

Socialist OUTLOOK

What's Left in
local government?

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No. 61, April 30, 1994

VOTE

LABOUR!

Kick out the

TORIES!

Force a General Election now!

Labour right backs racist laws

By Bill MacKeith.

LABOUR right-wingers combined with the Tories on Oxford City Council to defeat - by one vote - a resolution calling for the closing down of Campsfield detention centre.

Among those voting with the Tories was Val Smith, wife of Oxford Labour MP Andrew Smith. Mayor of Oxford John Power went on radio to insist that 'we don't support universal

immigration

The council only agreed to call for a Public Enquiry into Campsfield.

The actions of these right-wing councillors is consistent with Labour Front Bench policy which appears to be opposed to the closure of Campsfield.

Their desperate search for 'respectability' leads them to oppose measures which even the local Liberal democrats have no problems supporting.

No doubt they will also fail to campaign against the building alongside Campsfield of a pro-

posed detention centre for 12-14 year olds, part of the Tories' 'Get Tough' policy.

Despite this reverse the campaign to close Campsfield continues. This weekend (23-24 April) a two day 'Freedom Camp' with ten tents has been set up outside the detention centre.

■ Preparations are well in hand for a National Day of Vigils outside detention centres and prisons on 30th April.

Pickets will take place out-



side Pentonville, Holloway, Harmondsworth, Haslar (Portsmouth), Winson Green,

Canterbury, Winchester and elsewhere - including, of course, Campsfield.

No-show fascists

DESPITE widely publicised threats that Blood and Honour were going to hold a St Georges day concert in Brixton and 'take Brixton back', helped by far-right paramilitaries Combat 18, not a single fascist dared to show themselves outside Brixton tube as advertised.

If they had over 200 anti-fascists including, ANL, YRE, Black Freedom and Unity party, Lambeth Unison and many independents would have shown them they were not wanted anywhere near Brixton.

The fascists are not standing any candidates in the local elections in Lambeth and have never had a presence in Brixton but recently evidence of their activity has been found - stickers on bus stops and plastered all over the local college during the Easter break.

Defeat for rail strike vote

THE RECENT RMT ballot for strike action over PT&R (redundancy arrangements) was defeated 10,193 for 11,336 against.

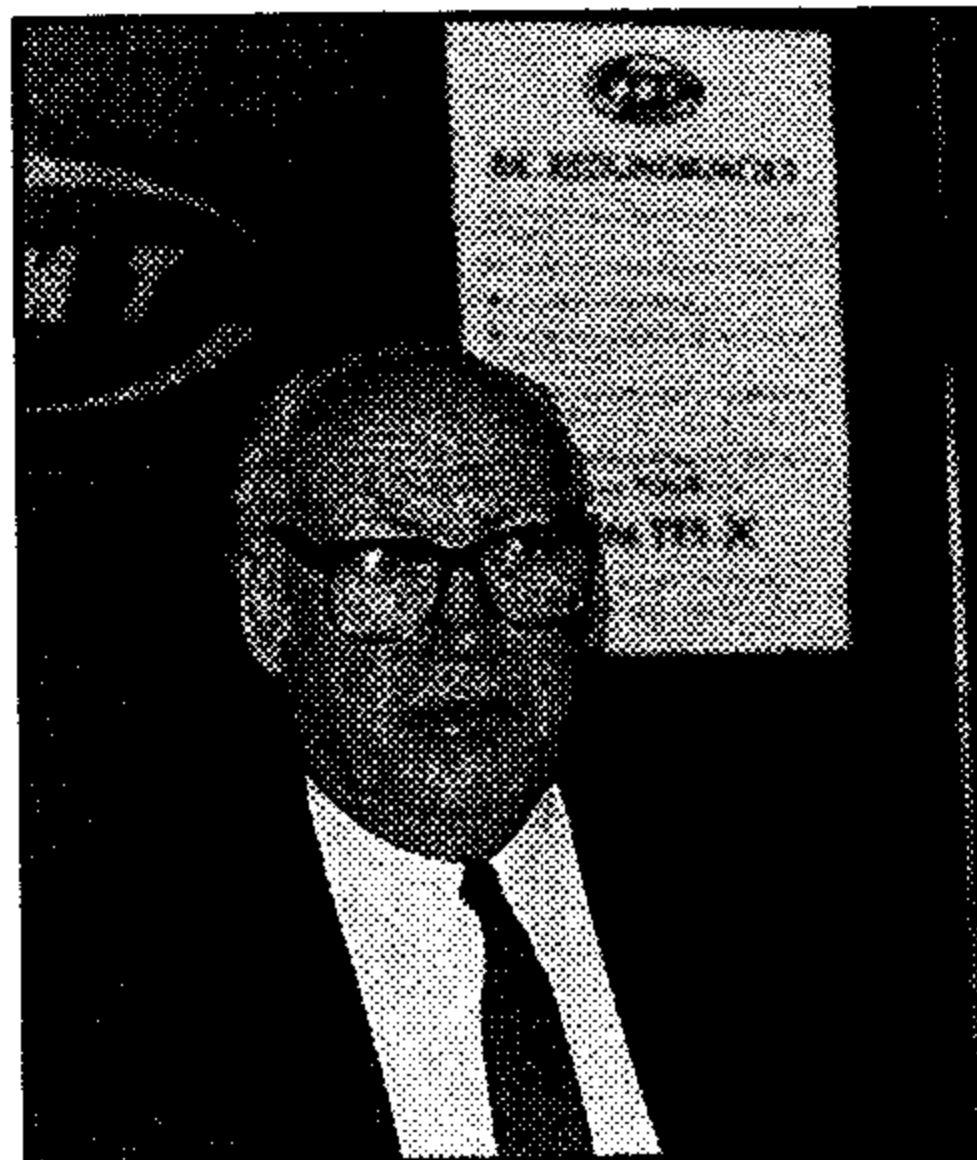
This major setback was seen as a result of the total lack of campaigning by the leadership. The only publicity material produced was at a local level.

When the RMT Special General Meeting last week heard the result it agreed to call upon the General Grades Committee to examine what had led to the defeat.

Two hours

After a two hour session immediately after the close of the SGM the committee agreed by 10 votes to 9 to set up a special sub committee to investigate why nothing had been produced by head office and to take control of any publicity produced for any further ballots.

This is a step in the right di-



RMT leader Knapp

rection to recover from the defeat but angry activists at special conferences this weekend were sceptical. They will be convinced of a change when they see something different.

Ballotting is about to take place for interim pay award for signalling grades and there is still a dispute with British Rail over negotiating machinery.

The left needs to put pressure on the special committee to reverse what is seen as a betrayal by union officials

Campaigning for the right to strike

DELEGATES from the NUT, NATFHE, NCU, RMT, UCW and T&G attended the small but productive 'Fight for the Right to Strike' Conference organised by Lambeth Trades Council on April 23.

The conference focussed on the implications of the recent injunction against NATFHE for the trade union movement hearing about the Post Office's use of this precedent in seeking an injunction after the ballot of Royal Mail engineers.

Conference also heard from Patrick Sikorski from the RMT national executive, Stuart King from NATFHE London regional executive and Dominic Brown from the Socialist Lawyers Association.

It was agreed that there needed to be a massive response from the trade union movement as a whole. To begin this process conference asked Lambeth Trades Council to organise an open planning meeting to plan the creation of the broadest possible campaign throughout the labour movement.

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HOME NEWS

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Mayday! Mayday!

MAY DAY, MAY 1, is internationally celebrated as an international workers' day, a time of special attention to solidarity with struggles at home and overseas.

At home, of course, the British workers' movement stands at a historic low point, bound into a vicious straitjacket of Tory legislation which effectively illegalises strike action, and saddled with trade union and Labour leaders who almost to a person have distanced themselves from any concept of class struggle or socialism.

As the Major government turns the screw, freezing wages, raising taxes and attacking the foundations of the British welfare state, the workers' movement remains paralysed.

But the word Mayday (from the French 'm'aidez' – help me) is also an international distress call. And May 1 this year finds possibly more workers and poor peasants than ever before in serious distress. The need for practical and political solidarity, for genuine socialist internationalism, has never been greater.

Despite the fact that tens of millions already unemployed and hundreds of millions of men and women are condemned to miserably low-paid part-time work, there is a world-wide attack on jobs, pay, and working conditions.

Competition

Employers are being driven into this onslaught by the growing competition of the capitalist market system.

The same pressures mean that the collapse of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe and the ex-USSR has opened up a new offensive against the jobs and living standards of the working class, as the new ruling bureaucrats attempt to create conditions for a restoration of capitalism.

Competition for scarce resources creates increasingly obvious splits and conflicts within and between recession-ridden capitalist countries – increasingly dividing into mutually hostile trading blocs.

It also drives brutal wedges between the interlocking nations and peoples in the no-man's land of Eastern Europe, and spurs on equally bitter and bloody con-



frontations in the forgotten territories of the 'third world'.

After the wanton massacre of 100,000 Iraqis by US fire-power flying UN banners, we were told that a 'new world order' had been established, offering peace and stability.

This was always a lie, and beyond the headlines, and outside the spheres of influence of any of the imperialists, other savage wars continued to take a horrendous toll: in Mozambique, Angola and Sudan ruinous wars have brought economic activity to a near standstill.

May Day 1994 takes place in the shadow of the brute horror of rampant racism and nationalism triggering the slaughter of 100,000 in two weeks in Rwanda, and the continuing carnage unleashed by Serbian aggression as a merciless Stalinist regime seeks to complete the imperialist-sanctioned carve-up of Bosnia by blitzing helpless enclaves previously disarmed by ... the United Nations.

But while the European Union bleats hypocritical protests against Serbian 'ethnic cleansing', its own member governments are implementing the scandalous Schengen agreement, aimed at slamming the door on potential immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Encouraged by this, and feeding from the frustration of downtrodden sections of youth and workers, the racist and fascist right wing is growing in size and confidence, mounting violent attacks on black and minority communities.

European governments, notably Britain in Ireland, and Turkey in Kurdistan, continue to repress the struggle for national self-determination. And despite the promise of peace in exchange for the treacherous deal signed by PLO leader Arafat, Israel's Zionist regime metes out harsh repression as the only means to maintain its settler state on Palestinian territory.

Partial victories

But May Day 1994 can also register some historic gains and partial victories, and pointers to future struggles.

● In South Africa, the end of apartheid has been signalled by the first non-racial elections. Millions of blacks have won the vote as a result of the courageous defiance, sacrifice and struggle of generations of black militants who have risked violence, torture, prison and death to fight for freedom. Now a new phase of the struggle will open up in which the remnants of racist rule, and the exploitation of capitalism must be challenged by

the black working class.

● In East Timor, despite the genocidal repression by the Indonesian government, the guerrilla fighters of FRETILIN continue their struggle for self-determination.

● In Brazil, opinion polls show 'Lula', the presidential candidate of the Workers Party as the front runner for the elections to come this autumn: his election would again open up a new stage in the struggle of the Brazilian working class.

● In the USA, the giant Teamsters union, for decades almost synonymous with the mob, violence and corruption, is flexing its muscles under a newly-elected leadership, defying anti-union laws and winning strikes against employers.

● In Britain, thousands of workers – college lecturers, Sheffield council staff, and now Liverpool postal workers – have so far taken strike action in defiance of the latest anti-union laws: teachers have rebuffed Tory plans for education. Anti-racist campaigns, including the campaign to close the Campsfield detention centre, are growing.

● In France, the far left is playing a key role in mobilising campaigns against unemployment and for a 35-hour week, while youth and students have beaten back the Balladur government's attempts to slash the wages of young workers.

● And across Europe sections of the Fourth International and other organisations have joined forces in a massive solidarity effort for Bosnia under the banner of International Workers Aid, delivering lorry-loads of supplies to beleaguered Tuzla where they are distributed by unions.

This year the IWA has been invited to send a representative to the May Day celebrations in Sarajevo.

Class struggle, socialist politics and workers' solidarity are not dead: but this spirit and tradition must be defended against new and dangerous pressures. That is the task which the Fourth International is proud to undertake.

In sending our May Day greetings to all those fighting oppression and exploitation across the world, *Socialist Outlook* commits itself to a fresh year of struggle for solidarity and internationalism.

Vote Labour – and step up the fight!

MILLIONS of people will get the chance to give John Major's government and local Tories a bloody nose in the council elections on May 5.

A strong Labour vote can remove Thatcherite Tory councils and stoke up the internal crisis within Major's party.

This is why *Socialist Outlook* says vote Labour on May 5 – and in the Euro-elections on June 9.

We have no illusions in the wretched right-wing programme put forward by John Smith's fumbling and ineffective leadership.

But we know that every blow that weakens the main party of the ruling class must strengthen the resolve and fighting spirit of the working class, increasing the chances of action against the public sector pay freeze and in defence of jobs and threatened

services.

Smith's team has made it as hard as possible to rally support for Labour. Nationally, Smith appears to have been doing a job-share with the Invisible Man, while side-kicks like Jack Straw try to make a virtue out of having no defined policies.

No fight

Labour has led no opposition to the anti-union laws, or to cuts in the NHS and the welfare state; Smith has not even pressed the case for an immediate general election as it becomes ever more clear that Major has lost his mandate to govern.

On a local level, too, Labour has a dismal record. Many workers and socialists will need to clench their teeth before voting for right wing Labour councils which have acted as enforcers



Doing a job share with the Invisible Man? Smith offers little to enthuse voters

for Tory laws and cutbacks, slashing services, attacking union rights and eagerly privatising parts they were not obliged to touch.

There are political scores to settle within the Labour Party, but these cannot be resolved by abstention or by voting for par-

ties which have no connection with the workers' movement.

To change the policies and leadership of the Labour Party, a class struggle left wing must be built, based on a socialist platform, and linking up Labour's left wing with militants in the unions and mass campaigns who want

to fight back.

The June 11 Conference on Socialism and Full Employment, called by the Socialist Campaign Group Network (see page 14) offers an opportunity to advance this process.

Vote Labour, get active, and step up the fight.

EDITORIAL

What's Left in local government?

ON THE EVE of the local government elections Helen Shaw spoke to expelled Labour councillors and *Socialist Outlook* supporters STEVE FRENCH and GREG TUCKER about their eight years on Lambeth council.

SO: You came onto the council after the surcharge of the Lambeth 31 following ratecapping in 1986 – what's your assessment of the last eight years?

SF: In 1986 Labour candidates in Lambeth were selected on the basis of willingness to fight the Tories. People got through by giving weasel answers: with the first budget, cuts were made. We've never supported a single Labour budget because every one contained cuts.

I don't think we expected things to go downhill so rapidly but after the ratecapping defeat, even 40 councillors refusing to implement Tory cuts would have meant nothing without a better balance of forces nationally.

GT: When we came into office the party was linked to the council through the local government committee (LGC) with an expectation that councillors would follow party strategy rather than act on individual whims.

Now there's no real communication between the council leadership, the Labour Group and the party. Our biggest political failure is our inability to maintain that link.

SF: The rot really set in with the suspension of the LGC, the witch-hunt and the suspension of 13 councillors. The party bureaucracy came in so crudely because we still had significant support in the party.

GT: The amount of effort and number of hours put in by leading officers of the Labour Party nationally to stop our influence, indicate some level of success. Its not entirely negative.

Even in the last year we have been able to lead successful local campaigns. Despite the witch-hunt and the influx of rightwingers we still have a strong left in the Borough.

SO: Have there been



Before the Lambeth surcharges in 1986: since then massive Tory attacks have shackled powers of councils

attempts to co-ordinate with other left councillors? What's happened to the left if that was the case?

SF: We tried to launch national initiatives – Councillors Against the Cuts and then Councillors Against the Poll Tax – with some degree of success. It was impossible, after the rate capping defeat, to organise a diminishing band of left wing councillors.

GT: There are some beginnings, through the SCGN, of work around a national forum of councillors willing to work with us. This indicates the party purge wasn't completely successful but also shows that once confronted with the same issues, some of these mainly new councillors end up coming towards us.

SO: What do you think will happen after May 5? What prospect is there is for a fight for left policies in local government?

SF: The idea of Labour councillors playing a significant role in the council chamber to support struggles outside is hardly on the agenda. In Lambeth the new Labour Group will be more anti-trade union and will be consciously planning attacks.

Labour's manifesto is incredibly uninspiring. On local issues like housing, a bold policy for house building could have a dramatic effect in mobilising votes and support for left wing ideas. This has been completely wasted. We'll see some significant Labour gains but pyrrhic victories.

GT: When we started there was still an idea that you could

act locally. Not 'islands of socialism', which we never agreed with, but at least pockets of issues on which one could deliver.

That no longer exists and certainly won't after this election. Everything is reduced to waiting for a general election and 'don't rock the boat' until it takes place. This affects the broader labour movement as much as the Labour party and Labour councils.

SF: People used to say the Labour party leadership was way to the right of the membership: now its way to the right of society. A recent example is the new housing legislation which will make it no longer necessary for councils to house the homeless. There's been sod all from Labour in terms of any national campaign. You're left with the housing lobby – Shelter and other campaigning organisations making the running.

High profile

GT: Before, we had high profile campaigning around defending local services including highlighting what services existed. Now we've lost the whole idea of a social service in the broad sense. Public perception and expectation of their council's role has changed. People aren't sure what it does other than collect their rubbish and cost them lots of money.

SF: It's criminal the way Jack Straw MP has entered this debate about whether Labour or Tory councils are cheaper? He ignores the central question of local government funding and unequal distribution of grants from central government. Labour councils are more expensive and Straw shouldn't be embarrassed to say so.

Boroughs like Wandsworth and Westminster get incredibly high grant assessments. Labour councils with massive social needs have had their grant cut with the burden falling on working class people through local taxation.

SO: Its a very negative assessment. So why should people vote Labour?

SF: It's a class vote, and come election time we're in a united front with Labour for all their faults. We don't agree with their programme – its a bourgeois programme but its a class vote. We've always argued for people campaigning against the Labour council's actions to take that fight into the party and unite with those willing to fight.

GT: Militant Labour are standing in Lambeth. While we agree with a large part of their policies locally, in the longer term they don't present an alternative around which you can build a campaign against Tory attacks. The best terrain to do that is with a Labour council.

SO: Many on the left believe it's all over in the local government arena. Should we be struggling to get left candidates on the council in four years?

GT: Being on the council is not a task of managing the local state – its a political forum. Local parties have to campaign and fight around broader politics including international, national and local issues, and local government issues within those local issues.

We've always campaigned to broaden the party and the

council out. Part of the charges against us were things like the Gulf War meeting where there was a broader political perspective to be injected. Even if local government is totally closed down, councillors only allowed to set the budget once a year, award the contracts and do nothing else, we should still be trying to force them to take a broader political platform.

The trouble is that legislation has taken away real authority from councils and given it either to quangos or the government directly.

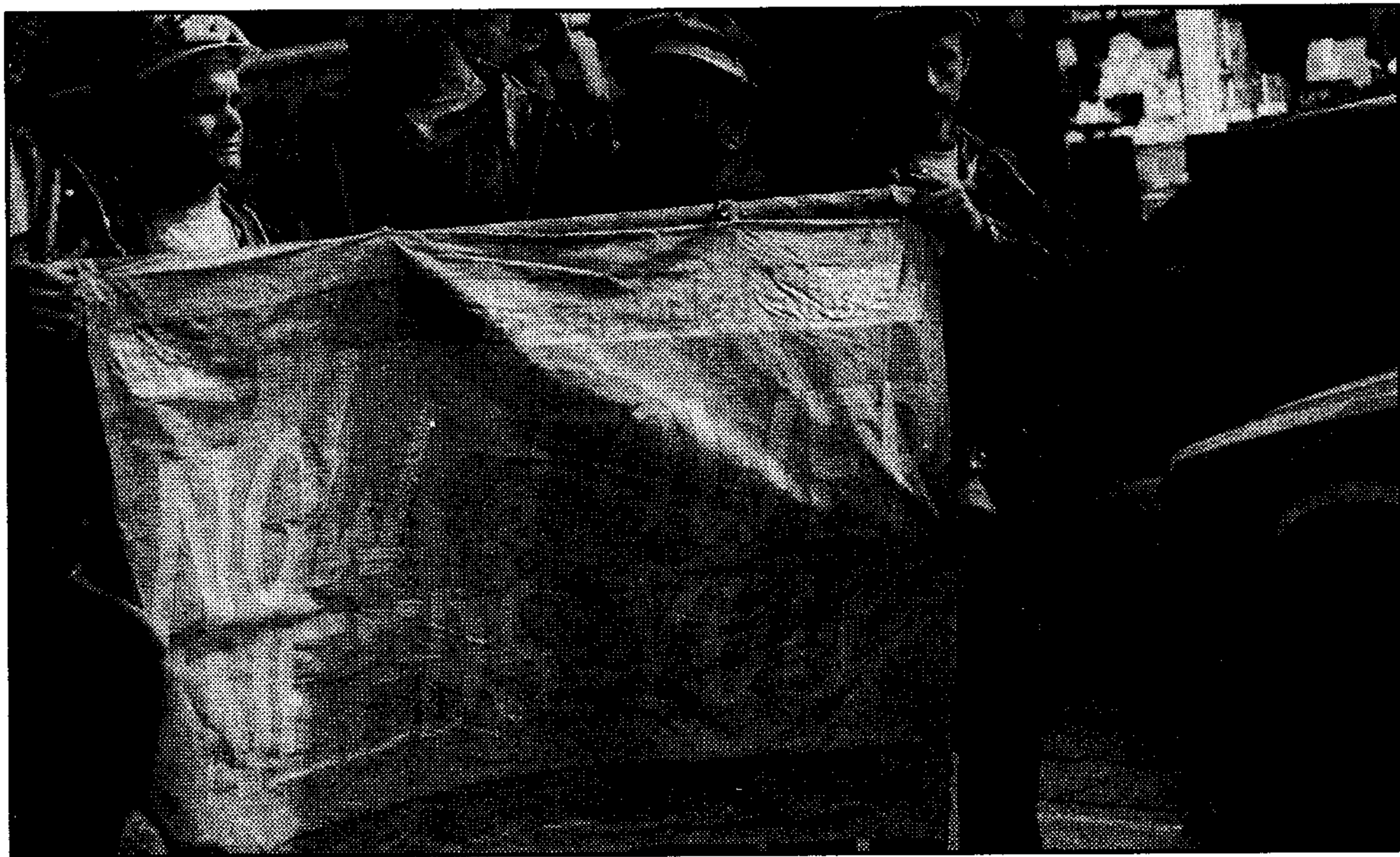
SO: Your eight years as councillors have come to an end and you've been thrown out of the Labour party. What next?

GT: We haven't broken our links just because the party's expelled us. We're still trying to build and recruit to the party and have an influence on it. We have to make sure our experience is disseminated, not wasted.

We still have some influence, we're still listened to and I don't believe the right can bottle up the party in Lambeth. It hasn't been able to expel everybody or destroy political debate – that will continue.

Whether we're in the party or not, whether we're allowed to stand for the council again or not I hope in four years time we will still see people who agree with us stand on the left policies we've argued for.

SF: It may sound arrogant but as part of the balance sheet, as individuals and as supporters of *Socialist Outlook*, we have in the bank a strong base of support and respect in the Labour movement. That won't evaporate on May 5.



Merseyside fighting back

Fire fighters on the move

By Glen Voris, St Helens Trades Council

ON MONDAY April 18 Merseyside FBU called a ballot following threatened closure of a Liverpool fire station.

The ballot proposed a series of one hour strikes throughout Merseyside, to be stepped up if closure is not reversed. Results are not yet known.

To give FBU members confidence the Merseyside leadership called a national demonstration in Liverpool for Thursday April 14.

To the amazement of local and national leaders over 8,000 FBU members – more than a fifth of the entire membership – participated.

After this show of strength Merseyside FBU leaders are confident of a massive vote for determined strike action.

Blackmail beats down Tower resistance

By Dafydd Rhys

THE LAST deep mine in South Wales has closed. Miners at Tower colliery voted to accept redundancy, reversing an earlier decision to fight closure.

The vote followed an unprecedented week of manoeuvring by British Coal. In the words of one Tower miner, 'If British Coal worked as hard to keep the pits open as they do to close them down, we'd all be smiling.'

The events which unfolded are as bizarre as they are tragic. The first response by British Coal was to try to undermine the vote, by pressurising individual miners to accept redundancy; they even asked one coal-face team to vote, as a team, on the redundancy offer.

By next day management were forced to accept this contravened review procedures and all offers of redundancy were withdrawn. It seemed the pit was entering a lengthy review period.

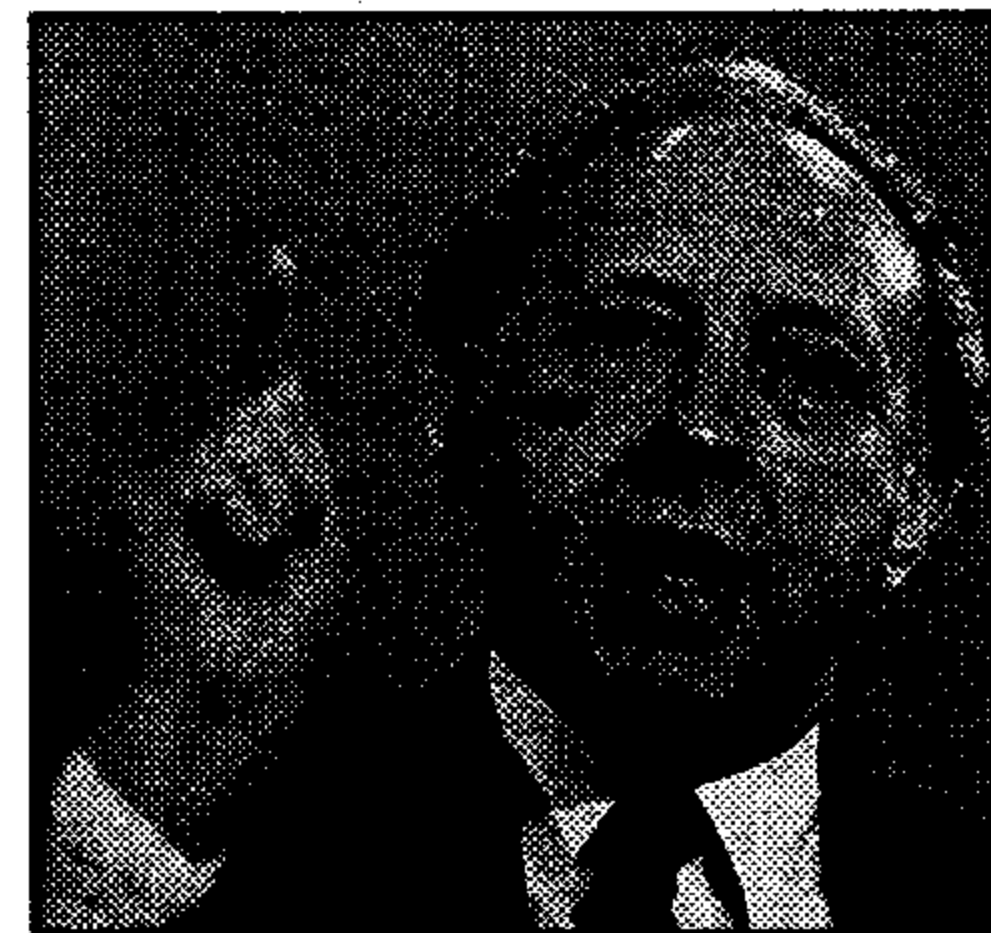
British Coal then announced the pit would be kept open after all, if miners accepted pay cuts and increased production. In one week their position had changed from closing the pit, because of lack of markets, to keeping it open with increased output! The NUM were given 48 hours to respond.

A 27 hour sit-in at the pit by Ann Clwyd MP began, with Woman Against Pit Closures

lobbying the Welsh Office and calling an impromptu demonstration at the pit gates.

The following morning a recalled NUM mass meeting reaffirmed the decision to take the pit into review. British Coal responded with a cynically worded statement, announcing they had decided to keep the pit open after all.

This was widely reported by local and national media as a victory for the campaign.



The sting in the tail was the last sentence: 'Men will be paid fully in accordance with the industry's collective agreements as regards basic grade rates and the local agreements covering incentive and bonus arrangements'.

This sounded innocuous enough but 'basic grade rates' meant re-grading most of the men at the pit, affecting pay-packets by £100 or more per week as well as final redundancy payments.

British Coal were asking the men to lose a further £20,000 or more on top of the £9,000 already sacrificed – for a pit that wasn't guaranteed a future beyond the next three monthly re-

view.

The NUM argued British Coal had no right to pull the pit out of the review procedure. Being in the review would have protected all existing pay and redundancy terms.

All the confusion and double talking, along with the huge loss of pay and redundancy money, placed enormous pressure on the miners. A further mass meeting voted to accept redundancy.

But as Phil White, chair of Tower Lodge, pointed out: 'The men didn't close the pit, British Coal did.'

The closure of Tower brings to an end a remarkable history of struggle and organisation in the South Wales coalfield.

The South Wales Miner's Federation, which organised 250,000 miners at its peak, was undoubtedly the finest collective endeavour of the Welsh people this century. The South Wales miners gave us the Miners Next Step, one of the most important documents of the British working class.

The stay-down strikes of the 1930's remain a vivid example of the struggle against company unionism. As a banner for the 'Taff Merthyr' prisoners declared: 'You have suffered for a principle. We are proud of you.'

We have every reason to be proud of the Welsh miners and to mourn their demise. Our task is to affirm their history in the face of those who would like it quickly forgotten, to learn from it, to prepare for the struggles ahead.

Post Office workers beat anti-union laws

200 workers walked out of Coppras Hill Post Office Sorting Depot, Liverpool, on Tuesday April 12.

A supervisor had deliberately provoked a deaf UCW member by continually laughing behind his back because of his disability. Harassment was so bad that the UCW member eventually threw a punch.

Management neither investigated the incident nor used agreed Disputes Procedure. They immediately suspended the deaf worker, causing uproar in the sorting depot. After a mass meeting the whole work-force walked out, setting up pickets at every gate.

Management used all the anti-union laws at their disposal and on Thursday April 14 an injunction was served on the union.

The UCW National Executive, frightened of losing their precious funds, demanded the branch immediately return to work. A mass meeting decided unanimously to continue the illegal action.

Letters were piling up –

there was no mail coming in or out of Liverpool. Over half a million homes and businesses were affected. Management and local union leaders had round after round of talks without reaching agreement.

Management tried to break the strike by transferring mail to other large depots. At Ellesmere Port, Warrington and Bolton workers refused to handle scab mail.

After six days on strike, the branch decided to return to work on Monday April 18. Management reluctantly re-instated the suspended worker, though he still faces a disciplinary hearing.

The branch made clear further attempts to sack him would result in more walk-outs.

This is the first time workers have flouted the new anti-union laws. It is a major victory for the trade union movement. By standing firm and spreading action disputes can be won despite management intimidation and reactionary union leaderships.

NUT: vote Mary Hufford for GS!

There will be two candidates in the election for NUT General Secretary. They are Mary Hufford, current Deputy General Secretary and Doug McAvoy, current General Secretary.

This is important election will have a strong influence on the direction of the union for the next five years. Teachers will see the elections as a

fight between the current leadership and the left.

Mary Hufford is a leading member of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CFDU) supported by both the STA and the CFDU Socialist teachers must not stand aside in this election, we should intervene to support Mary Hufford and to raise the demands that are necessary to take the union forward.

£21,000 Appeal Fund

Never mind false modesty - Socialist Outlook is the best paper on the left! Not just because our front covers and lay-out are more imaginative - which they are - but because of what we have to say.

Our analysis of the break-up of former Yugoslavia is way ahead of anyone else. Through International Workers' Aid we have organised concrete support for the people of Bosnia. With our limited resources we have helped give young people a voice through Liberation!, the only socialist youth paper in Britain.

We want to be able to continue all these things and more. But that costs money. We need to raise £21,000 over the next few months.

RUSH cheques, postal orders or surplus jewelry to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



TRADE UNION NEWS

EVEN MORE than during the Gulf War, there is a current of opinion within the workers' movement which sympathises with the call for UN military action to halt the Serbian bombardment of Bosnian 'safe havens'.

Fed on a diet of media coverage emphasising the sheer barbarism of the Serbian shelling of hospitals and defenceless civilian targets in Gorazde, many conclude that there is no alternative but for NATO or the UN to strike back and 'reach them a lesson'.

Here HARRY SLOAN answers five possible arguments for supporting UN action, and insists that the only consistent policy for socialists is to call for the arming of the Bosnians to defend themselves.

Q: Surely the NATO ultimatum, backed up by the threat to mount air strikes against the Serbs if they do not withdraw from Gorazde is simply defending the Bosnian muslims?

A: Far from defending the Bosnian muslims, the UN role has been actively to *disarm* those living in enclaves in Gorazde, leaving them prey to the advancing Serbs. Before the situation in Gorazde hit the headlines, disarmed muslim communities in Zvornik, Foca and Visegrad had already fallen in precisely this way.

The UN-imposed 'peace' in Sarajevo similarly brought in blue-beret 'peacekeeping' troops to impose the partition of the city, enabling the Serbs to move their heavy guns on the Gorazde.

The UN's ultimate objective is not to defend the national right of self determination for Bosnia, but to secure a settlement which carves up the country between Serbia and Croatia.

Already the Bosnian government, weakened by a ruthlessly-imposed arms embargo, has been forced into a deal with Croatia which involved heavy territorial concessions while offering no security to the remaining muslim enclaves.

The experience over three years shows that the very last people to be considered or defended by the UN are the Bosnians.

Why we are against UN air strikes

Five questions and answers on the Bosnian crisis



International Workers Aid picketed Downing Street against UN bombings

Q: But shouldn't we punish the Serbs for their brutal attacks on unarmed civilians? They pay no attention to cease-fires or agreements: force is the only language they understand.

A: None of the decision-making in this situation is under any democratic control. It is not 'we', but our government which is taking action, and deciding on what basis force should be used. We have no say in this, and should not give any support whatever to John Major's reactionary government, whose motives are very different from working people.

The most immediate impact of any bombing of Serb positions would be to reinforce the position of Serbian leader Milosevic and the Bosnian Serb leadership, who would revel in the situation.

In practice the governments which favour air strikes are not so much proposing punishing the Serbs as saving face, having failed to deliver their previous promises of protection.

The tactic of air strikes is dangerous in itself. As the Gulf War showed, large numbers of bombs will miss their intended military targets and hit innocent civilians. In Bosnia, there is a real threat that Bosnian muslims could themselves get caught in the crossfire.

The probability is that the Serbs who come under air bombardment will take reprisals not against the well-armed and technologically superior NATO jets flying overhead, but against unarmed Bosnian civilians on

the ground. They might also begin more systematic attacks on unarmed UN forces – potentially widening the war – or on aid workers.

So while NATO planes would probably return safely to base, the fresh bloodshed triggered by their raids would probably only have begun.

There is no way that the population of Bosnia could be defended against subsequent Serbian revenge attacks, short of a prolonged period of occupation by a truly massive UN force.

This kind of open-ended commitment – undesirable in any case – is not even an option for the UN, which has already fallen thousands short of the numbers of troops asked for by General Rose, and which would be rapidly left stranded if it were bogged down in an unwinnable Vietnam-style situation.

Q: But the UN is only there as a peacekeeping force, not to take over. Surely its authority must be upheld if it is to be effective?

A: Who controls the UN? Clearly the strings are primarily pulled by the USA, especially now, in the aftermath of the collapse of Stalinism, when the destitute Russian government is unable to use the treasury and diplomatic levers open to the old USSR.

Not since the carnage of the 1950-54 Korean War was passed off as a United Nations effort has the UN been so completely subordinate to the demands of imperialism.

US domination is reflected in

the fact that 500,000 troops with state of the art weaponry were air-lifted under UN banners to protect oil supplies in the Gulf by fighting Iraq, while the slaughter in Bosnia – with no strategic value to the USA – has been met by a few F16s and a complete absence of US ground forces.

Under the UN flag, over 100,000 retreating Iraqis were senselessly massacred by US-led forces in what some described as a 'turkey-shoot'. The indifference of the UN to human suffering is underlined by the timing of its withdrawal from Rwanda.

In practice, conceding some kind of independent role for the UN amounts to subscribing to the concept of a 'new world order', policed by the USA, with license to kill – or to withdraw as it sees fit.

Q: The Serbian policy of ethnic cleansing is the latter-day equivalent of fascism. Are you saying that the international community should sit back and watch these developments in the heart of Europe?

A: There is no such thing as an international community, only governments and the

class interests.

What is being proposed is not some kind of International Brigade to lend enlightened proletarian support to the Bosnians, but a brutal blitzkrieg against Serbian troops by imperialist warplanes.

The British and US governments which now pose as opponents of ethnic cleansing have been quite happy to do deals with Pol Pot's Kampuchean Khmer Rouge, who slaughtered millions in their brutal period of rule.

We have to ask who claims to speak for the international community, and which class interests they represent. It is clear that the ruling classes in Europe would be perfectly content to strike a deal with the Serbs for the permanent partition of Bosnia – provided only that they could guarantee that the shooting would stop, or be confined to the inside pages of the press.

Q: At the end of the day, it is obviously an impossible situation. How can you deny it would be better to save a few lives by intervening now, than to leave the Serbs to run riot and massacre who they please?

A: At the end of the day, the only sure defence of the Bosnian muslims is to ensure they are armed and supplied to defend themselves.

This must be linked to a solidarity effort aimed at strengthening anti-war movements and left wing opposition to the Milosevic regime in the Serbian working class.

The Bosnians have been quite consciously left stranded by imperialism, and would be left stranded again once the air strikes had concluded. They have learned the hard way how foolish it would be to entrust their fate to benevolent outsiders. The British left must learn this lesson too and redouble the campaign to lift the arms embargo.

The probability is that the Serbs who come under air bombardment will take reprisals not against the well-armed and technologically superior NATO jets flying overhead, but against unarmed Bosnian civilians on the ground.

Bosnia: the scandal of the British Left

THE DESTRUCTION of Gorazde by Serb forces and the impending human catastrophe has highlighted the scandalous position of the British left, including most of the far left, on the war in Bosnia.

The large scale ethnic cleansing of Muslim peoples and other major atrocities amount to some of the greatest crimes perpetrated in Europe since the defeat of the Third Reich.

In the first of two articles ALAN THORNETT and DAVE PACKER discuss the response of the far-left to this crisis. The next issue will take up the debate with sections of the Labour Party left.

ACCORDING to *Socialist Worker*, the arms embargo against Bosnia must stay, because lifting it would make the situation worse!

This is the astonishing conclusion the SWP draws from the sight of the Bosnian army trying to defend the 60,000 people in Gorazde against 200 Serbian tanks and 400 heavy guns with rifles and hand guns.

Even now the SWP do not agree that the Bosnians should be given the basic right of self defence. This is actually what they said:

'Lifting it [the embargo] now would see the American and Turkish governments rushing to arm the Bosnian forces which could spark a new spiral of arming all sides. Far from ending the fighting, the war would take on a new intensity as Muslim soldiers sought to retake territory.'

Yes indeed. People who have their territory taken away often fight to recover it – like the Palestinians fight to recover Palestine!

This is political confusion in the extreme. Two thirds of Bosnia-Herzegovina is under Serbian occupation, 200,000



Bosnians are dead and 1.5 million refugees. (Contrary to the view of Serbian apologists, most of these people are victims of ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Serbian forces). And yet the Socialist Workers Party and the *Militant* still think this is a 'civil war' between equally reactionary nationalisms.

Like Pontius Pilate they wash their hands and shrug their shoulders, and despite their ever-so principled rejection of all 'nationalisms' (which of course has nothing whatever to do with Marxism), they at best, abstain on the real interests of the working class – to defend their national rights.

This sectarian and profoundly economistic approach objectively ends up, by its passivity, aiding and abetting the most reactionary and aggressive chauvinism embodied in the 'Greater Serbia' project of Milosevic, Karadzic and those sinister forces even further to their right!

Crass

Do they really think that Karadzic and the Bosnian Serbs are independent of Milosevic, or that the Bosnian Serbs envisage some separate state to Serbia? Such a view would be crass in the extreme.

Bosnia was a multi-ethnic Republic and then an independent state with proportional representation of all 'ethnic' groups.

The vast majority had lived without cultural or religious conflict for many years, until Milosevic declared for a Greater Serbia and agitated and organised, including planning insur-

rection, for the Serb minorities in Bosnia and Croatia to join it!

The war does not take place on the soil of the Serbian Republic, it is a war of aggression and territorial expansion perpetrated by the degenerate Serbian bureaucracy, initially as a means of holding on to power. Once the war is over, those parts of Bosnia and Croatia held by the Serbs will become a part of Serbia itself even if covered by a federal camouflage.

An SWP member recently claimed in a meeting that the situation is 'complicated'. This is the typical response of many in the workers movement who do not understand the relationship between the struggle for national rights and the fight for socialism, in other words, the combined character of many revolutions in our epoch.

To ignore the national question, as many economistic groups do, reducing everything to simply 'the workers versus the boss', is fatal. The national question represents historically unfinished business and will always be used to divide the working class, if we do not understand how to deal with it.

Marxists therefore always defend national rights and the rights of national minorities within any state. But crucially, we fight for the independent working class to lead the nation, against the chauvinist national bourgeoisie and imperialism.

This is why we support self-determination for Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Bosnia, but oppose the bureaucratic and pro-capitalist regimes who currently run these Republics.

Many things are complicated

in politics but the essentials of this particular war are in fact quite simple: Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Serbia are historic nations and Bosnia, a distinct political-cultural entity, was granted this same status under Tito. They all have the right to self-determination. In fact it was formally written into the 1974 Tito Constitution.

The Greater Serbian project denied these national and democratic rights and invaded and occupied two of its next door states. This outrage only stimulated the growth of right wing nationalism in Croatia in particular.

The issue is not whether the borders were just; a genuinely socialist Yugoslavia would have resolved conflict in the only possible way, through the democratic process and workers' democracy. The Bosnian people were denied this by the Serbian government, who launched a naked war of aggression.

Mixed ethnicity

The peoples of Bosnia, a huge proportion of whom are of mixed ethnicity and inter-married, and want the right to live together, have the democratic right to liberate themselves and determine their own future.

That is not so complicated. Without recognising these rights there will be no class unity. For Marxists its ABC.

In any case where does *Socialist Worker* think the 'Bosnian Serbs' get their tanks and their SAM missiles from?

How come the 'Bosnian Serbs' have these and not the Bosnian government? The an-

swer is not very difficult – they came from Serbia!

From the beginning the Serbs were armed from the arsenals of the Yugoslavian army who handed over heavy weapons to them, other caches were seized in planned raids.

The International Workers Aid (IWA) film, 'From Timex to Tuzla' interviewed front line members of the Tuzla miners brigade, a proudly working class and multi-ethnic force, who possessed only small arms and were limited to ten bullets each!

As everybody but the British SWP and *Militant* knows, the arms embargo is only effective against the Bosnians! It is a UN/imperialist policy aimed at forcing the Bosnians to the negotiating table and surrendering to cantonisation.

This is Hurd's 'level killing fields' argument all over again. It is also the argument of Western governments that the important thing is 'peace'. But who are 'we', and who are *Socialist Worker* to propose such an unjust 'peace' for the Bosnian people?

We don't say to the Palestinians that the most important thing is peace and that they should forget the recovery of their country.

Spanish resistance

The left correctly defended the Spanish Republic in the 1930s. They did not say that less people would have died if the Republic had had even less arms and had mounted no resistance to Franco. Nor did we say that the NLF in Vietnam should not be armed because it would make the situation worse!

The arguments of *Socialist Worker* and even the *Militant* (who, after their debates on the Scottish question, should know better) are nothing less than a rationalisation for political confusion and bankruptcy on the national question in ex-Yugoslavia. They are a typical product of crass workerism and economism.

It is true that *Socialist Worker* opposes imperialist intervention into the region. That's good, but utterly confused as well – since they are in favour of the imperialists continuing to enforce their arms embargo!

We, along with IWA, are in favour of the right of Bosnia to survive and the lifting of all imperialist/UN embargos, including those against Serbia, which only devastate the lives of the workers there, further feeding right wing nationalism.

Stop the bombing, Imperialist troops out of the Balkans, Lift the arms embargo!

DEBATE

Nothing much seems to have gone right for Major: now a new scandal awaits him in the autumn.



Great Scott! It's another Tory scandal!

By Dave Osler

THE SCOTT INQUIRY into arms for Iraq actually did a half-way decent job.

The 95 per cent of the population who always suspected that politicians and top civil servants perpetually lie, fib, deceive, tell porkies, hoodwink, dissemble, mislead, cheat, double-cross, trick, peddle untruths, fiddle, diddle, and generally economise with the truth now know for certain.

But if the hearings weren't the whitewash that cynics expected, in many key respects they didn't go far enough. The inquiry's terms of reference were strictly limited to the questions of whether the government breached its own restrictions on arms exports to Iraq and the suppression of evidence in the Matrix Churchill trial.

The potentially explosive Thatcher connection has only been touched upon. Mark Thatcher, son of former prime minister Margaret, had extensive business dealings with Industrias Cardoen, the Chilean company that built the Iraqi arms factory that Matrix Churchill's lathes equipped.

Furthermore, arms sent to Saudi Arabia as part of the giant Al Yamamah deal signed by Margaret Thatcher in 1986, enabling Mark to glean hefty commissions as a middle man, may have been diverted to Iraq.



Looking the other way? Kenneth Clarke was Defence Secretary

Neither those who facilitated Iraq's arms procurement programme - the clearing bankers, the accountants and the lawyers - nor any of the major defence manufacturers - Vickers, British Aerospace/Royal Ordnance, Racal or Marconi - have even been questioned.

All we are likely to get is a handful of scapegoats, probably William Waldegrave, currently chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, and Sir Nicholas Lyell, the attorney-general, who may well be dispatched in a cabinet reshuffle even before the Scott report is published, tact-

fully after the end of the political conference later this year.

The remarkable story starts in October 1985, when Sir Geoffrey Howe, then foreign secretary, announced in the Commons that the government would not approve exports of 'any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the [Iran-Iraq] conflict'.

These were in themselves weasel words. Alan Clark, then defence minister, described them as drawn up in 'as elastic as possible a way as the English

language would tolerate ... obviously drafted with the objective of flexibility.'

In 1988, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein ordered that the Kurdish town of Halabja be bombed with poison gas, killing 5,000 people. That didn't stop the then trade minister, Tony Newton, flying to Baghdad shortly afterwards to offer £340m in trade credits. The government had visions of developing the country into a major export market for Britain.

This was the year that MI6 pressed for Matrix Churchill, a Coventry-based manufacturer of sophisticated computer-controlled machine tools - equipment, such as lathes, that shape metal - to be allowed to sell to Iraq, enabling the company's directors to provide intelligence on the country.

Machine tools aren't weapons as such, but they can make them. Were they thus covered by Howe's guidelines? Much of the subsequent story hangs on precisely this question.

'Flexibility'

In December 1988, three junior ministers took a secret decision to permit 'flexibility of interpretation' of the embargo, in what has since become known as the 'tilt' towards Iraq.

The first was Waldegrave, Eton and Oxford educated younger son of the 12th Earl of Waldegrave and brother-in-law of Marmaduke Hussey, former chair of the BBC, was then at the Foreign Office.

The second was Clark, then trade minister, the Eton and Oxford-educated son of the multimillionaire Lord Kenneth Clark. The third was the 2nd Baron Trefgarne, then defence procurement minister. So much for the classless society.

Labour backbenchers were starting to ask difficult questions. Margaret Thatcher told Harry Cohen MP in April 1989: 'The government have not changed their policy on defence sales to Iraq.' The evidence is that she knew about the tilt, and was quite simply lying.

Margaret Thatcher had instructed Whitehall to provide her with intelligence reports on Iraq's arms procurement efforts in Britain. An Iraqi Procurement Working Group was established in May 1989, which met at least six times before it disbanded in February 1990. Minutes show

that it discussed Matrix Churchill's assistance to the Iraqi missile programme.

In March 1990, Saddam ordered the hanging of British journalist Farzad Bazoft. The following month, Customs officers at Teesport seized components of the biggest gun in history, bound for Iraq.

Licences

They had been made by two British firms, Forgemasters in Sheffield and Walter Somers of Halesowen, who had export licences to supply steel tubes for a petro-chemical project.

Two men were arrested, including Walter Somers' managing director, Peter Mitchell. His defence was that the project had been agreed with the government, thanks to the mediation of his personal friend, local Tory MP Sir Hal Miller.

Miller made it plain that he was willing to go public, in technicolor, if his buddy had to take the rap. Meanwhile, Iraq occupied Kuwait in August 1990, and in January the following year, the Gulf War began.

British soldiers were killed with munitions manufactured on British equipment, supplied with the Tories' full approval despite their parliamentary denials. The government had every motive to keep such story quiet.

In the middle of the conflict, all charges against Mitchell and Chris Cowley, an engineer who had worked in Iraq, were suddenly dropped after the intervention of Sir Patrick Mayhew, the then attorney-general. The decision is still unexplained.

Customs were hopping mad and determined to get a result elsewhere. Four executives of a company called Ordtech (short for Ordnance Technology) were charged in Reading with supplying shell fuses to Jordan that were in reality bound for Iraq.

Parallels

There were uncanny parallels to the later Matrix Churchill trial. Peter Lilley, then trade secretary, and Kenneth Baker, then home secretary, signed gagging orders on government documents requested by the defence, while one of the defendants, Paul Grecian, claimed to be an intelligence asset.

CENTRE STAGE

After threats to call ministers and civil servants, the accused were allowed to plead guilty to small technical offences instead. It was light fines, suspended sentences and large gin and tonics all round. Customs got even madder, and began investigating Matrix Churchill.



Inventing new 'flexibility': William Waldegrave is now laughably reassigned as minister for 'open government'

But after threats to call ministers and civil servants, the accused were allowed to plead guilty to small technical offences instead. It was light fines, suspended sentences and large gin and tonics all round. Customs got even madder, and began investigating Matrix Churchill.

Meanwhile, in February 1991, John Major, the prime minister, insisted in the Commons: 'For some considerable time we have not supplied arms to Iraq.' Again, he was almost certainly lying.

Late the following year, Customs prosecuted three Matrix Churchill directors - Henderson, Peter Allen and Trevor Abraham - for supplying machine tools allegedly specially designed to make arms to Iraq.

Both the government and the civil service were petrified that the tilt would come to light. Whitehall tried and failed to block the prosecution. Four ministers signed gagging orders - officially known as public interest immunity certificates - which suppressed government documents vital to a defence case based on government complicity.

These were Malcolm Rifkind, defence secretary, Kenneth Clarke, home secretary, Michael Heseltine, trade secretary, and Tristan Garel-Jones, foreign office minister, acting in the absence of the number one in his department, Douglas Hurd.

All insisted that they were merely obeying orders from Lyell, who, it later transpired, didn't even bother to find out exactly what he was telling his colleagues to hush up. Heseltine contended that he only went ahead on the understanding that his serious misgivings were passed on to the court. This was not done.

The prosecution was already in trouble when Clark stood up in the witness box and admitted that he had been 'economical with the actuality' in advising Matrix Churchill to say that its exports to Iraq were for general engineering purposes.

No-one is quite sure why he did not simply go along with the cover-up. Shortly afterwards, the case collapsed after Judge Brian Smedley QC exercised his option to overturn the gagging orders.

There was instant public outcry, forcing the government to set up the Scott inquiry. Testimony after testimony reveals that while MPs are not allowed

to call each other liars in the House, lies are an everyday event.

Asked about Margaret Thatcher's answer to Cohen, Eric Beston, a senior Department of Trade and Industry official, replied that responding to MPs is 'more an art form than a means of communication'.

Asked about a later question from Labour's Chris Mullin to Clark, Beston replied: 'Not all questions are answered fully. Information is not necessarily volunteered which goes beyond the strict limit of the question.'

Intelligence reports told him that Matrix Churchill products were being used to manufacture missiles, but he did not inform his boss, Trefgarne, because he had forgotten about it during his summer holidays. Well, well.

He also admitted misleading the jury in the Matrix Churchill trial - 'I got myself into quite a tangle. I quite simply misled myself on what I thought the situation was'. My goodness.

Anthony Steadman, Beston's deputy, was director of the DTI export licensing unit from May 1987 to November 1991. Unlike his boss, he even failed to notice intelligence reports about Matrix Churchill which spelt out the company name in block capitals: 'I know it seems a conundrum but I failed to pick it up.'

He admitted preparing inaccurate draft witness statements for the trial, deleting references to ministerial knowledge of the military uses of export licences they approved, at the request of a treasury solicitor. Even the final version 'was not accurate ... it was not untrue but it did not



The explosive connection: Thatcher

go as far as the previous witness statement had'.

David Gore-Booth, the Eton and Oxford educated son of Lord Gore-Booth, himself a one-time foreign office chief, was formerly responsible for Middle Eastern policy at the foreign office and is now ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Quizzed on answers to MPs, he said: 'Of course half a picture can be accurate.'

Full or half empty

He added: 'The extent to which a parliamentary answer should be full, half full or empty is very much up to the minister.'

Similarly, Sir Robin Butler, head of the civil service, insisted: 'Half the picture can be true. My justification of the answer is it didn't mislead, it gave half the picture.'

He went on to lambast the media for saying nasty things

about 'middle-ranking officials who could not have expected to be thrust into the limelight in the way in which they have' and condemning 'the damage which has been unfairly done to our system of government, to the reputation of the civil service and to individuals'. Perish the thought.

Mark Higson, a former foreign office official who has now quit, argued outright that ministers misled parliament: 'It wasn't telling the truth.' Ian McDonald, a Ministry of Defence official who monitored arms sales, merely stated that 'truth is a very difficult concept'.

William Patey, foreign office official, said that civil servants had written reports for their ministers which were inaccurate, misleading and 'clearly wrong'.

Andrew Leithead, assistant treasury solicitor, defended official secrecy with the argument that 'it is damaging to the public interest to have any decision-making process exposed.' So much for the democratic process.

So much for the bureaucrats. What about the politicians? Howe argued that ministers could not give inaccurate answers to MPs, but added: 'Perhaps you can give an answer that is incomplete.' Trefgarne believes that 'of course you must not tell parliament untruths, or mislead them, or tell them some-

thing that's not so, but you don't tell them everything you can.'

Waldegrave contended that 'in exceptional cases, it is necessary to say something that is untrue in the House of Commons'. He argued that there were 'plenty of cases' when a minister 'will not mislead the House ... but he may not display everything he knows about a subject'.

Heseltine said: 'I was of course preoccupied that I had given false information to the House of Commons. I'm not going to tell you that no minister has ever told half the truth to the House of Commons.'

Major is in all this up to his neck. At least half a dozen relevant documents crossed his desk. One he said he didn't see. One he saw, but he says he did not read the relevant page. Three he had to admit reading, as they carried his own handwriting in the margins, but somehow he failed to twig their significance.

Margaret Thatcher denied that she had been told about the tilt, a dubious proposition given the Iraq Procurement Working Party.

Moreover, official papers on arms-related exports to Iraq bore her handwriting in the margins. Against one claim 'MoD, FCO and DTI consider the government could argue that the sale would be within the revised guidelines', she had written 'doubtful'.

Garel-Jones had no regrets about enforcing confidentiality, as release of documents 'implanted in the minds of ordinary citizens that public servants were engaged in some sort of conspiracy to see if they could somehow have slipped arms to Iraq when no-one was looking, which is absurd.'

Actually, Garel-Jones, that sounds like a fair summary of what was actually going on. All of this makes nonsense of the liberal media uproar about government willingness to see 'three innocent men' go to jail.

The Matrix Churchill directors were guilty of breaking the law. The Tories should be done for aiding and abetting.

Major is in all this up to his neck. At least half a dozen relevant documents crossed his desk. One he said he didn't see. One he saw, but he says he did not read the relevant page. Three he had to admit reading, as they carried his own handwriting in the margins, but somehow he failed to twig their significance.

CENTRE STAGE

The Portuguese revolution revisited

TWENTY years ago, on 25 April 1974, officers of the MFA (the radical Armed Forces Movement) overthrew the fascist regime in Portugal. An intense period of revolutionary upheaval followed. DAVE PACKER looks back at these events suggesting lessons for today.

THE OVERTHROW of the Caetano dictatorship ushered in far more than a period of political and economic struggle; it opened the door to a vast movement that brought Portugal to the brink of revolution. Streets filled with hundreds of thousands of people demanding radical change, even a socialist Portugal.

But the Socialist and Communist parties re-emerged, virtually from nowhere, and placed themselves at the head of the mass movement, determined to pursue a purely democratic programme.

The leaders of both parties joined Admiral Spínola's first two governments of 'National Salvation', and did everything to preserve their alliance with the different sections of left-wing military officers.

Over the summer, despite concessions, a huge strike wave developed. In August a Second Provisional Government, supported by the CP, attempted to impose anti-strike laws.

6,000 Lisnave ship-building workers marched illegally on Lisbon, daring troops to shoot them. They called for an end to capitalism and 'democracy for the workers and repression for the reactionaries'. A mass demonstration was called for September 28 by the most militant factory councils.

In response Spínola called a march of the 'silent majority' and launched his first presidential coup. His march was prevented by a semi-uprising of the Lisbon working class, while the CP and far-left PRP-BR mobilised armed militias. Despite this victory, the CP and SP continued their coalitionism.

During the winter the bourgeoisie exported capital to sabotage the economy, leading to factory occupations and growing demands for nationalisation of enterprises. In January, armed agricultural workers in the Alentejo began land occupations.

Rank and file committees were established everywhere whilst certain army regiments, notably the Fifth Division, were infiltrated by the workers' parties.

Big capital launched a second Spínola coup on 11 March, involving bombardment of the left wing RAL-1 barracks. The working class response was immediate; armed barricades and road-blocks of workers and soldiers remained in force for a week. Leftist units opened up arsenals to the workers.

The mass movement flourished, throwing up new forms of organisation in workplaces, barracks and popular ar-



reas. Factory councils began to implement measures of workers control and management of industry.

Elements of dual power were coming into existence, though not yet fully centralised into Soviets. Revolution was on the streets and it was armed. March 11 opened up a revolutionary situation.

Despite the scale of the mobilisations the CP and SP did not break with the bourgeoisie. The centrist Guide and Copcon documents (militant sections of the MFA) called for workers' power and socialism, but also insisted on the 'Unity and discipline of the armed forces', 'respect for the constitution' and a 'people-MFA' multi-class alliance.

Spring of 1975 was the high point of the mass movement, but the mass workers' parties vacillated, manoeuvred against each other, undermining the unity of the workers. Both shied away from breaking with the leftist military to form an independent workers' government, which would have propelled the revolution onto a higher stage.

In July, following the famous occupation of the *Republica* newspaper by leftist forces, the Socialists and the bourgeois PPD left the Fourth Provisional Government to launch a bitter anti-Communist Party campaign.

They took up themes which would attract some working class support, denouncing the *Republica* incident as a violation of workers' democracy; the CP's use of 'private militias' to settle disputes within the workers' movement.

Although there was some truth in these claims, SP leader Soares had, in reality, launched the counter-revolution, mobilising the more backward sectors of the workers along with the middle classes against the militant workers and soldiers. In the SP strongholds of the North and Oporto many labour movement buildings were left in flames.

The collapse of the Fifth Provisional Government and the formation of the

Sixth of Azevedo in September, was the first real fruit of the SP led counter-revolution. Azevedo promised to roll back nationalisations, promote business interests, strengthen relations with the EC and most importantly, restore 'law and order' and the 'authority of the state'.

The government rapidly moved to strengthen the riot police and formed the AMI, composed of commandos, ex-foreign legionnaires and mercenaries. This force attacked strikers and demonstrators, destroyed left wing Radio Renascença and imposed press censorship.

This Sixth Government consisted chiefly of the SP and PPD, together with the MFA Assembly, whose leftist majority had been bureaucratically reversed. It was also joined by a CP minister. Behind the scenes a rapid regroupment of political and state forces was taking place, leading inevitably to a collision: tragically, this show-down was not to be Portugal's October.

Renewed offensive

During September and October the most advanced sections of the masses renewed their offensive. Plans for leftist coups and insurrections were being widely discussed. The masses were confronted with the pressing question of which class ruled and who should form the next government.

Was it to be Carvalho, the charismatic populist military leader who accommodated to the CP (who in turn were wedded to Popular Frontism), or was it to be the weak and divided forces of the revolutionary left, temporarily united in the FUR, a loose federation of disparate forces?

Unfortunately, because of previous disunity and, in most cases, ultra-left sectarianism, they were not seen as a serious alternative by the Portuguese workers.

The far-left joined in promoting the general insurrectionary mood without placing demands on the CP-Carvalho

axis such as: break with the bourgeois ministers; campaign for a united front of the workers' organisations; for a workers government.

It did not fight for a genuine Popular Assembly - of factory and popular committees, trade unions and workers' parties - to prepare the ground for a workers' government and the mass movement needed to defend it.

This was the context of the fateful events of 25 November, 1975. What exactly happened is unclear, but it appears that forces around the CP and Carvalho - who, that morning had been sacked from his Lisbon military command - launched a minority military action to pressure Costa Gomes into dissolving the Sixth Provisional Government and call in Carvalho and the CP to form the government.

Gomes refused to play ball with his erstwhile 'allies'. Action floundered and commandos were sent to crush the left wing units before the working class of Lisbon and Setubal had the opportunity to mobilise. Where the workers took up arms they were quickly demobilised for lack of a political response. The revolutionary process was at an end; the elements of dual power were soon to disappear.

The failure of the Portuguese revolution has important lessons for socialists. The absence of a well established revolutionary party that knew how to unite the masses in struggle independently from the bourgeoisie and the officers, and how to fight the mis-leadership of the reformist parties, was decisive.

A second lesson, a product of the dominant ultra-left sectarianism, was the failure of the revolutionary vanguard itself to understand how to combat the treacherous role of the two mass reformist workers' parties. Instead of using the United Front tactic they thought - wrongly - they could simply by-pass or outflank them.

Voices of the oppressed

INSIDE BABYLON: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain

Editors: Winston James and Clive Harris
£12.95, Verso 1993, 317pp

Reviewed by Bala Kumar

'WHAT MAKES this collection distinctive', note the editors, 'is its attempt to give voice to the fractured narratives of (the Caribbean) diaspora from within'.

This fine volume has ten essays. They range from a re-working of the industrial reserve army thesis to fit into the facts of post-war migration to Britain; the Notting Hill Carnival as a metaphor for black culture; psychiatric racism through to the Indo-caribbean condition as a landmark contribution on the experience of Caribbean migrants and the trials of their descendants.

Yet in the voluminous literature on migration and racism the specific experiences of black women have most been neglected.

This review will concentrate on four essays by and about black women.

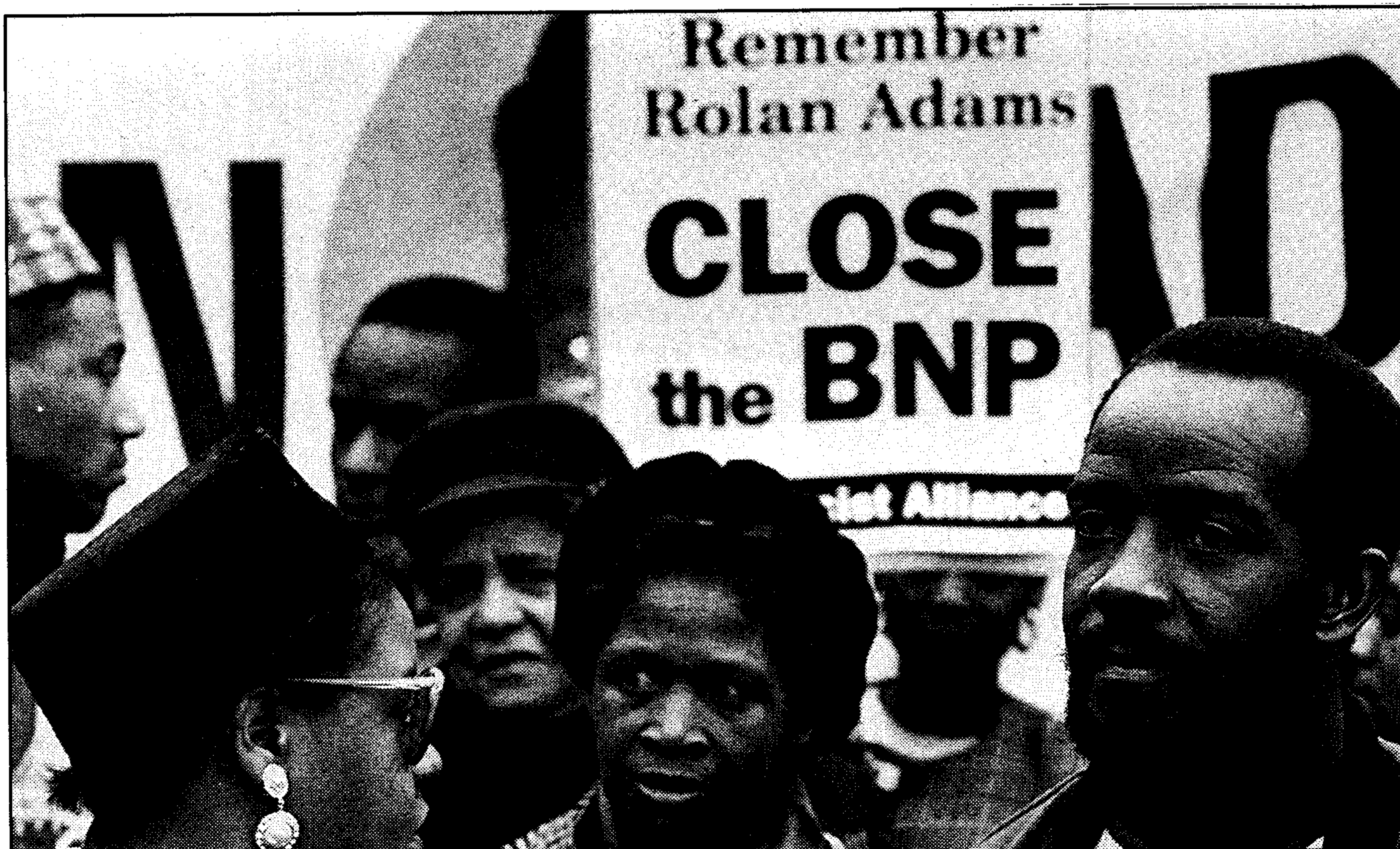
The need for cheap labour in the expansion of the National Health Service coupled with changes in the manufacturing base of post-war capitalism created openings for black women in paid employment.

However in *Black Women's Employment*, Gail Lewis finds that not only are black women concentrated in areas of 'women's work' but also in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs.

Supporting families in the Caribbean and later in Britain too made full-time work the norm. By the late 1970's only 19% of Caribbean women worked part-time compared to 36% of white women.

Contrary to the idea of 'separate spheres' which legitimise the sexual division of labour, black women not men were often the major wage earner. Employers motivated by racism and depressing pay confined black people in general to occupational ghettos.

As capital strives to surmount its crisis of accumulation e.g. through Thatcherite strategies, workers too strug-



Caribbean women are the sometimes forgotten voices at the centre of the suffering in racist Britain

gle for an outcome more favourable to them.

These struggles inevitably take place in the community over housing, policing, education, health and social security. The community is as important an arena for class struggle as are work-place disputes over pay and working hours.

Neither is the home a sanctuary from oppression. There is a fashionable belief that black men beat black women because they themselves have been brutalised by unemployment and other forms of racism.

This is flatly rejected by Amina Mama who insists that 'The question of where this leaves oppressed black women remains unanswered'.

Case histories

Through case histories of black women from different ethnic and class backgrounds, Mama records in *Woman Abuse* the ugly scenes and blighted lives of women ridiculed, beaten, raped and mentally tortured.

This study contradicts the Euro-feminist analysis of domestic violence which relates it to women's economic marginalisation and dependence on their partner's income.

The abusive men were themselves dependent on many of the women interviewed here. If not for financial support, then for housing and their other needs.

Money problems, sexual insecurities and misogynistic atti-

tudes recur as themes in the inter-relationship between these men and their partners.

Compounding all of this is the abject failure of state agencies like courts, local authorities, hospitals and the police to look after the interests of black women.

Courts have awarded custody of children to the abusive (male) parent. Hospitals have allowed assailants of battered women to visit them.

Forced out

Women have been forced to leave their own council tenancies and then spend months in refuges or filthy bed and breakfast accommodation.

The role of the police comes in for particular criticism. We are reminded that black women would be reluctant to approach the police authorities because of racist policing in their communities.

After all it was the near-fatal shooting of Cherry Groce and the fatal assault on Cynthia Jarrett by policemen which sparked the Broadwater Farm uprising in 1985.

In one situation the policeman asked the battered and bleeding woman to sit in their van with her assailant and sort their problems out. She was told to 'kiss and make up'.

Another incident was when they chanted, 'Eenie meenie minie mo, catch a nigger by the toe', while they decided who to arrest. Finally it was the woman who was arrested and taken to the station where

she was racially taunted and assaulted by the police officers before being released the following day.

Many believe as *Black Women and the Policenotes*, that where the police are involved, 'if either the woman or the man is black, the entire case may become one not of protecting the woman but of an immigration investigation.'

Finding themselves at the sharp end of racism as well as sexism and homophobia, Claudette Williams affirms that black women are 'a natural part of many different struggles'.

In *Black Women Organising* the early struggles are chronicled. From when the community was trying to find its feet and helped each other to raise money for mortgages and for social support, women had gendered roles.

Their part was in food preparation and accounting while it was the men who were in the public sphere.

Newspaper

Women like the Trinidad-born Claudia Jones, did their best to change attitudes within the black community. She founded the first community newspaper, the *West Indian Gazette*.

The rise of the Black Power and Women's Liberation Movements enthused many black women. However they found their concerns marginalised by both.

Black radicals even of the

revolutionary variety felt that racial oppression needed struggling against to the exclusion of other oppression.

Political questions like childcare, sexuality, women's participation and free, safe and legal abortion were sidelined.

In the women's movement Williams recalls, 'there was the inability to acknowledge that racism shapes and is a fundamental part of the experiences of black women'.

In 'reclaim the night' marches, white women marched through predominantly black communities demanding 'better policing' insensitive to black women's feelings.

Once again the need for autonomous self-organisation surfaced. 'It is only those who are oppressed who are best equipped to liberate themselves. No one else can do it'.

The Black women's movement was born and it lived through groups like the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD) and dozens of black women's collectives.

There are no magic formulations to iron out the contradictions within our communities. The crucial point is to assert that we recognise no 'hierarchies of oppression'.

Sexism, racism and class exploitation interlock to oppress black women. All of them need to be recognised and challenged simultaneously.

REVIEWS

**NEWS
BRIEF**

South Africa goes to polls

VOTING is taking place in the historic elections in South Africa as this issue of Socialist Outlook goes to press.

Pressure on Inkatha leader Buthelezi from his black supporters unwilling to miss out on their first-ever chance to vote played a key role in his last minute retreat from a boycott. This could yet expose the extent to which the ANC has won support among Buthelezi's Zulu base.

The next issue of Socialist Outlook will contain detailed analysis of the results of these elections and the showing of the Workers List Party candidates promoted by the Workers Organisation of Socialist Action (WOSA).

Teamsters in turmoil

THE GIANT US Teamsters Union, which in February defied a court order to stage a successful one-day strike against United Parcels Service is now wracked by internal struggles.

The new-look national leadership headed by general president Ron Carey, elected on a radical platform two years ago, has hit back at the efforts by reactionary old-guard (often mob-connected) local and regional officials to sabotage and scab on the UPS strike and cripple the union's strike fund.

Carey has sent agents to investigate the finances of all four Teamster regional bodies, the power base of the old guard. His declared aim is to divert the money to the national office, which pays out strike pay, now increased to \$200 a week.

Since taking over, Carey has led a victorious strike of car-haulers, and defied the law in the UPS dispute over working conditions, while truck driver members have staged a massive week-long stoppage against firms imposing part-time working.

Chinese struggles

CHINA faced no less than 10,000 examples of strikes, slow-downs, collective appeals, demonstrations, parades or protests during 1993, according to Minister of Labour Li Boyong. "Enterprises with joint foreign and local capital are particularly problematic".

Beijing bureaucrats abolished the right to strike in 1982.

Bitter fruits of imperialist divide and rule



Rwanda bloodbath

*'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere.
The ceremony of innocence is drowned'*

WB Yeats.

By Bala Kumar

15,000 are estimated killed in the carnage on the streets of Kigali, Rwanda's capital.

The downing of an aircraft carrying Rwanda's President, General Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi's President, Cyprien Ntaryamira caused their deaths.

It unleashed a frenzy of violence combining carefully planned executions and massacres with mob attacks.

Western television and print media have concentrated on the murder of 11 Belgian troops serving with a United Nations force; and the evacuation of European expatriates.

The media have fed racist myths about Africa by reporting the atrocities as 'tribal blood-letting'. This is as inaccurate and offensive as it would be in describing the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

Habyarimana's assassination was almost certainly the work of the Presidential guard. This was

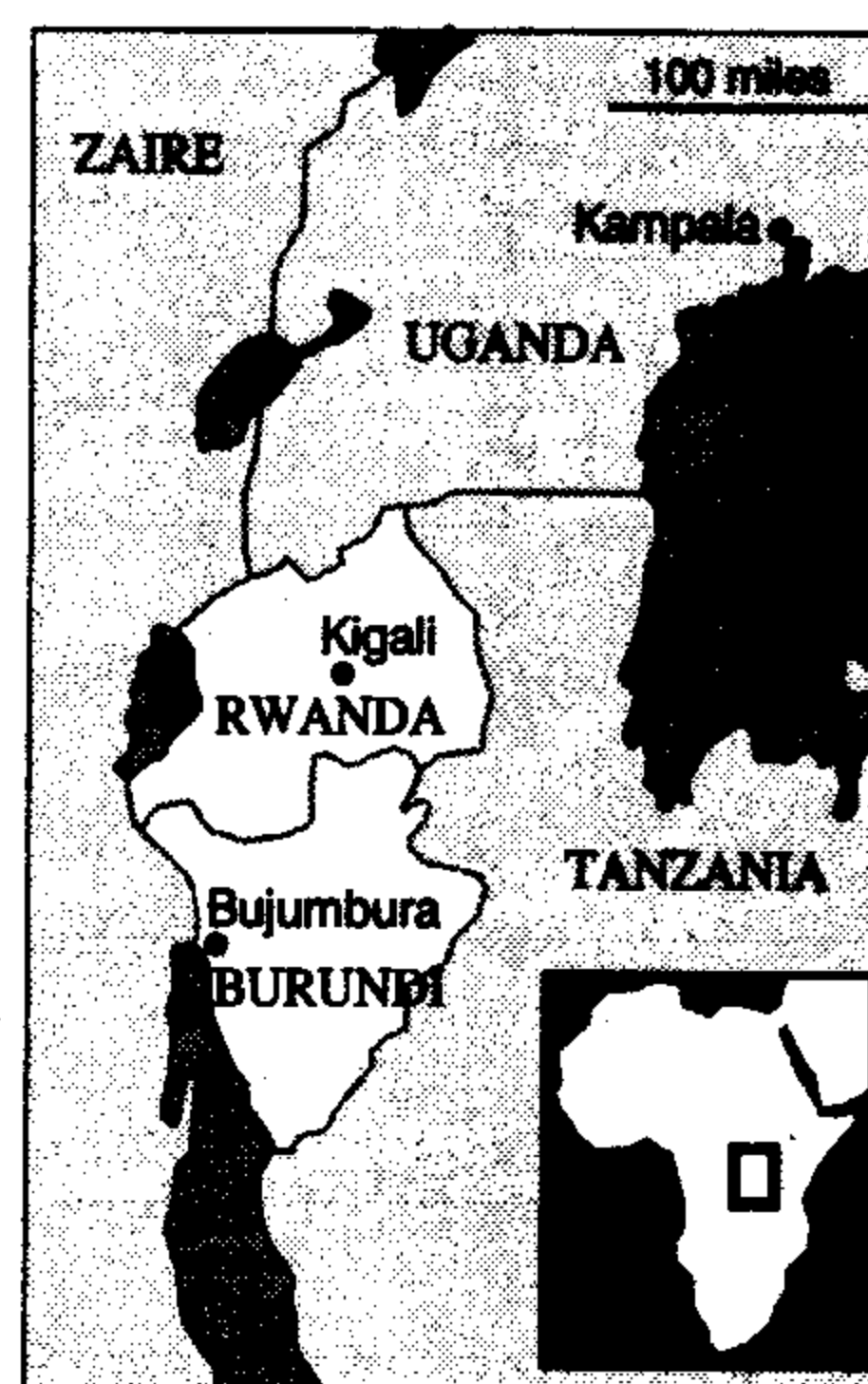
a coup attempt by a group of elite officers who belong to the same ethnic group as the late president, the Hutu.

Their motive was to safeguard their power and privilege as army officers and as members of the dominant ethnic group. Under the Arusha accord negotiated last year between Habyarimana's government and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) there would have been a multi-ethnic government and a smaller army with reduced political clout.

The RPF is numerically dominated by Rwanda's second largest ethnic group, the Tutsi. But it has Hutu soldiers and its chairman, Alex Kanayarengwe, is himself a Hutu.

The RPF had the most to lose by any break-down in the UN sponsored peace process. It has become one of a number of factions fighting in Kigali. The others are the Army, the Presidential Guard, the gendarmerie and the youth wing of the ruling party.

Much of the violence has been intra-ethnic. Hutus be-



longing to rival opposition parties have been targets of Hutu members of the ruling party.

There have also been inter-ethnic massacres. Hutus fearing that the RPF will favour Tutsis have turned on their neighbours.

Agents

For centuries Hutus were ruled over by a feudal aristocracy of Tutsis. When the Belgians colonised Rwanda and Burundi, they maintained the Tutsis as their local agents. Using the tactic of 'divide and rule' they pitted one group against the other.

Hutus and Tutsis share the same names and culture. They speak the same language, Kirundi, and have inter-married

for generations.

The UN's role has been as despicable as that of the Western media.

2,500 troops have been stationed in Rwanda since October 1993 to implement the Arusha accord.

The 'Guardian' of April 12, 'A few yards from the French troops, a Rwandan woman was being hauled along the road by a young man with a machete...she looked at the foreign soldiers in the desperate, terrified hope that they could save her from death.

But none of the soldiers moved. "It's not our mandate," said one leaning against his jeep as he watched the condemned woman.

'It's not our mandate'. African lives never are.

Where do Rwandans go from here? They could heed the words of a leading human rights activist, Professor Charles Ntampaka.

'The only way to change things is if politics is based on the majority of ideas rather than the ethnic majority. It's true that there's a definite ethnic problem. But the ethnic problem only arises when there's a change of power. The bigger problem is economic - rich against poor, and the rich encouraging the poor to fight.'

Racism diverts Indonesian fightback

By K Govindan

A MASS strike of workers and a demonstration in the city of Medan, northern Sumatra, turned into an anti-Chinese riot last week.

20,000 factory workers marched on April 14 and over 50,000 the next day. This followed the first nationwide general strike, on Feb 11, since the military seized power in the bloody coup of 1965.

The general strike and a series of small activities have been led by the Independent Labour Welfare Union (FBSI)

which is persecuted by employers and the military.

According to Sunarti of the FBSI, the demand of the Medan protests are:

- * a daily minimum wage of 7,000 rupiahs (£2), instead of the present 3,800 rupiahs;
- * better working conditions including an end to military interference in labour disputes;
- * an independent investigation into the death of labour activist, Rusili.

The protest exploded into attacks on the shops, homes and property of the ethnic Chinese minority. While Chinese form only 3% of Indonesia's 185 million people, they domi-

nate the economy from petty trading to regional giants.

One leaflet in circulation read, 'destroy the Chinese who completely colonise our lives.'

'They are rapists, murderers and robbers who plunder the country's money that belongs to us, oppress the workers and humiliate the workers'.

The Chinese have been a convenient scapegoat for Indonesia's economic ills. The wealthiest like Liem Sioe Liong have prospered with close links with the military and the President's family. Yet it is the politically weak-

est Chinese who suffer popular resentment, not the big capitalists and their powerful patrons.

The FBSI has been quick to distance itself from the leaflet, suggesting it could be the work of agent provocateurs.

'The pamphlets are not ours', said Sunarti, 'we never distributed them. There must be third parties who have been using our protest for their own interests'.

A new generation of militants has come forward after thirty years of repression. In which direction will they take the Indonesian workers' movement?

France hits the road for the right to work

OVER ONE thousand people lost their job on an average day in France in 1993. This year is expected to be even worse. In many regions industrial and agricultural deserts are being created. But French workers and the unemployed are fighting back.

Two important initiatives are now underway and both deserve the full support of the Labour movement in Britain. GEOFF RYAN looks at the campaign for the 35 Hour Week Without Loss of Pay and the March for the Right to Work.

(More details of both these campaigns can be obtained from *Socialist Outlook*)

ON APRIL 30 trade unionists from throughout France, as well as a number of other European countries, will meet in Paris to discuss a European wide fight for the 35 hour week without loss of pay.

The following day, May 1, is of course International Workers' Day. It commemorates those who fought in the 19th century for the 8 hour day. A century later the need to co-ordinate struggles to further reduce the working week remains a necessity.

Petition

The Paris forum follows the launching of a petition, signed initially by one thousand trade unionists from all the different union federations.

Today over 50,000 people have signed this appeal, despite the organisers having no apparatus or finances to promote their initiative. They have had to build up a national network of shop stewards, union militants and sympathetic officials to ensure the distribution of the appeal in workplaces and at

markets, as well as on all major demonstrations.

Their success so far shows the possibilities that exist in France for a broad movement to cut the working week. They aim to build on this excellent start by bringing together union activists from throughout Europe for a common struggle for the 35 Hour Week With No Loss of Pay.

The forum is organised around four main themes:

The Trade Unions and the 35 Hour Week - with representatives from the different federations. It will look at issues such as: how to win this demand, how it can help build trade union unity and what is the place of this demand in trade union strategy.

The 35 Hour Week as a Response to Unemployment - this will look at how the demand can build bridges between the unemployed and those in work.

The 35 Hour Week in Europe - with speakers from Germany, Spain, Basque country, Italy and others. In Spain a similar petition has already been launched. How can initiatives be developed throughout Europe?

The Mobilisation in France today - How does the fight for the 35 hour week fit into the struggle of young workers against government attempts to

cut their wages? How does this conference relate to the national march against unemployment?

The organisers themselves see no conflict between their initiative and the March for Jobs and will be proposing that the forum does all it can to make the march a massive display of working class unity in the fight against unemployment.

Act Together Against Unemployment!

THE FIRST of five national marches set off from Carmaux in South West France on April 6. Nearly two hundred people braved appalling weather to support this march organised by *Agir Ensemble Contre le Chomage!* (AC! - Act Together Against Unemployment).

Carmaux had never seen so many TV, radio or press journalists. Nanie, an unemployed member of the Albi AC! Collective, who is marching all the way to Paris, suddenly found herself thrust into stardom. The media scrambled for interviews and photos, while the Communist Party mayor of St-Benoit-de-Carmaux presented her with a spray of Lily-of-the-Valley.

The Carmaux march is supported by fifteen local organisa-

tions including miners from the Communist Party-influenced CGT federation and the local Peasants and Small Farmers Confederation.

Miners

The CGT miners decided to walk out of work to see the march off. Retired miners provided refreshments along the 16 kilometre route to Albi, where a civic reception was provided by the Socialist Party mayor.

When the march left Albi - in yet more wind and rain - it is accompanied by striking postal workers. In the small town of

Graulhet it was met by Didier, an unemployed worker who had heard about the march on TV and decided to go with it to Paris.

On April 9 the march was met by a 750 strong demonstration in Toulouse. The following day they met with workers from ABG-Semca in Montauban who have been occupying their factory for five days to fight plans for 120 redundancies.

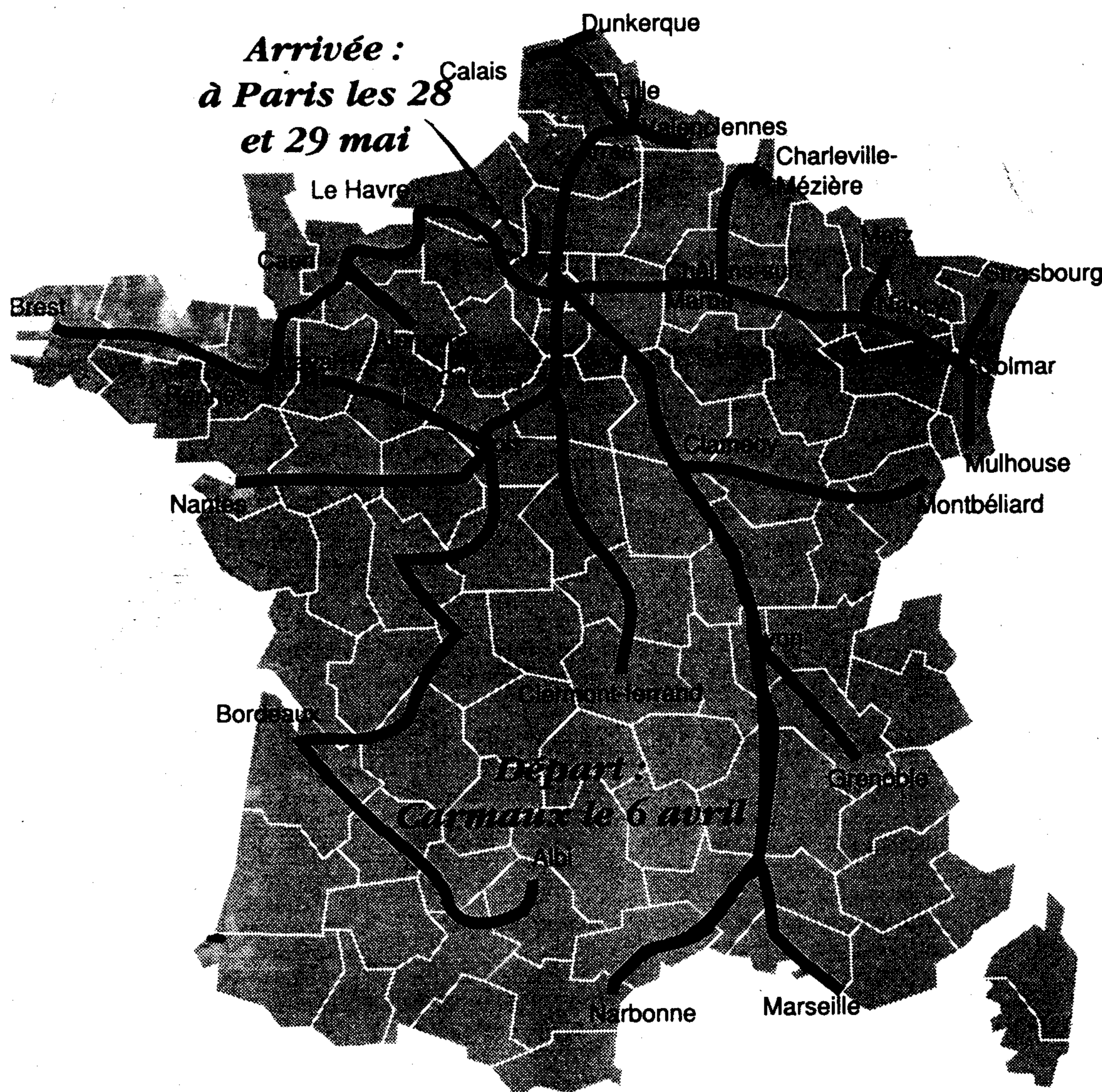
Meanwhile the South East leg of the march has set off from Narbonne and Toulon, to join together in Avignon on April 19.

The Narbonne march is accompanied by a tractor supplied by the local Peasants Confederation. At the railway station they held a meeting with the CGT branch. They crossed the *etang de Thau* in boats provided by local fishermen.

The marches have received tremendous welcomes in every town they have visited.

Well attended public meetings have taken place every evening and support has been given by all the different union federations, as well as the unemployed and pensioners. Communist or Socialist Party controlled municipalities have given civic receptions.

Most importantly new AC! collectives have been established in all the towns along the route. They are now organising coaches and even trains for when the marches all finally link up together in Paris on the May 28-29 in a massive demonstration for the right to work.



Fighting for free public transport

ON THURSDAY March 24 members of AC! held a rally of 100 people at the Sèvres-Babylone metro in Paris to demand free travel passes for the unemployed and poor. Their leaflet stated:

'In the Paris region transport is a daily necessity because of the distances between housing, workplaces and government offices.

'Workers have had this necessity recognised by the provision of free travel passes by their employers. No such provision exists for the unemployed, although it is essential they can easily travel throughout the whole *Ile-de-France* region in order to find work'.

Not surprisingly the AC! delegation did not receive a positive response from the Prefect when they handed in petitions.



Busking for Bosnia

By Chris Erswell

BOSNIA aid campaigners in Manchester have developed a new tactic for raising the issue on the streets.

Leafleting the centre of Manchester on Saturday mornings had previously not met much of a response. Shoppers refuse to take leaflets.

So we retreated from the class war to the glass war in a local pub and had a conflag. A new tactic was hatched: using music as a draw.

After discussion with our student supporters it was proposed that they organise a major musical benefit event at Manchester University.

To give our leafleting a lift we decided to experiment with street music. Two of us just hap-

pened to be blessed with the gift of musicianship, notably the truly amazing Fiddlin' Adam Hartman - can he knock out a tune!

On Tuesday 19th April 'Busking for Bosnia' was born! It was of course, being Manchester, pouring with rain. But that didn't deter us - we headed for Manchester University shopping precinct, which was sheltered and had excellent acoustics.

Violin case

The idea was that two of our number would belt out some Irish music while others leafleted. The public would be invited to put money for Bosnia in Adam's violin case.

The response was truly amazing! In the space of a couple of hours an incredible number of people stopped and gave

money.

People were obviously sickened by the shelling of the civilian population of Gorazde and the air strikes against the Serbs.

Just as we were launching into 'Ragtime Annie', an American from San Francisco on holiday (he must be loopy spending it in Manchester) heard our music and introduced himself.

Not only that: he offered to do a stint on the guitar! The sound of their music floating across the precinct was wonderful.

By the end of the session we had lost count of the number of pound coins that had been tossed into the case.

We are planning to do this kind of thing more often in future.

There is more than one way to skin a cat.

Obituary - Frank Ridley (1897-1994)

Last link with the pioneers

by Ellis Hillman

FRANCIS Ambrose Ridley died on March 27 at an old age home. He was the last link with the generation inspired by the October revolution who resisted its Stalinist distortion.

Frank founded the Marxian League in 1920, which became the first group to disseminate the writings of Leon Trotsky following his exile from the Soviet Union.

Pioneer Trotskyists, including Hugo Dewar and Reg Groves, gained their inspiration and training from him.

Frank played an important part in influencing Sri Lankan revolutionaries - including Colvin de Silva and Phillip Gunawardena - towards Trotskyism.

He fell out with Trotsky over the formation of a new International, Ridley prematurely calling for it before its necessity was established following Hitler's victory in 1933.

Frank gravitated towards the ILP, becoming one of its principal theoreticians. The

Marxist groupings in the ILP regarded him as a maverick, oscillating from ultra-leftism to centrism, whilst Fenner Brockway *et al* viewed him as a Trotskyist.

Despite his disagreements with 'the Old Man' and the Trotskyist movement, he wrote a moving tribute to Trotsky in 'Socialist Leader' after his assassination in 1940.

Ridley actively supported efforts made by the RCP to expose the Moscow Trials, particularly during the Nuremberg trials when demands were made to cross-examine Rudolf Hess, Hitler's former Deputy, about allegations that Trotsky had collaborated with the Nazis in the pre-war period.

He had some fifty works catalogued in the British Library ranging from materialist studies of Christianity and Islam, to studies on the rise of fascism and Nazism.

On the 50th Anniversary of the Fourth International Frank sent a message of solidarity.

His importance in the formative phase of the movement cannot be understated.

HOME NEWS

Socialist
OUTLOOK

Where We Stand

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

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

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

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

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

ion rights.

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

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

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

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

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

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers,

the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. *Socialist Outlook* is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

Sectarianism

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

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolu-

tion. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

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

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

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

- Please tell me more about *Socialist Outlook*
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Socialist OUTLOOK

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS AID

All money collected for International Workers Aid and its projects should be sent to: IWA, PO Box 30, LONDON SE15 5EP.

BOSNIA UNDER DUAL SIEGE

AS WE GO to press the second UN 'ultimatum' to the Serbs to withdraw from Gorazde or face massive air strikes is about to run out - at midnight on Tuesday April 26.

Whether or not the air strikes happen, the terrible sufferings of 70,000 people in Gorazde and in Bosnia as a whole are far from over. Bosnia is caught between the superior firepower of the Serbs and a UN/NATO force which, while purporting to 'protect' them against the Serbian military onslaught, is seeking partition and dismemberment of Bosnia.

This would hand two thirds of the country over to the Serbs and give them political and military victory on a plate. With 'friends' like this they don't need too many enemies!

The lesson for the Bosnian people, reinforced by the mess and confusion of UN and NATO policy in the region, is that they must rely on their own resources, and on those who are prepared to defend their national rights, if they are to survive as a nation.

The UN/NATO forces are riven from top to bottom by policy divisions and equivocation. They are not only incapable of defending the Bosnians from the Serbs but are enforcers of an arms embargo which prevents the Bosnians from effectively defending themselves.

The arms embargo is the number one issue of this war. The task of socialists is to

Between Serb guns and UN policy

campaign for the lifting of the imperialist arms embargo to allow Bosnia the basic right of self-defence. Without the embargo being lifted slaughter will not end.

None of the imperialist powers have enough material interest in the region for a full commitment to the war. They all want the war ended at any price but are divided as to how to go about it. US strategic interests are in

Turkey and the oil rich Arab regimes; they therefore want to appear more pro-Bosnian.

Germany's interests lie in Croatia and Slovenia where they are putting in

investment. British links are more directly with Serbia.

Russia is strongly linked to the Milosevic regime and at the same time wants to use the situation to strengthen its role as a world power and its influence in the UN.

At the same time NATO's sabre rattling is as much to do with its world role, its humiliation at the hands of the Serbs last week, and its conception of the new world order than the immediate effects of its policies (and its bombs) in the Balkans.

One of the problems for the UN is that Serbian political leaders have a very good assessment of all this. They know exactly who they are dealing with and are able to push the UN to the brink at each stage.

At the time of writing they appear to be withdrawing heavy weapons from Gorazde but very much on their own terms.

It could well be a repeat of the Sarajevo 'ceasefire' with the Serbs prepared to withdraw under conditions where they have already achieved most of their objectives and can move their weapons on to the next target area.

Step up Workers Aid!

By Mick Woods in Split.

THE INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid campaign for Bosnia has now firmly established itself. A permanent office operates from Split and our warehouses are currently full of aid materials. The second IWA convoy has just returned from Tuzla. They delivered flour, oil and sugar for the 'Bread Programme' requested by the people of Tuzla.

Further convoys will leave Split every 12 days. The next is planned to leave on April 28. The urgency of the current situation in Bosnia means the campaign in Britain needs to be stepped up.

For further information, or to send much needed donations, contact: IWA, 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9 0BL. Tel: 071-978 8622.

Should newspapers take sides?



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