

Socialist OUTLOOK

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Bombs hit coaches, villages, factories ...

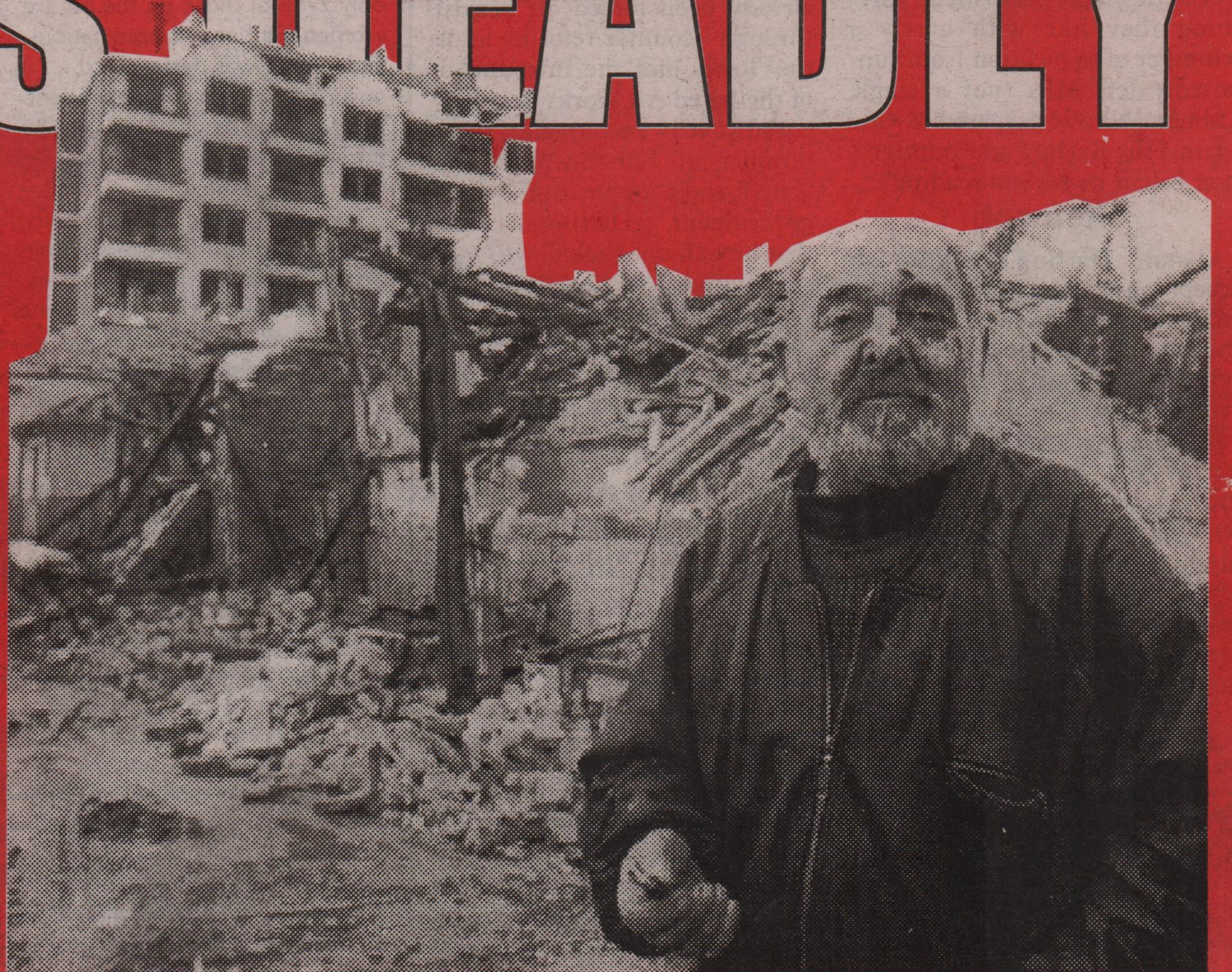
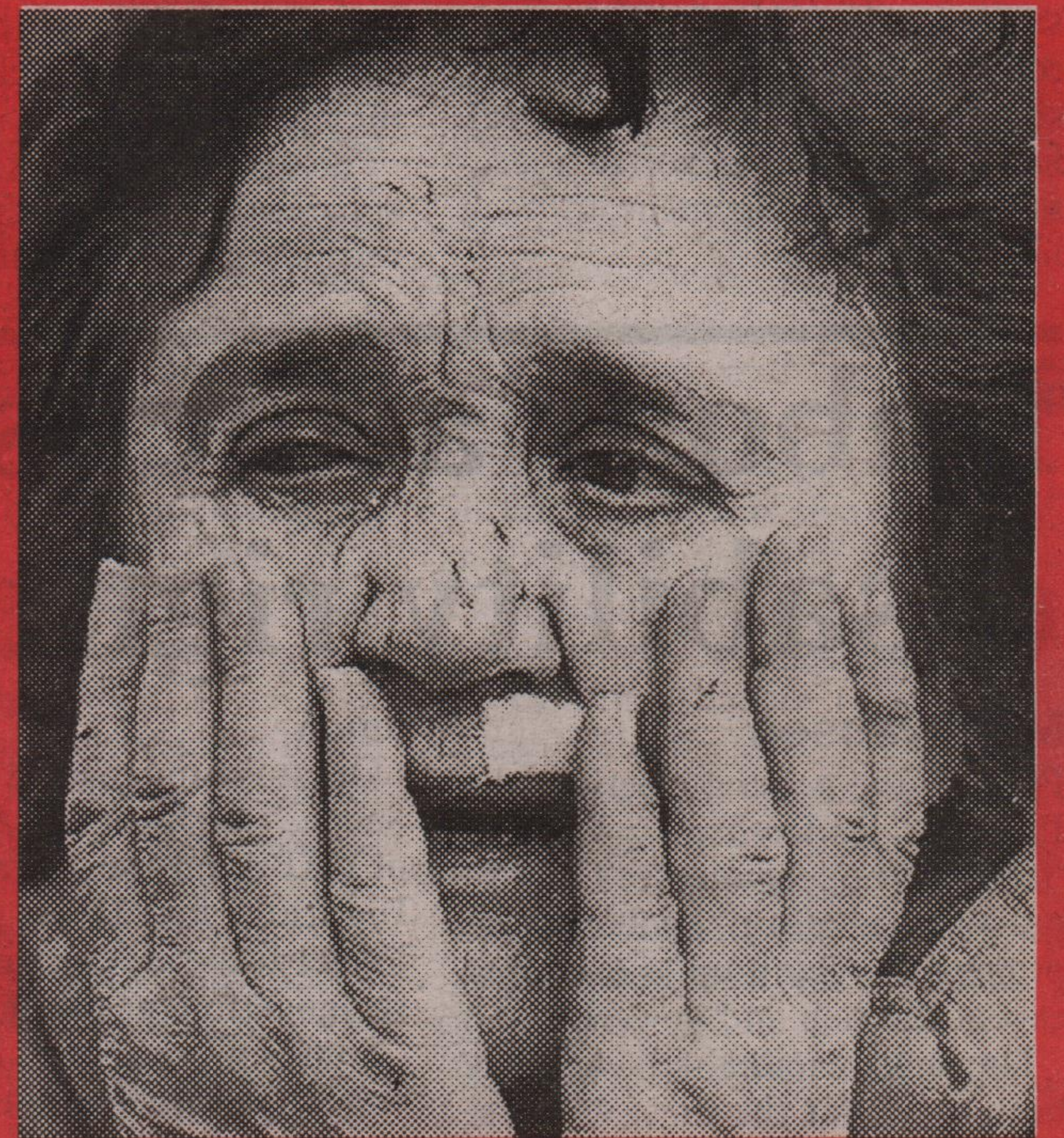
INNOCENT

PERISH IN

NATO'S DEADLY

BLITZ

STOP the BOMBING



Serbia out of Kosova!

NHS fury as Trusts say no on millennium bonus

UNISON members on April 10 Low Pay demo



HEALTH workers are steaming wild at the arrogant refusal by management and Labour ministers to make any national pay offer for working through the millennium festivities.

UNISON and the other health unions had tabled a claim for a flat rate £500 to be paid by all staff working over the night of the hyped-up holiday – modest in comparison with some of the deals being squeezed out of management in private industry and the utilities.

After a prolonged constipated silence the NHS Executive responded by insisting that there should be no national-level deal, leaving unions to negotiate piecemeal with management in each local Trust.

This was enough to convince UNISON's health conference to ignore the platform's call for moderation and vote 3-1 for a ballot on strike action over the two days of the millennium weekend.

Since then, it has all gone very quiet at UNISON Head Office: but NHS management have sensed that union officials are a soft touch by putting the boot in. One major Trust, the Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals, has just announced that it will pay no more than basic Bank Holiday enhancements for staff who turn up to work while all their friends and relatives are welcoming in the next century.

Personnel boss Mike Fleming, apparently oblivious to massive vacancy rates and staff turnover,

insisted that the Trust would depend on the "public service" ethos of health workers.

One London Trust has offered different patrolling approach, trying to fob staff off with a hand-out of tickets to the Millennium Dome instead of a decent pay packet.

The NHS London Region is seeking to take some of the heat out of staff anger by offering doctors and nurses a £150 bonus for the Millennium Eve: even this would cost £7m across the capital, and raise financial problems for cash-strapped Trusts.

As the NHS heads for a nervous

winter, the one certain factor is that while the sky is apparently the limit for pay rises in the boardroom and private industry, anything more than a pat on the head is apparently too much for the staff who keep front-line public services running.

Labour attacks disability rights

Mark Jansen

Prior to the general election, the Labour leadership promised 'fairness not favours'. This in practice has meant a government prepared to stand up to everyone except the rich and powerful.

The most vicious attacks have been saved for the most vulnerable within society - first single parents and then asylum seekers.

The focus of New Labour's newest assault is people with disabilities, as the government draws up proposals to slash £750 million from disability benefits.

Up until now New Labour have had an easy ride, being able to force through parliament anything they like with barely a whimper of opposition from supposedly left MPs (not a single Labour MP was prepared to vote against the Asylum and Immigration Bill at its second reading).

Refusal

Alistair Darling's refusal to accept any amendments to the current proposals may have laid the basis for the most significant rebellion within the Labour ranks to date.

A dozen national charities have withdrawn from the governments Disability Benefits Forum, complaining that they have simply been used to give credibility to a government policy that they disagree with, whilst the government has refused to take any notice of their input into the

forum.

Organisations such as RNIB, Scope, the National Association of CABs and the Royal National Institute for Deaf people no longer feel they can participate in the government forum.

Some 67 Labour MPs have stated their opposition to two key points to the Welfare reform Bill: the means testing of benefits for anyone with a pension of over £50 per week, and the ending of Incapacity Benefit for anyone who hasn't paid National Insurance for two years.

Tories

Many disabled people have already been forced off benefits through counter-reforms under the Tories and the introduction of the hated All Works Test.

Whilst it is encouraging that a number of Labour MPs have tsated their opposition to the government, Darling has said that he will not back down.

It is absolutely vital that a mass campaign is built to ensure that the MPs vote against the Bill, that can win the support of a much wider layer of MPs and that can force the government to back down.

The Disability Action Network is already preparing to campaign against the bill with direct action tactics. Disability organisations, Trade Unions, Labour Parties and Benefits Rights organisations can form a powerful alliance that could force a retreat.

Greater London Assembly candidates Reject the Millbank fix!

Neil Murray

THE LIST of Labour's 'approved' candidates for the new Greater London Assembly has recently been released, and it makes dismal reading. Rather than seeking nomination from constituencies and trade unions, those wanting to be candidates merely had to put themselves forward.

A panel then looked at the nomination papers, invited some to interview, and drew up a list after hearing appeals against rejection.

The system was a fix from the start. Self-nomination was supposedly to ensure a better ethnic and gender mix of candidates. In fact only 27% of those on the list are women. Rather self-nomination and vetting was designed to ensure that left and independent-minded candidates who might be popular in the party could not get onto the assembly.

The vetting panel established by the Greater London Labour Party Board was stacked with Blairites, supplemented with 'independents' such as arch witch-hunter Joyce Gould. Candidates had to submit papers spelling out, among other things their "life experience" and "vision for London".

Many were rejected for having the "wrong kind" of life experience and vision for London, despite the Party never having spelt out what was expected. Others were rejected for not submitting sufficient information, despite it never having been made clear how much was expected.

The vetting panels supposedly looked at nominees papers "blind" (without knowing the names), but it does not take a genius to read such a submission and work out the politics and even identity of the candidate.

All this is an attempt to cover up political decisions with pseudo science.

Among those rejected for inclusion in the list are Geoff Martin, London Region convenor of UNISON, and Christine Shawcroft, 13 years a Councillor in Tower Ham-



Deselected - but elected: Canavan

lets. Also rejected are some right wingers obviously deemed too independently-minded, and some who have spent at least a decade doing the Labour leadership's bidding, but are obviously still not to be trusted because they were left wingers in the early '80s.

But it is among black candidates that the list is so obviously politically biased. While the list does include black candidates such as journalist Trevor Phillips, it excludes several who actually have a record of building black and anti-racist organisations.

Kumar Murshid, Tower Hamlets councillor and chair of the

National Assembly Against Racism, is excluded, as is Raj Jethwa, the London Labour Party's own Ethnic Minorities Officer.

The most hypocritical decision of all is to include Kathryn Smith, Bexley Labour Group leader, despite a reported admission that her membership was not continuous for 12 months, while excluding Lee Jasper, Chair of Operation Black Vote for the same reason.

The list does, however, include 8 Council leaders, obviously looking for a step up the career and earnings ladder. Overall the list is bland, with an extremely limited political range.

The nomination process for candidates is due to start in June with trade union and constituency branches making nominations to constituency parties. Instead, branches should refuse to nominate from this sanitised list and send in resolutions condemning the whole procedure and calling for the process to be re-opened.

Activists should point to the election results in Wales and Scotland (particularly Dennis Canavan's) as showing how such manipulation only rebounds against the party.

Action stations on Labour NEC poll

BALLOT papers should be sent out to all Labour Party members in the week beginning Monday 17 May for the Constituency places on the National Executive Committee and National Constitutional Committee.

The leadership has done its best this year to ensure this is a low key affair compared to last year, probably in the hope that their candidates will do better than last year, when they only won 2 of the 6 NEC places.

This makes it very important that Party members circulate

the material from the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance as widely as possible. Nor is it too late to organise meetings at which the candidates speak.

Leaflets can be obtained from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (0181 458 1501).

The Centre Left Grassroots Alliance candidates are: For the NEC: Ann Black, Bill Butler, Liz Davies, Mark Seddon, Christine Shawcroft, Pete Willmsman.

For the NCC: Teresa Pearce.

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EDITORIAL

No coalitions...

Scrap tuition fees and PFI

As expected the elections to the Scottish Parliament left no party with an overall majority. The failure of Labour to win a majority in Wales was more surprising, showing the extent of the backlash against the failure of the Labour government to deliver any improvements to depressed Wales and the resentment at the virtual imposition of Alun Michael on the Welsh Labour Party and voters.

After the results were declared, the horse-trading was in the

open. Michael set his mind against any coalition in Wales - this may be because the Assembly, unlike the Scottish Parliament, cannot pass legislation rather than for principled reasons.

Negotiations between Donald Dewar and the Scottish Liberal Democrats began well before polling day. It looked briefly as if they might flounder on the Liberal Democrats opposition to student tuition fees. However, for the sake of having a couple of ministers the Liberals have caved in and accepted an independent

review which will be binding on the coalition.

The irony of this is this that if the Liberal Democrats were really concerned to scrap tuition fees, they could have ensured they were voted down in the Parliament, given that all the parties except Labour committed themselves to abolishing them. Such is the price of principle.

Socialists are opposed in principle to workers' parties forming coalitions with bourgeois parties. While the Labour Party remains based on the unions it is still a workers' party, even with its cur-



If Scots Lib Dems wanted to defeat tuition fees, why not just vote them down?

rent rotten policies and despite Blair's wishes.

The fact that elements of the Liberal Democrats election manifesto were to the left of Labour's does not alter the fact that it is a bourgeois party, and while Labour is liable to pressure from the unions and the working class, the Liberals are not.

Some on the left, including in the Labour Party, looked to a Lib-Lab coalition in the hope that it would carry out policies to the left of Blair.

The Liberal Democrats collapse over tuition fees shows this is not to be, that a more direct fight is necessary, linking up with those campaigning in the labour movement, colleges and on the streets for policies in the interests of the working class.

The fight against coalitionism has to be linked to a fight for socialist policies which could enthuse the Scottish working class and win an absolute majority if the other parties brought down a minority administration.

Within the Scottish Labour Party and even among Labour Members of the Scottish Parliament, there is significant opposition to the policies of Blairism, whether tuition fees or the Pri-

vate Finance Initiative.

The massive vote for Dennis Canavan, expelled by the Labour Party for standing as an independent after he was declared not up to being a Party candidate, showed that significant sections of the electorate agree with the left, and certainly saw him as a perfectly good candidate to represent them in the new parliament.

Tommy Sheridan of the Scottish Socialist Party was also elected as an explicitly socialist candidate. The demand has already been raised within the Labour Party for Dennis Canavan to have his membership restored.

This must be supported, but activists should go beyond this to call on Labour to break the coalition with the Liberals and form a minority administration on radical policies.

Tommy Sheridan and other activists outside the Labour Party should add their weight to this call, with Sheridan spelling out the policies a Labour administration would need to carry out to win his support.

Such calls will also strengthen the hand of the Scottish Socialist Party in the lead up to June's European elections, where they should be supported by all socialists.

Don't soft peddle on rights of Kosovars!

DEMONSTRATIONS are growing against NATO's war in the Balkans, but the anti-war movement, as led by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans, continues to have a major failing, not least if it is to win over those who, up to now, have swallowed NATO's line about conducting a "humanitarian" war.

It is not just that its sole slogan, "Stop the Bombing" fails to address Milosevic's crimes against the Kosovan people, but at meetings and rallies few, if any, of the official speakers even mention this issue.

By concentrating almost exclusively on the suffering of the Serbs without mentioning the Kosovans, they come across as apologists for Milosevic.

This in turn gives a legitimacy to those Serbs in Britain (by no means all) who vehemently oppose any criticism of the Serbian government and its ethnic cleansing.

On both national demonstrations there has been a small counter-picket by Kosovans. Holding KLA placards, but also NATO, U.S. and British flags, these show the illusions most Kosovans currently have in NATO saving them from Serbia's repression.

But the outrageous response they get from sections of the demonstration is to chant "Kosovo is Serbian".

Sections of the demonstrations which have raised slogans in support of the Kosovans as well as 'Stop the Bombing' have been subject to verbal abuse and threats of violence.

Although these problems are not present on the same scale in every local campaign, it does mean that at its heart the movement cannot address the concerns of those appalled at the plight of the Koso-

vans in Kosova and the camps.

Nor can there be any dialogue with the Kosovans themselves who, wrongly but understandably, see NATO as their saviour.

Because of this organisations have come together in a loose coordination around the slogans "Stop the Bombing, NATO out of the Balkans", "Stop the Ethnic Cleansing, Self-determination for Kosova" and "Open the Borders".

On the two national demonstrations these organisations have formed a bloc behind a banner with these slogans, both for pro-

tection against abuse and to make it more visible that at least a section of the anti-war movement does attempt to address the issue of the Kosovans.

The participating organisations (Socialist Outlook, Workers Power, Workers Action, Communist Party of Great Britain, Socialist Democracy and Workers International) have also sent a letter to the Committee for Peace in the Balkans calling on them to ensure the range of speakers at meetings and demonstrations also includes those who address these issues.

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!

This is the second issue of *Socialist Outlook* to be reduced in size from our normal 20 pages, as we wrestle with financial problems. We only make this cut reluctantly, but to produce and distribute the paper each month costs far more than the 50p cover charge, and the demands on our organisation have for the moment outrun our resources.

We need more - both in one-off donations to get over a number of short-term cash pressures, and more long-term supporters to help us sell and sustain the paper.

As Europe is wracked by its biggest war since 1945, and the labour movement faces the onslaught of Tony Blair's reactionary Millbank machine, there as great a need as ever for socialists and internationalists to speak out and organise in Britain.

***Socialist Outlook* is determined to continue to keep you in touch with the news, views and campaigns of the Fourth International, the struggles of the oppressed and the action in the**

unions.

That's why we are asking every reader and supporter to help us by making a donation to our appeal and by stepping up the fight to sell the paper.

We need £1,500 for a new laser printer to replace the one that has just died of over-work, and more to help us strengthen our coverage, buy more and better photographs and improve the appearance of the paper.

Please send as much as you can, as soon as you can, to *Socialist Outlook* (Fund Appeal), PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



You can't kill us all!

Jane Kelly and Susan Moore

Three nail bombs exploded in London within two weeks. Three died in the third attack; which also caused more injuries.

Many people have been badly injured, with several traumatic amputations and people badly hurt from shrapnel, flying nails, glass, and dirt from the bombs that has caused serious secondary infections.

The first two attacks were targeted at areas with large black communities: first Brixton in South London where about 40 per cent of the population is Afro-Caribbean, then Brick Lane in east London, home to the Bangladeshi community.

On Friday 30 April, the third bomb went off in a packed gay bar in Old Compton Street, in Soho. The bombing of a gay bar was not unexpected, indeed the police had been warning leaders of the lesbian and gay community to be on guard against possible further attacks.

The police were initially reluctant to accept that the Brixton bomb was racist in intention, but after claims by Combat 18, the White Wolves and later several other neo-Fascist groupings, that they were responsible and then the sec-

ond bomb in Tower Hamlets, it became clear that these vicious acts were aimed at the traditional targets of the far right.

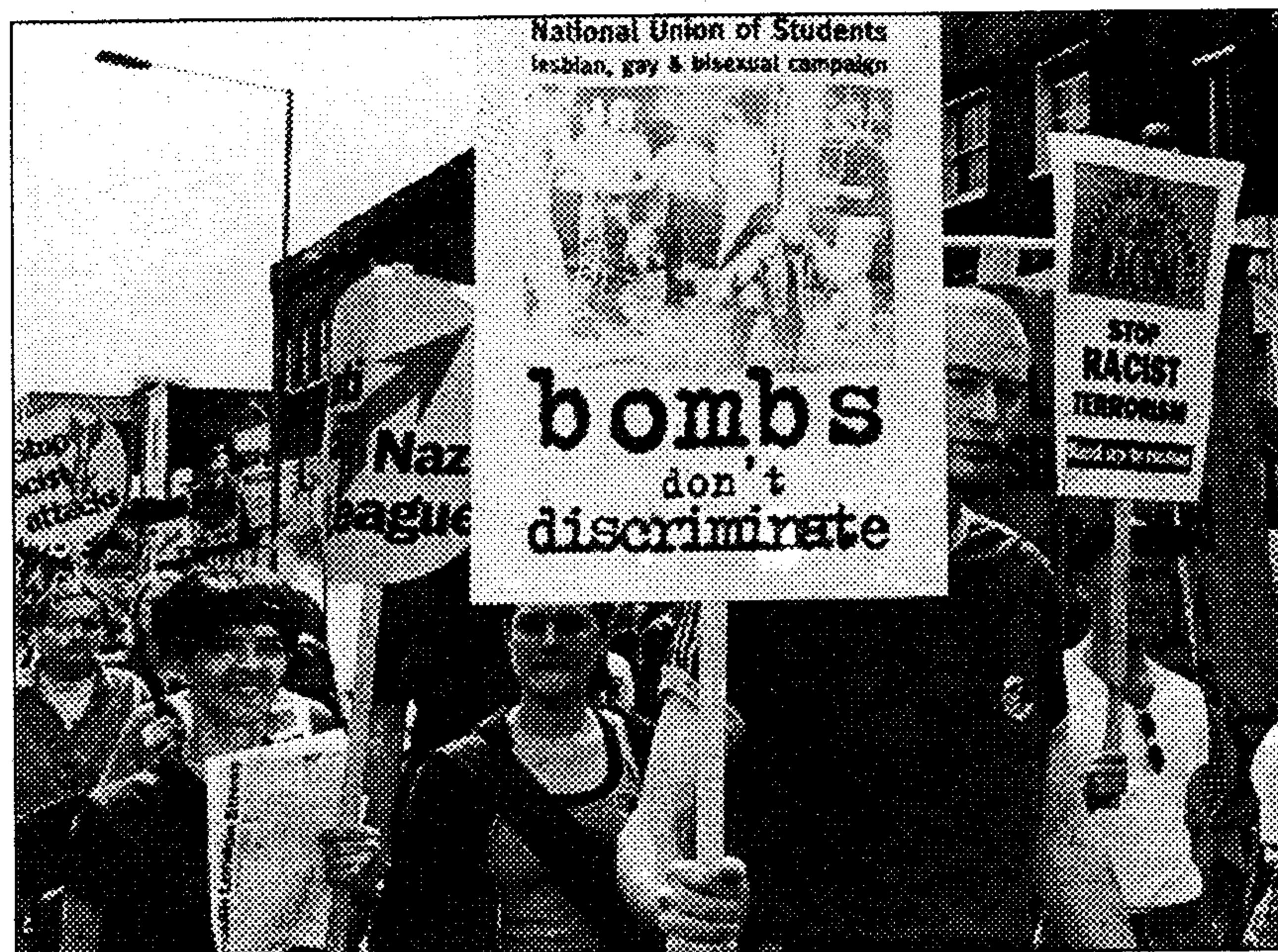
Prominent members of the black community had received a series of particularly threatening letters in the weeks leading up to the bombs telling them to get out of Britain before the millennium. The hand of the far right was apparent.

The day after the Soho bomb an arrest was made and the man is still being held. Police are claiming that explosive material was found in his house outside London. They say he has no connection with any far right organisation and was not responsible for any of the claims made. The brief police statement, seemed designed to suggest that this was an individual "crank" acting for "personal motives". Since the arrest there has been silence in the media.

Whether or not the individual(s) involved are members of any known far right group, there can be no doubt that the bigotry and hatred that led to these attacks is identical with that propagated by these groups.

There has also been an continued escalation of hate letters to lesbian and gay and black organisations since the arrest.

Why has this happened now, and



what does it mean about the state of the far right political groupings in Britain?

One significant element was the publication of the Macpherson Inquiry Report into Stephen Lawrence's murder, with its far-reaching criticisms of the police and the labelling of the Metropolitan Police force as 'institutionally racist', has given the black community greater confidence.

The founding meeting of a new National Civil Rights Movement in Britain, held in March this year and modelled on the American example, proved yet again how necessary it is for the black community, along with the Irish and those seeking political asylum in Britain, to organise together to fight racism. Numerous family campaigns, fighting for justice in cases of deaths in police custody and racist murders were represented at the meeting.

While the 'New' Labour government is following Tory policies

with regard to economics and employment as well as continuing the programme of privatisation, on some social issues such as the gay age of consent (in the process of being equalised with the heterosexual age) they are more progressive.

Of course even on social issues their policies and actions are contradictory. While the Labour Party in opposition promised to set up the inquiry into the Lawrence affair, which they did when elected, at the same time they are putting in place legislation against asylum seekers which is even more draconian than that introduced by their Tory predecessors.

This is the context in which the far right finds itself extremely isolated and on the defensive. While they have been able to kill and maim with their lethal nail bombs, the response by the population of London has been to organise meetings and demonstrations and to argue that an attack on any one

section of the community is an attack on us all. This latter has been the line adopted by government ministers too. This was the theme behind the demonstration held in London on May 1.

Traditionally a labour movement demonstration, it was transformed into an alliance of the working class and the oppressed, with a march from Brixton to the May Day demo in Trafalgar Square and then continuing on to Soho. Such a coalition has not been seen since the great Miners' Strike of 1984-5, when solidarity with the miners included the labour movement, women's groups, lesbian and gay organisations, black and Irish groups.

One debate which has resulted is the question of whether to ban the far right groups associated with these outrages. Ken Livingstone has called for the introduction of a Prevention of Terrorism Act against the right, and for far right groups to be banned. Home Secretary Jack Straw has said he is not persuaded that this would be of any help, since banning would simply drive them further underground.

Socialist Outlook is opposed to any introduction of further state measures, including the banning of political organisations, which would inevitably then be used against the left as well as the right.

Instead street demonstrations and self defence must be the response. It seems that this is the response of those groups directly targeted and most of the rest of the population too. "YOU CAN'T KILL US ALL" said the posters put up around Soho after the bomb went off.

Fight goes on for answers on death of Roger Sylvester

Fred Leplat, Islington UNISON

ROGER Sylvester was a 30 year old healthy black man who lived in Tottenham. He worked as an administration officer for a drop-in mental health centre in Islington and was a UNISON member.

On the night of 11 January Roger was restrained by eight Metropolitan Police officers outside his home in Tottenham. Roger was detained under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act

and the police told the family that he was restrained 'for his own safety'.

They also said that he had not been violent towards police or anybody else. Within 45 minutes he had sustained numerous injuries and remained in a coma, effectively dead until his life support machine was switched off seven days later.

From the outset the Metropolitan Police spin doctors have made a concerted effort to misinform the public by placing into

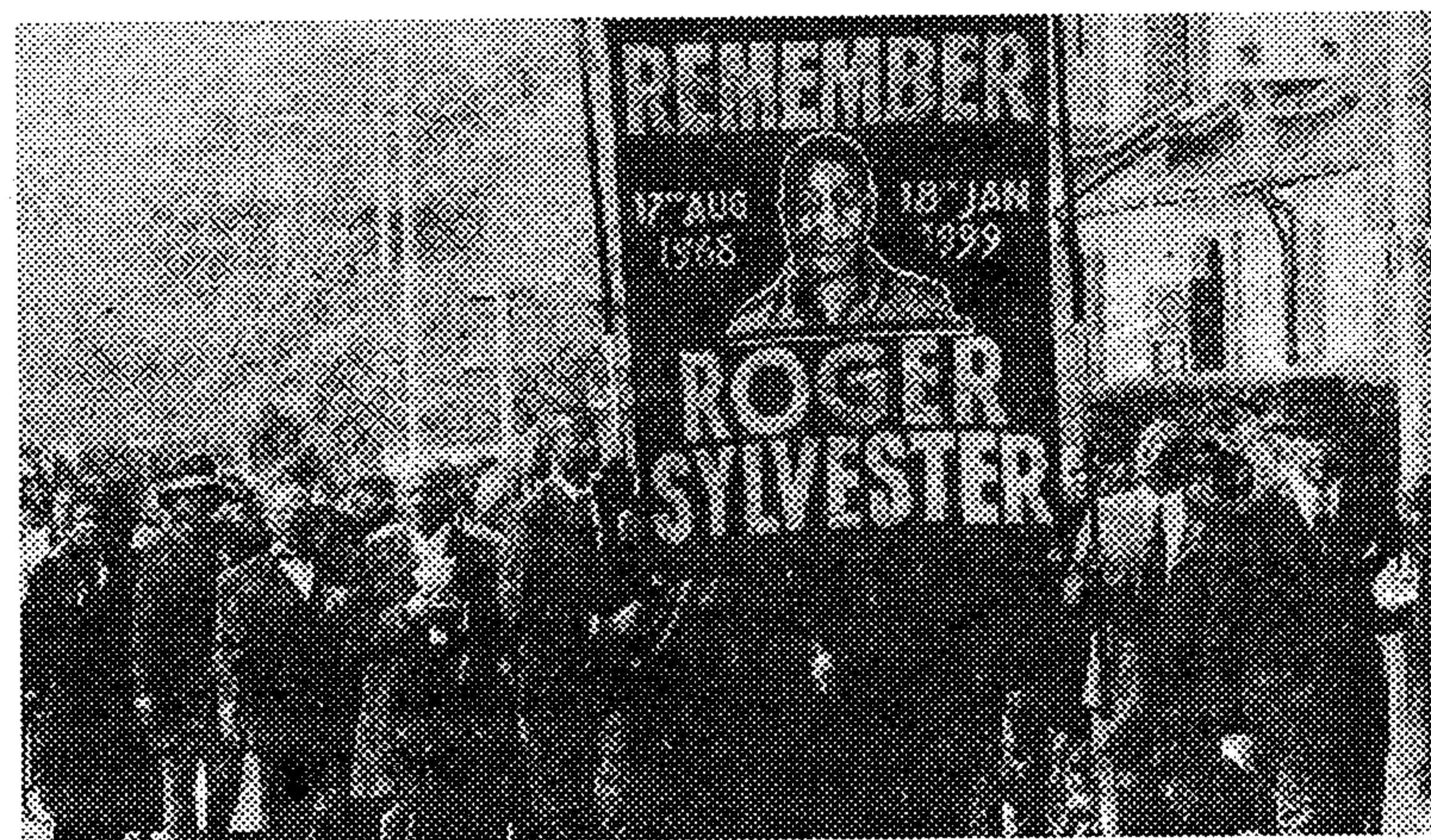
the public domain partial, inaccurate and deeply prejudicial information designed to smear Rogers character in an attempt to deflect attention away from police conduct. This is a pattern that has been seen repeated time and again in controversial deaths in custody.

The smears included:

■ Scotland Yard issued a press release describing Roger banging on a neighbour's door in an "aggressive and vociferous manner". It was quickly established that he had in fact been banging on his own door and that there is no evidence for the assertion that he was acting aggressively.

■ The pathologist for the Coroner Mr Freddie Patel branded Roger a crack cocaine addict in an off the cuff briefing to journalists outside the Coroners court - an allegation subsequently reproduced in newspapers: *The Times* newspaper ran an article which claimed police officers believed his death was due to his heart being "swollen by crack cocaine".

Three months after making a complaint, Roger's family received an unprecedented apology. The Metropolitan Police have now withdrawn the statements which the family considered smears but have refused to accept that meant they were inac-



curate.

The death of Roger Sylvester is yet another black death in custody following the use of force.

The evidence that black people are over represented in statistics of black deaths in police custody is borne out by INQUEST monitoring. This is particularly true of the Metropolitan Police.

In 1994, 5 out of 14 deaths were of black people (35.7%) whilst in 1996, 7 out of 20 recorded deaths were of black people.(35%) The total ethnic minority population of Greater London is 13.36% (1991 Census)

Roger Sylvester's family is still campaigning for justice. They want an independent inquiry into the circumstances of his death, legal aid for their representation at the inquest, and the suspension of the eight police officers who restrained him in such a way

that he later died.

Since Sir Paul Condon has been Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police we have seen the violent deaths of Joy Gardner (1993) Shiji Lapite (1994) Brian Douglas (1994) Wayne Douglas (1994) and Ibrahima Sey (1996).

The Metropolitan Police has not learnt any lessons from these appalling deaths - and in none of them have those responsible been brought to account.

The death of Roger tragically demonstrates again that the police is riddled as an institution with racism.

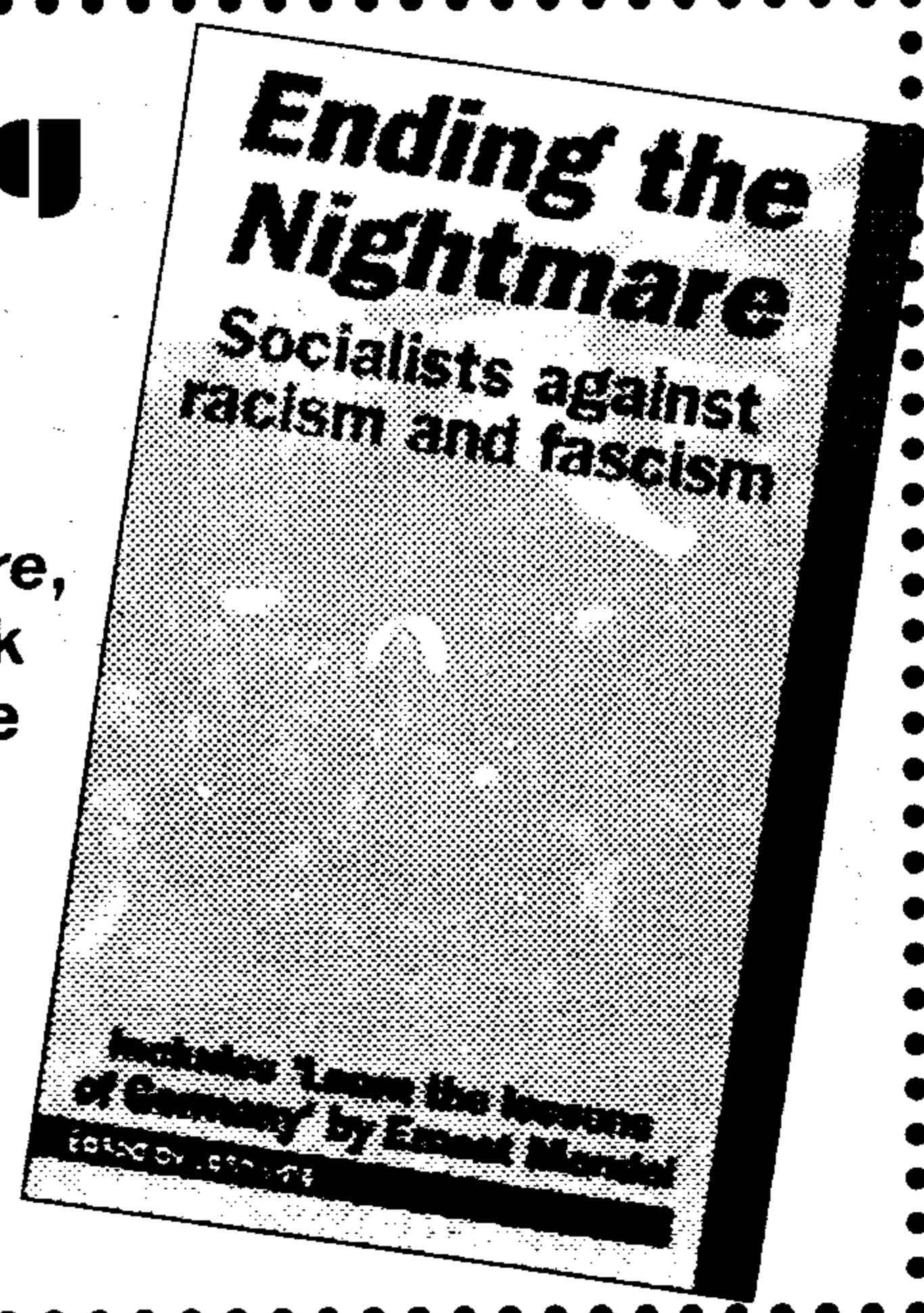
Useful addresses:

The Roger Sylvester Justice campaign, PO Box 25908, London, N18 1WU
Inquest, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4 2PJ
Islington UNISON, 257-258 Upper Street, London, N1 2UD

Fighting the far right

Ending the Nightmare, the Socialist Outlook book on the struggle against racism and fascism - the lessons of history

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Election gains for socialist Left

Dave Packer

The local elections in England and the elections to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly show that a space is beginning to open up for socialist candidates to the left of Labour. In some working class areas electors were prepared to turn their back on the Labour Party and vote for socialist alternatives.

In Scotland as a whole the socialist candidates chalked up nearly 100,000 votes, with a similar number going to the Greens. Dennis Canavan, excluded by Blair's New Labour had a tremendous result in Falkirk West, beating his New Labour opponent almost three times over.

The most revealing fact in these elections was that the majority of the population, especially in solid working class areas in England, and especially in the north of the country, did not come out to vote Labour but stayed at home. In England the turnout was only 29% and in most places Labour got in on around 10% of the eligible vote!

In some inner city wards the turn out was as low as 12% - this was front page headline news in Newcastle's Evening Chronicle. This shows two things: first, a growing layer of workers who are disillusioned with Labour and feel disenfranchised, and second, that these workers do not yet perceive a credible alternative.

In Scotland and Wales in contrast the nationalist parties, and even the Liberal Democrats, were seen as far more radical than the Labour Party and the SSP slate provided the beginnings of a credible left alternative. The Greens were also seen by many disillusioned Labour supporters as a left alternative.

In some areas exceptional votes were recorded for socialist candidates. In the Glasgow region the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) received 18,581 votes (7.25%) in the top up vote, and in Coventry Socialist Party (SP) candidate Karen McKay was elected to the council to join Dave Nellist, gaining just under 50% of the vote. In Glasgow Pollock the popular SSP leader Tommy Sheridan came third after Labour and the SNP with 21.51% of the vote and was elected to the Scottish parliament by the top up vote.

In Wales, which was a disaster for Labour, the socialist candidates also did less well. This is partly because Plaid Cymru adopted a leftish stance and collected most of the left leaning protest votes, inflicting stunning defeats on Labour in its heartlands of Llanelli, Islwyn and the Rhondda.

The United Socialists averaged 1.76% where they stood in South Wales Central but with some candidates gaining over 2%. The SLP did marginally better, while the CPB, who only stood in two seats, gained an average of 1.35%.

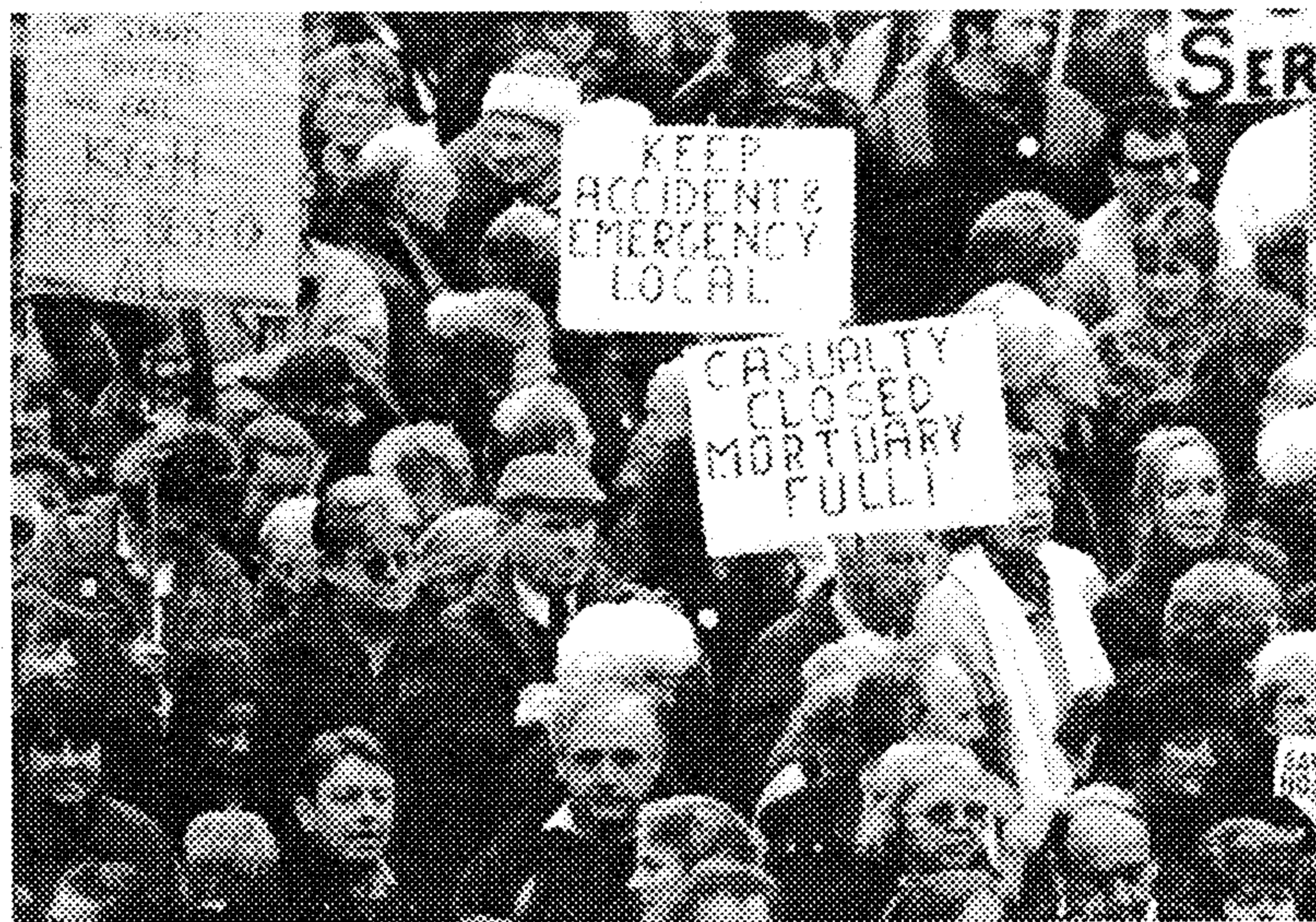
In England there were a sprinkling of socialist candidates, some of whom had impressive results but there was no concerted effort by the left.

Six Striking Tameside workers standing as 'Defend Public Services' polled 14000 votes. With an average vote of 10%, coming second in one ward and beating Liberal Democrats and People's Alliance (disenchanted ex-Labour councillors) in others, they had made a serious impact on the people of Tameside. Labour recognised that the careworkers campaign had been the most serious opposition they had faced in a long time.

Hospital campaigners in Wyre Forest, standing to oppose the closure of Kidderminster Hospital, won seven seats, meaning that Labour lost control of the council. In Sheffield, another Labour heartland disaster, which went to the Liberal Democrats, the left stood eleven candidates, including the Sheffield Socialist Alliance, which achieved between 2% and 3% of the vote. In Bootle on Merseyside SP candidate Pete Glover did well with 15% of the vote.

In all the elections, the picture

Making Labour pay for closures: Kidderminster hospital campaigners (below) won seven seats in Wyre Forest council.



was marred by the sectarian refusal of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) of Arthur Scargill to collaborate with other left coalitions or worse, avoid direct clashes. Sometimes the SLP chose to stand against other socialist candidates in order to compete with them and split the vote, for example in St Michael's ward in Coventry, where Karen McKay's success left them with a derisory vote - which they deserved.

These clashes weaken the left as a whole because they reduce the total potential vote for the socialists who are seen negatively by working class voters as divided and sectarian.

This was why the London Socialist Alliance withdrew when the SLP put Scargill at the top of their slate for the European elections, even though we had built up an impressive coalition and the SLP had little organisation in London.

The LSA would undoubtedly have agreed to have Scargill at the top of a joint slate, but the SLP's refusal even to reply to our letters proposing discussions on this led to our withdrawal.

These elections show that it was known candidates and parties with track records in struggle and campaigning which received credible votes, while those that were completely unknown or parachuted in, usually failed to reach 2 per cent.

In Scotland as a whole the SLP got more top up votes than the SSP even though their organisation was very weak. This is because of the SLP's association with

Arthur Scargill and the great miners' strike - doubtless many ex-miners voted for Scargill's party. There is also an ageing ex-Stalinist vote which can always be relied upon to vote for the SLP. The SSP in contrast drew strength in precisely those areas, mainly in the central belt, where it had worked and campaigned over a period of time.

Its supporters would undoubtedly have been on average younger and more dynamic than those of the SLP. The SSP have built themselves through their campaign and hopefully will build on this in their campaign for the European elections.

It is clear that space exists in some parts of these islands for left candidates. Workers are often prepared to vote for a united socialist alternative, if a credible alliance can be built. As disillusion with New Labour spreads as its projects becomes clearer, this will be the case more often and more widely.

Post-mortem needed as Welsh voters punish Labour

Ceri Evans

THE RESULTS of the first Welsh Assembly elections were a shock to everyone in Wales. Plaid Cymru achieved success beyond the hopes of even their wildest dreamers, while Labour activists were left stunned, "crushed" in their own words, and without a majority in the Assembly.

The Assembly was elected using an additional member system, with 40 constituency seats and 20 additional seats used to ensure greater proportionality. Welsh voters had two votes in these elections, the first for their constituency representative and the second used to allocate the additional seats.

The election was characterised by a low turnout, a collapse in the Labour vote and a significant upsurge in Plaid Cymru support. It was Labour's lowest share of the vote in Wales since the 1930s, with Plaid Cymru only five per cent behind.

Plaid's most astonishing successes were in winning constituency seats in the Rhondda, Islwyn, Llanelli and Conwy. These results show that not only did Labour voters stay home in significant numbers, but that many voted Plaid. It had been predicted before the election that Labour voters might use their second vote to



Waving goodbye to Labour votes: Alun Michael

protest against New Labour by voting Plaid. In the event, many Labour voters gave both their first and second votes to Plaid, and also voted for them in the council elections, held on the same day.

This led to Plaid Cymru taking control of Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerffili councils, both of which lie in Labour's valley heartlands.

Consider these facts: In the 1997 British general election, Labour's share of the vote was

greater than 60% in 15 Welsh constituencies. In the first Welsh general election, this share remained above 60% in only two constituencies, Blaenau Gwent and Cardiff West. Cardiff West, held in Westminster by Rhodri Morgan, was the only constituency which registered a swing to Labour.

In the 1997 British general election, the Plaid Cymru vote was greater than 10% in only 10 constituencies. In 1999, there were

only two constituencies in which it remained in single figures: Monmouth and Brecon and Radnor. The swing to Plaid Cymru was greater than 30% in a swathe of valley constituencies.

The Left The parties standing to the left of Labour and Plaid Cymru polled poorly. The United Socialists also stood in nine first-past-the-post seats, where they achieved somewhat better results.

Their best results were achieved in Merthyr Tydfil and Clwyd South, where they obtained 2.3% of the votes. On this occasion the votes of disillusioned Labour supporters went to Plaid Cymru and not to the small left wing parties.

Why? As the votes were counted on May 7, Labour's well-prepared spin on the results gradually fell apart. Both Peter Hain and John Prescott were interviewed early in the day and blamed complacency and the "politics of contentment" for the low turn-out!

Untenable

As the day wore on it became increasingly untenable to argue that complacency and contentment had caused such large numbers of Labour voters to switch to Plaid. It became apparent that Labour's main strategy in these elections, of frightening voters away from Plaid with talk of "nationalist madness", had abjectly failed.

Writing in The Western Mail after the result, Peter Hain began by blaming the two Labour leadership contests for alienating voters. He went on to claim that this was in no way a protest against New Labour, but simply that the Government had failed to motivate its Old Labour

base to vote. He also blamed the result on the unpopularity of some Labour councils and that the lack of a perceived Tory threat in Wales. His conclusion: Welsh Labour needs to be more New Labour.

An article by Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, took issue with Hain's view, and identified the blatantly undemocratic imposition of Alun Michael as a major factor in Labour voters' discontent. It was, he said "A case of dragons led by poodles." His conclusion: Welsh Labour needs to be less New Labour, not more.

Paul Flynn is undoubtedly correct in identifying the election results as a protest vote against the right-wing policies of the Blair Government and its arrogant and undemocratic practices.

The vote may also reflect a deeper development in Welsh politics, that of a growth in support for Plaid Cymru as a reaction against the practice of Welsh Labour, at both council and parliamentary level.

Opinion polls have indicated that Welsh voters will vote differently in British and Welsh general elections. At a British state level, they will vote against the Tories and for a Labour government.

On a Welsh level, they are far more prepared to support Plaid Cymru, since the Tories do not pose a threat.

The Labour leadership in Wales has tried to blame everyone but themselves for this disastrous result. The left in the party must try to ensure that a thorough post-mortem be carried out which fixes the blame squarely where it belongs.

Bickerstaffe fronts growing UNISON witch-hunt

Fred Leplat, CFDU national treasurer

DEMOCRACY is under threat in UNISON. Two branches – including the largest branch in England – have been suspended, activists are being investigated, “unauthorised” placards were banned on the April 10 Living Wage demonstration – and finally a conference decision allowing branches to campaign in the union is being reinterpreted through a “consultation”.

This attack on democracy has been going on for a year since the national officials around General Secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe attempted to ban donations from branches to political organisations and prevent branches from organising together to develop union policy.

The national leadership was partly defeated on this issue when last year’s UNISON conference adopted motion 184. This confirmed the right of branches to campaign to change or develop union policy, but stopped the controversial donations.

National officials were also defeated at national conference when they used every trick in the book to prevent a decision being made for a national demonstration for a proper minimum wage, which would have put them in conflict with the Blair government.

Given the obstacles put in the way of an effective demonstration, 20,000 people demonstrating in Newcastle for a proper Living Wage was certainly a warning that union members want more from a Labour government than just rehearsed Tory policies.

That is not the message that Bickerstaffe or the clique behind

him which runs the union want UNISON to be putting out.

Since last year’s UNISON conference, national officials have attempted to roll back lay-member democracy through a whole series of attacks.

They are now preparing the union for a sanitised conference which will be in their eyes a “show-case” for the union, and where they will not be “ambushed” as they were last year with the vote for a demonstration for a minimum wage.

The attacks started seriously after the UCLH branch organised a very large lobby of the Labour Party conference for the minimum wage. The UCLH branch was never accused of calling an event which was in breach of the rules of the union. But branches were asked by the General Secretary to account for the money spent in sending members onto the lobby.

Since the formation of UNISON, a small but increasing number of activists have been investigated – such as those from the Liverpool, Leeds and Newham branches. Some still are.

This has often occurred in branches where former NUPE branch officers were reluctant to merge, and attempted to depict former NALGO activists as bullies. This gave the opportunity for regional officials to remove “troublesome” left activists.

However, the current spate of investigations is directed essentially at SWP activists such as Dave Carr and Candy Udwin of the UCLH branch, Brian Butterworth of Brent and now Annette Carey of Sheffield.

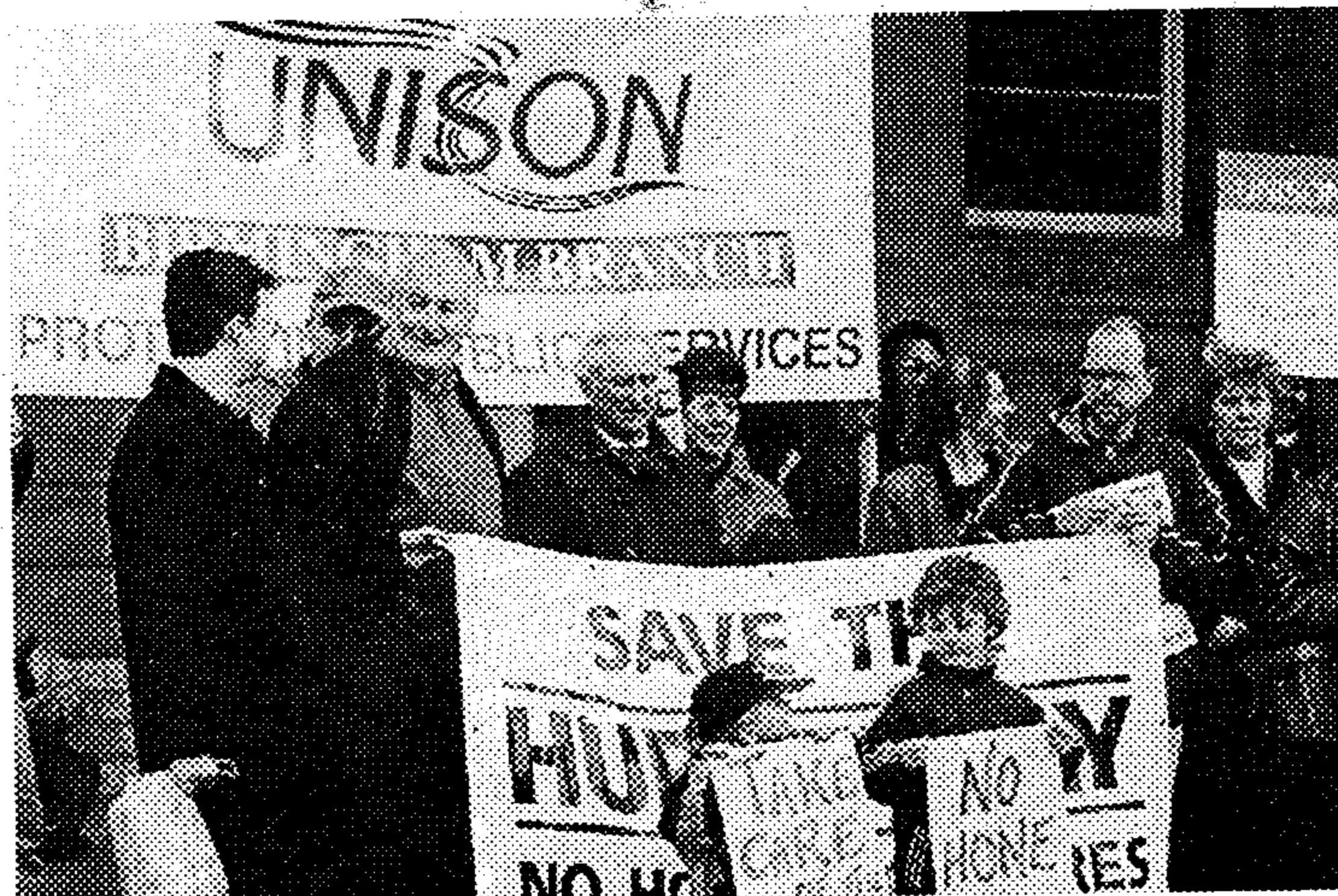
The national officials have targeted the SWP as they believe that they do not attract much sympathy beyond their own sup-

porters, and because they have been criticised for some of their tactics by others on the left such as the CFDU (Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Union).

The SWP, despite some wrong tactics, have attempted to organise a fightback against privatisation at UCL Hospital and against privatisation of housing benefit in Sheffield. It is this fighting leadership which national officials want to crush. And after having dealt with the SWP, they will undoubtedly launch a wider witch-hunt which will include the CFDU and others on the left.

The recent suspension of Birmingham, the largest branch in the union by a body called the “Presidential Team” confirms this trend. Birmingham UNISON, with 18,000 members, is not led by the SWP, but has a varied left leadership which has tried to organise against council attacks.

Some members made complaints about some branch officers: but instead of letting the members decide who should lead



Fighting for jobs – and risking a witch-hunt: Birmingham Branch

them, regional officials cancelled the branch AGM and subsequently suspended the branch.

Complaints against individuals are no reason for suspending a whole branch. The real motivation for the suspension is that the Birmingham branch leadership did not agree with a reorganisation into sub-branches being proposed by national officials.

Unfortunately, when this matter was raised at a recent NEC, only six CFDU supporters and the three West Midlands NEC members voted for lifting the suspension.

Now the suspension of the Sheffield UNISON branch, again by the Presidential Team, takes this matter further. Complaints against Annette Carey and other SWP supporters on the branch leadership are being used to demonstrate that “good govern-

ance” of the branch has broken down.

Regional officials are now running the branch, and all stewards have been asked whether they agree with the actions of the Presidential Team and will co-operate with the reorganisation of the branch before being allowed by regional officials to continue as stewards!!

The attacks on democracy also go hand in hand with an attempt to prevent any political alternative being presented to the membership. There is no national opposition to privatisation – whether through “Best Value” or PFI schemes, or to the imposition of normal overtime rates for working the Millennium New Year in the NHS, or to the miserly pay rises being offered in local government.

National officials are trying to prevent the left from winning conference to a fighting strategy, or at least a national demonstration on issues of concern to the membership and which could place the union in conflict with the New Labour government.

The national leadership has therefore drafted guidelines on the right to campaign in UNISON which would, if adopted, restrict this right by preventing any branch-based initiative, such as a conference on Best Value, if it does not have the support of the Regional Committee.

Fortunately, a number of branches and the CFDU and SWP, are organising against this attack on democracy. One of the proudest founding principles of UNISON was that it was to be a “member-led” union.

We must not let the Bickerstaffe and his officials ditch these principles to create a union in which all the levers of power are in the hands of full-time bureaucrats.

MSF Conference 1999 Left stranded as Chowcat is thrown to the Lyons!

Veronica Fagan

MSF’s annual conference failed in its most crucial task of forcing the leadership to account for its actions over serious allegations of financial malpractice at the top of the union.

Assistant General Secretary John Chowcat had brought forward charges against General Secretary Roger Lyons and Head of Finance Nelson Mendes in February. The union, supposedly the champion of whistle blowers, suspended Chowcat, while those alleged to have done wrong remained at work. Now he has apparently been sacked, and is appealing.

Members are not in a position to say whether the charges are founded or not. The Emergency resolutions were concerned rather with how the union had dealt with the subsequent investigation. The whole process was shrouded in secrecy, with even the National Elective Committee being denied

detailed reports and union bodies forbidden to discuss the matter.

Despite the fact that some resolutions jumped the barrier of the standing orders committee, conference was undemocratically denied the right to discuss them. The President made a lengthy statement which failed to deal with the key issues of accountability and natural justice addressed in the emergency motions. He then ruled that no further discussion could take place.

The floor needed a two thirds majority to overturn this – and the motion to overturn goes to the vote without even any motivation. Legitimate points of order questioning the interpretation of the rules were ignored and democracy silenced.

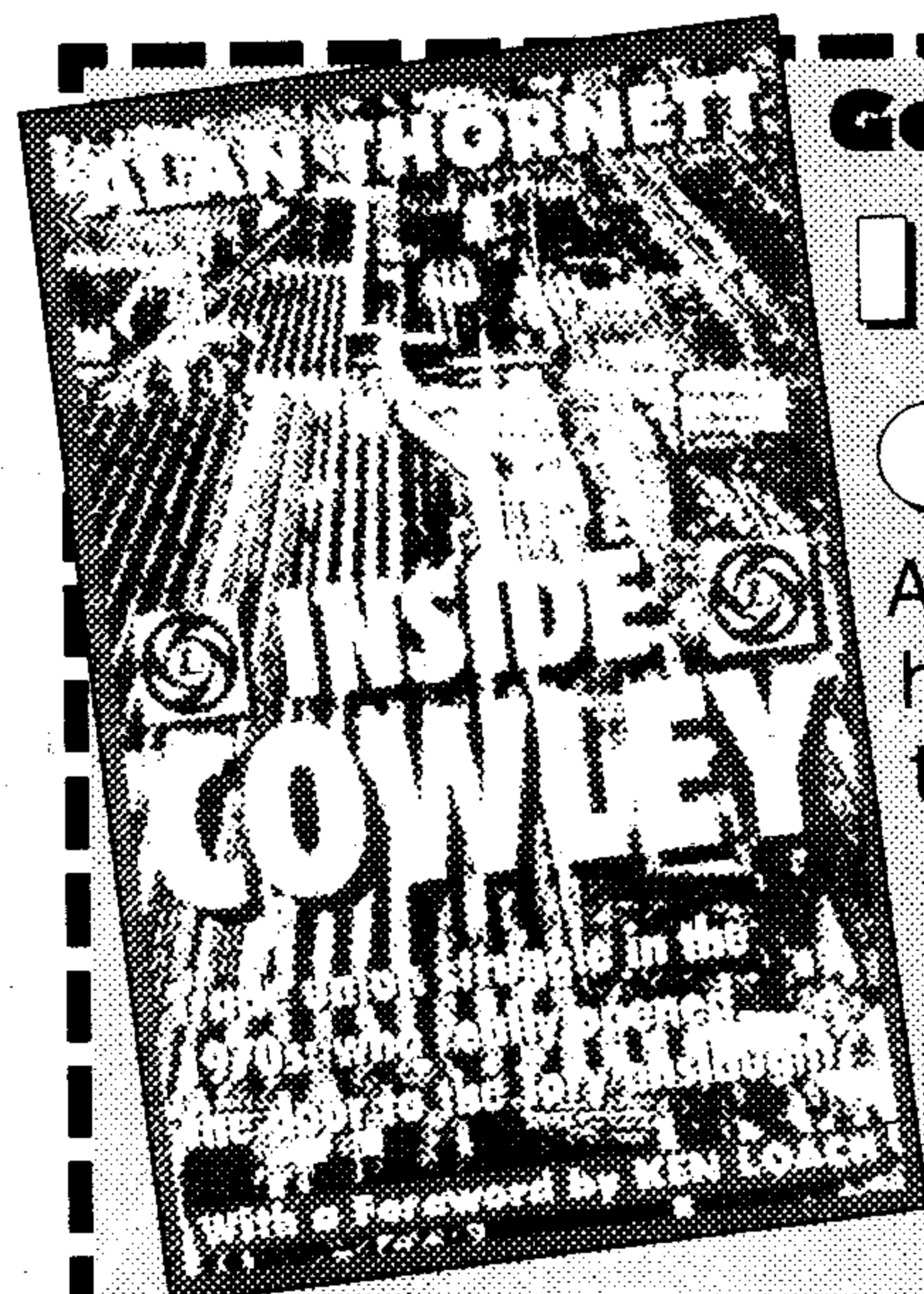
Later on however delegates heard Lyons admit that he had had two salary advances totalling £6000 in the last two years without the NEC’s knowledge – this to a man who earns around

£80,000. He was pressured to explain why he is not giving the £15,000 he earns at the Monopolies and Mergers Commission back to the union.

It is not in the end surprising that Lyons survived – he is a key ally not only of the TUC leadership but also of Blair’s New Labour. But the left, once again disorganised and uncombative as a whole at this conference, despite attempts from London and Ireland to steer it in a more positive direction, must find a way to break the log jam.

Without a serious frontal challenge the important steps forward at the level of policy that were made will be ignored or sidelined.

Positive decisions there were – including 43 per cent of conference voting for an anti-war resolution and a decision to affiliate to Reclaim our Rights, both in defiance of the top table. But these will not be sufficient to create the kind of union that its members deserve and need.



Get your copy!

INSIDE GOWLEY

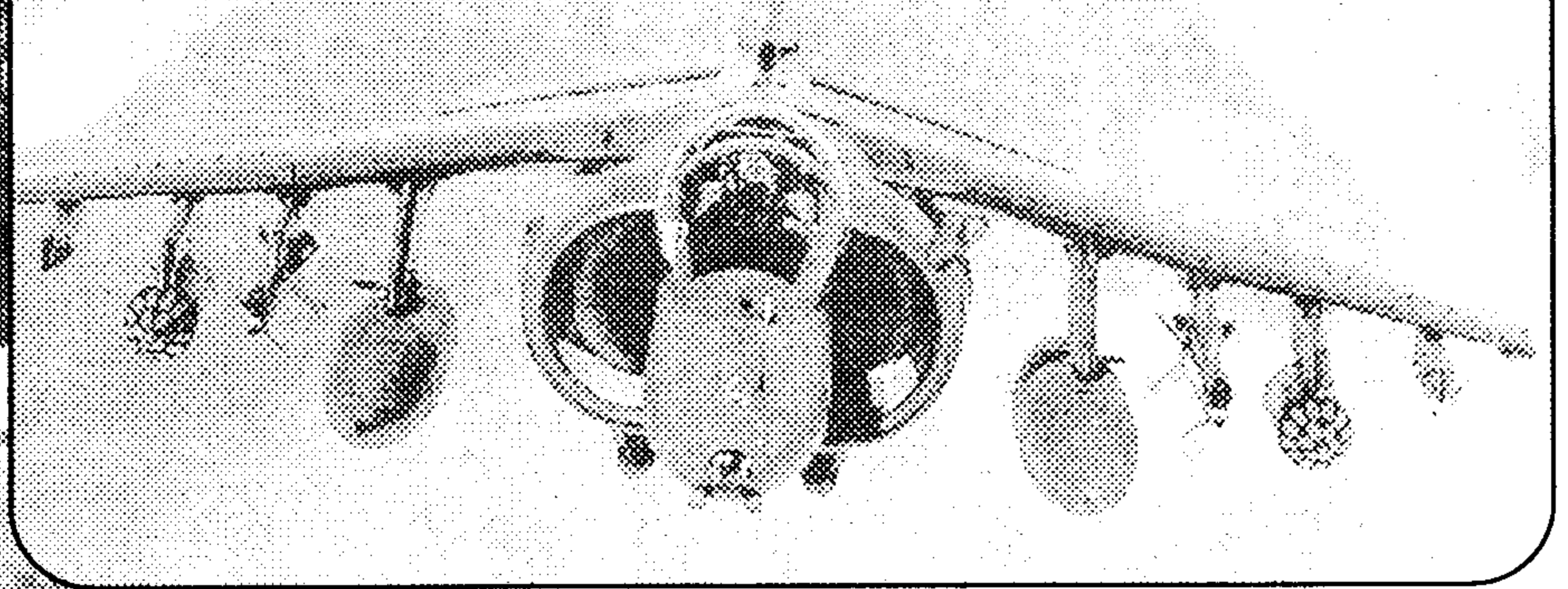
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Demolished: the car plant where workers a year ago defied Milosevic

NATO out of the Balkans!



Car-workers appeal ignored as bombs flatten Yugo factory

The television images showed a car assembly line reduced to twisted metal.

The plant was in Yugoslavia's biggest industrial complex, called Zastava, in the town of Kragujevac, some 75 miles from Belgrade.

On March 27, workers there had sent out an appeal to people all over the world via the Internet. They said they had voted to remain in their plant day and night, acting as a "human shield" to protect it from U.S./NATO bombing.

Some 38,000 workers were employed at Zastava. Another 60,000 worked in the area in supporting jobs. The complex included Yugoslavia's only auto factory, which produced the Yugo car.

The workers' objective, according to their statement, was "to protect with their bodies what provides for their and their families' living."

In their "Letter from Serbian Workers" they appealed to workers everywhere, but especially in the NATO countries, "to more loudly raise their voices" against the bombings.

The attacks, they said, were destroying hospitals and schools and attempting to reduce their industry to rubble.

The letter included the coordinates of the industrial complex, in defiance of the US/NATO warmongers.

On April 9—Good Friday on the Orthodox Christian calendar—NATO stepped up its murderous air assault. Among its targets was the Zastava industrial complex.

The missiles found their target. The complex was destroyed.

Some 124 workers of the "human shield" were injured, 20 seriously. The night shift was occupying the factory when the bombs hit. A year ago the workforce was a focus of opposition to the Milosevic regime: it will be a long time before they can go on strike again.

Poison cloud over Balkans

FEARS of a massive ecological fallout spreading across the Balkans have grown with the intensifying NATO onslaught on Serbian chemical plants. Among other targets, NATO planes have deliberately hit plants manufacturing PVC, which is highly toxic.

Massive oil slicks have been released into the river Danube from wrecked refineries, and Belgrade scientists have warned people not to eat fish.

Towns in northern Greece have been warned that poisonous dioxins released into the atmosphere by the bombing could affect their water supplies and crops.

Dioxins can be produced by chemical reactions following explosions at pharmaceutical plants, oil refineries, fertiliser depots or electrical transformers.

The fears that this carcinogenic poison could be affecting foodstuffs were increased when the French government warned shoppers to avoid Greek-grown asparagus. There are reports that dioxin levels in Thrace have increased 15-fold since the bombing began.

The Union of Greek Chemists has echoed warnings of an "ecological catastrophe" in Serbia, while concerns are also growing in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania.

Radiation danger from NATO weapons

Assistant Prof. Dr. Radoje Lausevic, Serbian Ecological Society Belgrade University

The public in the UK and in Yugoslavia are largely unaware that bullets being fired by A-10 anti-tank aircraft and probably all Tomahawk Cruise missiles fired by the US contain depleted uranium (DU).

The development of these radioactive weapons is based on the fact that uranium (atomic mass 238) is much denser than lead (atomic mass 207), and therefore its kinetic energy is sufficient to penetrate tank armour or concrete buildings more effectively than lead, prior to detonation.

The design of the bullet is to incorporate a long thin cylinder of DU housed in a plastic sheath or "sabot". This means in turn that the very small leading edge of the bullet pierces with maximum impact. The same principle is used in Tomahawk Cruise missiles, with the aim of piercing concrete obstructions rather than metal.

The bullets were used in the

Gulf War, and some 1 million of them still lie in the deserts of that region where subsequently the incidence of leukaemia, cancer, and birth defects have risen sharply as a consequence of the ensuing environmental radiation.

The amount of DU scattered around the Gulf war zone is given as 350 tons, but including the nose cones of Cruise missiles and helicopter rotors, the figure is nearer 750 tons. This is 27 TBecquerels of radioactivity, one fiftieth of the total alpha releases from Sellafield over its entire operating history.

The same is happening in Bosnia, where DU was also employed.

Some 80,000 US Gulf War veterans now suffer from the so-called Gulf War syndrome, whose symptoms are identical to radiation sickness. The US military are well aware of this, and are on record as confirming that radiation from the surface of a DU shell carries a dose equivalent to a chest X-ray per hour. Each A-10 Thunderbolt 30mm cannon anti tank shell contains some 275g (10.1 Bq). A single 120mm Abrams tank DU shell contains

more than ten times as much.

When DU bombs detonate, uranium oxide is formed in tiny particulates (0.5 - 5 microns). These can be blown several hundred miles by the wind or suspended electrostatically in the atmosphere. The half life of Uranium is 10⁹ (ten and nine noughts) years, so they do not decay.

One "hot particle" of this DU material in the lungs is equivalent to a chest X-ray per hour for life. It is impossible to remove, so the affected lung gradually irradiates the victim until death ensues.

In the use of DU, both ground-based combatants and their targets are almost certain to suffer long term radiation sickness and premature death. The Pentagon view is that the short term effectiveness outweighs the long term situation, but this is an error.

The public at large are unaware that these weapons are weapons of mass destruction and that there have been requests for them to be placed, like cluster bombs, on the Geneva Convention banned list.

It is said that the unprecedented use of Cruise missiles with DU inserts in Yugoslavia will have the same effect as the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island disasters. Again these calculations by eminent radiation physicists are not being released to the media.

In other words the action of is likely to have a long term pernicious effect not only on that part of Europe, but on their own ground troops if deployed, and almost certainly on the refugees from the Kosovo region.

This may be partly why NATO is reluctant to engage ground troops: You will see from CNN and other news program pictures that they are beginning already to wear submicron gas masks. The Yugoslav population however, together with aid workers and ethnic Albanians are largely unprotected.

Serbia faces ecological disaster

"NATO intervention in Yugoslavia is increasingly gaining a dimension of retaliation. The number of civilian casualties rises every day. The destruction of economic sites has long term dramatic consequences for civilian population and puts cities, country and the entire region under serious danger.

The bombing of the chemical plant in Pancevo, near Belgrade, has already caused severe ecological damage and seriously threatens to turn into an ecological disaster.

In the last fire that broke out in the refinery and factory producing artificial fertilizers, only the favourable direction of the wind prevented the whole city and all its inhabitants from suffering much more serious ecological and health problems.

In the last few days, chemical plants in Novi Sad and Belgrade have been bombed. Their destruction could lead to a tragedy exceeding the one in Bhopal, India.

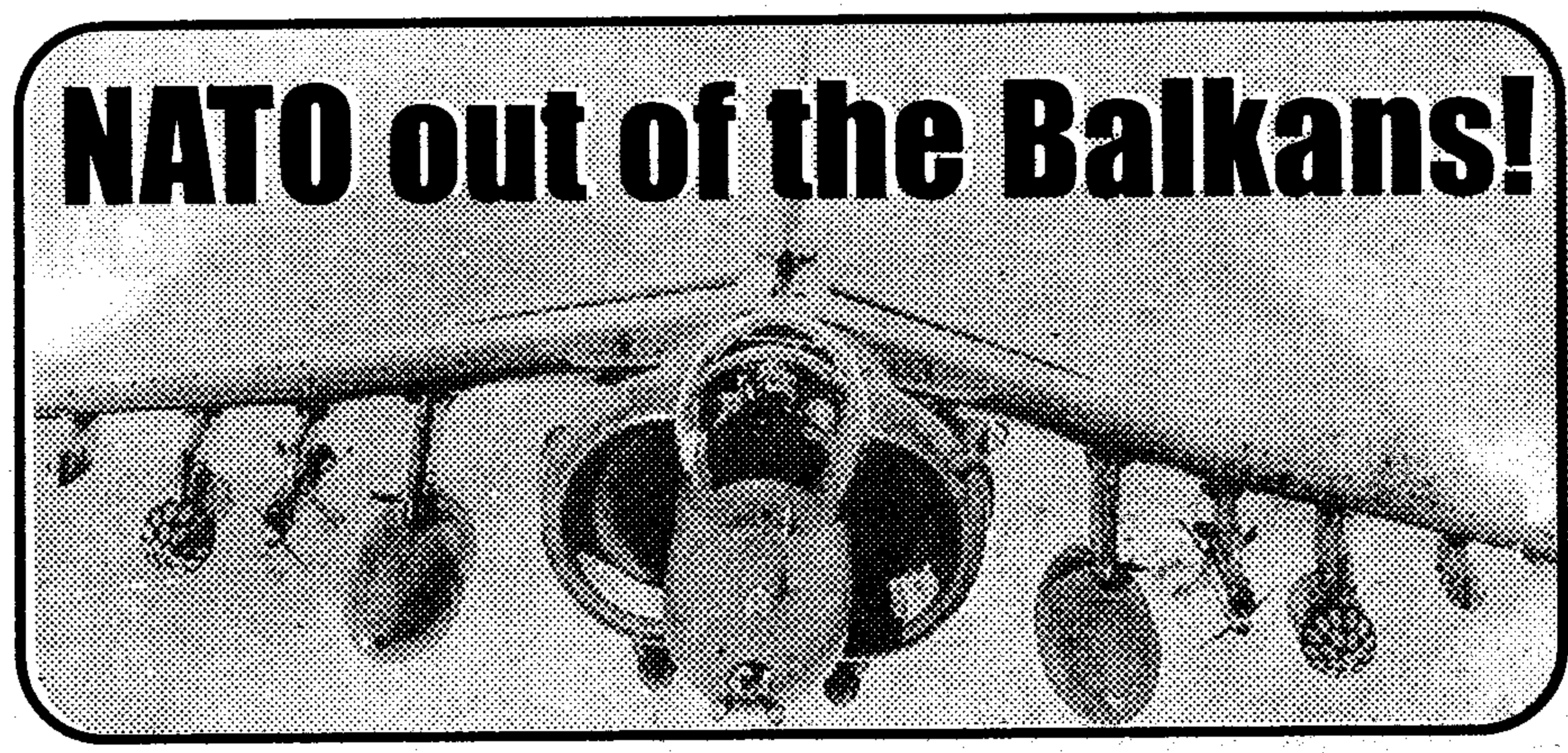
Those who are making the decisions must be aware of the effects of their actions. No subsequent apologies, or calling upon "collateral damage" could justify this action,

the consequences of which could lead to the permanent destruction of civilian population and their natural environment.

In the name of the people and in the name of Nature we demand that the use of force stops immediately and a solution is found to use negotiations for solving the difficult crisis facing Europe and the world."

- Association of Citizens for Democracy, Social Justice and Support to Trade Unions
- Belgrade Circle
- European Movement in Serbia
- Civic Initiatives
- Center for Transition to Democracy
- Center for Democracy and Free Elections Distrikt 0230 (Kikinda)
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia
- Women in Black
- Students Union of Serbia
- VIN-Weekly Video News
- Group 484 Yu Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
- Foundation for Peace and Crisis Management
- Urban Inn (Novi Pazar)
- Union for Truth about Antifascist Resistance
- Forum for Ethnic Relations
- United Branch Trade Unions NEZAVISNOST

Kosova: eight decades of repression which spawned the KLA



NATO out of the Balkans!

Geoff Ryan

Kosova before Tito

At the end of the Balkan wars and the First World War the Albanian nation was divided between a number of different states: Albania, Greece and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (which became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929). Kosova was allocated to Yugoslavia.

During the Second World War Kosova was divided between Germany (which occupied the mineral rich northern part) Bulgaria in the east, with the rest going to Italy.

The Italian-occupied part was integrated into Albania, which had been invaded by Italy and attached to the Italian monarchy in 1938. After the fall of Mussolini, German forces occupied the whole of Kosova.

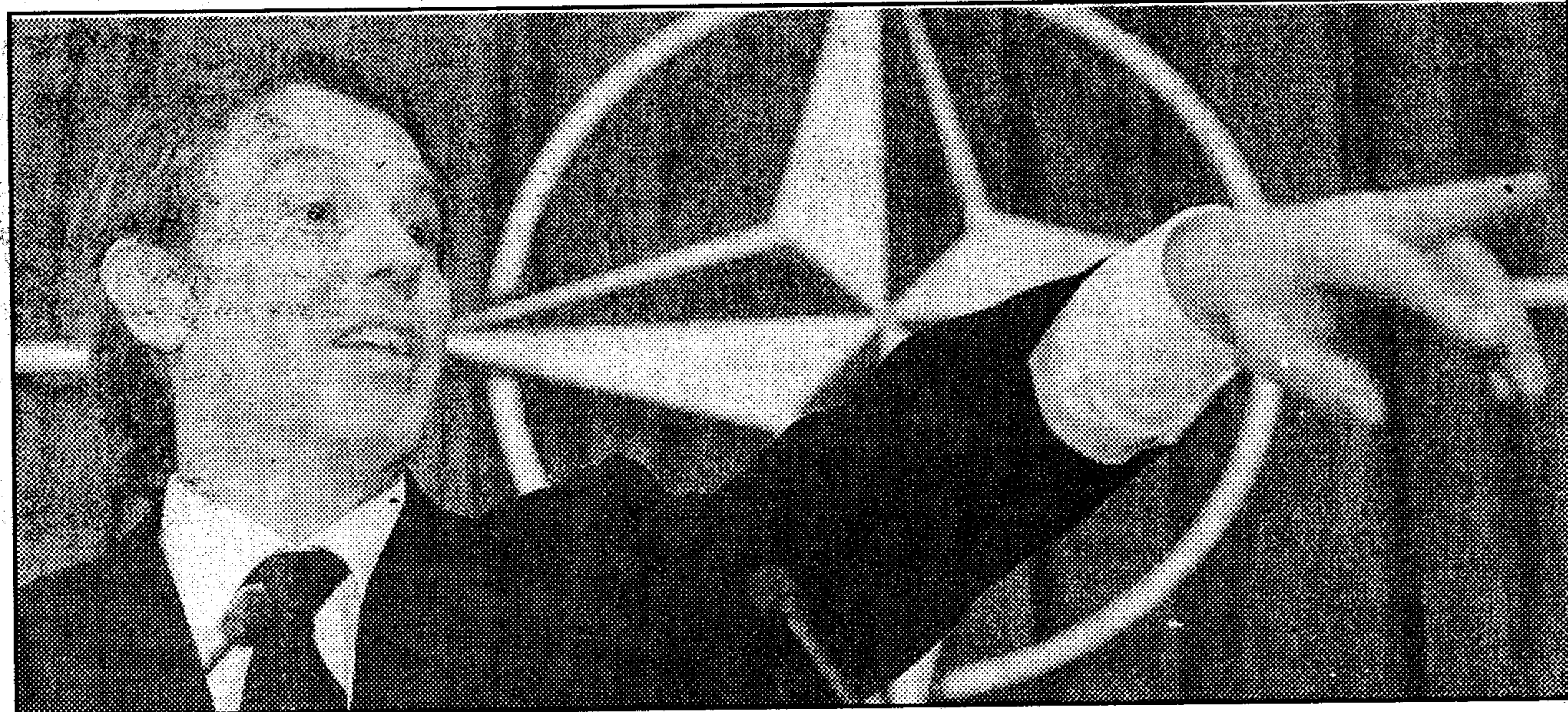
Many Kosovars welcomed the Italian invasion as it appeared to realise the dream of uniting all Albanians in a single state. The post war settlement had resulted in a majority of Albanians (about 60 per cent) living outside Albania: approximately 70 per cent of them in Kosova.

For the first time Albanian became the language of instruction in schools and was widely used throughout the administration. Serb and Montenegrin settlers - who had moved to Kosova during the colonisation by the Yugoslav government in the 1920s and 1930s - were attacked by Albanians.

A number of collaborationist organisations developed amongst Kosova Albanians: but with the exception of the small number of Albanians who joined the 'Skanderbeg' volunteer SS division, most of these organisations were not primarily pro-Nazi. They were motivated mainly by Albanian nationalism often combined with a marked anti-Communism.

Kosova was the area of weakest support for the Partisans. In the Summer of 1940 there were only 239 Party members in Kosova, of whom only 25 were Albanians. In August 1943 a CPY report stated 'Among the Albanian masses, the Communists are regarded as having sold themselves to the Serbs'.

As a result of the weaknesses of the Partisans the liberation of Kosova was carried out to a large extent by Bulgarian and Soviet forces, particularly in the east. There was a wide-spread Alba-



nian uprising in early 1945, and Kosova was placed under martial law: thousands of Albanians were killed by the Partisans in the course of suppressing Albanian resistance.

Kosova under Tito

Kosova was incorporated into Yugoslavia largely against the wishes of its inhabitants.

The decision to join Kosova to Serbia was passed by acclamation at a meeting in July 1945 of the Regional People's Council of Kosova, at which only 33 out of the 142 delegates were Albanians.

Under the 1946 Constitution Kosova was recognised as an 'Autonomous Region' of Serbia, giving it a lower status than the 'autonomous Province' of Vojvodina. Albanians, despite being the third most numerous people in Yugoslavia (behind Serbs and Croats) were not recognised as a 'Nation' but merely as a 'national minority'.

Only 'Nations' could have their own republics within the federation: and only 'Nations' could secede. Unlike Vojvodina, Kosova did not have its own independent legislature or its own supreme court. Its local administrative units were deprived of any independent decision making power.

Both the Albanian and Yugoslavian CP leaders were, after 1945, in favour of building a wider Balkan federation and there is no reason to suppose that they did not believe that the question of Kosova's future - and that of other Albanian communities in Yugoslavia - could not be settled amicably within this wider federation. Enver Hoxha produced plans for the unification of the

Albanian and Yugoslav armies and, as late as March 1948 was urging Tito to take concrete steps towards the unification of the two states.

After the initial repression the CPY also took steps to meet some Kosovar demands. The Albanian language was given equal status, at least in theory, with Serbo-Croat in legal and official matters.

These small but important measures came to an end with the Stalin-Tito split in 1948 when the Albanian leadership became one of the most implacable opponents of the Yugoslavs.

Effects of the Stalin-Tito split

The split with Stalin, and consequently Albania, led to a period of increased repression of the Albanian population of Yugoslavia. Belgrade was afraid that the Albanian CP would try to mobilise the large Albanian population in Yugoslavia to overthrow the Tito regime. At the same time the Hoxha regime in Albania accused dissidents of being Titoist agents.

The border between the two states was sealed, leading to virtual isolation between Albanians on different sides of the border for several decades.

Throughout the 1950s the Albanian population of Yugoslavia remained largely cowed, subject to continual repression. There were, however, signs of resistance. On May Day 1956 four Kosovar youths flew an Albanian flag in Djakovica. Over the next few months Albanian flags were unfurled over government buildings, schools and on trains. The result was increased repression, with thousands of arrests.

The period 1956-60 saw the

development of Albanian literary circles in Kosova, in which Adem Demaci - a future leader of the Kosova Liberation Army - first came to prominence. Demaci was jailed for denouncing the forced deportation of hundreds of thousands of Albanians on the pretext that they were Turks. Other Kosova writers of this period were also forced into exile, or jailed.

The slogan 'Kosova - Republic' was first heard on the streets during demonstrations on November 27, 1968 in Prishtina and several other Kosova towns. Other slogans included: 'We want a University'; 'Down with colonial policy in Kosova'; 'Long live Albania'; and 'Long Live Enver Hoxha'.

Demonstrations rapidly spread throughout Kosova and into Macedonia. These demonstrations resulted in amendments to both the federal and Serbian Constitutions which gave judicial and legislative rights to the autonomous provinces, and direct representation in the federal assembly.

Kosova was also given its own university and flag (that of Albania).

The 1974 Constitution made Kosova (and Vojvodina) a Republic in all but name. Following this came increased Albanianisation of the province, with bilingualism a necessary qualification for employment in public services and four fifths of available posts reserved for Albanians.

In 1976 Adem Demaci, along with 18 other defendants, was again put on trial, charged with various 'crimes' including 'organising against the people and the state', 'hostile propaganda' and forming the 'National Liberation Movement of Kosova'. The defendants were sentenced to 15 years imprisonment. After Tito's

death

The massive expansion of higher education at the University of Prishtina was not matched by increased job opportunities.

In 1981-2 demonstrations by Albanian students broke out throughout the province. They were brutally repressed, with over 30,000 soldiers. The protests soon spread beyond students, with increasing numbers of Albanian workers joining, and took on

a more political significance. The demand for a Kosova Republic was raised along with slogans such as: 'Unification with Albania'; 'We are Albanians not Yugoslavs' and 'Long live Adem Demaci'.

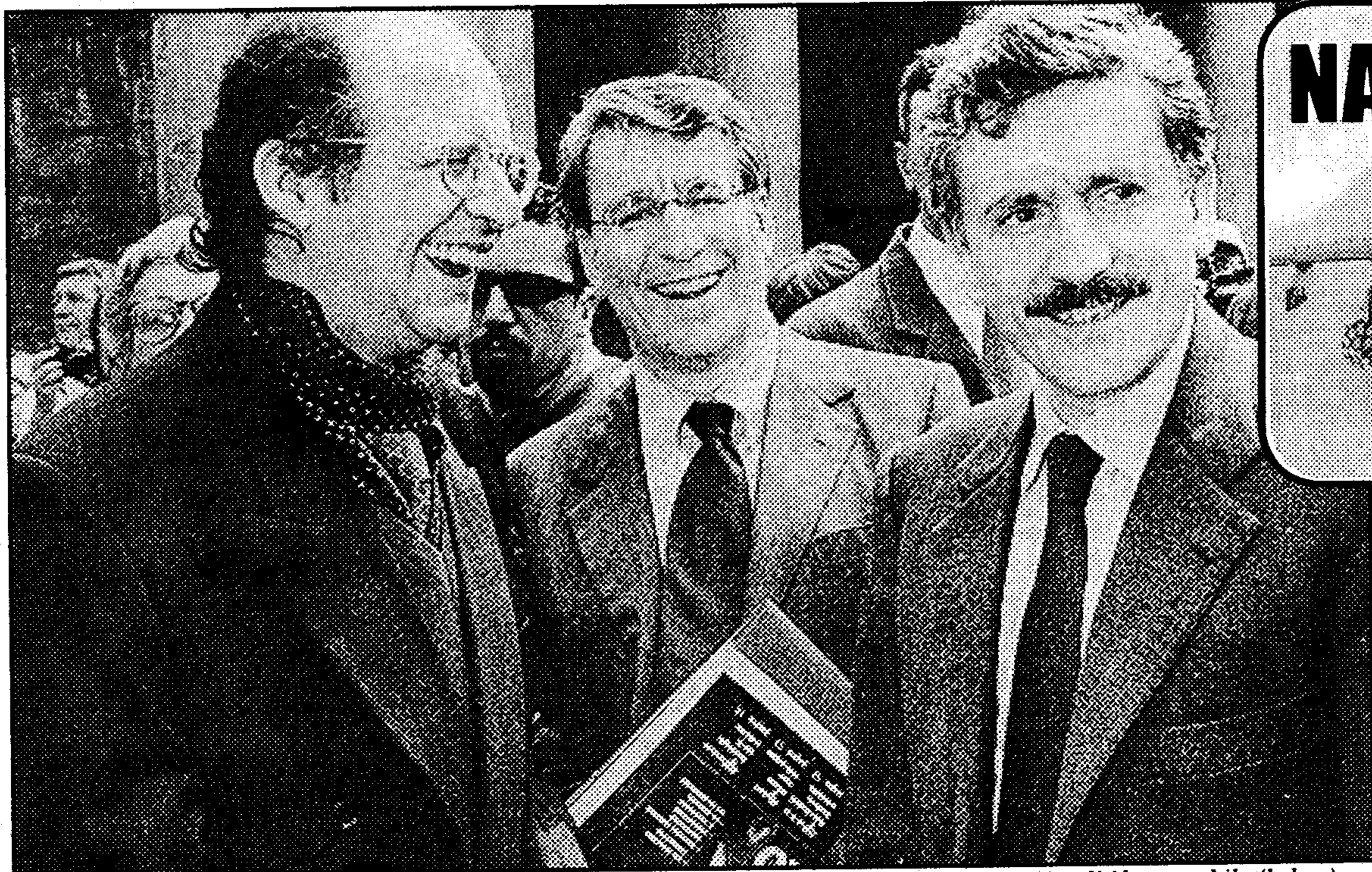
Although martial law was lifted after two months there was a steady erosion of Kosovar rights. In September 1981 strict censorship was imposed on the teaching of Albanian history, while the quotas for Kosovar students were gradually reduced. Nor was this confined to Kosova. Hundreds of Albanians were jailed in Macedonia and an attempt was made to make displaying the Albanian flag illegal - despite the fact that there had been no riots in Macedonia.

The Rise of the LDK

The overturning by Milosevic of Kosova's Constitutional position in 1989 was opposed by virtually all sectors of the Kosovar community. Miners from the Trepca mines went on strike, including a hunger strike underground.

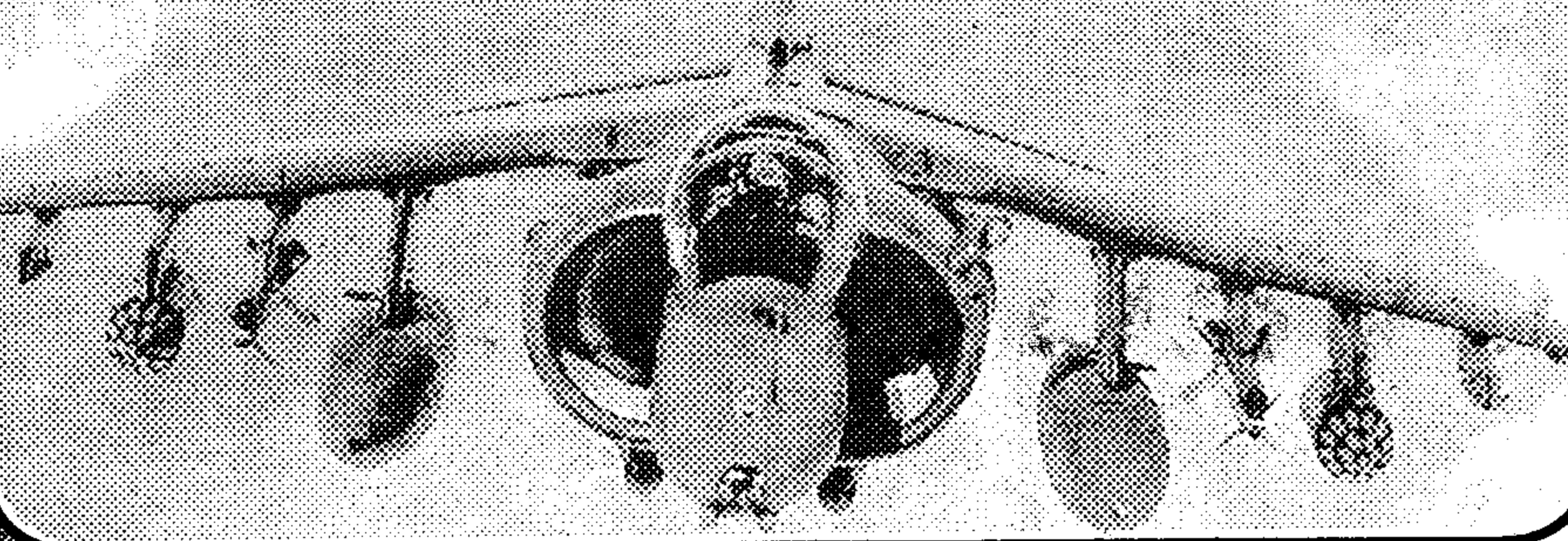
After the Kosova Parliament's decision to surrender Kosovan autonomy (a decision made with the Parliament building surrounded by tanks, and helicopters and war planes flying overhead) 114 out of 123 Albanian MPs met on July 2, 1990 in the street outside the locked Parliament building and declared Kosova 'an equal and independent entity within the framework of the Yugoslav federation'.

On September 7 the same delegates meet in Kacanik and issued the proclamation of a constitutional law for a 'Republic of Kosova' which laid down provi-



Imperialism's favourite Kosovar, Ibrahim Rugova (left) ingratiate himself with Italian premier d'Alema, while (below) KLA fighters try to liberate their country by more direct means. But Blair (opposite) and NATO still oppose independence.

NATO out of the Balkans!



Many of these weapons found their way across the border to Kosova. Among those leading the resistance are many former officers of the old Yugoslav People's Army and Kosovan Territorial Defence Forces, from the period previous to 1989.

Volunteers, arms and money have also come from the 600,000 Albanians working in Germany, Switzerland and other countries — the same people who largely financed Rugova in the past. Some of the money may well come from the Albanian 'mafia' and from drug smuggling.

In early 1999, the US relaunched its efforts to force the Kosovans to accept the plan.

KLA finally capitulated. Demaci resigned from the leadership and is now in Slovenia. It is rumoured that the new KLA leadership have threatened to kill him as a traitor.

The 'illusions' Demaci spoke of flow from the political weakness of the KLA leadership, which has a 'militaristic' tendency to reject political struggle, identifying the failed politics of Rugova with politics in general. The KLA's political declarations make no mention of the Serb minority, except to say that it is in the interests of 'peace in the Balkans, for both the Serbs and the Albanians' to end the occupation of Kosova.

In general, the KLA expresses little in the way of ideology, claiming last September, 'We do not fight for party or political

What's in it for the west?

Kosova has some of the richest mineral wealth in the Balkans, including reserves of coal, nickel, lead, zinc, magnesium, lignite, kaolin, quartz, asbestos, limestone, marble, chrome and bauxite.

sions for new elections for Parliament and of a Kosovar President.

In September 1991 a referendum was held which ratified the decision of the underground Parliament to declare Kosova a sovereign and independent republic.

Supposedly 87 per cent of eligible voters participated, with 99 per cent of them in favour. Accordingly Kosova was proclaimed independent on November 19, 1991. On May 24, 1992 elections were held, using private houses as polling stations.

The current that gained the most from this was the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK) of Ibrahim Rugova.

The LDK won 96 seats; the Parliamentary Party of Kosova (led by Adem Demaci) 13 seats; the Albanian Christian Democratic Party 7; the Albanian Peasant Party 7; and 2 seats were won by independents.

Five other seats went to Slav Muslim representatives. An additional 14 seats were held open for representatives of the Serb and Montenegrin populations, though these were not filled as only a small number of Serbs and Montenegrins participated in the election. Ibrahim Rugova was elected unopposed as President.

The Parliament never actually met. Decisions were, therefore, taken by Rugova and his closest associates without ever having to be debated in front of Kosovar representatives.

The basic strategy of Rugova was to avoid conflict with Belgrade, hence a policy of passive resistance. More militant actions were denounced as the work of provocateurs, acting on behalf of Belgrade. The hope was that western governments would reward the restraint shown by the Kosovars with recognition of Kosovan independence.

Such futile hopes were to be rudely shattered at Dayton, which encouraged wide sections of Kosovars to believe that they would only achieve their aims of an independent Kosova through violence. The Rugova project not only failed at an international level: it also had serious consequences inside Kosova itself.

The LDK decided to boycott all elections to the Serbian Parliament. As a result Arkan became MP for a Kosova seat and Milosevic remained in power. Albanians who advocated participation were denounced as traitors.

The attempt to create a parallel state increased the already greatly developed system of 'apartheid' in Kosova. By 1996 there was virtually no communication between Serbs and Albanians. They did not even use the same forms of transport: Serbs took the train while Albanians used buses. Most Albanians under twenty could neither speak nor understand Serbian. The responsibility for this situation lies, of course with Milosevic: nevertheless the policies of the LDK actually exacerbated it.

The LDK believed that the elec-

Qosja's attacks on Rugova were an indication of a growing opposition to the LDK policies. By 1996 there were 15 different Albanian parties in Kosova. The most vocal attacks came from Adem Demaci, who characterised democracy in Kosova as a caricature and denounced the LDK for its monopoly of power.

He was also savagely critical of the institutions of the parallel state. Demaci went on to argue that engagement with genuine Serbian opposition forces was more important than attracting Western attention.



tion of Sali Berisha as President in Albania in 1991 would bring Albanian assistance to Kosova. Berisha was from northern Albania and could, therefore be expected to be sympathetic to Kosova's plight. In his early speeches he did indeed promise to provide all possible aid to Kosova. The realities of Albania's poverty stricken economy — as well as pressure from western leaders — forced him to moderate his stance and declare Albania's frontiers with Montenegro and Serbia to be inviolable.

Nevertheless the issue of unification with Albania did not go away. One of the foremost advocates of unification was Rexhep Qosja who criticised Rugova for his reliance on passive resistance and insisted that Serbs and Albanians had to separate. The same Rexhep Qosja was one of the signatories of the Rambouillet accord, which committed the KLA to disarming and remaining within Serbia.

Although Demaci stopped short of advocating armed struggle at that time he was shortly to become a leader of a new force in Kosova that would seriously challenge Rugova's domination of Kosova political life: the UCK (Kosova Liberation Army).

The KLA

By mid-1998, the KLA had appointed Demaci's party as its political leadership — a significant step given that Demaci advocated dialogue with non-nationalist Serbs. He argued that on gaining independence a Republic of Kosova could enter into a new and equal federation with Serbia and Montenegro, which he called 'Balkanija'.

The sudden emergence of the KLA in late 1997 was because of the liberation of hundreds of thousands of weapons in Albania during the revolutionary uprising against the Berisha government earlier that year.

Given the Albanians' natural disbelief that they could feel secure within Serbia, without their own armed forces and with the KLA disarmed, the US now offered a NATO 'peacekeeping force' to police the deal.

Despite the original left-wing leadership of the KLA it has now clearly moved to the right, relying on NATO rather than its own strength.

It is, of course, easy to understand why many Kosovars see NATO as their salvation at the moment. The lack of any alternative leadership within the workers' movement — not to mention the military power of NATO — would very easily push them in that direction. Nevertheless Demaci and others pressured the Kosovan delegation at Rambouillet to reject this attempt to 'convince Albanians to accept capitulation, by launching illusions and empty promises'.

However, under massive pressure from pro-Western Albanian forces, the leading wing of the

interests, as do the political parties in Kosova and Albania'. That is its real weakness.

It is notable that the supposedly more 'militant' militarist faction ended up accepting Rambouillet while the 'moderate' Demaci wing, which advocates dialogue with Serbs rejected Rambouillet as a capitulation to imperialism.

Certainly if Kosova is to gain independence it will be by following the lines advocated by Demaci rather than the present leadership of the KLA. NATO has made it plain on many occasions that it will not countenance an independent Kosova, and any NATO troops would be there either to prevent Kosovan independence or to enforce a partition they have negotiated with Milosevic.

Still less would NATO allow Kosova to become part of Albania. A political line that relies on NATO and fails to open up discussions with non-nationalist, anti-Milosevic Serbs is likely to lead to disaster.

War divides European left

Social democrats line up behind USA

Francois Vercammen reports

In September 1998 Gerhard Schroeder promised that "German troops would only go outside our frontiers if they have a UN mandate." But at the recent SPD congress the Chancellor blocked a left-wing motion opposing any NATO ground war in Yugoslavia, and successfully imposed a motion approving the bombing campaign, though without counting the votes for and against.

In response, the left within the SPD went public with its opposition to the war. Federations in Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein and Munich issued proclamations, as did the "Frankfurt Circle" and eight SPD members of parliament, including Andrea Nahles, president of the Party's youth wing (Yusos). Former minister Oskar Lafontaine has also condemned the war.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin has had little difficulty containing dissidents within the ruling Socialist Party. The Socialist Left Current (Gauche socialiste) of Gerard Filoche, Jean-Luc Melancon and Julien Dray has spoken out against the NATO



Leading the charge — or taking back seat to Clinton? Tony Blair

bombing and in favour of Kosovar rights. But they focus on their criticism on the US rather than on France's SP-led government.

Jean-Pierre Chevenement's Citizens' Movement (MDC), a dissident faction outside the socialist party, but strongly represented in the government, has a much clearer anti-war position, though MDC leaders continue to stress their loyalty to the Jospin government.

There was little initial support for the NATO intervention in Italy, though a majority of voters seem to support NATO bombing. The first to speak out against the bombings were the Refounded Communists (PRC) and the Pope.

Italy is a key base for the NATO intervention, and centre-left Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema has manoeuvred hard to maintain elite consensus and public support for the intervention. Italy's government is an unusually broad coalition, within

which a number of left currents have criticised D'Alema, though stop short of anything that could bring down the government.

119 of Italy's 630 MPs have demanded a NATO ceasefire, opposed a ground intervention, and condemned ethnic cleansing — though stressing their "loyal and total support for the government".

This dissident platform has been signed by all the Green MPs, supporters of ex-PRC leader Armando Cossuta, and dissidents within the DS and PPI.

With fanatic pro-NATO leaders like former Prime Minister Filipe Gonzalez and current NATO president Javier Solana, Spain's social democrats (PSOE) support the conservative government's pro-intervention discourse.

Only three PSOE MPs, from the Socialist Left current (IS) abstained in the vote approving Spanish participation in the NATO campaign.

Dilemma for Communist Parties

FOR SOME of Europe's Communists the Balkan war, and Milosevic's regime, are the last act of the death agony of Stalinism.

Italy's former CP strongman Armando Cossuta, now a minister in the centre-left government, made a pathetic trip to France, Berlin, Moscow and Belgrade, in a futile attempt to unify CP leaders and play a mediator role between Milosevic and the west.

There are remnants of "either NATO or Milosevic" cold-war thinking in most of Europe's CPs, as well as nostalgia for Serbia's "actually existing socialism".

But despite the regular contacts between these parties there is a broad spectrum of opinion and engagement in the anti-war movement, with the Greek KKE the most militant and anti-NATO, and the French Communist Party the most hesitant and inactive.

Greece has strong traditions of anti-British and anti-American sentiments, which fuel anti-imperialist consciousness. So does US support for Turkey, and Greece's cultural and economic ties with Serbia.

The KKE has always been pro-Milosevic, even supporting the notorious ethnic cleansers Arkan and Karadzic. But the party's large implantation, particularly in the

labour movement, has enabled it to play a decisive role in real mass mobilisations against the war.

Soldiers and sailors have refused to be mobilised. There have been occupations of airports, and blockades of US ships in Greek ports.

The leadership of the French CP has tried to reassure both anti-war militants and its partners in government. All criticism of NATO is balanced by statements that the party is absolutely committed to remaining in the Jospin government!

Demonstrations

Italy's Refounded Communists have the potential to organise massive resistance to the war. After successful political mobilisations against the NATO bombings, with demonstrations of 40-80,000, the party is well placed to organise any future social protests against the war.

The communist-inspired newspaper Il Manifesto has played a very positive role in building the impressive Rome demonstrations.

Leading columnist Rosanna Rossanda has incited Italian soldiers to disobey any orders to participate in a ground war.

Spain's United Left (IU) has opposed the war in parliament and in the streets. But one wing of the movement supports Milosevic,

while the other demands respect for Kosovar democratic rights.

When the conflict started, IU leader Julio Anguita took a pro-Milosevic line. In one *El Pais* interview, he called Milosevic "a man of the left". On 26 April, the Anguita leadership abruptly modified its position to head off growing protests. But prominent CPers refused to support the new policy.

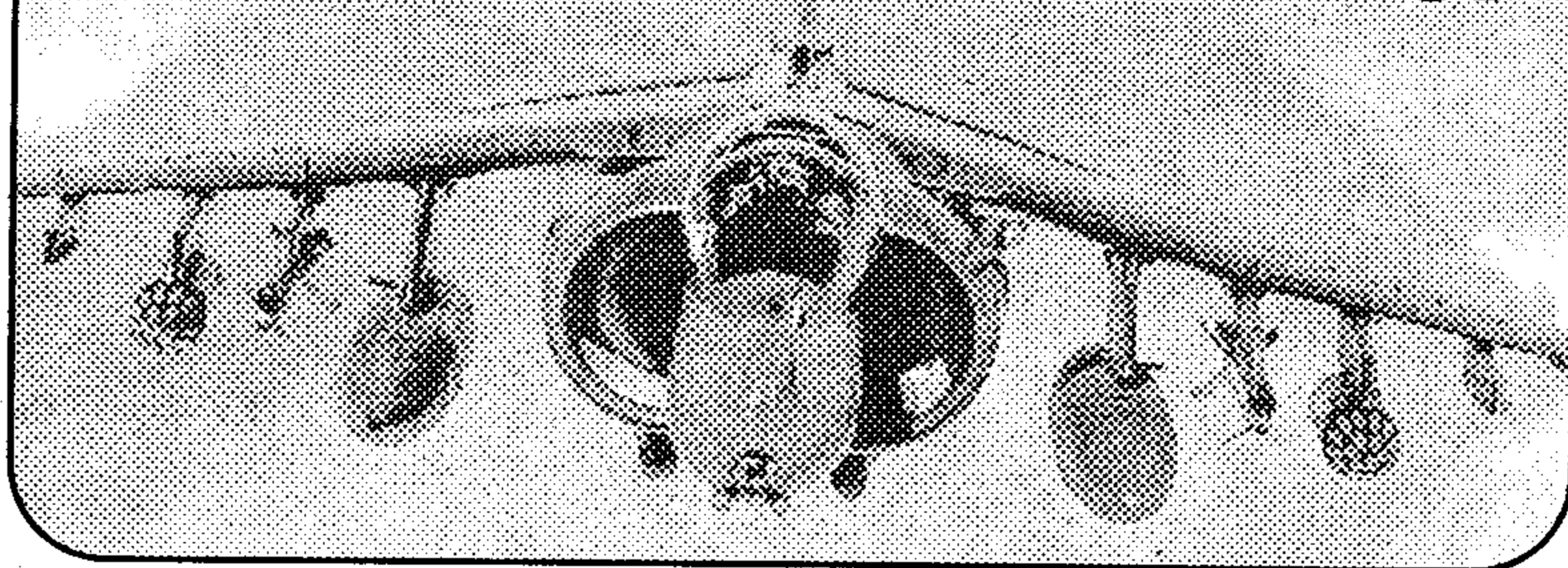
Pressure on IU is also coming from the broad left "Manifesto for a just peace in the Balkans," which has been signed by a wide range of intellectuals and leaders of social and political movements.

Germany's PDS opposes the war and NATO, criticises Milosevic's anti-democratic regime within Serbia and in its expulsion of Kosovo Albanians. But party leader Gregor Gysi rushed to Belgrade for talks with Milosevic. He also visited Kosovo, but his handshake with the Serbian leader was very badly received by the PDS base.

The PDS has said nothing in defence of the democratic rights of the Kosovars. At the same time, the PDS is active in the anti-war movement.

Member of Parliament Winfried Wolf persuaded the party to publish a war diary, which has sold over 500,000 copies in three editions.

NATO out of the Balkans!



Castro backs Kosovar rights

Extracts from speech by Cuban leader Fidel Castro on May 4, after some remarks to the Cuban baseball team

"ON THE EVE of the next millennium Europe, —that is, NATO and its members, the United States of America included— is involved in what can be described, whether they like it or not, as genocide.

That is what results from depriving one million people from electricity and heating services, overnight and in mid winter. Also from cutting off all communications, sources of energy and transportation; destroying non-military facilities providing crucial services to all the population and tearing to pieces all the means of life created by a nation.

Such destructive frenzy, either by mistake or recklessness, is directly killing or injuring thousands of civilians while trying to submit them by the destruction of their mass media and the intensification of the psychological warfare with overpowering technology and bombs. Unquestionably, this is a major genocide.

Europe is involved in a conflict hazardous to itself and the world. An extremely serious precedent is being set in defiance of international law and the United Nations Organisation, and resulting in an increasingly complicated the situation.

We are of the view that in such a predicament only a political, and not a military, solution is possible based on respect for the rights of every nation in that region, and every religion, ethnic group and culture: a solution for both, Serbians and Kosovars.

I am deeply convinced that the problem cannot be solved by force, that the military technology will crash against the will of any people determined to fight. I firmly believe that when the people are willing to fight —and this is how I feel about our own people, too— no power, regardless of its might, can throw them down on



"Unquestionably this is genocide" their knees.

(...)

"Europe and NATO have become the hostages of a subjective factor: the decision the Serbians might adopt —or not— to resist to the end, although it is to be assumed that after such destruction they are not going to be much inclined to give up. What is happening there was obvious to us from the beginning.

This does not mean that we are against anybody's rights; we support both, the rights of the Serbians and the Kosovars' rights.

When we were recently informed that Guantanamo Naval Base would be used to accommodate 20 thousand Kosovar refugees, we immediately agreed, and I think it is the first time that we have agreed with anything the United States of America has done in that base.

We said that we did not only agree that 20 thousand Kosovar refugees were sheltered there but also that we were willing to cooperate as much as possible in providing care for those refugees, that we offered our hospital services if required, our doctors and any other cooperation within our capabilities.

In the end, the refugees were not sent in. The truth is that none of the NATO countries, which have dropped so many bombs there, really want to receive refugees."

Italian anger as US bombs drop near Venice

HUNDREDS of deadly cluster bombs dumped by US warplanes after abortive NATO missions over Serbia have been causing havoc in the sea near Venice.

One Italian fishing boat has been destroyed by exploding bombs caught in nets and several fishermen have been badly injured.

The most recent episode came the day after NATO admitted killing up to 100 Kosovar villagers in a bombing raid, and a month after cluster bombs and laser-guided missiles were dropped into Italy's Lake Garda.

Mealy-mouthed NATO propagandists would only grudgingly admit that the bombs which fell as close as 7 miles from Venice were "certainly similar to NATO's stocks.

A young refugee's tale

VLORA is young, well dressed, and speaks perfect English. A few weeks ago she worked for an international organisation in Pristina and earned a good salary. Yesterday the Chetniks cleansed her street. Today she is a refugee. She sits with the family who have taken her in, their children and her sisters. They hug a lot, otherwise she seems in very good shape after her experience. MICK WOODS spoke to her briefly in Tetova.

What happened yesterday?

The Serb police came and told us we had to leave. We took what we could and left, my three sisters and I.

Did they put you on a train?

No we drove to the border in a neighbour's car. There was a really long queue when we got there so we walked the last 7 kilometres.

Did they take your papers?

Yes, everything they could find. They got my passport but I managed to keep my identity card so I have some evidence of who I am.

And were you robbed?

Yes, they tried to take everything of value they could find when they searched us. It was systematic.

Who was doing the robbing, JNA, police, irregulars?

Everybody - JNA, police, militias, armed Serb civilians. It's total chaos there!

Were there many young men at the border?

No not many, many are in hiding for fear of their lives or have gone to join the UCK.

Do you believe the young men are being massacred?

We are sure of it. We have heard reports from many places, of course they cannot be verified. The Serbs drove all the international organisations out for that reason.

I have also heard reports that former workers with international organisations are being victimised....

This is true, I can't give many details because we were under siege in Pristina. We stayed in our houses, the phones didn't work. We heard rumours.

There is no way, at the moment, to really confirm anything or find anyone. If somebody has crossed into a neighbouring country they should have been registered, if they're still in Kosova there is no way to find out. I don't even know where my parents are.

What are conditions in Pristina?

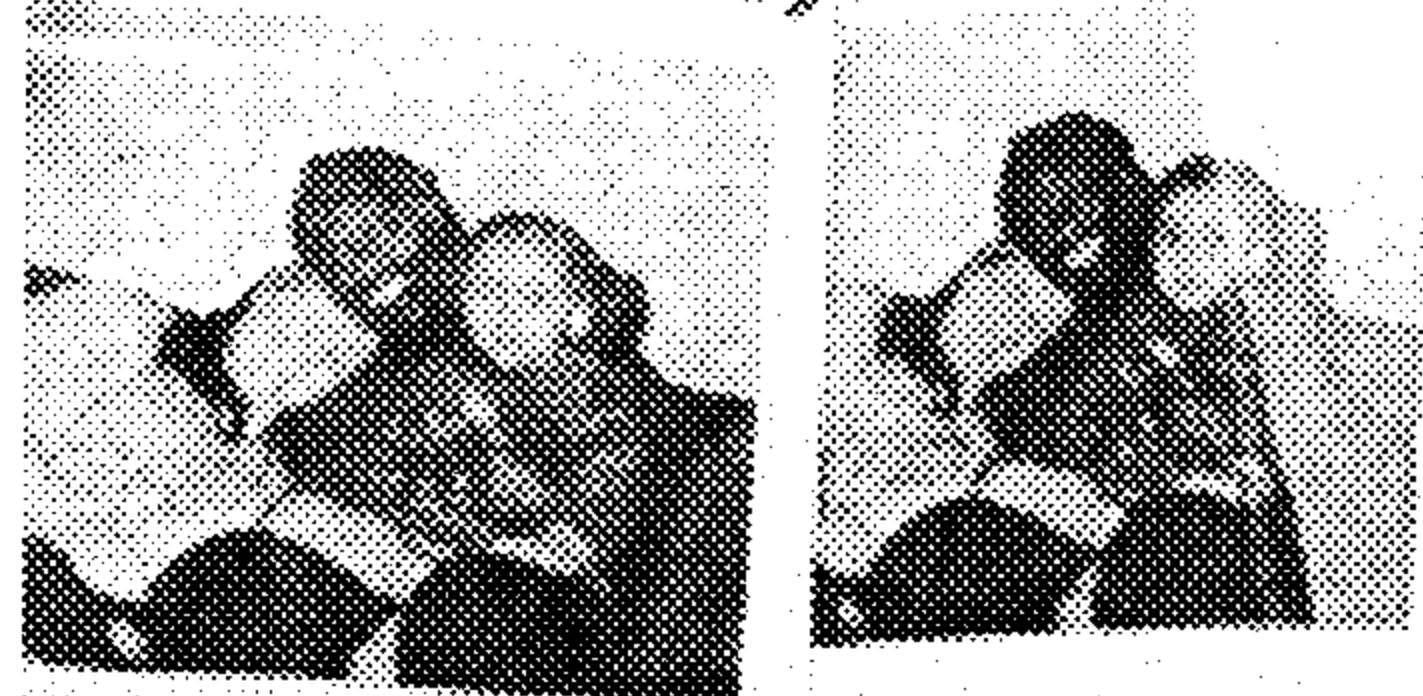
Food is scarce and expensive, electricity and water are scarce, there are no telephones.

Apart from the army and police, there are Serb irregulars and armed Serb civilians going around.

Was your lack of papers a problem when you came to the border?

No, you only have to give your name, former address, date of birth and where you intend to stay. Oh yes, I had to give the border guard 100DM. We didn't have anywhere to stay, but luckily this family took us in.

WE MY DADDY P M Jobs



SE LET Him ether WITH US EVER



asylum and immigration rights

Don't bend to racism

RIGHTS

AGAINST RACISM



Kosovars may be flavour of the month with ministers: but what about the asylum seekers Labour's Bill would exclude?

New Labour shows hypocrisy on refugees

WAR certainly exposes hypocrisy.

Last week the Queen Mother unveiled a monument to the "heroic" citizens of London who lived through the "blitz" in the second world war.

But now, the citizens of Belgrade have to be shown to be deserving of a similar "blitz", which is constantly being stepped up.

For the government's own reasons we are told the truth about what it is like to be a refugee: driven from one's home, witnessing murder, experiencing torture or brutality, left without possessions, afraid and traumatised.

The response to this is the massive public support for refugees from Kosova. One Scottish paper had the headline in Albanian "You are welcome here". People have stood at airports with welcome banners.

Suddenly the phrase "bogus asylum seekers" seems to have disappeared from the lips of politicians who used to start every speech with it.

The word has gone out to clear the remaining Kosovans out of the detention centres and prisons, although there are still two in Campsfield who, the government claims, can't prove they are Kosovans.

The new voucher system will not apply to these refugees. They will be allowed benefits, and the right to work. The government has even talked of allowing 1000 per week into Britain, even though they will have been in another country before coming to Britain (Albania or Macedonia).

Whilst the experience of the Kosovans since the bombing started has been terrible beyond belief, it is no different from what refugees have experienced in other parts of the world, or what Kosovans

experienced before the bombing.

Earlier in the year, when we demonstrated outside Campsfield in support of large numbers of Kosovans amongst other refugees inside, the government used every kind of excuse to try to discredit them, saying they were really Albanians.

Now they admit that Milosevic's troops have been driving them out of their homes for a long period of time, and that is why NATO was "forced" to act.

What about the Kurds, whose villages have been destroyed, and whose relatives have been massacred?

Or the Nigerians opposed to the multinationals who work with the military? Or the

Palestinians, Timorese, Tamils, Algerians and others, who are fleeing regimes supported and armed by NATO governments?

If their stories were told, like the Kosovans, they would be seen to be human beings as well, in need of support and sustenance, and not detention and deportation.

Refugees are nearly always the victims of war and dictatorial regimes. They deserve to be seen and treated as the Kosovans arriving in Britain now, and not as the new asylum bill proposes.

They are not guilty of crimes and therefore do not deserve to be locked up.

[This is an edited version of an letter written for The Campsfield Monitor]

Protests gain strength

Pete Firmin

As the bombing escalates and the numbers of Serb and Kosovan casualties increases and the plight of those expelled from Kosova worsens, the anti-war movement is growing.

The second national anti-war demonstration on May 8 was significantly bigger than the first on April 11, although still no more than about 10,000.

Central London public meetings are packed with hundreds of people and sizeable meetings and demonstrations have been organised around the country.

Organisations have come together in a loose coordination around the slogans "Stop the Bombing, NATO out of the Balkans", "Stop the Ethnic Cleansing, Self-determination for Kosova" and "Open the Borders".

The participating organisations (Socialist Outlook, Workers Power, Workers Action, Communist Party of Great Britain, Socialist Democracy and Workers International) held a public meeting in

central London on May 11 (also supported by the Socialist Party and Islington branch of UNISON) which was attended by over 100 people. Platform speakers included not only supporters of the three slogans of the coordination but Kosovans, Kurds and Bosnians.

The meeting listened to and debated seriously with Kosovans, even though they support the NATO bombing.

This meeting, together with the support won in various trade union and other bodies for the policy it advocated, shows the resonance these slogans can have in the movement.

This coordination is committed to building the broad anti-war movement while making sure it gets a hearing for its slogans which address not only the military might of imperialism but also the terrible repression the Kosovans face.

It will be taking further initiatives and will certainly be present again as a contingent on the June 5 national demonstration.

WHAT'S ON

MAY

Thursday 20

6.30 pm, Protest at the Ministry of Defence, Whitehall, London SW1. Organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans.

Islington Against the War Public meeting 7.30 Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, with Liz Davies, Mark Steel

Brent Socialist Campaign Group Open meeting with Labour Party NEC candidates Ann Black, Liz Davies and Christine Shawcroft. 8pm, Willesden Library Centre, Willesden High Rd, NW10.

Trade Unions for Kosova 7pm, Conway Hall

Sunday 23

Benefit Concert for the Committee for Peace in the Balkans with Jeremy Hardy, Linda Smith, John Hegley, Mark Steele, Junior Simpson and Seddik Sebiri. Hackney Empire, Mare St, London E8. Doors open 6.30pm, show starts 7.30.

Tuesday 25

Lambeth Town Hall at 7.30pm, Debate: Should NATO Continue Bombing Yugoslavia? For the War: Mark Seddon, Editor Tribune, Labour Party NEC, Against: John Rees, Media Workers Against the War

Manchester: Tariq Ali speaks against the war at meeting for teachers Ring 0161 224 4197 for details

Wednesday 26

Manchester Health workers against the war Ring 0161 224 4197 for details

Thursday 27

Greater Manchester against War in the Balkans Public meeting Truth is the first casualty of war Mechanics Institute 7.30pm Tam Dalyell MP John Foster (Gen Sec NUJ), John Rees (Media Workers against the War)

Saturday 29

The European Marches protest in Cologne to coincide with the Heads of Government Summit of the EU under the German presidency. Ring 0181-800-7460 for details of late travel.

JUNE

Saturday 5

National demonstration against the war. Called by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. Assemble 1.30 pm, Victoria Embankment, London.

Wednesday 9

London Socialist Outlook public meeting on Kosova ring 0181 800 7460 for details

Saturday 12

Reclaim Our Rights/United Campaign against the anti-union laws conference. 11 am - 2 pm, NATFHE, Britannia St, London WC1.

For further details of anti-war events in the North West contact mawith.freeseve.co.uk

Aherne ducks pledge on NATO referendum

Why Ireland must say no to this anti-socialist alliance

Paul Flannigan

Toiseach Bertie Aherne has wretched on his party's 1997 pre-election promise to hold a national referendum on Ireland joining the NATO dominated Partnership for Peace (PFP) organisation.

The Republic of Ireland was one of only a few European states not to attend the recently convened 50th NATO anniversary summit in Washington. Today NATO comprises 19 full member states and 25 PFP members.

When NATO was first formed, the Irish state was put under intense pressure by the United States to join. Marshall Aid was linked to support for NATO. The offer was declined because the six counties was still under the occupation by British military forces, one of the prime movers within the new alliance.

In 1994 Ireland was invited to join Partnership for Peace. The conservative Fine Gael party was eager to take this up but the populist nationalist party Fianna Fail was more cautious, wary of getting too far out of step with a deeply felt and popular sentiment which supported the established position of neutrality.

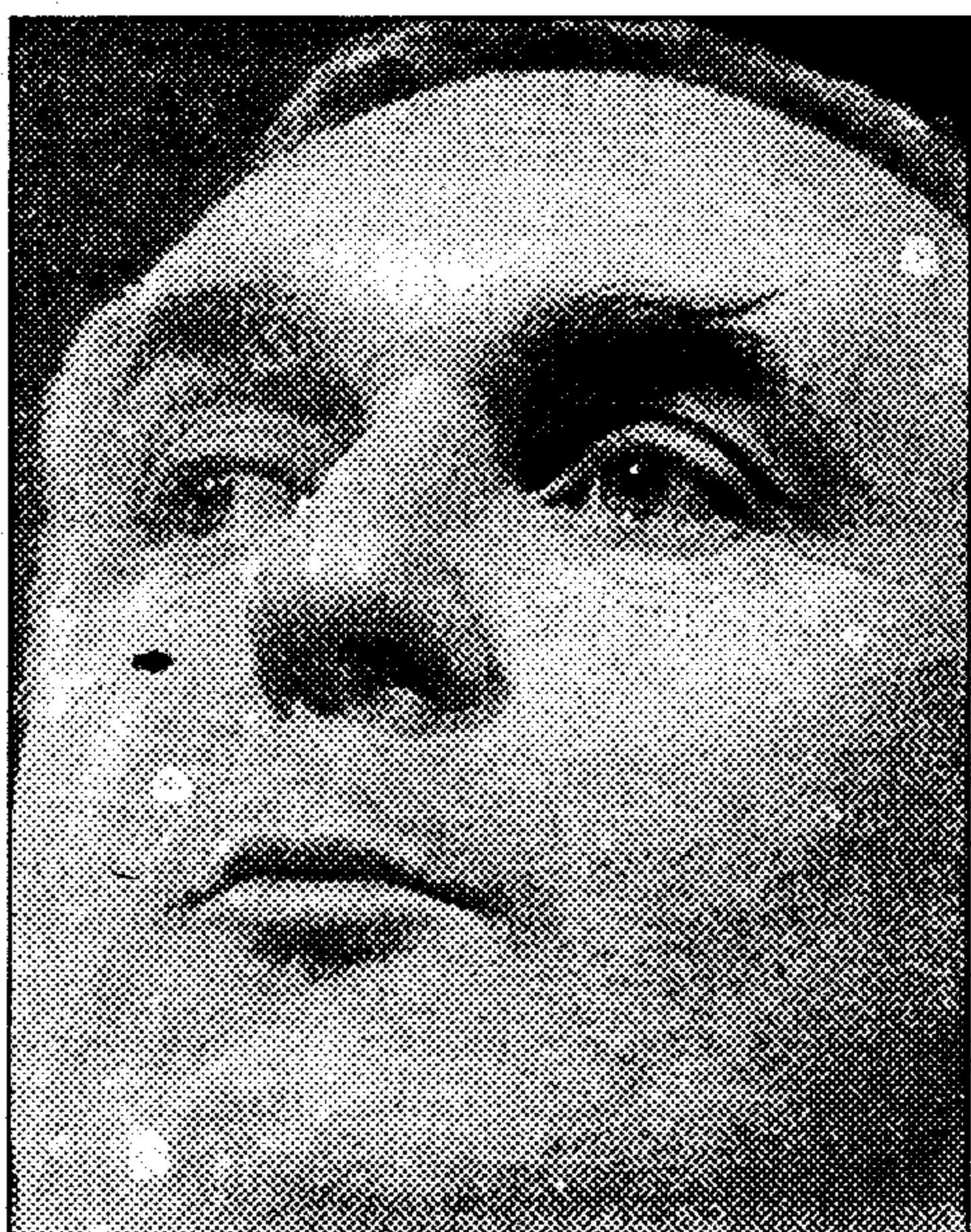
The Fianna Fail led coalition has used the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo to propose that Ireland will become a full PFP member in the autumn. The government, supported by Fine Gael and an array of media columnists is busy conditioning the Irish people to drop their dedication to neutrality in favour of a brave new world of association in NATO.

Ireland must rise to a supposed new moral challenge as a modern European partner and participate more fully in international affairs - this means of course association with NATO and WEU.

The Attorney General has been wheeled out to assure everyone that there is no need for a referendum on joining PFP as its provisions do not conflict with Ireland's constitutional imperative on neutrality.

The Irish people are being fed the lie that there is no conflict between association with NATO and a policy of neutrality. The Minister of foreign affairs David Andrews recently listed the PFP objectives as:

- The facilitation of transparency in



"Moral challenge": Aherne

national defence planning and budgeting processes, ensuring the democratic control of defence forces

- The maintaining of a capability and readiness to contribute, subject to constitutional considerations, to operations under the authority of the UN or the CSCE
- The development of co-operative military relations with NATO for the purposes joint planning and exercises in order to strengthen their ability to undertake missions in the area of peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations
- The development over the longer term of forces that are better able to operate alongside those of NATO.

He summed up both the government's and the Attorney General's view in that there is no legal basis for a referendum because "the state will maintain its freedom and flexibility to refuse to contribute to any operation should it consider that such participation is not in the interests of the common good."



Irish forces could be sent in to bandage the wounds after NATO bombing in Serbia

This is typical Fianna Fail lies to avoid a national referendum debate on the profound shift in foreign policy direction being undertaken by the former leaders of the anti-colonialist republican movement. Joining NATO-PFP is not the innocuous venture Fianna Fail politicians would have us believe.

PFP is supposedly to be dedicated solely to humanitarian goals. But the PFP has no recognised legal mandate to do with international peacekeeping - that task defaults to the UN. It certainly isn't a partnership, its decisions are all made by the United States and Britain.

Now that capitalism no longer has Stalinism to justify NATO's continued existence a new legitimisation has had to be found to license imperialist foreign policies. Global military interventions take place under cover of bogus claims to be pursuing humanitarian ends.

What role will Ireland play within the framework of NATO's imperialism? The US ambassador to NATO recently described the PFP as working towards "the difference between being a partner member and being an ally of NATO member razor thin". For some states PFP is clearly intended as stage leading to full membership.

Small states like Ireland with little military capabilities will be asked to play a useful secondary role. It is a bit like the "hard cop-soft cop" routine.

Ireland, with its anti-colonial credentials is ideally placed to give a soft humanitarian look and feel to the same old hard cop brutal imperialist methods in international affairs. It is no surprise to find that Mary Robinson as the UN spokesperson on human rights.

The strategic plan for the war in the Balkans tells us a lot about where states like Ireland are to be fit in. Phase one is to establish complete air supremacy over the

region. Phase two, if Milosevic remains defiant, attack Serb ground forces in Kosovo until he or one of his cronies is ready to make a deal based on a Rambouillet type proposal. Phase three, after a ceasefire, policing the deal that NATO has bombed into existence.

It is only in the third stage when small states like Ireland will be asked to make a contribution. They may have to take responsibility for disarming what remains of the Kosovan liberation fighters. They will go in to bandage the wounds of the oppressed and to police an undemocratic settlement akin to the miserable Dayton Agreement. Two million are still in exile as a result of that accord.

They will do as much good as flies do in an abattoir.

The NATO war in the Balkans is the first big test of this new "strategic concept" which includes NATO operating outside of its traditional territory and taking over tasks previously the preserve of the UN. The United States wants a more global role for NATO and talks about extending its geographical remit into Africa and Asia, as well as combating international "terrorism" and drugs trafficking.

"NATO has started the war it cannot afford to lose" is the consistent message from people who should know like Henry Kissinger. Ireland should stay well clear off NATO's war hubris and its globocop dreams.

But at this crucial juncture only the Green party and the Labour party has called for a referendum on membership of PFP.

Socialist Democracy of course is in favour of a campaign to keep Ireland out of NATO. But we are also in favour of the defeat and the break up of NATO.

NATO is a deadly instrument in the hands of big capital against socialists everywhere.

OUT NOW!

The Real Irish Peace Process available (£6 plus 70p p&p) from **Socialist Outlook**, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

Party line leads to Irish Telecom sale

Kevin O'Neil

IT WAS NOT inevitable that Sid would arrive in Ireland to loot the public purse and sell off public assets that had been built up over generations. It was not inevitable but it was the logical consequence of the policies pursued by both the Dublin government and the trade union leadership.

Ireland missed out on the wave of privatisations that took place in the 1980s in Britain thanks in part to the example set by Thatcher. The only party to openly endorse Thatcherism in Ireland, the Progressive Democrats, has had trouble getting itself elected and may very well disappear at the next general election.

Privatisations then are not popular in Ireland. But what the ruling class could not achieve by force they have achieved by stealth and the trade union leadership has been their invaluable ally in achieving this.

Support for privatisation fits neatly into the policy of Social Partnership which the bureaucracy has foisted on the Irish trade union movement. The word foisted is the correct word in this case as there has been no open democratic debate about the nature of social partnership or its implications.

The bureaucracy has blocked moves for such a debate and intervened in struggles such as those in TEAM Aer Lingus to contain them within the parameters of Social Partnership. This has meant the defeat of those struggles, which are later dressed up as victories.

This was seen quite clearly in the Ryan Air dispute which saw other workers in the airport engage in unofficial action in support of the Ryan Air baggage handlers.

The airport was closed down and the dispute threatened the future of Social Partnership which requires working class passivity in the face of attacks and resignation top inevitable defeat. The referral of the issues to the Labour court (Ireland's equivalent of ACAS) was unfortunately enough to end the action.

The sale of Telecom takes place in

the context of a trade union leadership which cannot and will not even defend the right to trade union recognition. Instead of this, they have gone one step further in agreeing to the sale.

The workers currently employed by Telecom will get shares in the company totalling 5% of the total. However, they are not being given these shares now - they will get them in five years time. Meanwhile their hands will be tied in negotiations with the company. Future employees of Telecom will not be share holders and will not even benefit from the sale but will suffer any worsening in pay and conditions.

Workers who are not part of the share deal will not be able to turn to their union for protection. The Communications Workers' Union has taken out an £85 million loan to buy a stake in the company thus binding the solvency of the union to that of the company.

They will be like a stock holding company - their future and the future of the workers they represent will be subject to the vagaries of the stock market. Any demands by workers that affect the profits of the company will also affect the solvency of the union.

Given the trade union leadership's existing willingness and ability to stab workers in the back through Social Partnership, how much more willing will they be when they themselves have a direct stake in the matter?

Social Partnership has meant working class passivity. The Telecom sale has been presented as a fait accompli and has to date met no resistance and it seems unlikely that it will. This sale is being used to pave the way for further privatisations such as Cablelink, Aer Rianta and Aer Lingus (national airport authority and airline).

Telecom has been in the sights of the government for some time; they first proposed selling it off in 1996. The union launched a national poster campaign with the slogan 'keep the fat cats' hands off Telecom'. The government ended up selling off 20% to Comsource, a Dutch and Swedish company.

The union backed down and began to talk about 'strategic alliances' in the world market. Swallowing the gruesome logic of Social Partnership, they have accepted that the increased competition of the global market means unity with "our employers" and competing with workers in other countries. National Assets are to be looted with not only the co-operation of the unions but their active participation.

The Irish trade union movement is possibly the only one in Europe whose leadership has totally adopted the Maastricht programme for the reorganisation of European capital and the building of fortress Europe. It is not surprising then that they should back privatisations which are a significant part of Maastricht.

At the May Day rally held in Dublin this year none of the trade union bureaucrats speaking even mentioned privatisation. The war in the Balkans and the unofficial scaffolders' dispute which has managed to paralyse the booming building industry were also ignored.

Those who choose to oppose these privatisations are immediately come into conflict with the trade union bureaucracy who are will oppose such struggles. They will also need to expose Social Partnership which the bureaucracy has used as a battering ram to demobilise militants.

Some on the left pretend that a fight can be led against the first two without taking on the leadership. They are not a mere bureaucratic obstacle to be overcome, nor are they really deep down on our side.

They are in alliance with the ruling class through Social Partnership. It is they who push through all the rotten deals and it is they who will push through the sale of Telecom and try to crush any opposition that might arise.



SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic or communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International, we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to us at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, and we'll be in touch.

Bulletin challenges "partnership" fraud

"SOLIDARITY", a new trade union bulletin opposed to social partnership, is to be launched, with a pilot edition, next month.

A broad range of trade union activists have agreed to produce the bulletin, to play a part in the struggle to forge a "new unionism" which breaks with the narrow concerns of "non-political" trade unionism and fights for the interests of the working class and oppressed.

"Solidarity" will be a debating forum and organiser, bringing together the experiences of the left across the trade unions, opposing subordination to the global market and fighting for practical

working class internationalism, against privatisation in any form and for social ownership, against all state interference in the trade unions and for democratisation of the unions with freedom from bureaucratic control.

Having already brought together a significant layer of activists, the aim now is to attract union branches to sponsor "Solidarity" and order advance copies of the pilot issue.

For further information contact: **Martin Wicks**, 333 Welcombe Avenue, Park, North, Swindon, SN3 2PF 01793 496816 Martin.wicks@btinternet.com

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Taliban and torture chambers at Punjab University Pakistani women fight back against fundamentalism

Women at the Punjab University in Pakistan have launched a movement against the Islam Janmiat Talba (IJT), the student organisation affiliated to the fundamentalist Jamaat Islami.

This started with protests on May 2 and May 5 in immediate response to a physical attack on a male Philosophy student, Ijaz Butt, by fundamentalist thugs. His supposed "crime" was talking to a young woman.

This was not the first assault by the Taliban. Punjab University is mini-Afghanistan ruled by the IJT.

On April 29 IJT thugs beat up male History students because they were sitting with women from their department watching a student cricket match. Meantime, the IJT prevented English students organising a farewell party for graduates at a nearby hotel, on the grounds that students might enjoy 'immoral fun'.

A month before this, some men from the Education Department were set upon at a restaurant outside the university campus. They were with women classmates to celebrate the birthday of a fellow student.

Female and male students cannot talk together or sit together at libraries, canteens or cafes. The IJT has stopped it through force, backed up by guns, so for a long time nobody dared resist them.

The fundamentalists take these violent actions and intimidate people under the banner of Islam. They claim that mixed activities are un-Islamic.

In the late 1960s and 1970s the



Afghanistan's Taliban: brutal role model for bullying Punjabi fundamentalists

Punjab University had a strong left tradition. The National Students Federation was the main left force, not only in the Punjab University but throughout Pakistan.

But in 1977, military dictatorship was imposed in the country. Jamaat Islami is hand in glove with the military dictator General Zia. Left wing political parties, unions and student organisations were the prime target of the mili-

tary regime.

Zia used the Jamaat Islami thugs to root out and eliminate socialists in the trade unions. The bully boys of IJT were used to attack, kill and eliminate socialists from the campuses.

In early 80s, Punjab University was a prime target of the regime. It was the biggest university, with about ten thousand students who were fighting back against the military dictatorship. The teach-

ing staff were also active in opposing the regime.

Meanwhile, Pakistan had become a military base camp of CIA against USSR intervention in Afghanistan. Campuses became a nursery for the recruitment of so called Mujahideen to send them in Afghanistan and IJT was the chief recruiting agency.

In 1983 union activities were banned by the regime. When democracy was restored in 1988 elections were held at campuses but in 1990, Nawaz Sharif again banned student and trade union activities. But in practice the ban is only for those who do not have guns - the Taliban are free to organise.

Punjab University is the role model that IJT presents across the whole of Pakistan where education is taught according to Islamic values. But using the veil of religion the IJT is able to claim many benefits for itself and its supporters.

The Punjab University provides

jobs to thousands of IJT youth. It is a recruiting group, for people who go on to become Jamaat Islami activists. It is a refuge for absconders, as police do not dare enter the campuses. In 1992 police entered the campus to end a protest, and as a result, lost a cop who was gunned down by IJT

IJT has on-campus torture cells where anybody daring to violate their so-called code of ethics is tortured. At Punjab University campus IJT is widely hated, yet it maintains power because the entire administration is in its control.

Since 1977, 90 per cent of teachers recruited in the university belong to IJT. That is why they are most obedient servants of IJT instead of the college. Other staff are also recruited on the recommendation of IJT.

On May 2 about 60 women from the departments of English, Philosophy, Education, Geography and History took to the streets. They marched to the Vice Chancellor's office to protest about IJT excesses (One wonders if he did not know in advance)

The demo was unprecedented. Never in the recent history of Punjab University had anyone dared challenge the IJT's gun-toting thugs.

This really infuriated the IJT. Next day they beat up male Philosophy students. On May 5 the IJT thugs held a demo outside the Philosophy Department, chanting "long live Jamiat". The women left their lecture to come and start chanting "Down with Jamiat".

Three bourgeois newspapers published the news of May 2. These were not displayed on newspaper stands on campus on May 5 and in some hostels, they were only available with the controversial articles cut out. This shows the absolute control of IJT.

The women are not ready to sit idle. "We will not tolerate Talibanisation of Punjab university", said one History student.

Although it is not easy to fight Jamiat, it is necessary to do so, with commitment coupled with good strategy.

Women's March 2000

Terry Conway

AN INTERNATIONAL women's campaign culminating in an demonstration on October 17 2000, the day of struggle against poverty, is planned. Women's March 2000 hopes to support and inspire campaigns of women against violence and poverty such as the women at Punjab university.

The campaign, starting with various initiatives around the world on International Women's Day (March 8), has three goals:

- to promote equality between men and women
- to stimulate a broad women's movement in the world
- to denounce patriarchy, capitalism and its current neo-liberal form and put forward alternatives based on equality and justice

The idea was born out of the

experience of the successful "Bread and Roses" March against poverty in 1995 in Quebec.

In October 1998, 140 women from 65 countries came to Montreal and adopted an international platform of demands. Over 1,625 women's groups in 119

countries are

already involved.

The final

decision has

yet to be

made

regarding

the target

of the

October

mobilisation - the

UN in New

York or the

World Bank in

Washington? There were

sharp divisions in Quebec.

Those arguing for the UN received slightly more votes, focusing on the issue of violence against women.

For women in many countries, though, to speak of violence auto-

matically means to speak of poverty because the struggles are so closely intertwined.

The few women from Europe who made it to Montreal were enthused and agreed to organise back home.

On April 17-18 more than 100 women from virtually every European country attended a meeting in Paris.

We agreed that there should be a European demonstration in Brussels as well as other activities. European participants on the International co-ordinating committee were agreed and a further meeting set for Brussels on October 1 and 2.

Unfortunately I was the only woman present from Britain, though others have expressed interest. A meeting is being arranged in September to see what is possible here, before the Brussels meeting.

For further information contact Terry Conway, Middle Flat, 10 Windsor Rd, London N7 6JG. Contact the campaign web site at www.ffq.qc.ca



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IN THE TURKISH parliamentary election on April 18, the openly fascist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) gained 18 per cent of the vote making it a close second party in the contest. The Democratic Left Party (DSP) of Prime Minister Ecevit won a mere 22 per cent, scraping into first place..

At the last election the MHP, also known as the Grey Wolves received 8 per cent, and therefore did not have even one MP in the last parliament as it did not pass the 10 per cent bar nationally.

The Grey Wolves take a very hard line on the Kurdish and Cyprus issues.

They fully support Turkey's annexation of part of Cyprus and deny the very existence of Kurds as a people.

It is virtually certain that the Nationalist Movement Party will be part of the next government coalition.

This surge in support for this dangerous, far right party took place against all predictions at the expense of other right wing contenders and the Islamist party.

About 12 groups of people from various European countries travelled to Turkey as independent monitors.

ALAIN HERTZMAN, one of those who went from Britain, explains.

There are two main reasons for the staggering increase in the MHP vote. One was that voters refused to vote for the parties in power, as they had not kept their promises to sort out the economic crisis.

The second was the effect of the "Falkland factor", in this case, the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdish guerrilla struggle. Ocalan's kidnapping by the Turkish state in breach of international law after his trek round Europe seeking political asylum, has strengthened Turkish nationalism. The preparations for his show trial due to start on May 31 are whipping up further anti-Kurdish bigotry.

The MHP's slogan during the election campaign was "Turkey, love it or leave it". Ecevit's DSP ran a very nationalistic campaign but were not able to keep pace with the Grey Wolves enough to undercut their support.

Fazilet, the Islamic party, received 15.5 per cent, a loss of some 3 per cent since the last election. It is quite likely that it was due to their watering down of their previous hard-line fundamentalist line. A good part of their vote went to the MHP.

The Istanbul stock market dropped by 6.58 points in response to the results. The bourgeoisie is definitely worried that social tension will increase sharply and will affect profits.

In Southeast Turkey, where the majority of the people are Kurds, the People's Democratic Party, HADEP received around 50 per

An overview of the Turkish election Designer fascism or rebirth of the Grey Wolves?



Kurds protest at arrest of their leader Abdullah Ocalan: it has triggered a right wing, chauvinist fervour in Turkey

cent of the vote. It is the only party which is supportive of the Kurds. All the same they will not be able to sit in parliament, as their share of the vote nationally was only 5-6 per cent.

HADEP is constantly subject to harassment - for example Veli Haydar Guleg, the party's candidate for mayor of Istanbul was arrested four times in the last six months and spent two months in prison. No charges have been brought against him.

Now the possibility of a political solution to the Kurdish question seems even more remote than ever.

Our group travelled to the town of Batman in Eastern Turkey. This is an industrial city, under military rule, sitting astride the only oil reserves of Turkey. We talked to trade unionists, human

rights activists, and members of the People's Democratic Party (HADEP).

Members of the PETROL-IS union told us that although the union was not allowed to declare publicly for any candidate, over 90 per cent of its members supported HADEP.

Everyone we met agreed that in Batman itself the situation was bearable, but in the small towns and villages in the area, repression was harsh and people were commonly threatened that if they voted for HADEP their villages would be burned.

Of course what is bearable in Turkey would lead to outrage here. For example on our way to Batman we were travelling on a public bus and were stopped at 4

military checkpoints and at the third forced off the bus and questioned.

We managed to spend around 24 hours in Batman before being forced to return to Istanbul.

Around 20 security personnel came to our hotel, surrounded us and escorted us to the airport where they ensured we boarded the first plane out.

We only got to stay long because we had escaped their notice earlier.

We quickly realised that Batman was an exception, as in other towns, repression was continuous and often on a grand scale. For example in Diyarbakir, the de facto capital of the Turkish Kurdistan, when HADEP organised a public meeting, 40,000 came.

The police attacked the meeting and arrested 4,000 people.

A German women's group went to Diyarbakir to discuss raising funds for a women's project there.

They were heavily intimidated, with security personnel sitting at the same table as them so that no one could talk with them in any confidence.

They were swiftly forced out of the area.

Turkey has long been seen as an important ally of both Britain and the US, who routinely ignore its human rights abuses.

Again within the war in the Balkans it is playing a key role supporting NATO's intervention.

So it was little surprise when the well known democrat Tony Blair, announced the day after the election, that Turkey was now a candidate for entry into the European Union.

Fight the frame-up: support Samar and Jawad

Roland Rance and Susan Moore

TWO PALESTINIANS serving twenty year jail sentences after the bombings at the Israeli Embassy and the Zionist offices in London in 1994 have been granted leave to appeal

This decision is based on the non-disclosure of potentially vital evidence, which prejudiced the fairness of the trial

Samar Alami and Jawad Botme are Palestinian activists wrongly convicted in 1996 in connection with the bombings. Paul Foot explains in his introduction to *Justice Denied*, a detailed pamphlet on the case, how he became convinced that the two had been fitted up.

Samar had a cast iron alibi for the embassy bombing. She was making a phone call from a phone box - from which (unusually) calls are recorded. But she forgot about this when she was first arrested and did not tell the police.

As her solicitor, Gareth Pierce explains, if she had anything to do with the planning of the bombing she would have made sure she

knew where she was.

Among the evidence withheld at the trial is a report referred to by ex-MI5 agent David Shayler. He has revealed that the authorities had definite information about the bombings beforehand, but, whether from negligence or calculation, failed to act to prevent them.

This report, if true, would be devastating for the prosecution case, since it would establish that the bombings were almost certainly carried out by a state or organised group, rather than by two independent activists.

However, the defence case is still hampered by the refusal of the High Court to overturn the Public Interest Immunity (PII) certificates imposed in respect of this report. A PII certificate means, in effect, that evidence held by the state cannot be tested in court, nor even revealed to the defence.

Other possible grounds for

appeal, including the attempt by an Israeli journalist to interfere with jurors, and the judge's biased summing up, were rejected by the courts. This is despite the fact that there is no concrete evidence at all linking the two young people to the bombings.

Shayler's statements, and the desperate attempts by the state to prevent them being raised in court, strengthen the suggestion, raised by journalist Paul Foot in a

Guardian article, that the Israelis bombed their own embassy, and used a provocateur, the shadowy Rida Mughrabi, to entrap innocent Palestinian political activists.

"Mugrarabi" was the person who persuaded Jawad to go with him to buy the car which was used in the bombing, and who handed Samar a bag of explosives before vanishing into thin air. But the authorities took no interest in him: they were not even asked by the police to provide a photo fit picture of him

account of the way Jawad and Samar's involvement in the struggle for Palestinian human rights was used to mask the lack of concrete evidence.

As Jawad said "We were involved in that process no matter how little our contribution meant to the result. But under no circumstances would we put that at risk because it fundamentally goes against our ideology, policy and practices. It would be self harm. Or else why would I, or Samar, ever get involved in student politics and NGOs and spend years campaigning peacefully if what we really wanted to do was use violence against the Israelis in London? They (the bombings) are totally counterproductive."

The campaign for Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad continues to call for full disclosure of all the evidence in this case, as part of the struggle for the release of Samar and Jawad.

● *Justice Denied* is available from FJSJ, BM FOSA, London WC1N 3XX. Further details of the campaign are also available at www.freesaj.org.uk

The bombings were almost certainly carried out by a state or organised group, rather than by two independent activists.

Socialist Outlook

As British opinion hardens against EMU

Euroland pays

price of

Maastricht

monetarism

May 29
Cologne
March
against EU
austerity

- Against unemployment
- Against poverty
- For secure jobs
- For welfare services
- Against racism and all types of discrimination

Organised by Euromarches, sponsors include UNISON and NW TUC.

AS THOUSANDS of workers from across Europe prepare to join a massive protest at the austerity policies ushered in by the Maastricht Treaty, evidence is growing that Britain's New Labour government is losing the battle for support to join the single currency.

The demonstration, called as a follow-up to successful Euromarches on EU summit meetings, will be in Cologne on May 29. Coaches from all parts of Britain will be taking hundreds to participate in the fight against unemployment and cuts in welfare state provision.

British sponsors of the Cologne demonstration include the public sector union UNISON, which is one of the few major unions to have taken a firm line against entry into the single currency, although this is now under fire from the union's Blairite bureaucracy.

The British TUC has been amongst the most eager proponents of Britain joining EMU, but a recent survey

shows how hollow is the basis on which this policy rests. An ICM survey of 1,000 trade unionists found just 15% supported the pro-EMU line spouted by TUC boss John Monks, with 61% opposed.

Nine out of ten trade unionists said they had never been asked their views on the Euro by their union, and almost 80% had seen no union information on the issue.

Of the major unions surveyed by the *New Statesman* recently only two, the AEEU and GPMU reported that they were in favour of early EMU entry, with most others having no position at all.

It is high time union activists demanded a proper debate and a vote on this key issue rather than allowing the unions to be "bounced" into policies by the unelected John Monks.

Meanwhile there are rumours that Tony Blair's top spin doctors are pessimistic about the chances of delivering the necessary Yes vote in a referendum to join the Euro.

One factor in this is the continued recession, privatisation, and economic dislocation in the Euroland countries – including Germany, once the power-house of European capitalism – since the single currency lifted off in January.

The institutionalisation of the Thatcherite Maastricht criteria, effectively tying EU economies to a regime of permanent monetarism, is proving to be costly for workers and the unemployed everywhere.

The strength of the Cologne demonstration is that it not only underlines the need for an internationalist resistance to monetarism and austerity, but begins to organise it.

We urge any readers who have not yet arranged to do so to join the march.

For travel details ring Glen Voris on 01744 755889.

