Connor Lysaght is thus timely. This exhaustive collection by Russian revolutionaries, spanning the years 1899 to 1924, allows us to examine how Marxists responded to other important events in Irish history.

The book draws heavily on the work of Marx and Lenin. Marx first believed Irish liberation would be won only through the victory of the British working class. But by 1867 he said 'I used to think the separation of Ireland from Britain impossible, I now think it inevitable, although after separation there may come federation'.

He argued the British working class should make repeal of the Union with Ireland a central part of its programme. This change of views was based on the understanding that whilst the British working class under Liberal influence was little more than a tool of the capitalists, a liberation movement had developed in Ireland, the Fenians, which had assumed revolutionary form.

It was the duty of British so-

cialists to support Irish independence, not only in the interests of the Irish struggle but with the aim of educating British workers in the spirit of democracy and national equality.

In advocating independence Marx's aim was not the permanent separation of Ireland, but a democratic federation, freely entered into on all sides. This presupposed a change of government in the oppressor nation, an event which he hoped would be greatly accelerated by a successful independence struggle.

Lenin was always ready to subject his ideas to the test of practice, and when the Irish rose in rebellion in Easter 1916 he seized the chance with relish. The opening shots in the debates were fired by Karl Radek, who saw the defeat of the rising as conclusive proof that 'The Irish revolution... has come to an end.'

Land issue

For Radek, the Irish question was essentially a land question, which had been solved by the land reforms of 1903. This meant that the Irish farmers abstained from the rising, reducing the struggle to a 'putsch' by an isolated group of petty-bourgeois idealists.

Trotsky took a more sympathetic view of the rising and understood that the working class, as well as the petty bourgeoisie, had participated. But Trotsky also felt that the basis for an Irish national revolution has disappeared.

It was left to Lenin to defend the rising. He understood that the question of self-determination was one of political democracy, of a nation's right to decide of which state it wished to be a part. And that such questions have a relative autonomy from economic questions.

Anyone who called this momentous event a 'putsch' was, he said, 'either a hardened reactionary or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of picturing a social revolution as a living thing.' In Lenin's eyes, the mistake of the Irish was not in having risen, but in having risen prematurely.

Wrong

Subsequent history has shown that both Radek and Trotsky were wrong in dismissing the Irish national question. Lenin stood head and shoulders above them all in the depth of his analysis and his sympathy for the Irish movement.

Documents of the young Soviet government and the Communist International, which denounce British rule and support the national struggle are also included.



A notable missing element in Jim Sheridan's film (see review below) is any reference to the Birmingham Six

The example of Ireland is further used to expose the hypocrisy of the Labour politicians who demanded that the Soviet state unreservedly respect the right to self-determination, whilst supporting the oppression of their own colonies.

The collection ends with an exchange of letters between Nora Connolly O'Brien, daughter of James Connolly, and Leon Trotsky, where he observes,

'The revolutionary tradition of the national struggle is a precious good. Would it be possible to imbue the Irish proletariat with it for its socialist class struggle, the working class of your country could, in spite of the numerical weaknesses of your population, play an important historical role and give a mighty impulse to the British working class now paralysed by the senile bureaucracy'.

Tragedy

This succinctly summarises the importance of the national struggle for both the Irish and British working classes, and underlines the tragedy of the present impasse.

Anyone interested in the Irish struggle or the national question will learn a great deal from this book. Above all it illustrates how Marxists should proceed from the facts in analysing the national question.

Marx's call for Irish independence, resurrected by Lenin and the Communist International during his lifetime, was based on a real assessment of the state of the working class movements in Britain and Ireland. There is much to be learnt from this approach in our study of the many contemporary national struggles and conflicts.

■ For your copy of 'The Communists and the Irish Revolution' send £9 to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Bulk discounts are available on orders of five or more. Write for details.

Getting closer to truth through added fiction

Kieran Mac an Ultaigh reviews Jim Sheridan's film *In the Name of the Father*, now on general release.

ALTHOUGH 'In the Name of the Father' has received generally good reviews in Ireland and America, it has proved much more controversial in Britain, particularly in regard to its accuracy and its portrayal of the Maguire family.

Though based on Gerry Conlon's autobiography, 'Proved Innocent', it shows Conlon and his father sharing the same cell. This in fact never happened, though their cells were always very close to each other.

Licence

In defending his work Sheridan argues that it is impossible to condense 15 years into less than two and a half hours without some dramatic licence.

Significantly Conlon supports Sheridan's argument and has had no complaints about the film's portrayal of him, or the events surrounding his arrest, trial, imprisonment and eventual release.

Others have criticised it for being too pro-IRA. Again Sheridan argues that his film is not about the IRA but about miscarriage of justice. For my part I very much appreciated 'In the Name of the Father'.

Directed by Jim Sheridan, who also directed 'My Left

Foot', the film stars Daniel Day Lewis as Gerry Conlon, Pete Postlewaite as his father Guiseppe and Emma Thompson as their solicitor Gareth Pierce.

While containing some very powerful scenes – Conlon's interrogation by officers of the Surrey Police Force – it also contains a great deal of humour, especially during the period Conlon and Hill (played by John Lynch) were living in a squat in London and also during many of the informal gatherings which took place while in prison.

Violent

The opening scenes of the film which depict a violent clash between the army and a section of the nationalist population of West Belfast, are as realistic as anything Oliver Stone has directed.

The film clearly shows just how easy it is for anyone, especially someone Irish, to end up on the wrong side of the law.

The only fault I found with Sheridan's film was its failure to show in any great detail the wider political campaign in defence of the Guildford Four – which highlighted their case for years before their release.

Missing Six

Also no mention was made of the Birmingham Six, despite the fact that Conlon frequently bumped into members of the 'Six' while in prison and was well aware of the campaign being mounted on their behalf.

Despite these minor criticisms the film is well made and worth watching.

REVIEWS

GPMU still locked into last year's pay battles

By Bob Smith

TWELVE months ago the Graphic, Print and Media Union launched a pay claim for £6.50 a week and a one-day holiday extension. The majority of employers have agreed or are negotiating. The BPI bosses union is in disarray through its virtual disintegration.

Three disputes have broken out. GPMU members are locked out at Arrowsmith, Bristol (120 locked out), Revell and George, Salford (25) and Harvest print, Mac-celsfield (10).

At Arrowsmith, management had reneged on holiday agreements and cut up to £50 a week from wages. The workforce voted 98-14 for limited industrial action.

Company chair Victoria Arrowsmith-Brown delivered an ultimatum that the entire workforce refused. They were then locked out on 26 April 1993. An offer from the company including trade union derecognition, attacks on jobs, wages, holidays and working conditions and has been refused.

Daily pickets are receiving wide-spread support from Bristol's labour movement and community.

On 20 August 1993 Amanda Lane and Steve Goldfinch CPSA stewards were sacked from Bedminster Employment Service Jobcentre, Bristol.

They had refused to advertise the jobs of sacked Arrowsmith printers. Arrowsmith workers have picketed the Jobcentre in their support.

At a well-supported recent 1,000-strong Arrowsmith rally deputy Father of Chapel (FoC - a media union steward) Mike Vine stated 'We are not on strike; never been on strike; never threatened to strike even. We believe workers have the



1986 Women's march at Wapping right to be represented by a trade union and agreements should be honoured'

At Revell and George, in Salford, Greater Manchester, GMPU members have been locked out since 30 March.

The company attempted to impose new working practices, victimised FoC Ron Senchak and deputy Geoff Suther, and cut wages and benefits after an overtime ban was placed by the workers in an attempt to press for their holiday claim.

Morale is high on the picket despite the fact that Roy Sen-

chak defended himself from a scab attack and is now banned pending as ludicrous court case.

Unfortunately three scabs are working and the company is trying to recruit more. The key is to force Revell and George's custom to go elsewhere.

Ron Senchak says 'We have turned a lot of lorries away and Judd's of Birmingham have refused to cross. They are GPMU-organised. But we need to explain our campaign and link with other struggles. We have been to Arrowsmith's, and spoken to Timex, FBV and UNISON branches.

'We have got the Manchester GPMU branch to organise a meeting of all FoC's and MoC's to escalate the action and pressure suppliers. The chapel is rock solid. They realise their future is in the balance. They could lose jobs, money and be victims of a dictatorial management.'

Harvest Print in Mac-celsfield locked out 7 GPMU members pursuing the pay claim. Support is being mobilised for the picket line, for further demonstrations and a rally is planned.

To win these disputes the management's injunctions and Tory laws must be challenged, effective boycott campaigns mounted, and mass pickets built up to keep scabs and supplies from going through.

GPMU members learned at Warrington from Eddie Shah, and at Wapping from Rupert Murdoch, than any vacillation or attempt to compromise can only lead to humiliation and defeat.

The GPMU delegation at the 1993 TUC voted to oppose Tory trade union laws. They also voted against the return of the EEPFU without guarantees on the return of poached members of TUC affiliates and assurances on future poaching and on single union deals - but that position was defeated by 2.5 million votes.

There is a Birmingham Trades Council social in Birmingham in aid of the three disputes on Saturday 5 March 8pm at The Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham with Kelly's Heroes. The compere is folk singer Ian Campbell.

WHERE WE STAND

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of the politics of *reformism*, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class - for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy - can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a *marxist* current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the *revolutionary* tradition of Marx,

Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise the power of the working class - the overwhelming majority of society - to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. *Socialist Outlook* is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

Unlike some other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for politics which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for *united front* campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

TRADE UNION NEWS

300 Club

More fun than lending us your rent!

It used to be that supporters of socialist newspapers got to lend their rent money to meet the printers bills. Now we offer you money - not bad, eh? *Socialist Outlook's* 300 Club offers you the chance to win £50 a month or a sleek second prize in exchange for a regular donation of £5 monthly, or more if you want more chances. February's winners are Ann Wackett, who wins £50, and Jim Padmore, who gets the fantastic £50, and Jamie Gough's new book *The Politics of Local Economic Policy!* Join today - send in this coupon & we'll send you the form.

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Address

Send to *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU.

Please tell me more about *Socialist Outlook*
 Yes, I want to become a *Socialist Outlook* supporter

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What's HAPPENING

WANT YOUR event included?

Send details by March 2 to What's Happening?, P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 23

Europe between Recession and Revolt *Socialist Outlook* forum with Duncan Chapple 7.45pm Queens Head pub 66 Acton St Kings Cross off Grays Inn Road WC1

Saturday 26

Day of action against McDonald's details phone (0602) 585666, (061) 953 4039 or (071) 837 7557.

Better Housing; Better Health. Socialist Health Association conference 10.30am - 4.30pm St Alban's Centre Baldwin's Gardens Holborn EC1 details 071 490 0057

Racism, Fascism & the Euro-elections Conference details Reading Labour Party, 81 Kings Rd, Reading Berks RG1 3DD Tel: 0734 573756

Sunday 27

Roger and Me London Socialist Film Co-op showing 1.30pm for 2pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1 tickets £3.50/£2.00

Monday 28

Picket High Court on first day of McLibel trial 9.30am The Strand WC2

Wakefield protest at closure of old peoples' and childrens' homes

NATFHE week of action opens

MARCH

Tuesday 1

Save Guy's Hospital! mass campaign meeting 7.30pm Boermond Centre 171 Abbey St SE1 details 071 703 949

Wednesday 2

Save Guy's Hospital! mass campaign meeting 7.30pm Millpond Hall Jamaica

Rd/Southwark Park Road SE1 details 071 703 949

Manchester teachers against the Nazis rally with holocaust survivor Leon Greenman 8pm Town Hall

Saturday 5

Liberation! committee meeting 11.00am London

Section 11 teachers conference 11am-4pm The E Club Mosely Road Birmingham

Scotland without Trident 10am - 1pm City Chambers George Square Glasgow registration £2/£1 from Tony Southall, Scottish CND, 15 Barrland Street, Glasgow G41 1HQ

Sat 5/Sun 6

Towards revolution - socialist politics now Bristol Marxist Forum conference details (0272) 423435

Tuesday 8

Save Guy's Hospital! mass campaign meeting 6.30pm Guy's Hospital Nurses Dining Room details 071 703 9498

Saturday 19

National demonstration against racism in East Lon-



Picketed Legal Aid Board recently gave aid to Satpal Ram

don called by TUC. Assemble 11am Spitalfields Market off Commercial Street E1. Move off at 12 noon. Rally 2pm London Fields off Mare Street E8. Details 071 636 4030

Sunday 20

The Patriot Game London Socialist Film Co-op showing 1.30pm for 2pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1 tickets £3.50/£2.00

Monday 21

Bullets to Ballots: will elections bring peace to Central America? Camden Nicaragua Association public meeting 7pm SOAS Malet Street WC1

APRIL

Tuesday 5

Demonstrate against the Child Support Act at CSA regional offices

Saturday 9

Communities of resistance against racism and fas-

cism national rally 1-5pm Pakistani Community Centre Stockport Road Longsight Manchester

Liberation! editorial meeting 11.00am Manchester

Mon 11/Thurs 14

National Union of Students conference Winter Gardens Blackpool

Saturday 16

Campaign Against the Child Support Act national conference 10am-6pm Kingsway College Sidmouth Street off Grays Inn Road Kings Cross WC1 details PO Box 287n NW6 5QU

End the Blockade: Cuba Solidarity Campaign day-school Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1

Friday 21

Campaign Against the Arms Trade Candlelight Concert 7.30pm At Martin-in-the-fields Trafalgar Square Tickets £12/£9/£6 from 071 930

0089

Saturday 23

Anti-Nazi League carnival London details 071 924 0333

Tuesday 26

Lobby of British Aerospace AGM Marriot Hotel Grosvenor Square W1

Sat 30

Leeds TUC may day march and rally 11.30am assemble outside the art gallery

MAY

Sat 21

National free speech day - picket your local McDonald's details London Greenpeace 5 Caledonian Road N1 9DX

JULY

Fri 22 - Fri 29

International Youth Summer Camp Tuscany Italy details from *Liberation!* PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Too harsh on republicans?

FeedBACK

Dear Socialist Outlook,

There have been a number of problems with the recent coverage of Ireland in *Socialist Outlook*.

Firstly we had Liam Mac Uaid's *Sinn Fein Turns Right* (no.54 Dec 11) which made the astounding claim that Sinn Fein were 'now willing to accept the unionist veto to a united Ireland', with no shred of evidence being offered.

It also implied that the tragic Shankill bomb was 'sectarian' without giving its context - an attempt to hit Loyalist death squad leaders in the wake of the most vicious UFF and UVF murder campaign since the seventies.

There were also throw-away

lines about socialism, reformism etc, which deserve far more space than is possible here.

Secondly, David Coen's far more substantial *Irish Struggle in Danger* (no.55 Jan 15) on the Downing Street declaration. This article fails to understand that the 'pan-Nationalist alliance' is partially a reflection of the fact that the Irish nation as a whole is denied self-determination.

Oppressed

The Nationalist community in the North is an oppressed community whether they vote Sinn Fein or SDLP, a fact which is not altered by the bourgeois (and therefore treacherous) character of the main parties in the south or of the SDLP.

This article also dismisses as 'additional sweeteners' 'talk of an amnesty and de-militarisation'.

If this was to mean release of Republican prisoners and removal of troops from Nationalist areas it would be a bit more than that, and it reveals the pressures on Dublin as well as the tension between Dublin and London.

The 'enticement' of repeal of Section 31 has happened, and Sinn Fein still refuses to endorse Downing Street.

Moreover, the Republicans publicly accepted years ago that it was 'impossible to force out the British military'.

If they are 'politically at their weakest for 10 years' why are they now the largest Nationalist party on Belfast City Council?

Both articles point to real dangers, as does the latest by Mac Uaid (no. 56 Feb 5), but actually offer no serious analysis of what the tasks are of Socialists in Britain, apart from continuing to demand British withdrawal and the implication that we should not

place the demand on the British government that they negotiate with Sinn Fein (which we should as a matter of principle).

Finally, we can only suggest that *Socialist Outlook* gives some space to the 'reformist socialists' of Sinn Fein to speak for themselves, and that comrades read such publications as *Republican News*.

The last issue of *Troops Out* has an interview with Gerry Adams which explains the Republican attitude to the unionist veto.

**In comradeship,
Bernard Gibbons and
John Hughes.**

■ Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters. Send them to PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Letters over 400 words will be edited for space.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Socialist OUTLOOK

TUC
unite
against
RACISM

Saturday 19 March

Student grants: Make NUS call direct action!

THE TORIES talk of extending access to higher education in one breath and reducing the grant by 30% in the next.

It may seem that grant cuts simply slam the door in the face of working class students, but with unemployment the only other option, low grants haven't slowed the demand for university places. Higher education has come to mean learning to live on less.

The Tories are happy to have more students in higher education with no cost increase - it keeps the unemployment figures down. The 30% cut means three years' full grant costs the government less than three years' income support and housing benefit!

But student protests might just put a spoke in the works - so the Tories are also busy attacking the NUS, stopping automatic membership and re-

Ten years of Tory attacks

1984

- Minimum grant cut from £410 to £210
- Travel grant abolished

1985

- Minimum grant abolished

1986

- Benefits over the winter and spring break taken away

1990

- Students denied right to Housing Benefit and Income Support
- Students Loans introduced
- Student Grant levels frozen

1994

- Grant cut by 30%
- Tuition fees starting at £200 a year proposed for 1995

stricting the right to protest with the new Criminal Justice Act.

And the current NUS leadership is there to help them.

While students everywhere

have got angry, organised and marched against the attacks, the NUS National Executive refused to support the National Demonstration on February 23. Under pressure they agreed



Young women are especially active in campaigns to defend student grants

to call a demo for the week of March 21 - when most colleges will be closed for the Easter break!

Why won't they back students who are taking on the government cuts? According to NUS press office the National Executive were 'very concerned' about safety:

'The last thing we want to see is something like the Unity demonstration in October. Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of the student union, erm, I mean students'.

But students' unions and campaign groups in the colleges and regions show real concern about student welfare. Not just on February 23 but campaigning against student poverty all year round.

One officer for a local NUS

said, 'There is no way we want to put students in danger, there have been meetings with the police to agree the route, and there will be organised stewarding of the march. NUS HQ are simply using the safety issue as a good excuse to stop students attending the march'.

NUS National Executive apathy and cowardice won't stop students marching against the grant cuts whenever they have the opportunity. And it won't protect 'the safety and well-being of the student union' either.

We need a union that fights. We won't get that unless we continue to organise in defence of student interests and fight for an NUS leadership which is prepared to do the same.

Don't Just Get Angry

Liberation! is written, designed and sold by a new network of students and young people working to help create a red, green and feminist youth movement.

In our Spring '94 anti-racism & anti-militarism special:

- One FM's DJ Sista speaks out
- Young refugees from

- war in Bosnia and in Kurdistan talk to us
- Sex, AIDS and the age of consent
- How French students fight education cuts
- Fight for the right to rave - and tons more!

For your copy send two first class stamps to *Liberation!*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Liberation!

For a Red Green and Feminist Youth Movement • Spring 1994

DJ Sista interview: 'Be strong & stick to your principles!'

REFUGES FROM WAR
They have
FORTRESS
EQUA
T...
SHAC...
MURD...
C...
RACIS...
BOSTON...
STUDEN...
CAT FOR...
HELP

Sex, AIDS and the Age of Consent

Homelessness: The Right To Squat!

Stop Racism & War!