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socialist OUTLOOK

Major's 'Carry On' team is no joke

Thatcher's men, Thatcher's policies!

2.2 MILLION officially unemployed, and rising: the rigid Tory squeeze on the economy has brought 3,000 redundancies a day since John Major took over as Prime Minister.

Latest figures predict jobless totals topping three million: in fact they are probably already this high. But Chancellor Norman Lamont declares this toll of misery to be "a price worth paying".

The Tories are desperately struggling to market Major as a 'caring' alternative to Thatcher; but it's not just the recession that reminds us that most of her policies are still in place, along with the ministers who helped force them in. The evidence is all around us.

CHAOS in the NHS, and deepening: the havoc caused by Thatcher's dogmatic insistence on applying 'market' methods is provoking a new round of cuts and unprecedented redundancies. More than 100 more hospitals are queuing up to 'opt out', while health care drowns in a tide of bureaucracy and waiting lists rise inexorably. Health Secretary William Waldegrave, backed by Major, insists that he will not bail out hospitals that go bust or relent on the highly unpopular 'reforms'.

ANGER in households across the country as bills for the Poll Tax that Major and Michael Heseltine claim to have scrapped drop through letter boxes. Even Heseltine is now panicked by the prospect that without an extra £4 billion subsidy, an election next year could take place under the shadow of a third year of Poll Tax bills.

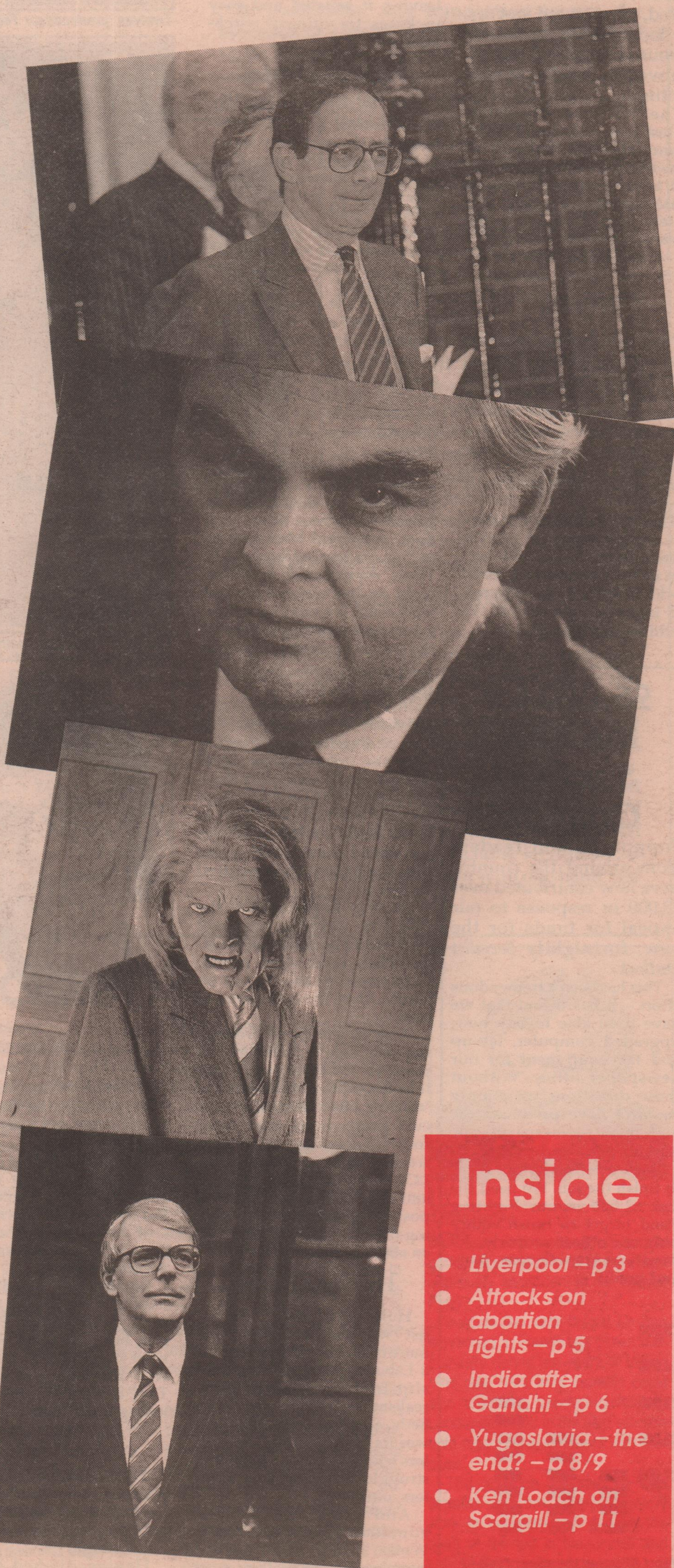
MISERY in the schools, where despite the failure of the first effort, Education Secretary Kenneth Clarke still insists that seven year-olds must be put through the agony of 'testing' to satisfy more Thatcherite prejudices. Meanwhile Tory Poll Tax capping and other restrictions have cut school and college budgets to the bone.

INCREDULITY among British Rail travellers and commuters on hearing Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind's vague pledges to improve railways. Even as he spoke BR was finalising plans to close down key sections of its freight services, and Lamont was restating the need for economic restraint.

Major may be attempting to don the mask of moderation, but his policies are stuck in the Thatcherite groove. His last best hope of electoral survival hinges on the weakness of Labour's response.

There's not only the problem of a Labour programme that offers less radical reforms than any time in the Party's history: there is a problem of credibility. Each time Kinnock and his Shadows preface their timid proposals for reforms with 'responsible' promises that spending will depend upon economic growth, more voters begin to wonder if anything would really change under a Labour government.

To make sure things *do* change, we must not wait for the General Election. We must step up the struggles *now* against every aspect of 'Thatcherism', and use the summer's union conferences and every other labour movement arena to develop fighting policies spelling out socialist demands on a Labour government.



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Lambeth: goodbye to Joan Twelves

by Councillor John
Tuite

TWO YEARS of Joan Twelves' leadership of Lambeth Council have ended, terminated not by the local parties or the 40 Labour councillors, but by Walworth Road's witch-hunting.

The left has protested against this disgraceful interference in local democracy, knowing that any replacement will be even more hostile to socialist politics. Yet there will be few tears shed, given the disastrous policies followed by the council leadership over the years.

Vilified

How is it that the very administration that the Tories, their obnoxious press gang, and the polite rottweilers of Walworth Road have vilified and witch-hunted, is also seen as the enemy by its own trade unionists, anti-poll tax activists, and by large sections of the left?

These two years can be seen as a perfect lesson in how to alienate every conceivable section of the political and social world. It was a long, tortuous, and inglorious exercise in the shedding of principles.

£5,000 for the new Socialist Outlook!

Supporters and readers from around the country have now contributed over £3,000 in response to our appeal for funds for the new, fortnightly *Socialist Outlook*.

This has been a tremendous effort - it has meant that we have been able to buy new, upgraded computer, lay-up and fax equipment for our newspaper office. Without these donations we simply couldn't have produced the high-quality newspaper that we know our readers expect.

But we need a further effort to finish the job. We need the last £2,000 of our Fighting Fund target to finish equipping our offices properly. All donations are welcome - large and small!

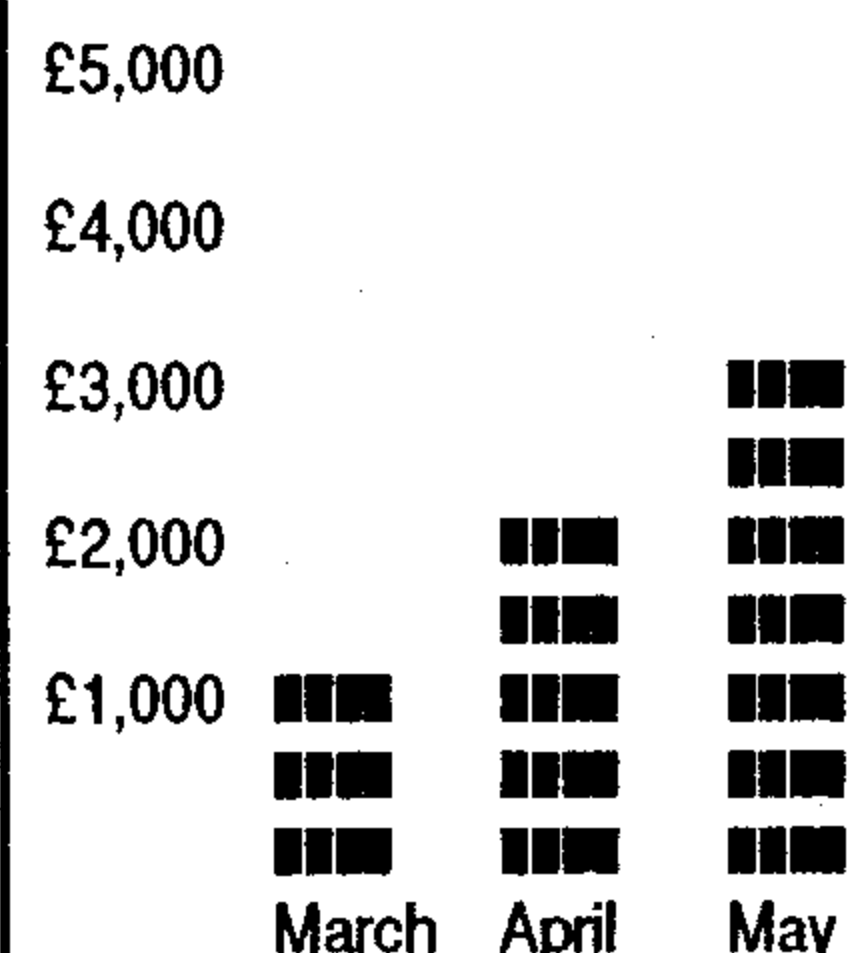


Fig. 1 Showing the amount raised since the launch of our appeal in March.

Political principles are not idealistic, dreamy things. They concern the alliances you make and your goals. On all these questions the Twelves administration was a disaster, leaving it isolated and easy pickings for hungry witch-hunters.

Fighting Tories

Any history of the administration must acknowledge the contradictory legacy of the Ted Knight years. Contradictory, because Knight, regardless of criticisms that could be made, did put up a fight against the government. But a fight that was defeated, resulting in surcharge and disqualification.

Most of the present leadership, given this experience, had some idea of fighting, but inherited a defeat. The majority on the council was well to the left by national standards, but not enough to risk surcharge. And this was decisive.

The administration came to power as the Poll Tax approached, as major cuts in spending, privatisation, rent rises, and Local Management of Schools hurtled towards it. These represented major attacks on the community and workforce. It would have been a formidable wave to face in the best of circumstances - but

held opportunities for the left, especially the Poll Tax.

But the leadership's promises of fighting the Poll Tax and rent rises, working with the unions, were never serious. Even in the early days, the capturing of the council apparatus was seen as a goal in itself. 'Keep out the LCC' was the sacred chant, even if that meant adopting their political framework.

So they implemented the Poll Tax, claiming that rent rises would be the decisive battle. Then rents were raised. Cuts would be the big test instead... Until the first round of cuts.

Soon they stopped pretending that they would fight. A punitive sickness policy was introduced, to get the services 'running more efficiently'. The cuts grew, until the recent round, a crushing £25 million worth. This was more than the LCC ever had to do, yet former anti-cuts Councillors found it possible to swallow this. Keeping the LCC out was, after all, an absolute necessity!

Holding power

Hold onto power 'for the left' was the idea. More and more often, the phrase 'wait for a Labour government' would slip from their lips. 'New realism' was coming to Lambeth, and the erstwhile 'left' was its host, deriding councillors who argued for a politics of struggle as unrealistic, splitters, ultra-left...

And what of the administration's triumphs? Well, they surprised everybody, winning their court case against the government over their right to set a higher



Twelves' predecessor Ted Knight, during rate-capping struggle



Lambeth mobilises against the Poll Tax March 1990



Poll Tax than capping would have initially implied. Local people were not exactly holding street parties!

This illustrated the problem. It was a victory for the local state against the central state. But it was totally disconnected and at odds with any real demands or mobilisations of the community.

Sometimes, small issues highlight the depths to which such politics sank. Nowhere else but 'left-wing' Lambeth were two Labour Councillors, who haven't paid their Poll Tax, actually banned from voting in the Council.

Two votes

Two uncounted votes were precisely what the leadership needed to get its £26 million cuts package and record Poll Tax through.

Having ditched socialist politics for an impoverished form of 'pragmatism', not even

basic democratic rights were to be defended - that an elected councillor can vote.

So why the witch-hunt, if the leadership was so compliant? Two issues forced it. Firstly, the recommendation that Poll Tax bailiffs should not be used.

Then, crucially, voting against the Gulf War. These were more than could be tolerated by the local LCC and the national Labour Party.

Conscience

The administration's left-wing past would never leave it alone, tugging constantly, albeit usually ineffectively, at its conscience. But you are now not allowed to make day-trips to the left in the Labour Party, especially on a question as dear to the NEC as a war.

The result is an administration that has angered its natural enemies, but also alienated its potential friends. NALGO, for example, has opposed the witch-hunt, but its efforts are understandably tied up with fighting the job cuts that Joan Twelves continues to force through.

As Twelves faced the end of her leadership, workers were going into occupation, balloting for all-out industrial action, lobbying the security-guarded Town Hall, and commenting bitterly on her last days.

Towards the end, the few remaining sympathisers could be heard bemoaning the fact that Twelves was wrong, no matter which way she turned.

Yet such a realisation never translated into an understanding that the left never held any real power in Lambeth, but instead made itself simply a function of other for-

ces. Sometimes they complained, but always they complied.

Little money

How did it end? Proving everyone to their right absolutely wrong by successfully appealing against capping, they had a little extra money to spend.

After two years arguing that all the compromises, sell-outs, and low-deals were necessary to prevent the right-wing and the LCC coming to power, the last act of the administration was to reverse a few cuts, not according to their own priorities, but the right-wing's.

It has to be asserted in the face of all the cynicism and shallow 'realism', that real power cannot be won in isolation from the struggles of the labour movement.

The Twelves administration rattled on every item in their original manifesto. It was clear that the real power was elsewhere, and that they were increasingly just a tool of other forces.

Litmus test

There is a simple litmus test for socialists. Ignore having your own office, and lots of suited people around you. Ignore your ability to deliver a vote (on whose terms?).

If you cannot welcome, and seek to amplify the struggles of local people, then such 'power' is worth nothing. Indeed you only have it until someone with real power takes it away.

That is the sad truth about the Twelves administration, recently deceased.

New witch hunt in Liverpool

In the 2 May local elections, six 'real Labour' candidates chosen by their local parties stood in Liverpool against those imposed by Walworth Road. Five candidates were elected. Although the candidates were backed by Militant supporters locally, it seems that the initiative to stand them did not come from Militant. The whole episode has caused considerable controversy on the left.

Now it looks as if the 'Broad Left' will stand a candidate against official Labour candidate Peter Kilfoyle in the Walton by-election, caused by Eric Heffer's death. What attitude should socialists in the Labour Party take?

The decision about how to cope with candidates imposed by the Walworth Road mafia against candidates supported by local parties is an entirely tactical one – there are no timeless principles to be obeyed. In particular, the view that socialists should never stand against so-called 'official' Labour candidates is formalistic and tactically inept.

Exceptional

The conditions in Liverpool are exceptional. Because Harry Rimmer's right wing council leadership has no stable majority, in effect there is a coalition council with the Liberals. Massive redundancies and service cuts are being imposed by this coalition. The opposition on the council is the 'Broad Left' group comprising 22 expelled Labour councillors and the five newly elected.

Clearly the decision to stand the six 'real Labour' candidates against those imposed by the Labour leadership was a tactic to attempt to shift the balance on council against the right wing coalition.

There are two arguments which some Labour socialists deployed before the election against the ward candidates. First, that it is wrong in principle ever to stand against 'official' Labour candidates.

Second, that this tactic would worsen the witch hunt against the left.

The first argument cannot be sustained. Five candidates won on the basis of fighting cuts and defending jobs. This showed that open defiance of Walworth Road and the council leadership had a mass base. The 'real Labour' candidates were chosen using the normal democratic selection procedures. They had the support of their local parties and a considerable portion of the local community.

Expelled

The second argument is more serious. Walworth Road has jumped at the oppor-

hunters.

The events in Liverpool stem from very special local circumstances and cannot be generalised or applied mechanically elsewhere. Liverpool has had the most advanced and determined mass opposition to the attack on local government in the whole of Britain. Opposition to the attacks of the Tories and the Labour leadership has a mass base often lacking elsewhere. In most other places these tactics would be unwarranted adventurism.

In particular, any temptation to use the evidence of Liverpool for advocating a general tactic of standing against imposed candidates would be wrong. In each case it depends on the strength of the left and whether there is a mass base for open defiance.

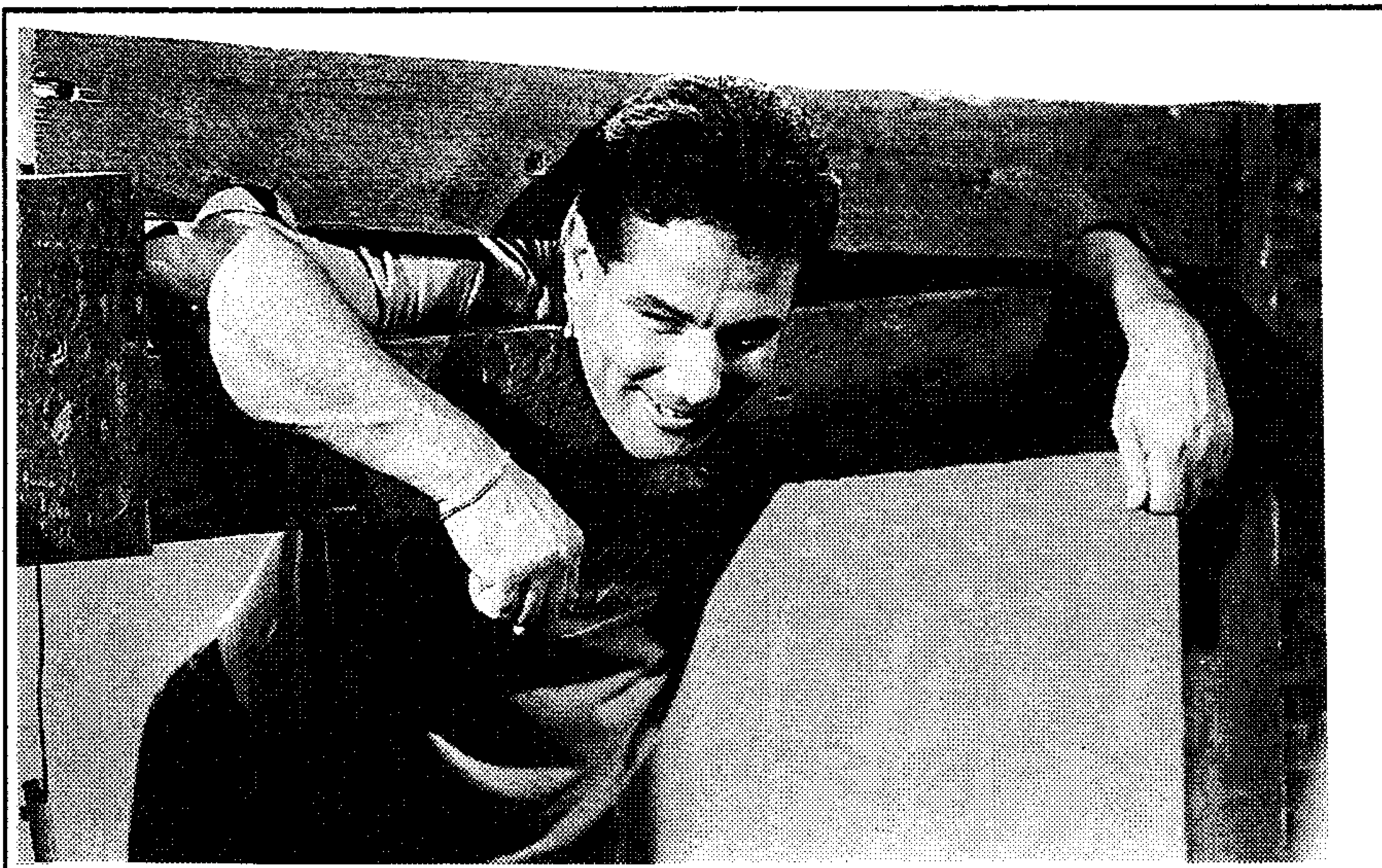
It seems that there is a sharp debate among the Militant leadership on these issues. Hundreds of their supporters have been expelled from Labour party membership. But it would be a major error on their part to respond to this by standing anti-Labour candidates on a national basis.

Neither should they, or the Liverpool council Broad Left, assume that they can repeat their council success in a parliamentary by-election. The Walton by-election will be about much more than the attack on Liverpool local government, or Kinnock's witch hunt. Workers will want to express their hatred of the Tories, and will want to avoid two labour movement candidates.

Ducking the fight

Militant have never seriously fought the witch hunt. They have avoided building a united campaign to confront the Labour leadership on this question. A general policy of standing anti-Labour candidates would be another episode of ducking the fight and playing into the hands of the right wing.

But neither can socialists adopt a generalised position of accepting automatically the fiats of Walworth Road, as if its instructions were the last word in democracy and socialist legitimacy. If the left did that it would fight with one hand tied behind its back.



After Hatton, who will they crucify next?

tunity to deepen the witch hunt, expelling the ward candidates and the 22 councillors who have formed a left group on the council. Local MPs Terry Field and Bob Parry are being 'investigated'. Obviously the Labour leadership has seized the opportunity to try once more to crush the Liverpool left.

But this deepening of the witch hunt is not in itself evidence that it was wrong to stand the six candidates. It has precipitated a deepening of the witch hunt – but that was coming anyway. Those who stand up to the witch hunt and try to defend local jobs and services face more witch hunting. Buckling down to every Walworth Road diktat will be no defence against the witch

What panics Chris Patten?

The response of leading Tories to their defeat in the Monmouth by-election has the taste of something horribly like panic.

As Major and Tory chairman Chris Patten orchestrated a campaign accusing the Labour Party of 'lying' over the NHS, it was obvious that this was more than the routine excuse for by-election failure. **At the highest level the Tories are rattled.**

They are panicked because there are signs that the measures they took to win the election – getting rid of Thatcher and the Poll Tax – have not worked. The Tory lead in the opinion polls is evaporating nationwide. The conventional wisdom that what stood between the Tories and a fourth successive electoral victory was Margaret Thatcher and the poll tax now looks decisively shaky: why?

The answer is not simply the NHS. That of course is a giant issue, from which the Tories cannot hide. But in addition to the NHS there is the flood of redundancies, with real unemployment rising to over 3 million. People are getting their new poll tax bills,

despite the pledge for its eventual abolition. And the underlying rate of inflation is up, despite the decline of the 'headline rate'.

This can be summed up in one word: *recession*. The Tories have had a massive internal bloodletting to get rid of the poll tax and Thatcher. But they cannot make a U-turn on the NHS as well; neither can they, despite public optimism, turn round the economy in a clear-cut way before the next election.

As a result they are losing support massively in their base in the middle class and the better-off sections of the working class. What is particularly dangerous and threatening to the Tories is that they are losing this support in the Midlands and the South, and to *both* the Liberals and Labour.

Whatever the exact date, the next general election will be fought under very different conditions to that in 1987. In 1987 Britain was at the crest of the 'yuppie boom' – the mid-1980s speculative economic expansion fuelled by US economic growth and

financial deregulation.

Now hard times are hitting not just the working class in the north, but substantial sections of the better-off working class and the middle class.

Once the Tories heartland support in the South begins to decay, and especially when they lose out to *both Labour and the Liberals*, they are in deep trouble. While Labour does not have a decisive lead, the possibility of a Labour government is opened up. The Tory hysteria against Labour is just the beginning of a long rearguard action.

What attitude will the ruling class take in a general election? In 1964 substantial sections of capital backed Labour. In the 1980s we have seen sections of the rich happy to back Socialist party governments in France and Spain. Has Labour gone far enough rightwards to attract such support in Britain?

An incoming Labour government would be put under big pressure by the City and big business to carry out right-wing policies – pressure it would be only too happy to accept. But

before an election, capital will fight a bitter campaign to prevent Labour coming to power. For sections of the middle class this is just a matter of tradition and habit.

But for the most far-sighted ideologues of British capitalism Labour is still not trustworthy. Not because Kinnock espouses radical policies or will challenge capitalism, but because a Labour government is a risk not worth taking.

A fourth Tory term might lead to battles inside the Labour Party as Kinnockism came unstuck, but it would deeply demoralise the trade unions. The effects of a Labour government are not so certain.

Working class expectations would be raised. The conditions for a fightback could be created. Overall, it is not nearly so secure a prospect for the ruling class as another Tory victory.

The achilles heel of the labour movement in this situation is precisely the strength of the right and new realism in the unions. A Kinnock government would come to power



Chris Patten

with new realism almost universally dominant in the unions, and the right massively ascendant in the Labour Party.

Just as the semi-fascist Le Pen movement in France has grown substantially during ten years of Mitterrand rule, right wing currents could also re-emerge. Labour victorious or Labour defeated in the next election both mean disillusionment with Kinnock.

The question will then be who benefits from this. The preparatory work to organise and deepen the base of the left in the unions and Labour Party *before* an election will be crucial to the outcome.



Tube strike: inevitable retreat or RMT climbdown?

After RMT leaders called off strike action against redundancies on the tube last month, we published an article by a Socialist Outlook tube worker calling the decision not to go ahead 'inevitable'. That article argued that the base of support did not exist for resistance to management's threats to suspend and eventually sack strikers. This view is contested below by two of our supporters.

Who called off the LUL strike?

By Alan Nettle

The aims of London Underground management are quite clear and public. They want to smash militant trade unionism to create higher levels of productivity and profitability to prepare for eventual privatisation. Un-

fortunately the calling off of strike action three weeks ago makes them closer to achieving their objectives.

The problem with the article on this in Socialist Outlook no. 2 is not just that it puts the best possible gloss on the loss of 800 jobs and supports the decision to call off the strike. It also defends the way that it was done - by a decision taken over the heads of the rank and file by informal 'soundings'.

It is true that there was management intimidation right from the start of the ballot, and it is possible that the mood changed, or new factors intervened making the strike become unviable - although the article in unconvincing on this.

But who decides the mood has changed? There was only one mandate from the rank and file - and that was for strike action. No one has a right to set aside such a mandate without going back to the members - not to call for the towel to be thrown in but to seek a reaffirmation of the strike vote in the new situation.

It seems that the change of heart, at least among the leaders of the strike, came after the result of the ballot - which many felt was disappointing. Yet a two to one vote on a 60% poll is a very good and solid mandate under today's conditions and with management threatening victimisations.

If the charge of using ballots as bargaining counters is to be effectively avoided, new democratic methods of decision-making clearly need to be developed within the RMT. While ballots to call strikes are unavoidable within the law, the law does not (quite deliberately) require a ballot to call it off! Mass meetings can be held if the views of the rank and file need to be sought.

In the event, LUL management won by intimidatory methods and they will be back for more. The days of 'safe' strikes are clearly over. This may well have been the best chance the RMT will get for some time to take LUL management on. 'Keep your powder dry' as against 'strike whilst the iron is hot' is seldom the way to generate a struggle against management.

It is true that the ASLEF leadership played a destructive roll in the whole confrontation, but the answer cannot be just 'smash ASLEF'. Too many assumptions were made in the previous article about what the ASLEF membership would have done in an initial one day official strike; not enough attention was given to developing rank and file solidarity.

The fact is the end result of the issue was a big defeat for the unions and a victory for management, and if that is not recognised it is harder to regroup for another day.



A timid climbdown

By an ASLEF member

The calling off of the strike on London Underground was a timid climbdown. Almost all of the 800 redundancies will go ahead (80 of them will be drivers - probably half of them ASLEF members). LUL said that the additional 200 job cuts were not seriously proposed anyway.

Management's 'reason' for the jobs cuts was that automatic ticket barriers had reduced the need for staff, and that reduction in use of the underground had enabled them to take rolling stock out of use for renovation. The restructuring involves both job losses, and loss of earnings for workers displaced, albeit temporarily, from their normal jobs.

The net result is fewer workers covering the same amount of work - a long term management project. After the successful strike ballot, the decision of the RMT leadership to call of the strike in return for a few vague concessions, had the LUL management laughing. Their divide and rule tactics

have paid off - the union leaderships and activists are at one another's throats. This is a throwback to the 1982 strikes, when ASLEF members crossed NUR picket lines, NUR members crossed ASLEF lines, and TSSA members crossed both.

The bitterness caused by that was only partly overcome by the 1989 train crew strikes - which were organised by mass, open meetings of the rank and file. It is not ASLEF's craft nature which upsets the RMT bureaucrats but their recruitment of guards and shunters previously organised by RMT.

RMT is little better than ASLEF despite its claim to be an industrial union. It is just as prone to poaching as ASLEF.

If a united, industrial rail-workers union comes about it will not be through a recruitment war, or through telling ASLEF workers they must sacrifice themselves for lower-paid and lower well-organised workers. It will come about through a united struggle over common issues - the last thing that either the RMT's Jimmy Knapp or ASLEF's Derek Fullick want.



Eric Heffer leads Liverpool Council demonstration

Eric Heffer - class fighter

All socialists in Britain will be saddened by the death of Eric Heffer at the age of 69. Eric was one of the few Labour MPs who consistently stood out against Kinnockism and new realism. His last major political act was his Commons speech against the Gulf war, denouncing it as 'a war about oil, a war for imperialism'.

In the early 1950s Eric Heffer helped found the Syndicalist Workers Federation and opposed socialist participation in the Labour Party. Once won to the Labour Party he consistently fought to keep socialists from leaving it.

He came into parliament for Liverpool Walton in 1964 as a supporter of the *Tribune* group. During the '64-70 Labour government the Labour left was at a very low ebb, and left parliamentary opposition was very muted. While the *Tribune* MPs opposed the Vietnam war, their opposition to Labour's domestic policies like the 1966 wage freeze was lukewarm. In his later book *The Class Struggle in Parliament* Eric expressed puzzlement about this lack of opposition. It was of course an expression of the character of the *Tribune* type of Labour left, with which Eric later parted company.

In the early 1970s Labour adopted its programme calling for 'a fundamental shift of wealth and power to working people'. When Labour came back in '74 Eric was given a junior ministerial post under Tony Benn at the Industry Department. It was short lived. Benn's 'planning agreement' policies were too radical for premier Harold Wilson. Benn was moved to Energy and Eric Heffer resigned.

During the rest of the Wilson-Callaghan years Eric was a voice of left opposition to the government, championing the Grunwick workers in particular.

The 'Bennite' revolt of the early '80s reshaped the labour left. Many of Eric's old *Tribune* colleagues moved right - but he moved left. He fought Kinnockism and new realism with increasing bitterness as a stalwart of the Campaign group, vilified and shunned by many of his old comrades. He championed the miners strike and the fight against the destruction of local government. In 1987 he and Benn stood for the party leadership, to rally the forces of left, despite the certainty of massive defeat.

Eric always understood that democracy and socialism were inseparable. Long before it was fashionable he was a champion of the opposition in eastern Europe, lending his support to *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, always taking a keen interest in solidarity campaigns with the workers in the post-capitalist states.

In 1969 Eric spoke with Michael Foot at a debate with the far left paper *Black Dwarf*. His first words, met with derision from a generally ultra-left audience, were 'I am a revolutionary socialist'. In truth, he wasn't. He was a class fighter, who like Tony Benn moved leftwards as the crisis of British capitalism deepened and as the *Tribune* tradition collapsed into bankruptcy. It was entirely appropriate that he should have been treated with sneering contempt by the Kinnockites.

For the militant left in the '70s and 80s it was important to have parliamentary representatives who stand out against the stream and give a voice to the oppressed. Eric carried out this task with determination and resilience.

The deepening crisis in the 1980s made all Labour MPs choose sides. Unlike most of the 1964 intake, Eric chose the side of the working class. Because of that his contribution will be remembered long after the grey tide of Kinnockism is a distant memory.

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New attacks on abortion rights

by Kate Ahrens

The reporting in the mainstream press of the recent court case allowing a 12 year old girl to terminate her pregnancy was, to say the least, selective. No papers chose to highlight the fact that the girl *did* want to have the abortion and most appeared to attach a lot more importance to the girl's mother's wish that she continue with the pregnancy.

Although the decision in this case was made mostly on the basis of medical evidence, it is nonetheless an important decision in that it has enabled the girl to carry out her choice to terminate the pregnancy.

This victory for choice however is only one in a sea of bad news for women's reproductive rights. The introduction of the internal market in the NHS and the creation of the trust hospitals has meant money is flowing out of the 'non-essential' services including abortion facilities.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (HFEA) while providing slightly easier access to the facilities that do exist for early abortions has also reduced the upper time limit for abortions from 28 weeks to 24 weeks making the reduction in facilities and increase in waiting lists even more worrying.

The HFEA has also restricted the availability of Donor Insemination (DI) for single women and lesbians. This is a vicious attack on women's choice and is a clear example of the hypocrisy of the anti-abortion lobby. Their aim is not to give rights to 'unborn children' from some misguided sense of humanity. It is a clear attempt to control the lives and bodies of women and ensure that

the 'right' babies are born to the 'right' parents.

Elsewhere the picture isn't much better. In the US, Utah has just passed very stringent anti-abortion legislation, with the death penalty available to judges for women who obtain abortions. Utah has put a bid in for the 1998 Winter Olympics which will be decided by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Birmingham on June 15.

The National Organisation of Women (NOW) from America has organised a boycott of the state of Utah and has asked women in Britain to picket the meeting of the IOC and show support for the women of Utah.

The National Abortion Campaign (NAC) is holding a conference aimed at trade unionists on July 27, to discuss many of the issues raised by the HFEA and the reorganisation of the NHS.

The conference will also be discussing access to contraception and access to information about it. Despite their recent realisation that AIDS is spreading among the heterosexual population as well as the gay community the government and the education services are not responding with more detailed information and advice on contraceptive methods.

The conference will also look at the attacks on abortion rights in eastern Europe and there will be pro-choice activists from Poland and other eastern European countries at the conference.

For more information about the activities in Birmingham, the conference in July or any general information about their work contact the National Abortion Campaign Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1.



Socialist Outlook supporter Eve Turner moves resolution for strike action against Poll Tax

Can NALGO's left meet the challenge?

Fred Leplat (Islington Branch) and Eve Turner (Ealing) sum up the key issues before this year's conference

THE 750,000-strong public services union NALGO has survived better than most the battering that trade unions have taken in recent years. Its overall membership has fallen just 40,000 since 1981; the equivalent figure for NUPE is about 100,00.

Central to this survival is not just NALGO's huge financial and publicity resources which boost recruitment, but the fact that its 490,000 local government membership has held up. Since rate-capping most jobs losses in local government have been among the NUPE and GMB manual workers. But this is starting to change.

NALGO's future depends on the following key factors. First, can it fight off the flood of redundancies threatened in local government? Second, will it put up a serious fight for its low-paid members? Third, can it fight off the growing threat of de-recognition? And fourth, what will be the outcome of the proposed merger with NUPE and the health union COHSE?

This year, up to 50,000 redundancies are threatened in the local government membership. Hundreds have already taken place in authorities as far flung as Haringey, Harrow, North Tyneside, Liverpool, Hammersmith, Lambeth and Kent County. NALGO's local government committee has no strategy to fight this jobs massacre.

Time and time again, redundancy and redeployment agreements have been negotiated, usually not involving immediate compulsory redundancies, for want of a national-led fight.

Capitulation

Local activists have a hard job winning the argument for resistance, when branch members know that everyone else is capitulating. Only in exceptional cases, like Liverpool, does a real struggle take place.

Next year the jobs carnage will be much worse. As the

Tories try to 'slim down' local government through privatisation and charge capping, NALGO stands to lose up to a quarter of its local government membership.

Local government employers are this year hanging tough on pay negotiations, refusing yet to make an offer, despite the 1 July settlement date.

Still smarting from the bloody nose they got in the 1989 pay strikes and concessions made last year, they are waiting for the official inflation rate to come down to impose a low-level deal.

Low-paid ditched

Once again, NALGO's negotiating team, led by lay-officials Jim White and Jean Geldart, and local government officer Dennis Reed, are preparing to ditch the claim for the low paid - a minimum of £9330 a year.

Job losses are also threatening the public utilities privatised under Thatcher - water, gas and electricity. Privatised electricity firm National Power has just announced 2000 jobs losses which NALGO does not intend to fight.

This sector is leading the way in breaking up national negotiating structures. The water industry, privatised into 12 private authorities, now has negotiations authority-by-authority. Several have severely restricted union negotiating rights.

Withdrawal from national negotiations also hangs over local government. Around 40 authorities, mainly in the south east have already withdrawn from national negotiations.

Union merger

Dominating this year's conference agenda is merger with NUPE and COHSE, scheduled to be completed by February 1993. The merger has wide support throughout the union. It will create the largest union in the country, with 1.5 million members of whom more than a million will be women. The new union will be dominant in the NHS and local government.

For the three leaderships merger is a matter of bureaucratic self-defence in hard times. NUPE and COHSE are financially strapped, and

NUPE in particular has lost thousands of members. NALGO's leadership knows that if it does not complete the merger then NUPE will look to the GMB.

The NALGO left rightly supports merger. But what matters is whose agenda wins out in the new union.

New realism

NUPE's leadership have been much more directly under the sway of new realism and linked, through deputy general secretary Tom Sawyer, to Neil Kinnock than NALGO. NALGO has often sided with the TGWU and MSF against the AEU and GMB in TUC committees, over issues like anti-union laws and pay restraint.

Sawyer and the NALGO right wing will want to use the merger to drive back the troublesome NALGO left. Merger will create a stronger bureaucracy and a tough battleground for NALGO left wingers. But the militants in NALGO face a broader problem - that of a renewal of their forces, and of organisation. Local government and the public services have been a meat-grinding arena of struggle in the 1980s.

Many local leaderships have been worn out and retreated. The endless round of battles over the cuts, job losses and pay are taking their toll.

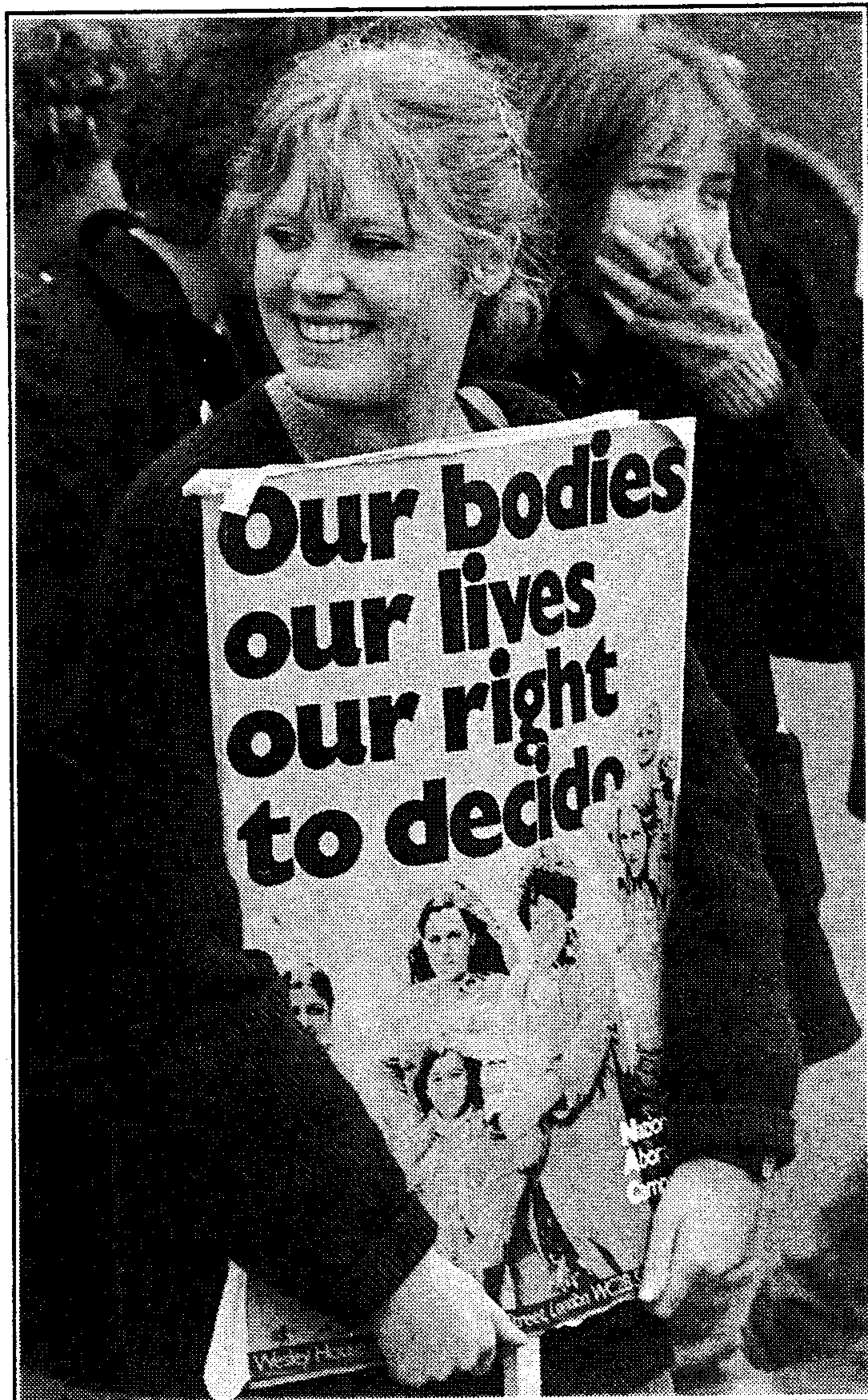
Minority

The left is a powerful minority, especially at national conference. But the Broad Left has never been stabilised because of the factional rivalry between the SWP and Militant, both of which have used it as a front.

Last November the SWP flooded the national Broad Left meeting to seize control and then effectively close it down.

If the challenge of mass redundancies and merger is to be confronted, the left needs a minimum of permanent organisation and co-ordination, organised on a democratic basis.

Only the forces organised around NALGO Action are putting forward this perspective. Without it, the left will suffer serious defeats in the next period.





Rajiv Gandhi presides at Congress leadership meeting

India after Gandhi's assassination

The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi has thrown Indian politics into turmoil. But the major factor in the general election campaign until his assassination was the strong surge of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The right wing BJP held 4000 mass election rallies across India, and is the decisive new force in Indian politics.

Oliver New spoke to ACHIN VANAIAK, a leading member of the ICS, Indian section of the Fourth International, about the crisis of Indian politics. Vanaik is the author of *The Painful Transition*, the best Marxist analysis of India, published by Verso.

Oliver New: What will be the immediate effects of Gandhi's assassination?

Achin Vanaik: The immediate effect is going to be a blow to the Congress party. Congress used to dominate Indian politics, but its domination was eroded by its failure to do anything about poverty. Now Congress is in a mess; they needed a really national figure to lead them, but without Rajiv they haven't got one.

But Congress should get a sympathy vote because of the assassination. The elections will either result in a small majority for Congress, or a new coalition. They will show whether the BJP can make a dramatic breakthrough. Even if they don't make an immediate breakthrough, the BJP will be a crucial factor for some time to come.

ON: When Rajiv was assassinated commentators talked of this death of one man as a threat to Indian 'democracy'. Why are individuals so important in India?

AV: It's to do with the 'plebscitary' character of the political system. In the political centre in India you have the Congress and its offshoot/imitator, the Janata Dal. On the main questions of the economy nothing separates them politically; they have moved well to the right of the post-independence social democratic consensus.

Both these formations are coalitions with a shifting class base and no clear cut programme to hold them together. So the role of central leading personalities is vital to appeal to a multi-class, multi-caste electorate and have a really

national appeal. It was this factor which made Indira Gandhi promote her son Sanjay, and after both their deaths, made Congress turn to Rajiv. In addition there is the growing volatility of Indian politics. That can be summed up in a single phrase: the failure of Congress.

Outside of the Congress and Janata Dal you have cadre parties to the left and right – the BJP on the right and the Communist Party (India) and the Communist Party (Marxist) on the left. They are more structured, with a firmer programme, so their leadership crises are not so severe.

The dilemma is that Congress is the only real national party, but with no leader to compare in stature with the other party leaders.

ON: But there don't seem to be fundamental political differences between the major parties?

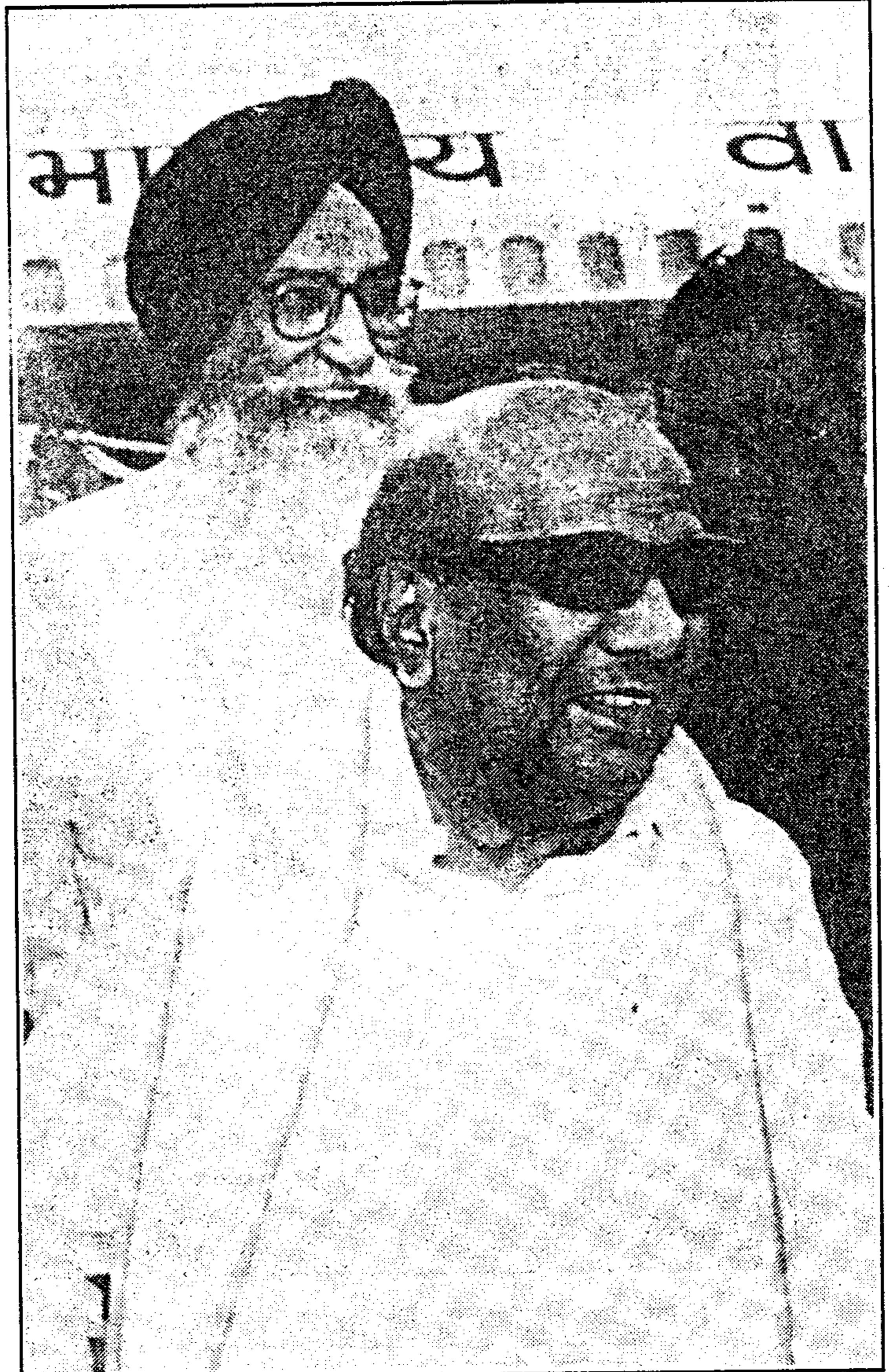
AV: In fact there are, on the crucial questions of economic policy and secularism. Both within Congress and Janata Dal there are social democratic forces which favour public ownership. And obviously the Communist parties have a more left wing economic programme.

But in practice of course Congress and Janata Dal have managed capitalism; and the BJP have no clear alternative economic policy, as yet. But the crucial difference is on secularism. While Congress, Janata Dal and the present premier Chandra Shekhar are opportunistic and play the communalist game, they are not nearly so committed to Hindu nationalism as the BJP. That is the vital dividing line in Indian politics today.

ON: Why, when the economic crisis is so great, is communalism and secularism the crucial dividing line?

AV: Because of the failure of Congress and its derivative parties. National rebellion as such is largely confined to the north and north-east of the country particularly in Punjab and Kashmir. But even these nationalist movements are very concentrated on the issue of religious identity.

There is a strong link between communalism and nationalism.



Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar

Hindu cultural nationalism of the BJP type is of growing importance. I think this is related both to alienation from the dominant Congress type of politics, and is in a certain sense a revolt against the impact of capitalist modernisation, which offers nothing for the untold millions of poor in India.

Nonetheless it is a remarkable phenomenon because Hinduism is such a peculiar religion.

Unlike the Semitic/prophetic religions it has no fixed texts, founders or doctrine. Thus there is little foundation for the forging of a common religious-political identity.

ON: But surely this could be created?

AV: Yes, but it's very difficult given the nature of Hinduism. But in any case, even if they can't yet forge a common vision of an alternative society, Hindu nationalism is extremely dangerous.

The conflicts last year over the decisions of the VP Singh Janata Dal government to reserve some public sector posts for the lower castes led to a big conflict which eventually brought the government down. Mobilisation along a caste or class basis is very dangerous for the Hindu communalists like the BJP, because it breaks the fake unity of Hindus. But it has yet to be seen whether class or caste conflict will interrupt the progress of Hindu communalism.

ON: Is India affected by the debt crisis?

AV: India is in a special position because although not an imperialist country it has built a substantial industrial base. Partially this was achieved because India was an economy dominated by state enterprises after 1947 and largely sealed off from the world economy. But from the late 1970s onwards the Indian bourgeoisie decided consciously to try to reintegrate India with the world economy to promote growth – but this has

not paid off at all.

India is on the verge of falling into the debt trap. Last year the debt had risen to around \$65 billion. As a result the IMF will tell India to implement a deflationary policy, and that will make life even harder for the masses.

ON: How do you see the prospects for the left in India?

AV: There are two factors, the state of working class struggle and the organisations of the left. The organised workers are often very militant, but they are only a small proportion. Most workers are not organised, especially in the rural areas. The union bureaucrats claim they want to organise the workers, but that is largely hot air.

The situation of the left is also very difficult. The two Communist parties, the CP (I) and the CP (M), are both mass parties, but class-collaborationist Stalinist parties of the old type. They have held the regional government in Bengal and Kerala where they managed the system with only minimal reforms.

Both these parties participated, together with the BJP, in the coalition which propped up the VP Singh Janata Dal government before its fall last year. It is a paradox that India is one of the few countries where perestroika and the international Stalinist crisis has not yet led to profound splits or decline.

To the left of the two CPs there are a number of Maoist groups, and they amount to perhaps 35,000 cadres. This again is a big obstacle for revolutionary socialists.

In truth, revolutionary socialism amounts to just a few hundred people in India.

This is a major historic weakness for the socialist left internationally. But in the next period, we are going to see Indian politics in turmoil and crisis. Opportunities for growth will continue to exist, but it will be a hard struggle.

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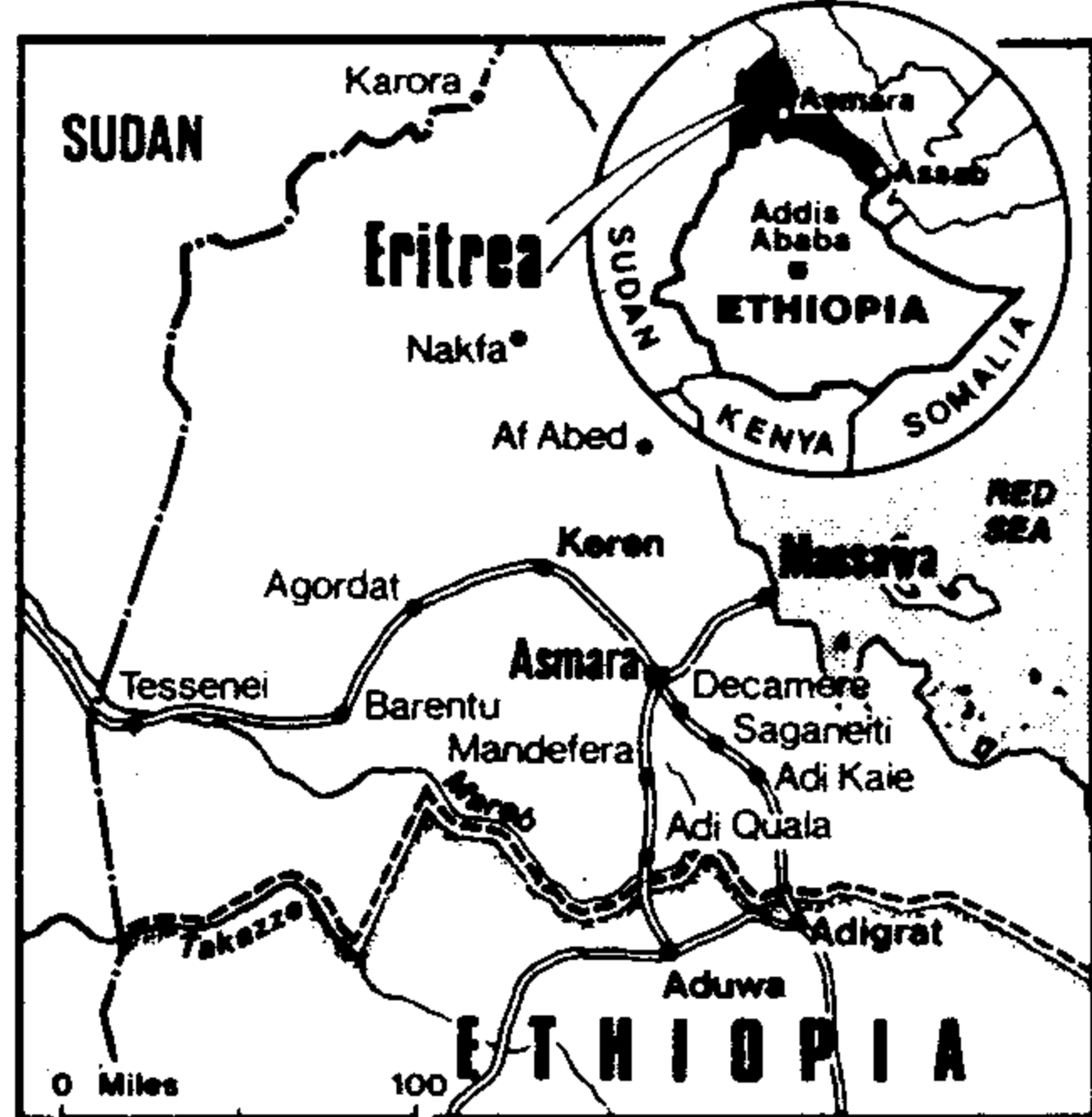
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Who wins in Ethiopia?

THE FALL of the Dergue regime in Ethiopia, and the flight of its leader Haile Mariam Mengistu, is the outcome of a long crisis. For years it has been obvious that the days of Mengistu were numbered.

Unable to defeat the rebels in the subject provinces of Eritrea and Tigre, hugely unpopular in the whole of the Ethiopia, the Mengistu regime was doomed once the Soviet Union began to withdraw its aid.

The entry into Addis Ababa of the fighters of the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front is a victory for all the peoples of that country. But what kind of regime will result?

Both the Eritrean fighters and those in Tigre have formally been led by adherents of 'Marxism-Leninism'. But the transition of power has been brokered by the United States, who want to pressure the ERPDF into a pro-Western stance in return for promises of aid.

Mengistu was part of the Provisional Military Administrative Council, the Dergue, which took power in 1974, overthrowing the emperor Haile Salassie. This was not a popular revolution, but a military coup against the semi-feudal regime. But overthrow of the emperor unleashed a revolutionary dynamic.

The early years of the regime were marked by sharp conflicts between the Dergue and the trade unions, which resulted in 1975 in the banning of strikes and growing repression.

Left repressed

From 1976-8 the Dergue fought a bloody battle to repress the far-left Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party, and eventually the more moderate All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (M'eison). The Congress of Ethiopian Unions was also repressed.

All the forces in this conflict made reference to Marxism, utilising Maoist-type rhetoric. But despite radical measures, including nationalisations and a brutal collectivisation imposed on an unwilling peasantry, the Dergue never represented a force for socialism. It was a radical, authoritarian petty-bourgeois political force, which crystallised a new privileged class based on the state bureaucracy.

The real face of the Dergue was most vividly shown in its long war against the peoples of Eritrea and Tigre. This war was fought with utter brutality, making attacks on the civilian population as a matter of course.

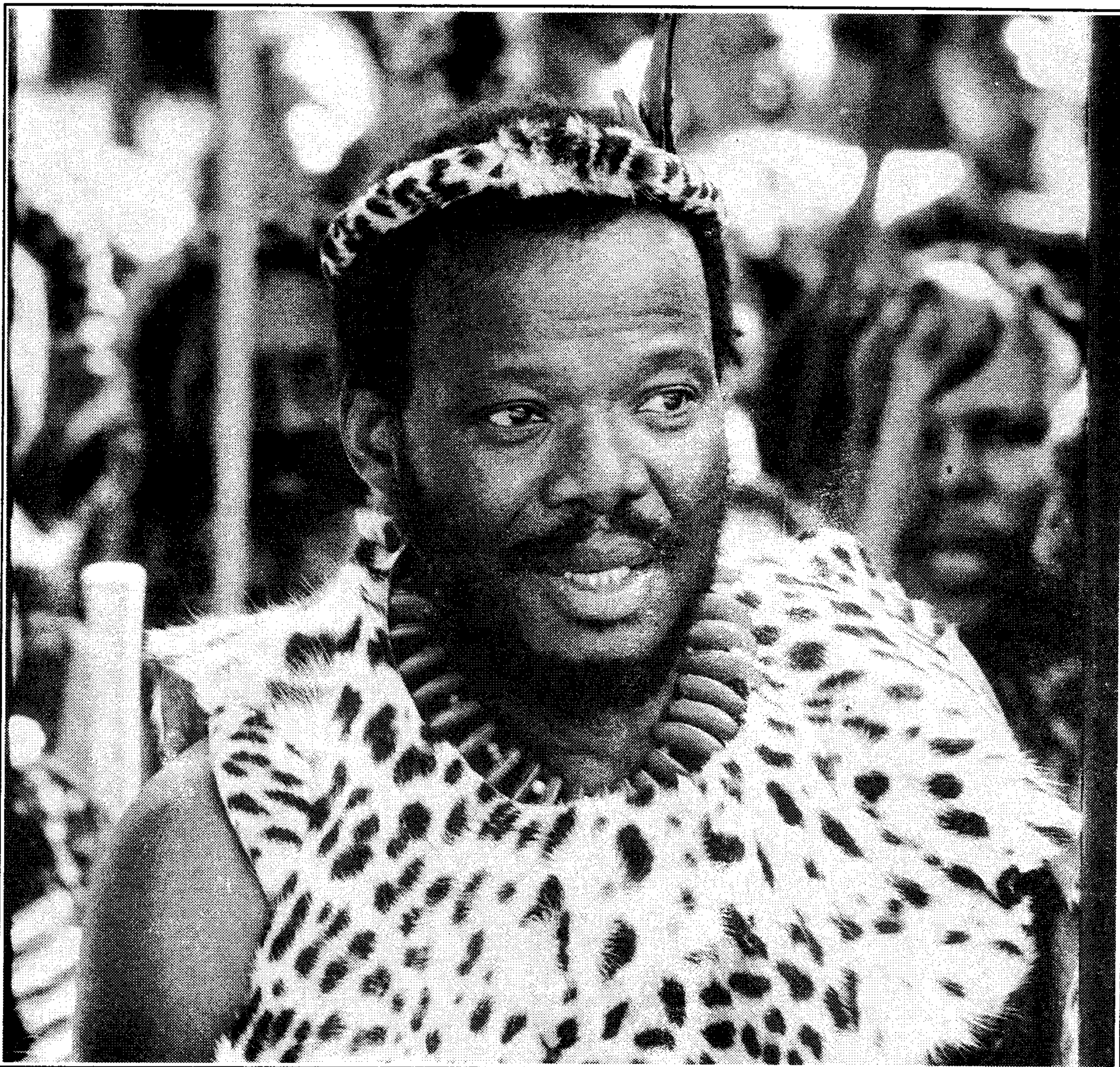
Worse, the Dergue showed utter disregard for the consequences of its military campaign in disrupting aid to the millions of victims of successive famines.

While the country remained war torn and hundreds of thousands died of starvation, Mengistu lavished state resources on prestige projects and sumptuous buildings in Addis Ababa.

It seems unlikely that the hostile demonstrations which greeted the entry to the capital of the ERPDF enjoyed real mass support. It appears that they were organised by the tiny groups of people who supported the Mengistu regime. Nonetheless, the violence with which they were met is not a good sign for the future.

Under Brezhnev the USSR backed Mengistu in return for military bases. The danger is that the new regime will be coerced into a pro-Western role.

The example of neighbouring Somalia shows that a pro-Western stance is no guarantee that aid to enable the new regime to stave off famine will be forthcoming.



Buthelezi - de Klerk's new partner?

South Africa: hunger strikers force ANC's hand

by Charlie van Gelderen

IT WOULD SEEM that even deadlines must have a deadline. After weeks of prevarication, it was only the initiative of African National Congress hunger strikers that pushed the leadership into taking action.

In December of last year the Consultative Conference of the ANC called for the implementation of the agreements with the government - principally the release of all political prisoners and amnesty for returning exiles.

It set April 30 as the date by which these demands should be met. If not, the ANC would organise mass actions, consumer boycotts and hunger strikes among political prisoners still behind bars.

April 30 came and went and the only thing that happened was that the ANC leadership issued a new ultimatum to the government. They demanded the sacking of the two ministers in charge of defence and security, Malan and Vlok.

No action

They again threatened action if these demands were not met by May 9. This deadline also passed. The ministers were not sacked. No mass actions took place.

On May Day, however, there were limited demonstrations against the continued imprisonment of

political prisoners. About 350 members of the ANC Youth League were arrested in rallies in various parts of the country and about 30 of its activists occupied the provincial offices of the ruling National Party in Cape Town for three hours, before being evicted by the police.

In his now well-established role of maintaining contact with the government behind the scenes, Nelson Mandela telephoned Security Minister Adriaan Vlok late at night and obtained the release of the youth who were arrested.

Hunger strikes

But at the beginning of May, six political prisoners started a hunger strike, to be joined by others later. Initially, one of them, Rafiq Rohan, was released from hospital because he was so weak that he could hardly stand. The prisoners' condition was said to be critical, and on the brink of kidney damage. A further six prisoners were released some three weeks later, to coincide with the opening of De Klerk's 'Peace Conference'.

This hunger strike spurred the ANC leadership into action. The entire leadership joined ANC members nationwide in a 24 hour fast. Whether this will be enough to satisfy the militant elements inside the ANC remains to be seen.

It is also symbolic of Mandela's pragmatic and conciliatory style of

leadership that while there were demonstrations against Margaret Thatcher, feted by white South Africa for her heroic (sic) stand against sanctions, Nelson Mandela had a forty minute telephone conversation with her.

'Peace talks'

The problems confronting the ANC leadership are growing. It is increasingly seen by rank and file members and supporters as having lost the initiative in negotiations with the government.

Pressure from the ranks and the increasing evidence that the security forces are conniving with Inkatha violence against the ANC seems, at last, to have had an effect. The ANC, as well as the COSATU union federation, refused to take part in the 'Peace Talks' convened by the government under the chairmanship of President De Klerk, at which the right wing Conservative Party and Inkatha were represented.

Demonstrations

It also called for demonstrations in support of the prisoners in the few days before the 'Peace Talks', in which both Winnie Mandela and ANC Chief of Staff Chris Hani were arrested.

But there can be no doubt that De Klerk now feels he has the upper hand in his dealings with the ANC. It is true that his white electoral

constituency is being steadily eroded. In a recent by-election in the Orange Free State, the Conservative Party candidate more than doubled his majority.

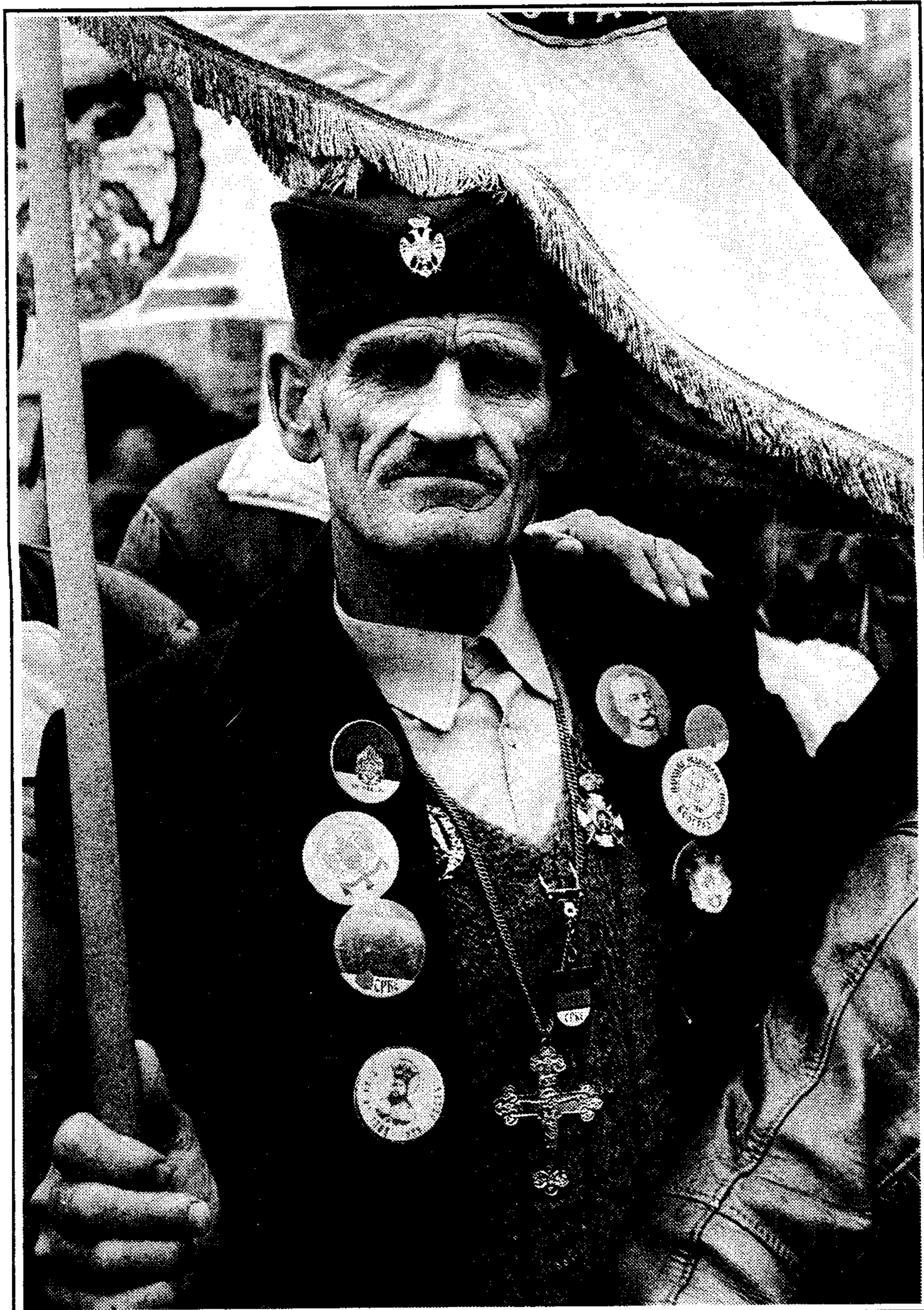
So De Klerk has had to look around for new alliances. Buthelezi has replaced Mandela as a potential partner in a future 'non-racial' government. This, despite the fact that a recent opinion poll showed that he commands only 10% support among black South Africans. It is even doubtful that he has the support of the majority of Zulus.

Confident

The 'coloured' Labour Party has now merged with the previously all-white National Party, thus assuring De Klerk of a majority in the event of the three, at present racially constituted, chambers merging in the future.

That is why De Klerk could confidently declare, in an interview with the *Financial Times* that the National Party 'will have its hands on the tiller of government for a very long time to come'.

He is not, however, prepared to put his power on the line with elections on the basis of a universal franchise - one person, one vote - across the colour bar. Instead he is hoping that the orchestrated violence now sweeping the country will stampede 'moderate' blacks into his camp as the only alternative to the savagery now going on in the townships.



Serbian nationalists rallied against Milosevic's communists



Croatian military police prepare for battle

PHOTOS: David Stewart-Smith (Insight)

Guide to main ethnic groups →

S	Serbians	SLOV	Slovenes
C	Croats	HUNG	Hungarians
M	Muslims	MONT	Montenegrins
A	Albanians	MAC	Macedonians
T	Turks		Other

This limits the authority of the federal government, which survives only by agreement of the republics. The influence of Ante Markovic, federal prime minister, thus derives mainly from the support he enjoys abroad – in the USA, USSR and Common Market countries – who for their own reasons wish to preserve Yugoslavia's political integrity. In recent months however Markovic's position has been boosted by support from the Yugoslav army leadership.

Until a few weeks ago, the commander-in-chief of the army was the collective head of state – the Yugoslav presidency. The presidency was made up of one representative from each of the eight federal units, elected by secret ballot of their respective assemblies. Its decisions were made by majority vote. On 15 May each year, the presidency would elect a president from among its members – by strict rotation.

In May 1989 this post went to Slovenia (Janez Drvnosek), in May 1990 to Serbia (Borisav Jovic) and in May 1991 it was to go to Croatia (Stipe Mesic). This latest change was however blocked by Serbia. By refusing to allow Mesic to become president, Serbia destroyed the federal presidency and delivered a mortal blow to Yugoslavia as a single political entity.

Over the past year, the ability of the Yugoslav presidency to make decisions has in any case been severely jeopardised by the illegitimate Serbian control over the votes of Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro. Serbia thus commanded four out of the eight votes, three of them outright. The regular 4-4 tie on the presidency became a rule, paralysing its work on all important issues.

Despite its impotence the presidency, and the other federal institutions did provide a minimal all-Yugoslav framework, within which different options could be presented and argued. Why then did the Serbian leaders decide to finish it off? The answer is to be found in the nature and politics of the Milosevic regime.

Greater Serbia?

The period during which the Serbian representative Jovic was Yugoslav president – May 1990 to May 1991 – was a crucial period in Yugoslav history. The demise of the League of Communists (the Yugoslav CP) in February 1990, put paid to Milosevic's plan to use the party to take control of Yugoslavia.

Jovic's accession to the top of the Yugoslav state during this period allowed Milosevic's regime to stabilise itself during the turbulent period, and cloak anti-Yugoslav acts in pro-Yugoslav rhetoric. As the resistance to Serbia's aggression grew in the other republics – strengthened by the election of non-communist and nationalist governments – Milosevic turned to the army for support.

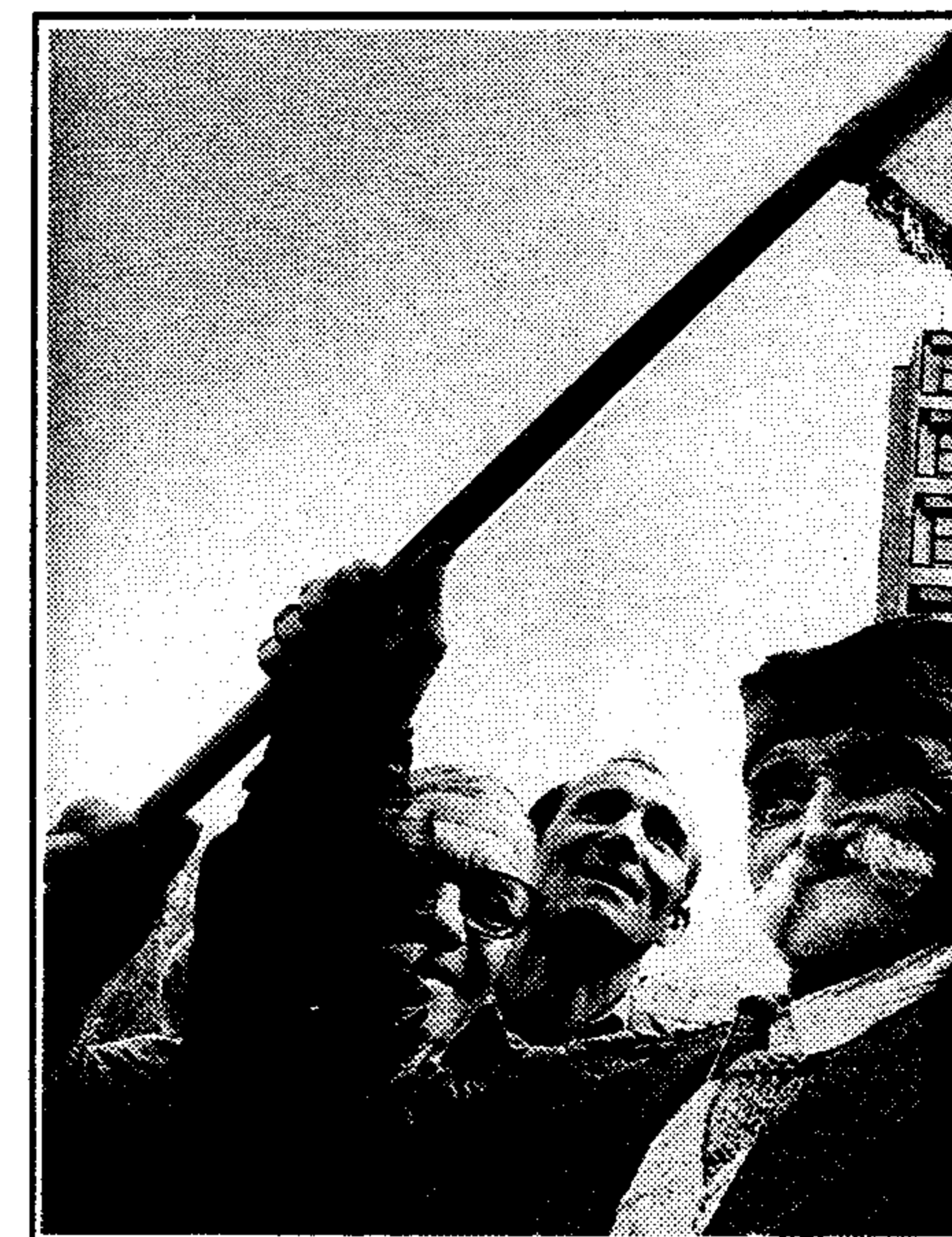
The army, hostile to the new order in Slovenia and Croatia, proved willing to go along with this, giving Milosevic the illusion that he was above all laws.

However, in March this year spontaneous mass anti-government

demonstrations erupted in Serbia. Milosevic asked the army to introduce a state of emergency throughout Yugoslavia, but the army refused without an express order from the presidency. This was denied.

Two things immediately followed: Serbia decided to destroy the national presidency and the army turned to federal prime minister Markovic. It should be stressed that the conflict is not an ethnic conflict. The Serbian regime's hostility to Croatia is not based on ethnicity, but expresses a fundamental clash between two opposing visions of Yugoslavia. Four republics – Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia and Croatia – voted for Mesic, while Serbia and its satellites voted against.

In the short term, Serbia's problem with Mesic lies at a symbolic level; as



Serbian president Mesic would outrank Milosevic. Given the cult of the personality which Milosevic has fostered and the anti-Croat hysteria he has fanned, it is possible the Serbian regime would not long survive such a change at the all-Yugoslav level.

In the long run Milosevic is working for the creation of a Greater Serbia. Such a Serbia would embrace, in addition to the two provinces, most of the territory of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia. That is why, over the past year, Milosevic has encouraged armed Serbian rebellion in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina with the aim of breaking them up.

Much of the Serbian opposition has united with Milosevic on this issue, helping him to survive the March demonstrations and a strike involving 700,000 workers that followed within days. Since then, the Serbian regime has shifted still further to the right, embracing semi-fascist political groups.

Milosevic's strategy was clearly summed up in the statement issued in response to the breakdown of the presidential system by the Serbian

The End of Yugoslavia

The crisis in eastern Europe is taking a special form in Yugoslavia – the break up of the multinational state into warring nations. Yugoslavia's spiralling economic crisis, and the dissolution of the League of Communists, has brought regional and national conflict back onto the stage of history. The prospect of any federal solution has been sabotaged by the offensive of the ex-Communist leadership of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, which is attempting to make the whole of Yugoslavia a Serbian fiefdom. Here MICHELE LEE charts the end of Yugoslavia.

YUGOSLAVIA today is split into two irreconcilable camps; those who want a free association of equal nations and those who want a Serb-dominated central state. The earlier Federal order, based on national equality has been destroyed – a process which started with the Serbian destruction of the autonomy of the province of Kosovo. The latest crisis – with Serbia blocking the election of a new Yugoslav president – has substantially increased the likelihood of a full-scale civil war.

Break down

The latest crisis is the culmination of a four-year process of destroying the all-Yugoslav constitutional order, by Milosevic's Serbian regime. Formally speaking, Yugoslavia is a federation of eight members: six republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro) and two provinces (Kosovo, Vojvodina).

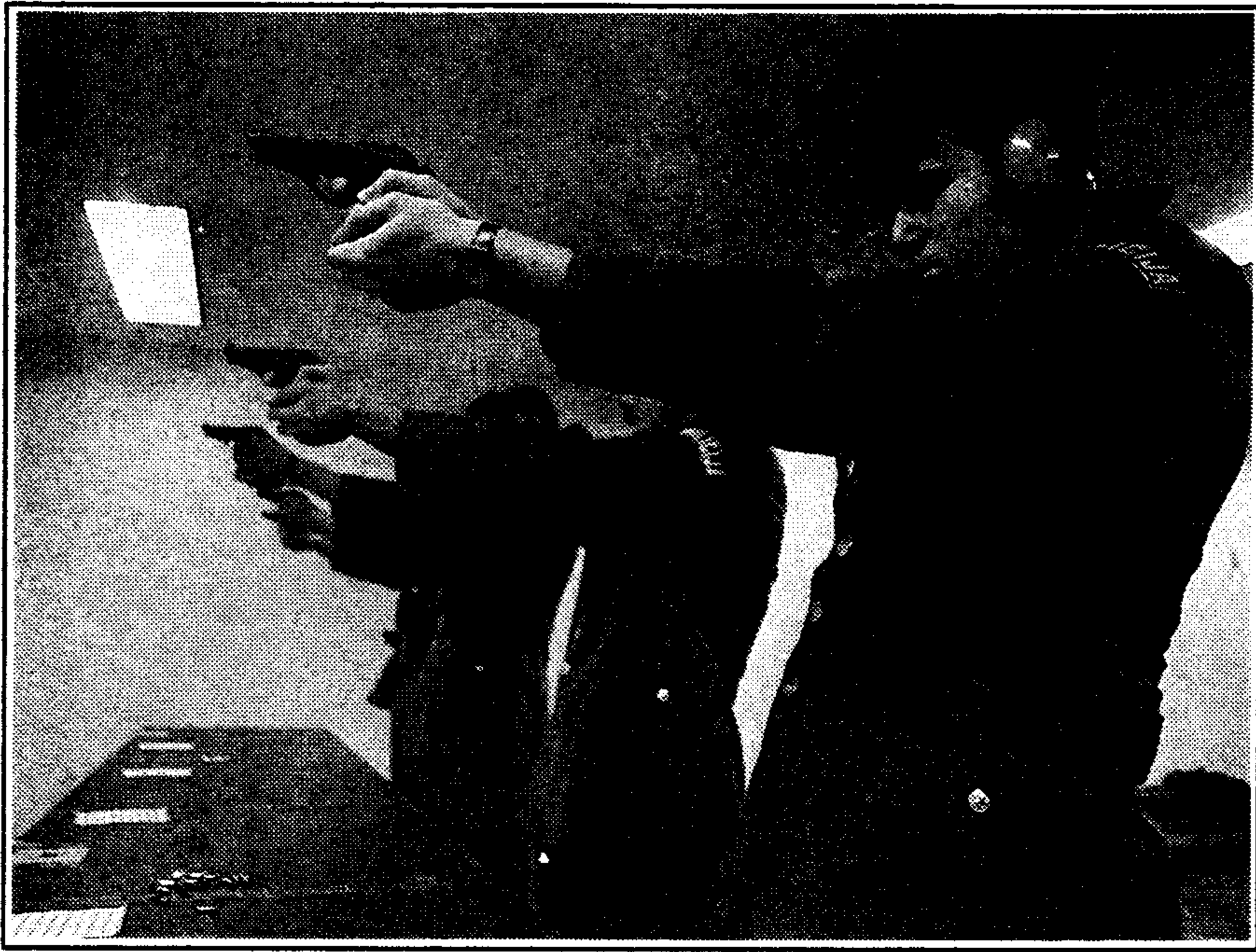
But over the past three years Serbia has unilaterally altered the character of

the federation, swallowing up the two provinces (Kosovo is in the third year of military occupation), and engineering a coup d'etat in Montenegro which has reduced it to satellite status.

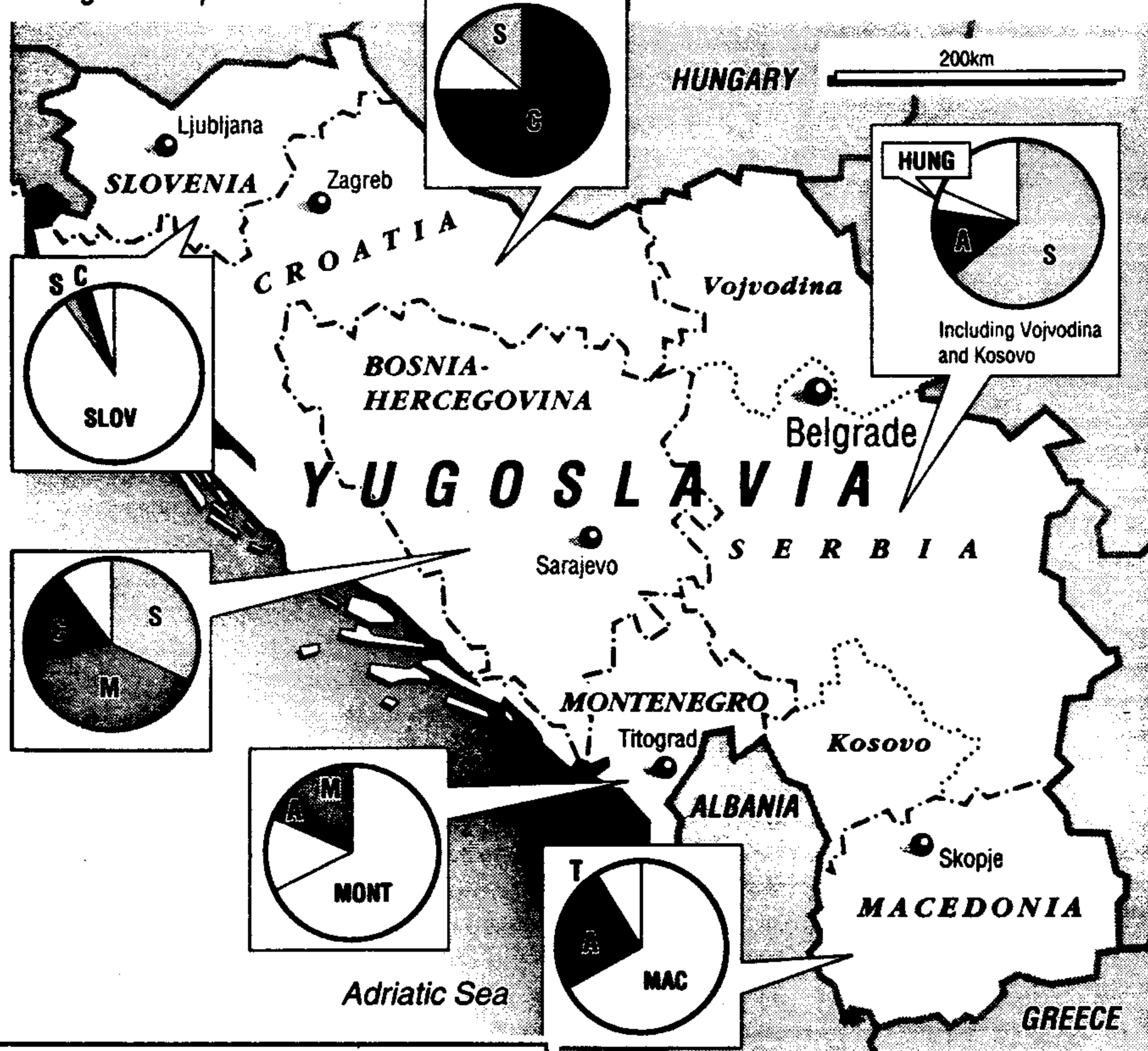
This has destroyed the national-political balance in the federation. Milosevic's trick consisted in robbing the provinces of their real autonomy, but keeping their representation at federal level – a representation which is under his control. Thus while Serbia had been one among equals, its weight in federal bodies has quadrupled.

Federal Yugoslavia may continue precariously to exist in a formal sense, but in reality the federation has been dead for some time. Its only significant remnants are the federal government and the army.

The federal assembly, to which the federal government is responsible, is made up of two chambers, one representing the republics and provinces, the other all citizens. The make up of the former was altered by the republican elections of 1990, but elections for the second chamber have not taken place and probably never will.



Aiming for independence?



branch of the Alliance of Reform Forces of Yugoslavia – a coalition of parties and groups supporting prime minister Markovic. They said: 'By obstructing the election to the post of president of the member from Croatia, Milosevic's personal regime has completely revealed its real intentions in regard to the future of Yugoslavia.'

'We are witnessing the final act of the destruction of Yugoslavia, which has been pursued over the last few years in accordance with a clear plan: to force Slovenia to leave Yugoslavia; to cause chaos within, and the territorial disintegration of, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina; to transform Macedonia into the southern province of Serbia; to provoke military intervention in the name of defending Yugoslavia – understood as Serb property; to prevent all reforms and stop all economic and social changes which could bring Milosevic's personal regime into question.'

'By their refusal to accept the constitutionally prescribed procedure for elect-

ing the president, the representatives of so-called 'unified' Serbia, acting as Milosevic's personal representatives, have shown that they do not recognise the equality and sovereignty of the other republics, or accept the basic rules of democratic procedure. They have shown, in other words, that they no longer recognise Yugoslavia.'

Military Coup?

Mesic's election would have increased the chances of a new inter-Yugoslav settlement, based on a respect for internal borders and republican sovereignty. Rather than accept a situation in which the federal institutions would bestow legitimacy on his opponents, Milosevic chose to destroy them. At the same time, as blocking the election of Mesic, Serbia (via its satellite Vojvodina) tabled its intention to seek a vote of confidence in the Markovic's government.

If Markovic were to fall, a state of anarchy would follow. Since the federal institutions are located in Belgrade, which is also Serbia's capital, the latter would be in a position to take over the federal reserves and money-printing machinery. In this way Milosevic would finance his war on Yugoslavia.

Serbia's destruction of the presidency has left the army without its legal commander-in-chief. Markovic and the army have both, in fact, come out in favour of Mesic becoming president.

However, as this now looks unlikely, it is possible that the army would support a move in the federal assembly to transfer the powers of the collapsed presidency to Markovic. This would amount to a coup d'état, and de facto military rule. It would solve nothing and should be resisted. However, the unfolding economic catastrophe is forcing the hand of all actors on the Yugoslav stage. The end of the Yugoslav drama is in sight. It looks unlikely to be a pretty spectacle.



Polish workers plan fightback

POLAND HAS BEEN the testing ground for IMF shock-tactics in Eastern Europe. But signs of resistance have appeared, with a wave of strikes organised by Solidarnosc.

This text was published in *Workers Unity* by the Factory Commission of Solidarity '80 in the Warsaw FSO car plant, a traditional bastion of workers' militancy.

Solidarity '80 is a breakaway from Walesa's Solidarity (some would say the political continuation of the Solidarity of 1980). It has 250,000 members (to Solidarity's 2.5 million) and is strong in the Szczecin area.

We must have our own interfactory, independent workers' representation.

The elections are drawing nearer and will be different from those in 1989. Then Solidarity voted by an overwhelming majority for the Solidarity side of the Round-Table Agreement. The elections were like a plebiscite, in which the majority voted unambiguously against the Communist Party (CP) – to be rid of the nomenklatura.

However, it became clear that the Solidarity side of the Agreement was intending to co-operate with the nomenklatura. From the Balcerowicz Plan, it was clear that the new order meant a swift transition to nineteenth century-style capitalism.

This is the aim of both the former opposition elite and the nomenklatura, who are trying to transform themselves into a new class of businessmen. Those who are benefitting are the new political elite, the new class of private owners and foreign investors. Those who are losing out are the working people.

We are bearing the cost of inflation, unemployment, cuts in social services

and losing our jobs.

They, on the other hand, have cause to be pleased with themselves.

They have unlimited potential to enrich themselves at our cost, from our work, and can use private schools and health care.

It seems that there is no longer room in the political system for the democracy that we voted for two years ago. It seems that the transition to capitalism has so many problems that it cannot accept democracy. Trade union rights still have to be restricted and the political police still exist.

Workers councils are being closed down. We are still defenceless against the lawless state apparatus. Undemocratic laws are being introduced with the goal of clericalisation – banning abortion, blocking divorce, imposing religion in schools.

It is time to protest. Time to say loudly that this is not why we overthrew the nomenklatura, to substitute for it a dictatorship of money, of the rich, of speculators and the same party parasites who are now metamorphosing into directors.

Key demands of the independent workers' list

1) Unconditional defence of the workers' living standards

- Legislation for a minimum wage determined by the trade unions, based on a real assessment of workers' needs.
- Automatic indexation of wages and benefits.
- Abolition of the 'payroll tax'.

2) The right to work

- End the closure of workplaces and mass sackings.
- For a sliding scale of working hours – if output is reduced, working hours will be cut equally without loss of earnings.
- An ambitious programme of public works – particularly housing and infrastructure.

3) Defend social services

- Priority for investment in health, education and housing.
- An immediate rent freeze.

4) Reject the Balcerowicz Plan

- Rejection of predatory 'marketisation' of the economy and the privatisation of factories.
- Restoration of government control of foreign trade.
- Repudiation of the foreign debt.

5) A plan for economic development based on self-management

- Workers' control in the factories, exercised by elected delegates.
- A national economic plan to be elaborated by the self-management councils.

6) Defend Women's Rights

- Stop the exclusion of women from work.
- Equal pay for women. Wage rises in feminised professions.
- Priority for investment in free creches and nurseries.
- Freedom of choice – free access to contraception, abortion and universal sex education.

7) Fully democratic political life

- Freedom to establish political parties, without state interference, apart from openly fascist ones.
- Restoration of trade union rights, and the right to strike, including solidarity action.
- Halt clericalisation of public life – separation of church from state. Independence of all state institutions from the church. End religious education in schools.

Translation by David Holland.

What is socialist feminism?

by Kate Ahrens

Feminism has never received a good press. Even in the left press feminism has been one of the 'poor relations' along with the other struggles against specific oppression - racism, heterosexism and ableism.

Some on the left have even espoused the notion that all these oppression will just 'disappear' when the revolution comes. So what is feminism really about?

Since the Sixties and the rise of the women's movement, feminism has developed broadly speaking into three main areas - socialist feminism, radical feminism and bourgeois feminism. This is a very loose and inaccurate portrait - because in reality there are more varieties of feminism than there are left sects in Britain! But it will do for the moment.

What these three strands have in common is an understanding that women suffer discrimination. And that is almost where the similarity ends!

Bourgeois feminism

Bourgeois feminism, the most common, really stops at that point. Generally bourgeois feminists don't attempt to analyse *why* women suffer discrimination or think that any systematic oppression exists.

However the most important error they make is to believe

that the solution to this discrimination is to be found within capitalism. Anti-discrimination legislation, quotas in labour movement bodies and a few good female role models are all that is necessary for the bourgeois feminist.

This is why many bourgeois feminist particularly in Europe and America have recently been embarking on a discussion as to whether or not women are still discriminated against.

Within this framework, there is very little room for a conception of patriarchy - the idea that the oppression of women pre-dates class society. Bourgeois feminism fails to place women's oppression in a historical context and therefore loses in large part the importance that women's oppression has in the development of capitalist society.

Radical feminism

Radical feminism takes a rather different standpoint. Radical feminism analyses the whole of society through the prism of patriarchy, which overwhelms any other factor (such as class) in determining why things happen and who benefits from them.

Many radical feminists also have a view of men which broadly speaking reckons that they are beyond help and there is no point in attempting to change the whole of society to end the oppression of women.

This leads to almost the mir-

ror of bourgeois feminist ideas - a belief that not only can the solution to women's oppression not be found under capitalism, but it can't be found in *any* society in which men and women interact.

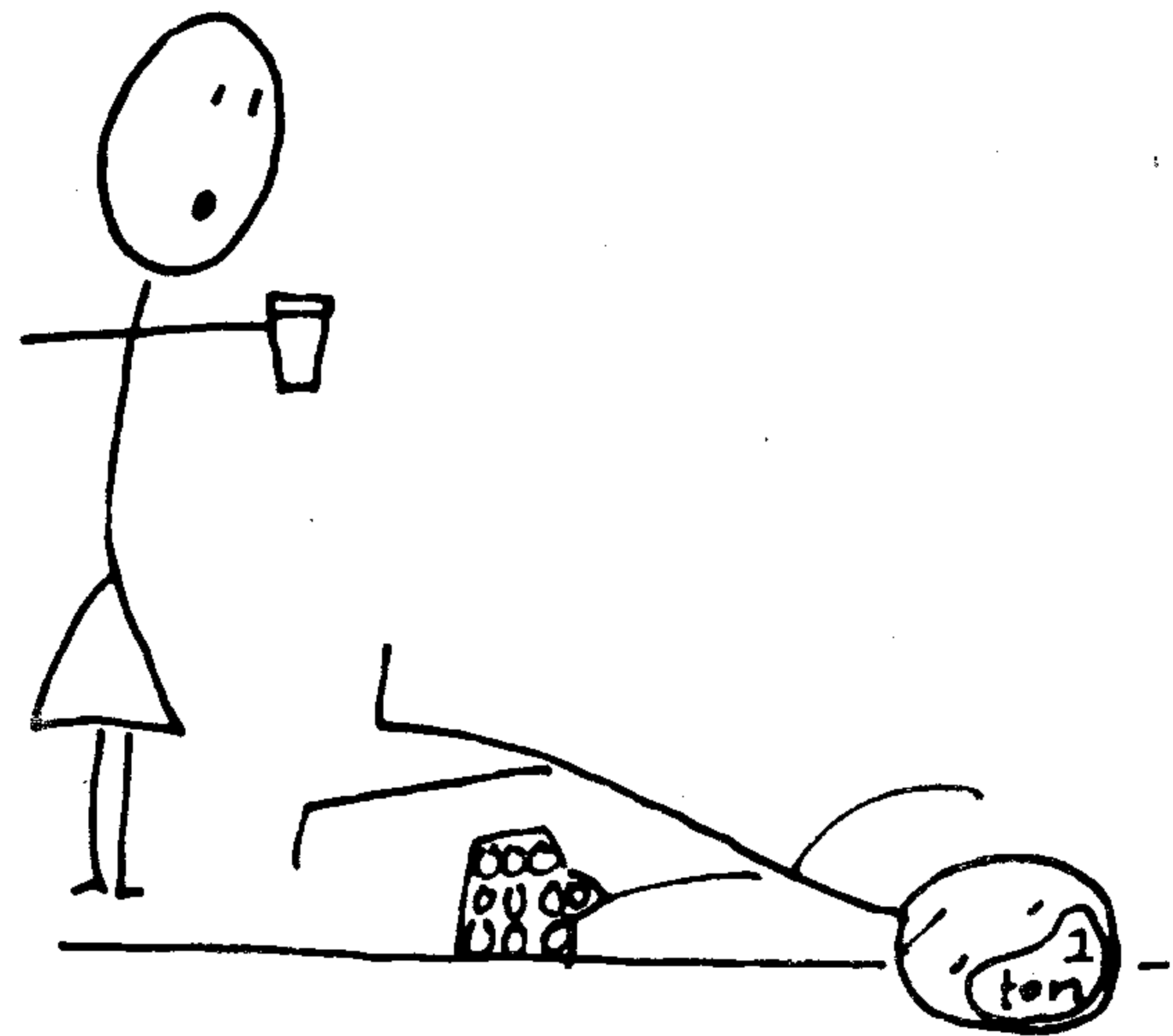
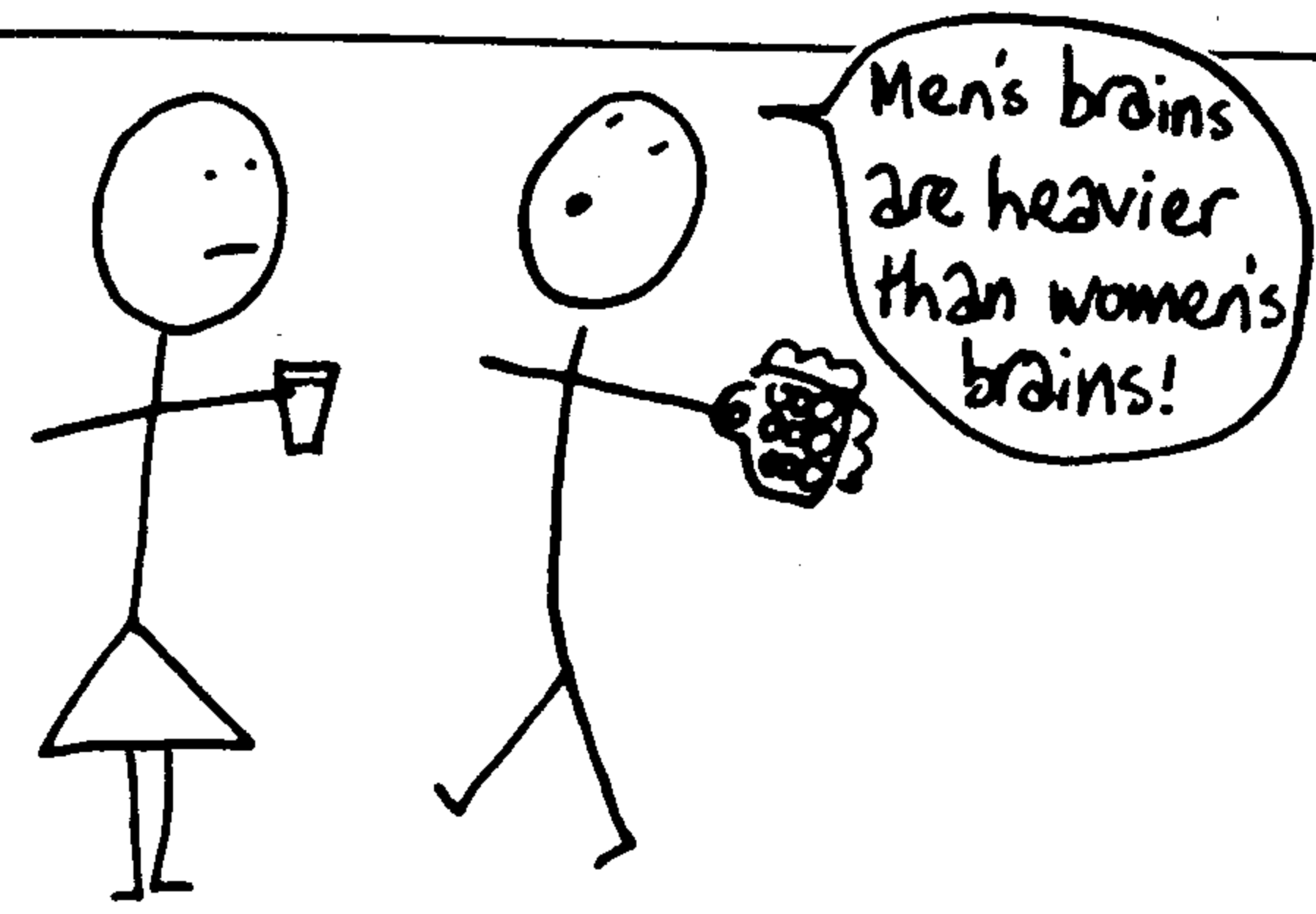
Socialist feminism is perhaps the least widely known of the varieties but provides the best understanding of reality. Put simply, socialist feminism states that bourgeois society is one of patriarchal capitalism and that the struggle for women's liberation is inextricably intertwined with the struggle for socialism.

Socialist construction

One of the major differences socialist feminism has with radical feminism is the concept of social construction. Much radical feminist ideology is based on the idea of men's inherent violent and selfish natures and women's inherent kindness and generosity. Socialist feminism is founded on the basis that these traits are not inborn but culturally conditioned by the society we live in.

Socialist feminists, along with bourgeois and radical feminists, argue in favour of women's caucuses and women-only spaces. But the motivation is different for all three types.

Bourgeois feminists argue for these things as an end in themselves; radical feminists want them as places they can remove themselves from the mixed society they see as hopeless.



Support

Socialist feminists recognise these spaces as methods of encouraging women to gain the confidence and support they need to fight for liberation and as places to further develop the understanding of women's oppression without the constant pressure they are under in mixed groups.

Socialist feminism is a way of combining the reality of women's oppression with the reality of the class nature of society. In essence it is an extension of the marxist analysis -

which was correct as far as it went but was incomplete because, for the most part, it missed this element of the nature of capitalism and pre-capitalist societies.

The struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism are inextricably linked. It is impossible to achieve true equality for women without the destruction of capitalism and socialism - a society of real equality - cannot be achieved without the victory of the struggle against women's oppression.

agenda

Dates for your diary

Outlook for Socialism

Socialist Outlook is in December organising a weekend of rallies and workshops on the theme *Crisis in the Third World*. In the aftermath of the Gulf war, US president Bush declared the start of the 'new world order'. For the peoples of the third world this means not just more of the same, but worse - much worse.

40 million people are at risk from starvation in Africa; the debt crisis is taking a huge toll in human misery through IMF-imposed austerity; epidemics of cholera are sweeping through Latin America, the Middle East and Asia; ecological catastrophe threatens as the West strips the third world of its resources and gives in return thousands of tons of toxic waste. And to enforce this new order, US militarism is being stepped up.

To discuss this situation and the tasks which it implies for socialists, our *Outlook for Socialism 1991* will be on the

theme of *Crisis in the Third World* and will bring together socialists from Latin America, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East, as well as Belgian Marxist economist Ernest Mandel.

Outlook for Socialism 1991 is on 6-8 December at William Collins school, Charrington St., London NW1. To register fill in the form below.

Debt Campaign

Preparations for the 13 July demonstration demanding the cancellation of the Third World debt, called to coincide with the 'G7' meeting of the leaders of the world's richest nations, are well under way. New sponsors of the campaign include the TUC South East region, and the executive of the ACTT.

Socialist Outlook supporters should be ensuring that meetings with speakers from the campaign are organised in their localities and coaches booked for the demonstration.

For speakers and information

about the campaign contact *Cancel the Debt*, c/o 23 Beveden St., London N1 6BT, or *Cancel the Debt Scotland*, c/o Latin American Institute, 60 Oakfield Ave., Glasgow.

Summer Camp 1991

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International holds its eighth annual youth summer camp in Czechoslovakia this summer.

This is a great opportunity for young people from all over Europe to meet and discuss politics in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The camp runs from July 20th - 28th.

We are organising a delegation from Britain to attend, and the total cost, including transport and food for the week, will be £161.

We will make every effort to subsidise unemployed people and students who wish to attend.

If you are interested in finding out more about the camp, write to: Kate Ahrens PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU, or ask your Socialist Outlook seller.



CANCEL THE DEBT

International Demonstration and Carnival

Support third world struggle against the debt

Saturday 13 July

Assemble: 12 noon, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park

Rally at Trafalgar Square 2.30pm

I would like more information about *Outlook for Socialism 1991*

I would like more information about *Socialist Outlook*

I would like to register for *Outlook for Socialism 1991*

Rates - (before November 13th) - £12 waged/ £5 unwaged/students
(on the door) - £15 waged/ £6 unwaged/students

I would like to book place(s) in the creche

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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

John Lister

Life as a token Trot

A WEEK AGO, I luxuriated in a First Class seat on British Rail's Manchester Pullman. Stretching lazily in a large seat in the nearly-empty carriage I heard announcements telling people like me in second class carriages to get off because there was no room.

Yet, even though my ticket had been bought for me by Granada television so that I could appear on their Friday night regional talk show, I could not kid myself that this was my long-delayed break into show business.

It was not debonair good looks they wanted from me (just as well, I thought, or they would want their money back!). Nor, alas, did they want me as an advocate of the marxist left, a supporter of *Socialist Outlook*, heroic protagonist of the working class.

No, Granada wanted me for my knowledge in a field unfortunately rare on the hard left: I was to appear as an expert on the NHS, to help argue the case against hospitals "opting out".

Seven years working for London Health Emergency have led to many interviews, live and taped, with regional and national television and radio – and with a wide range of local, regional and national newspapers and magazines.

On behalf of LHE I have been asked to speak at hundreds of local, regional and national meetings called by the whole spectrum of labour movement organisations. Invitations and support have come from almost every quarter, with one notable exception: the hard left!

For some reason or other the eyes of almost all left activists glaze over with instant indifference the moment NHS campaigns are mentioned. Revealing to most socialists that I work for LHE is almost like confessing a rather shameful addiction: "Yeah, O.K., I campaign on the NHS a bit, but I can handle it..."

The joke is that sections of the paranoid right wing in the unions, seeing a socialist involved in LHE, have instantly taken fright, regarding it as a 'Trot front'. If only they knew!

LHE has almost 300 affiliations from trade unions, Labour Parties and other organisations, and virtually none of these reflect any influence or involvement of the hard left.

For seven years I have struggled to understand why the NHS, by far the most popular of the public services, and a continual electoral asset to the labour movement, should be met by such indifference on the left.

There is no economic or political explanation. The NHS is by far the biggest employer in the country, with 'branches' in every town. 70% or more of its million staff are women, and large percentages are black – and the left professes a special interest in fighting sexism and racism. The majority of healthworkers are unionised, and their record of militancy in the last fifteen years matches any other section of workers.

Perhaps it is the rare exceptions to the general left apathy on the NHS that give the clue: struggles on NHS pay (most recently the ambulance dispute) do occasionally cut through to galvanise some 'interventions'. But as soon as the pay fight subsides, the left troops off in search of action elsewhere.

The problem is that the left on this adopts an economistic approach. The largely female NHS workforce does not easily fit in to the stereotype of male-dominated industrial workers who tend to be targeted for the left's selective efforts at serious 'trade union work'. And many of the day-to-day issues NHS workers confront are too political or too complex to allow easy answers to be dropped in from outside.

Yet with everyone other than the marxist left, the NHS is now "flavour of the month". Since the Monmouth by-election, Neil Kinnock and the Labour leadership have at last caught on to the electoral advantage of high-profile health campaigning, and the mass support that is so easily tapped.

How does it feel to be out-'lefted' by Kinnock? Maybe you agree it's time for a change!



Miners' strike 1984 – now Kinnockites want revenge on Scargill

PHOTO: John Harris

The Scargill frameup

For fifteen months the Daily Mirror, and latterly TV's Cook Report, have hounded Arthur Scargill, with allegations of financial impropriety during the miners' strike. In particular they have accused him of using money donated for miners' welfare funds to pay off a personal mortgage. The Lightman Report, set up by the NUM executive, repudiated this claim, finding it 'without foundation'. But the Mirror continues to make these and other allegations.

Socialist Outlook: Did you encounter any problems with Channel 4 in explaining who was behind the frameup?

Ken Loach: What was disappointing was that a lot of things said about the Labour Party's role in the affair, especially the actions of NUM MPs Kim Howells and Kevin Barron, were cut out by the Channel Four lawyers.

The point is that Barron and Howells deserved to be criticised. They'd abused Arthur Scargill with great abandon, especially Kim Howells.

SO: The original Mirror allegation was that Arthur Scargill used money sent for the miners to pay off his own mortgage. Your documentary comprehensively disproves this. However, the Mirror, in its one-page reply to your programme, makes much of the fact that you didn't respond to the accusation that Arthur was lent money by the International Miners Organisation (IMO).

KL: Yes we didn't deal with this because it seemed such a private matter. It was true that Arthur borrowed money from the IMO during the strike – for six months, all paid back, and at a high rate of interest. During the strike he wasn't being paid by the NUM, didn't have an income, so how could he go to the local building society and borrow money from them?

The hypocrisy of well-paid journalists like the Mirror's industrial correspondent Terry Pattinson, on their enormous expense accounts making these allegations seemed nauseating.

SO: The programme relies heavily on the face to face interviews. It is almost as if the camera is reading their faces to see if they are lying. Scargill came across as sincere; but so did Roger Windsor. He didn't look as if he

was lying.

KL: He seems on face value very genuine. You have to remind yourself that he has made £110,000 out of this. He was the one person in the NUM offices to get a loan during the strike – £30,000 which he has never paid back. He also got at least £80,000 from the Mirror and the Cook report. This cash has enabled him to move to France with his family.

SO: Both Cook and the Mirror still both assert that money came into NUM funds from Libya.

KL: You have to remember that the situation was very difficult for the NUM leadership during the strike. Money was coming in from all over the place. There was also money coming in from unions which couldn't been seen to be going to the NUM, otherwise it would have been sequestered.

So the NUM Executive had to deal with the finances, with the media, with the negotiations, and they were also running the strike, so to keep tabs on every penny of the money would have been impossible. It is incredible that there are any records at all.

SO: A lot of fuss has been made about money collected by Soviet miners to aid the strike going to the IMO, instead of striking miners. But your film showed that the money had been diverted by the Soviet government. It also showed that Gorbachev had made a deal with Thatcher that the USSR wouldn't give support to the British miners.

KL: As the film makes clear decisions had to be made on this money at the highest level and it was totally a function of Soviet foreign policy.

The old guy who was the head of the Soviet Miners' Union was quite interesting because when he went on television and gave a militant speech on the need for solidarity with the miners, they gave him the push. The way that Stalinism changes, but is the same,

Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme on 22 May refuted the slander campaign against Scargill. It showed how much of the 'evidence' against him was based on testimony by former NUM chief executive Roger Windsor, who received £80,000 from the Mirror for his story. It also showed that those with most to gain were people in the Labour Party who wanted to destroy Scargill as a left threat to Kinnock. Sean Tunney and John Lister spoke to the programme's director KEN LOACH.

is amazing.

SO: Pattinson of the Mirror was very weak on the inconsistencies about how much money had supposedly come from Libya and the allegations about Arthur's mortgage.

KL: The Mirror, as Arthur says, want to drag him into court to sue for libel. It's like a loss leader. They are prepared to be wrong over the mortgage allegations, because the benefits of getting him into court to discuss the miners' tactics would be so great. In a court, pursuing an expensive libel action, Arthur would be asked all kinds of questions about what happened to the NUM's finances during the strike. By definition he cannot answer, because in the face of the sequestration of the union, everything had to be done in a clandestine way. Lots of labour movement organisations and individuals secretly helped the NUM in this.

The insidiousness of the Mirror/Cook/Howells/Barron accusations is that they turn this secret financial operation, absolutely necessary to preserve the NUM and keep the strike going, into something shady and dishonourable.

SO: Nicholas Jones of the BBC was very good in the programme, stating that the reason for the allegations was to destroy Scargill as a threat to Neil Kinnock. And once the pro-Kinnock Mirror had made its allegations, there was Kinnock giving them credence and demanding an enquiry.

KL: Yes I agree. The prime reason for doing the piece was to put it into a political context, not just to refute the allegations.

What was said in the programme was so true – that if you could denigrate Scargill then you could denigrate the whole strike. It makes sense from Maxwell's point of view as a concerted attack on that sort of politics, on industrial struggle, on militancy, on anything that isn't vote for Neil every five years.

Feedback

Falling for the hard sell

When the commodity spectacle of late capitalism unveils its charms the most surprising people get dazzled. Sarah Pickett and Sam Inman (SO 1) have fallen hook, line and sinker for Madonna's hard sell.

Madonna's antics are the opposite of feminism. Her pandering to male sexual fantasies is quite blatant. The fact that she has many women, lesbian and gay fans proves nothing. So did Marilyn Monroe. Madonna injects her lips with cow hormones to get that full pouting look. And now, apparently, she's had her breasts implanted to boost her cleavage. Is that the model of the 'sexually assertive women' that feminists want to promote?

So Madonna 'teased men's sensibilities' (an interesting phrase!) by simulating orgasm with another woman? Come off it, 'lesbian' scenes are a stock-in-trade of porno movies.

OK, Madonna parades her sexuality in an assertive way. That's nothing new. Suzi Quatro got it right when she said of her own style 'that's part of men's fantasy too'.

Madonna's image is slap bang in the middle of bourgeois and sexist imagery of what is 'beautiful' and 'sexy'. Millions of young women 'wannabee' like her? Yes, because they have internalised sexist imagery and the commodity spectacle. You've got to be blind not to see that Madonna is part of the alienation of sex and art in late-capitalism.

Assertive women - even sexually assertive women - do not equal feminism. That's a radical feminist, not a socialist-feminist argument. Wasn't Margaret Thatcher an 'assertive' woman? But assertive in a wholly reactionary cause. Surely an allegedly 'Marxist' paper like Socialist Outlook should see the difference!

Ann Taylor
London

Hidebound attitudes

KATHY KIRKHAM and Rachel Wingfield (SO2) show themselves to be remarkably intolerant towards alternative forms of sexuality enjoyed by many men and women.

What gives anyone the right to say that such enjoyment is wrong when practised between consenting adults? Masochistic sex is more likely to be practised by liberated women than by those who conform to accepted values. It should not be denounced.

When Madonna takes on the role of bimbo or virgin she is actually poking fun at these stereotypes and the aspects of male fantasy they 'pander' to. She does not glorify them any more than Jane Austin glorified women's role in society in her day. Social commentary is often most effective when it is not overt. Madonna-bashing feminists should look beneath the surface and appreciate this fact.

Attila Hoare
London W11

SWP same all over

I'M NOT sure that Stephen Valentine's comment on Callinicos's recent book,

'Trotskyism', that the argument is one which you could have with any *Socialist Worker* seller, (SO 2), isn't a back-handed compliment. It does suggest a theoretical consistency from the university library to the factory gate which is frequently

missing in far left groups.

Firstly, Callinicos's book is an attempt to explain Trotskyism to a wider, mainly academic audience, outside of the frequently sectarian criteria which various Trotskyists set to 'prove' their theories. Hence the references to Lakatos et al. My understanding is that the book has been a success on those terms.

Secondly, I'm not aware that it's the case that the SWP argues that the Fourth International should not have been formed in 1938. My understanding is that it was the only, and very necessary, option open at the time. That is not to say that it is still the only possibility over 50 years later.

Thirdly, and as for the rest of the comments on state capitalism, I would draw Comrade Valentine's attention to one of the Rules which Marx wrote for the First International in 1864. 'The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself'. One point which has stood the test of time.

Keith Flett
London N17

Don't slam the 'Doors'!

THE NEW paper has made a promising start. But film reviews need a great deal of improvement. In my opinion the review of Oliver Stone's 'The Doors' (SO 2) was both shallow and inaccurate.

The tone in which the review was written illustrated Mr Tunney's inability to relate to the era in which the film was set. Is the word 'man' an instant point of ridicule? Contrary to Mr Tunney's opinion (and probably experience) the sixties were the sixties, and people did talk like that. Maybe the reviewer would have preferred the characters to use the street-cred lingo of the nineties?

If Jim Morrison had been portrayed as less sexist and egotistical, a worked-out radical leftie, with his girlfriend (sorry - 'partner') being an assertive worked-out feminist would Mr Tunney have approved?

I would prefer to see something that approximates reality. This was what the film tried to do. Jim Morrison is correctly portrayed in the film as he was. A pretentious, self-obsessed degenerate but also an innovative artist whose music animated a generation and continues to have influence today.

If all film reviews follow this pattern of knee-jerk moralistic leftism (also somewhat dated) they will make for pretty boring reading. The review is also riddled with inaccuracies - too numerous and trivial to pursue. Mr Tunney was perhaps too busy listening to 'New Kids on the Block' on his personal stereo to follow the plot! Anyone who likes the Doors shouldn't be put off by the review.

Rachel Newton
Manchester

Colour blind?

THE FIRST issue of the new paper was well-produced and made for interesting reading.

However I would like to register my concern at a glaring omission in the article on the TGWU elections (SO 1). One would not have guessed from reading the article that race figured as an issue in these elections. Or that racism had been used against Bill Morris in the campaign.

I think some explanation is in order.

Andrew Kennedy
London SW9

Ah, for Victorian values! Family life: hard work: respect: discipline...



Hmmm...



Sweat-shops!

Company stores!



Why the family has to go...

IT IS INTERESTING to note that the two subjects which have excited controversy on your letters' page are lesbian and gay oppression and liberation and Madonna. It seems that it is still sex which gets the punters going!

However, while I have some sympathy with your correspondents on Madonna's feminism, I have absolutely none with either on the question of the family or the biological determination of sexuality.

The subjects are of such fundamental importance to an understanding of the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation as to warrant a fairly comprehensive reply.

The letter proposing a compromise (in the best liberal tradition) between the analyses of sexuality as biologically or socially constructed seems to have badly misunderstood the meaning of the original Supplement and therefore to have confused a number of different arguments and concepts.

It is obviously true that the social construction of sexuality operates within certain biological parameters - humanity is genetically **sexual**. However, that fact is a million miles from the liberal belief, shared on many sections of the left, that the

object of that sexual motivation is determined by biology.

Clearly the statement that people are born sexual has a rather different meaning to the statement that people are born heterosexual or homosexual. Moreover the former assertion can be scientifically, historically and empirically substantiated while the latter cannot.

Nor is social construction synonymous with 'social conditioning'. It is a complex process in which both objective and subjective factors constantly interact.

A similar set of confusions are illustrated in the letter in defence of the family. It fails to separate the **institution** of the family from the actual individuals which exist within it, and therefore comes to very reactionary conclusions.

The institution of the heterosexual, patriarchal nuclear family is incontrovertibly oppressive.

It is an institution which directly and often violently oppresses women and children. It recreates and reinforces these inequalities of power and presents them as natural and unchanging.

It is an institution which mediates women's entry into the workforce, underlying the gender segregation of employ-

ment and gender differentials in pay...

The family is an institution with which lesbians and gay men are incompatible, which necessitates compulsory heterosexuality. It directly and indirectly exerts control over the sexuality of people within it, again often violently...

None of the above means that the **individuals** within the institution may not be kind, loving, progressive, even revolutionary, though it does make it a lot harder.

What it does mean is that the **institution** must be destroyed and people (including lesbians and gay men) enabled to determine for themselves the relationships they want to have, the situation they want to live in, free from inequalities of power between men and women, children and adults, heterosexuals and lesbians and gay men...

History shows very clearly (as the supplement understands) that the form and structure of the family has changed radically over time but that its essential oppressive and exploitative role has not. It must therefore be abolished, it cannot be reformed.

Rebecca Flemming
London. SE11.

Subverting sexist stereotypes

THE MOST alarming aspect of the Madonna discussion in is the dismissive tone of the polemics.

Rachel Wingfield writes in a measured way, but says: 'it is a shame to see Outlook going in the same direction as other left journals of male dominated organisations...' and demands the balance is 'redressed'. We should favour a broad expression of views on cultural topics. It is wrong for individuals to claim they speak for all feminists on these topics.

Rachel Wingfield and Kathy Kirkham argue that Madonna is a caricatured co-option and distortion of feminism by the capitalist entertainments industry.

They say that her cultural production represents no threat to capitalism or patriarchy. That society will not be transformed by art, music or culture in general is true. But Madonna is clearly perceived by the resurgent moral right in the USA as a threat to the family and to the moral values of young people.

Her images of the family, gender roles, religion and repression, race and sexuality, provoke outbursts of hatred and

vilification from these reactionaries. This is certainly not 'predictably what women performers have been doing for years'.

When millions of young women and men see her as a symbol of rebellion against authoritarian attitudes we should look more closely. Rachel and Kathy fail to recognise the ironies of Madonna's work.

She does not just reproduce fantasies and sexist stereotypes. She investigates them, parodies them, and often mocks and subverts them. However I don't entirely agree with the focus of the original article, which looks at Madonna the person and not enough at her cultural production. But it does capture the essence of the phenomenon.

Rachel says, 'Sexuality in our society is constructed in the context of male domination and women's subordination...' This is only part of the equation. The 'context' is the sexist, sex negative, repressive bourgeois family, school, church and state. Women as well as men are reared in this 'context'. In reality, sexist and aggressive male sexuality cannot be con-

trasted to the somehow pure and unsullied female sexuality. That's why Madonna strikes a chord with female as well as male fantasies.

Today's women and men can't fundamentally transcend the effects of the bourgeois family. As materialists, we understand they continually reproduce themselves, socially and in bed. Their worst effects can be challenged collectively and reduced to the public sphere.

But they will continue to reproduce themselves long after formal elements of the bourgeois family have been abolished. What sexual radicals like Madonna help us do, is develop our critique of bourgeois sexuality and possibly point to new directions.

Madonna's commercialisation, her bourgeois feminist and individualist attitudes in her work must be criticised. But her music and imagery allow us to explore the complexities of our sexuality. That's not so bad compared with most of the 'bimbos', male and female, in the entertainments industry.

Dave Packer
London SE5



FILM

Hollywood - and bust

Guilty By Suspicion

Directed by Irwin Winkler
Reviewed by Sean Tunney

'ARE YOU NOW, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?'

Those words struck terror into the heart of a generation of Americans at the height of the Cold War. When the Senate Committee on Un-American Activities moved from searching for reds under the bed, to those supposedly on the Silver Screen, Hollywood's heads ducked for cover, while directors, actors and actresses got shot down.

Not surprisingly, Hollywood, so adept at mythologising its own history, has been notoriously incapable of dealing with this, its most murky period. Indeed, only two films have been made previously, neither being particularly politically sharp.

So it is with trepidation that *Guilty By Suspicion* should be viewed. Especially when it is known that the original script had the fictionalised main character Merrill as a Communist, while the final film has him as a liberal.

Merrill (De Niro, in unusually, but excellently, understated performance), starts the film as studio chief Darryl Zannuck's golden boy, on the verge of directing two sure fire hits. All he needs to do to get going on the films is to name a few names from his past minor flirtation with the Communist Party.

However, he has already seen his Communist scriptwriter friend destroy his own wife by informing on her. So he refuses to snitch, for personal rather than political reasons.

Immediately, Merrill goes from being toast of the town to being one of its pariahs. His films are pulled, he finds next to no work, and he eventually loses his home. What stops him going under is the love of his little boy and his estranged wife.

Theirs is a reconciliation waiting to happen.

Meanwhile, others, incapable of putting personal honour before their need to work, go under. So Merrill's best friend, unremarkably named Buddy (wittily played by George Wendt from Cheers), seems to collapse under the pressure.

For some the choices are more limited. They, like Martin Scorsese's hugely sympathetic character, have to leave for Europe, or will never work. For, as Scorsese's character proudly announces; 'I am a Communist, and I have always been a Communist'.

Eventually, Merrill leaves for New York and the film sags as he fails to find work there. But when he returns to Hollywood the pace speeds up to an explosive finale.

Guilty By Suspicion can be easily dismissed as no more than a typical Hollywood thriller with some nice comic touches. Indeed, for the most part, the film is one about a quasi-religious moral choice, rather than political commitment.

Only at the end does the film question the idea that people have the right to be Communists. Certainly, it never really explains why anyone should make that choice. Indeed, apart from one mention of the Rosenbergs, the film does not set itself in any the wider context of the Cold War.

Nonetheless, the use of contemporaneous Hollywood sets and people gives the audience the feeling that this film is more than saccharin fiction. Equally, the fact that this is a mainstream Hollywood film means the issues which it partially deals with cannot be sidelined.

In short, this is a genuinely radical liberal film. Compared with other liberal films of our time, such as *Dead Poets Society* there is no contest. Merrill's final outbursts are far more political than standing on a table, even if De Niro doesn't say 'Hey, fuck you, McCarthy', once.

Four decades of battles against bigotry

Peers, Queers and Commons

by Stephen Jeffery-Poulter
Published by Routledge

Reviewed by Rebecca Flemming

Peers, Queers and Commons is a readable and detailed survey of the battles for change in the legal situation of gay men across Britain. It covers the period from the struggle for liberalising reforms in the 1950s and '60s, to the fight against the reactionary measures of the Thatcher era.

Based on contemporary materials, the book communicates both a general impression of the shifting attitudes of the press, the lawmakers and the gay community, and gives many tasty morsels of information.

Thatcher

For example, it is revealed that one of the very small minority of 22 Tories who in 1960 backed a motion calling on the Government to speedily implement the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report regarding homosexuality was Margaret Thatcher! And we are treated to a pertinent quote from a Socialist Outlook supporter in moving the first successful lesbian and gay rights resolution at Labour Party Conference in 1985.

The specific struggles in Scotland and the North of Ireland, after they were exempted from the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, are thoroughly documented, with a welcome focus on the vicious harassment of lesbian and gay activists in Belfast by the RUC as a prelude to the Democratic Unionist Party's flamboyant 'Save Ulster from

Sodomy' Campaign.

However, neither repression, brute reaction, nor the hand of God was able to prevent Jeff Dudgeon of the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association taking the British government to the European Court of Human Rights.

Discrimination

He claimed that the refusal to legalise homosexual activity in the North of Ireland was an invasion of his privacy and discrimination against him in relation to heterosexuals, thus breaching Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights.

His victory in 1981, significantly on the grounds of invasion of privacy, not discrimination, finally forced the Government to extend the 1967 Act to the North of Ireland, one year after they had grudgingly brought Scotland within its ambit.

The other limitations of the 1967 Act are also clearly laid down, summed up in a quote from Norman St John Stevas:

'If this Bill were passed, homosexuality would remain unlawful, although not

there been and is there a differentiated response to the demand for lesbian and gay equality from the different political parties and forces? Why have certain groups or organisations campaigning for social or legal change been more successful than others?

The progression is carefully charted - from the softly-softly tactics of the Homosexual Law Reform Society in the '50s and '60s, through the radical assertion of Gay Pride articulated by the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in the 1970s, to the peculiar hybrid of respectability, activity and self-confidence initially represented by the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, before its decline.

So is the fragmentation of the movement into the kaleidoscopic range of lesbian and gay organisations, both political and social which exist today. But that is all.

We are left with no sense of the author's views and therefore no grasp of the lessons he thinks the lesbian and gay movement should learn from its history.

The final passages of the book do come close to explicitly advocating a particular political strategy for the period to come when Jeffery-Poulter writes that:

Stonewall

'The emergence of the Stonewall Group as an uncompromisingly self-selected, polished and tightly knit professional organisation marks a hopeful new start...'

And he seems to be proposing a kind of lesbian and gay multi-culturalism, a 'concern for the value of diversity', however, even this rather dubious approach remains implicit and unclear to the end.

Thus, *Peers, Queers and Commons* is accessible and informative, but ultimately frustrating.

"a Socialist Outlook supporter moved the first successful lesbian and gay rights resolution at Labour Party Conference in 1985"

criminal. The Bill would create no recognised status of homosexuality. It would remain contrary to public policy.'

However, the central flaw of the book is that it fundamentally remains a narrative, shying away from analysis, judgement and the central question of - why?

Why did the political climate change in the 1950s and '60s? Why are lesbians and gay men discriminated against, why has

Critical stage for Socialist Movement

By Sam Inman

TACTICAL differences have blown many a movement apart. Last weekend's Socialist Movement (SM) AGM showed the current to be politically mature enough to withstand the pressures created both by the volume of political work and by the fact that comrades are coming from different traditions.

This is a critical time for the movement with the challenge of the new paper, *socialist*, and the forthcoming General Election.

Hilary Wainwright opened the meeting and outlined some of the tasks that lie ahead in the coming months and years. 'We have the huge task', she said, 'of reclaiming the word socialist'.

Quoting the late Eric Heffer's words, Hilary talked of the need to root the SM in workplaces and in communities. The pre-election period is vital - the SM needs to prepare for the increase in confidence that would follow the election of a Labour government.

The task of the AGM was to orientate the movement in this direction. How do the different sectors and the campaigning priorities of the SM relate to the new paper and the structures of the SM at a national and regional level?

Both Hilary and Ruth Clarke spoke of the important work initiated and carried through by the different sectors - particularly illustrated during the Gulf War by Women for Socialism (WfS) and Labour Party Socialists (LPS), and by the work around the anti-union laws led by the SM Trade Union Committee (SMTUC).

The first debate of the meeting was around the proposed constitution of the SM. Comrades decided - correctly in our view - that this needed more discussion. Two complementary resolutions (from Coventry/SM Organising Committee and WfS) were overwhelmingly passed. A constitutional working group, involving all the sectors, will

now be set up to prepare a draft to go to next year's AGM.

After a presentation of the new paper, *socialist*, due for launch in September at TUC conference, various suggestions were made for improvement.

Two key points were that *socialist* needs to reflect the major political priorities of the movement and it needs to draw more on the experience of activists.

The discussion of campaigning priorities was squeezed through pressure of time. The sharpest debates were around the General Election and around the national question in Britain.

After some close voting the meeting accepted all the resolutions - calling for a Labour government, a vote for Labour, but recognising that there would be SM members (particularly in Scotland and Wales) who would be voting and campaigning for other parties. This discussion will continue in *socialist*.

Resolutions were also passed, with very little discussion, about developing and campaigning around a socialist economic strategy, arms conversion, internationalist issues - particularly the debt campaign, 'Unshackle the Unions', education, and health.

Amendments were passed that brought Ireland and ecology into campaigning priorities and incorporated feminist perspectives into others.

It was also recognised that there were other areas of work - in particular local government and lesbian and gay oppression - that the SM wanted to get involved in.

The pressures under which the SM is working today meant that the AGM suffered from being less well-prepared and attended than we would have hoped.

The task for socialists now is to link up their work on the ground with the projects that the SM has set itself, through the sectors, through local groups and through *socialist*.

Tories win control in Brent - another LCC fiasco

by Mick Woods

OSCAR WILDE WOULD HAVE LOVED IT. For the second time in eight years, the Tories are in control of Brent council due to the defection of Labour councillors. Carelessness indeed!

The resignation of the Labour Whip, Poline Nyuga, and Nkechi Amalu-Johnson to form the Democratic Labour Party (membership two) as well as their vote for a Tory mayor, changes the balance of the council from one of no overall control to a Tory/DLP alliance depending on the mayor's casting vote.

At the time of writing, another Labour councillor, Harshad Barot, has also resigned the Labour whip but is unlikely to join the DLP (membership still two).

Serious side

But there is a serious side to this fiasco... The existing Labour group was hand-picked by the LCC/new realist right, with left wingers so brutally excluded that even London Labour officials were dismayed. Four sitting Labour councillors were excluded after having the whip removed for fighting cuts. Now the chickens are coming home to roost with a vengeance.

The lessons of the fiasco were recently debated by the Brent East party with much passion, but little enlightenment. The left were keen to press home the lessons of this debacle.

The right, via the Labour group deputy John Lebor, used



Hattersley - under pressure

the situation to launch an attack on positive action - both defectors were black women. Rather than risk the embarrassment of any political assessment (he called for an SDP vote in 1982), he chose to question their level of literacy.

Back in the real world, the Tories seem unlikely to reduce the Poll Tax this year. Poll Tax notices are already late due to Major's recent U-turn. In addition, non-payment levels are high and the council have yet to obtain all of last year's liability notices.

As a result, some high-profile projects may be at risk. But more

serious is the Tory declaration of war on council housing, via the promotion of Wandsworth-style privatisation.

If Labour is to recover, it needs to rebuild from the base upwards against these attacks - defence of council housing is an issue that could rally Labour's natural base. A campaign and petition have been launched in the affected wards, demanding the defectors' resignation.

Meanwhile, the ruling 'alliance' are already at one another's throats over whether the name of the Housing Needs Unit should remain 'Winnie Mandela House'.

Fighting back for lesbian and gay rights

By Debbie Epstein

THE CURRENT attacks on lesbians and gay men, the effect of the infamous Section 28 and ways of campaigning were some of the themes discussed by lesbian and gay activists at a recent conference in Birmingham.

It was organised by the West Midlands Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and around 70 people attended from groups as far afield as Manchester and Brighton.

Steering committee

Delegates decided to set up a new national Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights. To facilitate this a steering committee was set up to which any lesbian and/or gay group would have the right to send one voting representative.

The Coalition is organising a contingent at Pride in London on 29 June. There will be placards and banners opposing Clause 29 (ex-25) of the Criminal Justice Bill, calling for the right of lesbians and gay men to parent, and for full equality for lesbians and gay men.

To join this contingent you only need to support these demands. Pride will also be leafleted to advertise a launch conference for the new Coalition.

Support was given to the Skelmersdale Youth Group (One in Ten) who aim to take Lancashire County Council to court for failing to provide lesbian and gay youth with much needed facilities - using Section 28 as

the excuse. This action could provide a legal definition of what Section 28 really means, the possibility of taking the council to the European court and the basis for a major campaign against Section 28. Letters of support and financial help are urgently needed. Copies of these letters and any other information about the effects of the Section should be sent to Brighton Area Action Against Section 28.

The conference did have its lighter moments. Leader of the Labour Group on Birmingham City Council, Sir Dick Knowles, arrived at the council-house with a look of horror on his face, demanding to know who had given the organisers permission to use council property. Will heads roll...?

It also had its difficult moments too. One man present made a number of anti-lesbian statements.

Discussion

But one of the cheering things about the day was that this did not lead to a massive walk-out. It led to a discussion of how to work together on demands we agree on rather than falling out over differences.

For more details of Coalition contact Mark on 021 333 5349 (day)

Send letters of support/donations to One in Ten, Yewdale Centre, 300 Yewdale, Tanhouse, Skelmersdale, Lancs. And to Brighton Area Action Against Section 28, c/o Brighton Unemployment Centre, Prior House, Tilbury Place, Brighton, BN2 2GY.

A hard-won success

by Peter Purton, LCLGR National Officer

Full legal equality for lesbians and gay men for the first time ever in Britain: this was the prospect which determined the decisions of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) following its recent AGM.

From failing to make it onto the Conference agenda in 1984 to successful meetings with Shadow Cabinet ministers in 1990 marked the dramatic success of LCLGR in forcing the Labour Party to listen to demands for the ending of the legal oppression of the lesbian and gay communities, and the outlawing of everyday discrimination.

The Labour Party National Executive's document 'Opportunity Britain', which would have been the basis of a June election manifesto, contained a substantial paragraph

promising such reforms, along with a commitment to repeal recent Tory attacks - such as Section 28 and Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill.

But - as out-gay MP Chris Smith warned the meeting - there is absolutely no room for complacency. Many of the Labour leaders have finally accepted their conference policy for no other reason than that they were forced to.

The inevitable Tory attack, guaranteed to be outdone in sordid bigotry by the press, cannot be defeated by the defensiveness or silence which has marked previous Labour responses, from the Bermondsey by-election onwards. The perceived electoral unpopularity of the issue will be a massive pressure on those who do not understand that prejudice cannot be fought by retreating before it.

Those MPs who see lesbian and gay equality - like abortion rights - as a matter for their private con-

sciences have already secured a victory in Roy Hattersley's refusal to allow more than a free vote on the equalisation of the age of consent.

LCLGR therefore plans to build an even stronger campaign of pressure through the labour movement in the run-up to the election. Meetings are to be held with the Tribune and Campaign groups of MPs, with important shadow ministers like Robin Cook and Jo Richardson, and with groups such as Labour Party Socialists and the Labour Coordinating Committee.

This is most definitely not a question of waiting for Labour to win an election. On the contrary, it is a continuing fight to defend the lesbian and gay communities against attacks and to carry the issue throughout the labour movement.

★ To obtain a speaker from LCLGR on its campaign for equal rights, or to affiliate, write to: PO Box 306, London N5.

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PHOTO: Mark Salmon

Demonstrators stage a sit-down protest outside the Birmingham Arms Fair on May 15. Following threats of mass protests, former dictator of Chile, General Pinochet decided to stay away. He was treated to a private view of a range of weapons of mass destruction by British Aerospace instead.

Post Office counters hit by strikes

by a UCW postal worker

THE communication workers' union, the UCW, has called a series of strikes over pay in the Post Office's counter sector. The action follows a 56% majority in a national ballot in favour of rejection of a 6.8% pay offer.

Following the 'divide and rule' principle, the Post Office management have picked on a relatively small and vulnerable group of workers, hoping for an easy victory in the first round of pay negotiations in the industry. They are relying on the system of sub-post offices, often run by shop keepers, to undermine the effectiveness of the strike.

Underestimated

But the Post Office management underestimated anger among counter staff against recent changes in working practices, as well as a pay offer below inflation.

The initial three-day strike in London, Coventry, Birmingham and Glasgow won 75% support. This was followed by a further four-day strike from 27 to 31 May, which, UCW leaders claimed, won 80% support. Some offices have, however, been kept open by managers.

But the key to success would be action from other sectors of UCW members. Militants in the union are arguing that only all-out action can win a decent pay deal for postal workers, given the failure of previous one day strikes.

Anti union laws

But UCW leader Alan Tuffin insists on respect for Tory anti-union laws, meaning that the counters strike has had a structural weakness from the start.

No further action is currently planned - the future of the dispute is to be discussed at the UCW strike committee on June 4.

A defeat for the counter staff would be a green light for the Post Office management to press on with its anti-union offensive. Now is the time for postal workers to reverse this trend through united, all-out action.

Rail unions scrap pay ballot at eleventh hour

by an RMT member

The largest rail union, the RMT, called off a ballot for British Rail workers only three hours before it was due to start.

The union's executive accepted an offer of 7.75%, only 0.75% more than the previous rejected offer, and a long way below members' expectations.

The original call for a ballot on pay was unexpected: while rail-workers wanted more than BR's miserly offer, the vital issue facing the industry is BR's reorganisation plans in preparation for privatisation. These plans are being pushed through sector by sector, dividing up the workforce and eroding hard-won national conditions.

This year's pay claim could be one of the last national claims in British Rail, as national bargaining on pay and conditions go out of the window. However, despite a mandate from the 1990

AGM, the RMT is letting each sector and group of workers fight on their own.

Just before the pay ballot was called, the union had geared up members for industrial action against BR's plan to break up the national negotiation machinery. Mass meetings were held up and down the country and a ballot was widely expected.

Miserly

The miserly pay offer only increased members' expectations: that a ballot would be called linking the two issues together and so gaining maximum unity. Now, not only have the union executive failed the membership on pay, but more importantly they seem determined to allow the break-up of the industry by refusing to call for industrial action in defence of national conditions.

Calling off the pay ballot at the eleventh hour has made it that much more difficult to con-



RMT leader Jimmy Knapp

vince members that the RMT leadership is serious about defending members' rights and conditions. As Rifkind makes his proposals on the rail industry - which will lead to privatisation - only united industrial action can secure jobs and conditions and make the railways a real public service.

All of the rail unions have failed their membership at a crucial time. British Rail now has a green light to go ahead and destroy the industry. And it is the union leadership who threw the switch.

Tough times for building workers

By Paul Davidson

The state of the construction industry is usually seen as a barometer of the economy as a whole. Given the current dire state of the industry, talk of the recession ending is clearly absurd and building workers face tough times ahead.

100,000 construction workers face losing their jobs this year. This is on top of the thousand jobs already shed by Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs). So-called self-employed building workers are earning far less than official union rate of £160 a week. Added to this, the industry's health and safety record has deteriorated so badly that deaths are at a near post-war high.

It is in this climate that the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT) is receiving more press coverage than at any time since the national strike in 1972.

This time though, it is not because the UCATT leadership is campaigning on behalf of construction workers. The press coverage concentrates on alleged ballot-rigging by the right and the subsequent swing to the left in the recent elections for the executive committee of the union.

Even before last month's *Dispatches* programme, 'The Ballot Fixers' on Channel 4, it was common knowledge that the right-wing in the union had a corrupt history of ballot-rigging in elections.

That the Broad Left has now won control of UCATT is a sign that the eighth largest TUC affiliate is moving in the right direction. Undoubtedly the new leaders have struggled hard to expose the ballot-rigging that has kept them out of office in the past. But the problem is with the way in which this fight was conducted. The use of the courts and the media has left the rank and file out of the fight to democratise the union.



The bosses in the building industry have already responded to the election result with the offer of a 4.5 per cent wage rise and a threat to tear-up union agreements. These attacks will be a key test for the new leadership in mobilising the rank and file.

The right-wing General Secretary Albert Williams is retiring this month and now balloting is taking place for his successor. *Socialist Organiser* inform their readers that this is an uninspiring choice. Although this may be true UCATT members cannot afford to abstain. With one candidate being a freemason, another hardly seen by activists, and with the Broad Left not having an alternative, the only contender with any record at all is George Branwell.

Ballot-rigging must be dealt with. But it has to be dealt with by the members. In the face of the bosses' offensive more court cases and more blood-letting won't take building workers one step forward.

Victory for Hull CPSA strikers

80 members of the civil servants' union, the CPSA, have voted to return to work after a successful two month strike. The strikers waged a vigorous campaign against the threat of redundancies, addressing over 70 CPSA workplace meetings.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) workers argued for a nationally co-ordinated campaign of strike action against job cuts. In some areas they successfully encouraged workers to ballot for strike action.

The union's DSS conference had agreed on a national campaign around the issue, but the section leadership had failed to act. The Hull action has now shown the effectiveness of well-organised local strike action. Now the pressure for a national campaign needs to be increased.

Hull strikers step up fight for shorter working week

by Keith Sinclair

Engineering workers in Hull have now been on strike for over one month, demanding a shorter working week.

The sixteen strikers have continued to picket the Parsons factory, and have recently won increased support in the area, particularly from the nearby British Aerospace plant.

But while the resolve of the strikers remains strong, the plant management have maintained an intransigent line, refusing to meet AEU full-time officials. Workers have responded with plans to increase the impact of the strike - a mass picket of the plant has been called in conjunction with the local trades council.

But now steps need to be taken to increase support from production workers in the plant, who are still working. The workers, mainly GMB members, are not hostile to the strike, but have been actively discouraged from supporting the action by their local union full-timer.

The action now needs to be broadened, given that the outcome of the dispute will clearly determine the future hours and conditions of all the workers in the plant.

Pergamon 23 head fight against union busters

by an NUJ striker

JOURNALISTS in newspapers and publishing have for some time been facing a concerted employers' assault on collective bargaining rights. But many chapels of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) are fighting back.

The best-known of these struggles against union derecognition is the two-year long strike by 23 NUJ members at Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press in Oxford.

Now they have been joined by workers at Marshall Cavendish, Haymarket and IPC in London.

Sacked

The Pergamon strikers, sacked by Maxwell in May 1989 for staging a one-day strike against union derecognition, have waged a magnificent campaign on an international level over the last two years in defence of their union rights.

Their case has recently been strengthened by an independent inquiry conducted by ex-TUC President Tony Christopher. Maxwell, wilting under the constant pressure, has attempted to undermine the strike with a series of buy-off deals.

Last year the strikers rejected an offer of £100,000 that had been backed by then NUJ General Secretary Harry Conroy.

Offer rejected

More recently the strikers have rejected an offer of re-employment that excluded their Father of Chapel (shop steward). The recent sale of Pergamon Press to Dutch publishing giant Elsevier has not deterred the 23. Their response has been to organise a national rally in celebration of two years of struggle.

Nor has the sale solved Maxwell's problems - huge borrowing to finance such purchases as the *New York Daily News* is beginning to increase financial pressure on his empire. Now the fight for union rights is spreading.

Management intimidation at Marshall Cavendish has failed to deter strikers. Indeed, the print union SOGAT has offered support to the NUJ strikers, and there are moves to build further joint action between print and NUJ chapels.

Single union

This attempt to break down the sectoralism of the industry will be vital to the success of the fight for union rights. But the campaign for a single union for all media workers will not be aided by NUJ General Secretary Steve Turner, who is explicitly opposed to any amalgamation with print unions, and prepared to flout NEC and conference policies on the issue.

Turner's victory in the recent postal ballot, which had a turn-out of only 23%, was on an election address declaring support for a 'non-political' professional journalists' association.

But his success in the election reflected a desire by many NUJ members to oust ex-General Secretary Harry Conroy, as well as the lack of a credible left candidate, rather than a positive vote for Turner.

Nonetheless, the right-wing majority on the NUJ executive is shrinking, with Pergamon's left wing FoC Jim Boumelha now Vice President of the union.

The left has been making progress in the battle over derecognition. Practical solidarity from socialists is now a vital task.

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2

**YEARS OF
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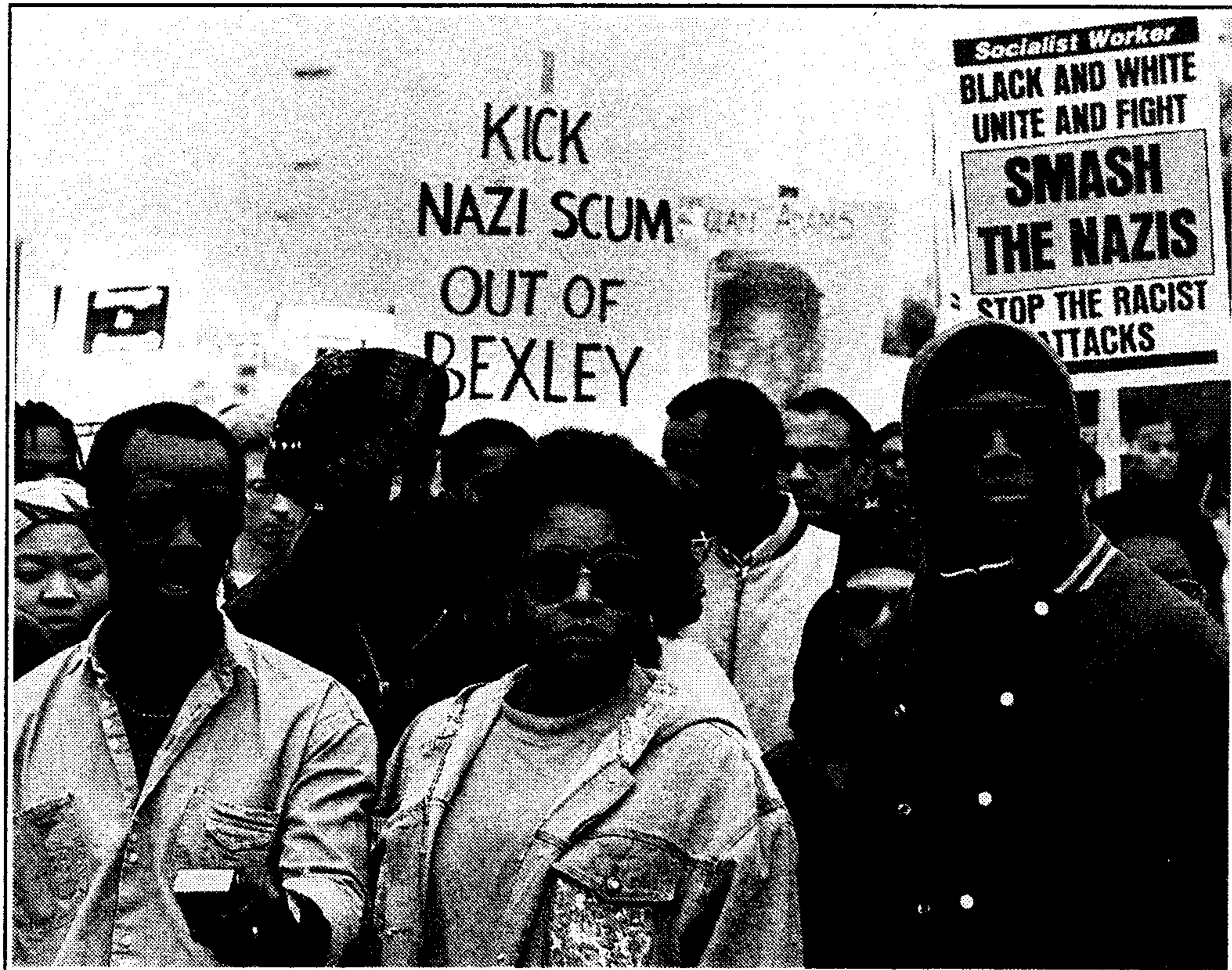
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RALLY
Saturday 8
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Speakers include: Tony Benn MP Steve Turner, NUJ General Secretary and others

SPEAKERS:
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TONY BENN MP
STEVE TURNER (NUJ GEN SEC)
MARY HUFFORD (NUT DEP GEN SEC)
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Mobilisations defeat London Nazis

by Ian MacDonald and Patrick Baker

Recent attempts by the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front (NF) to intimidate London's black community have been decisively rebuffed.

Nazi demonstrations in Uxbridge on May 11 and Thamesmead on May 25 were met by mass counter-mobilisations organised by the black community and the left.

The National Front's attempt to return to west London attracted only 20 supporters. They were met by a mobilisation ten times their size, organised by the Southall Monitoring Group and the local labour movement.

The BNP's continued attempts to stir up racial hatred in Thamesmead, where two black people have been murdered in the last few months, met with a similar response.

Over 1,000 anti-Nazi demonstrators turned out on Saturday May 25 for a rally called by the local anti-racist coalition, GACARA. Demonstrators were only prevented from halting the racist march by the repeated attacks of hundreds of riot police.

The twisted priorities of Peter Imbert's Metropolitan Police mean that any future Nazi rallies must continue to be met by united mass action.