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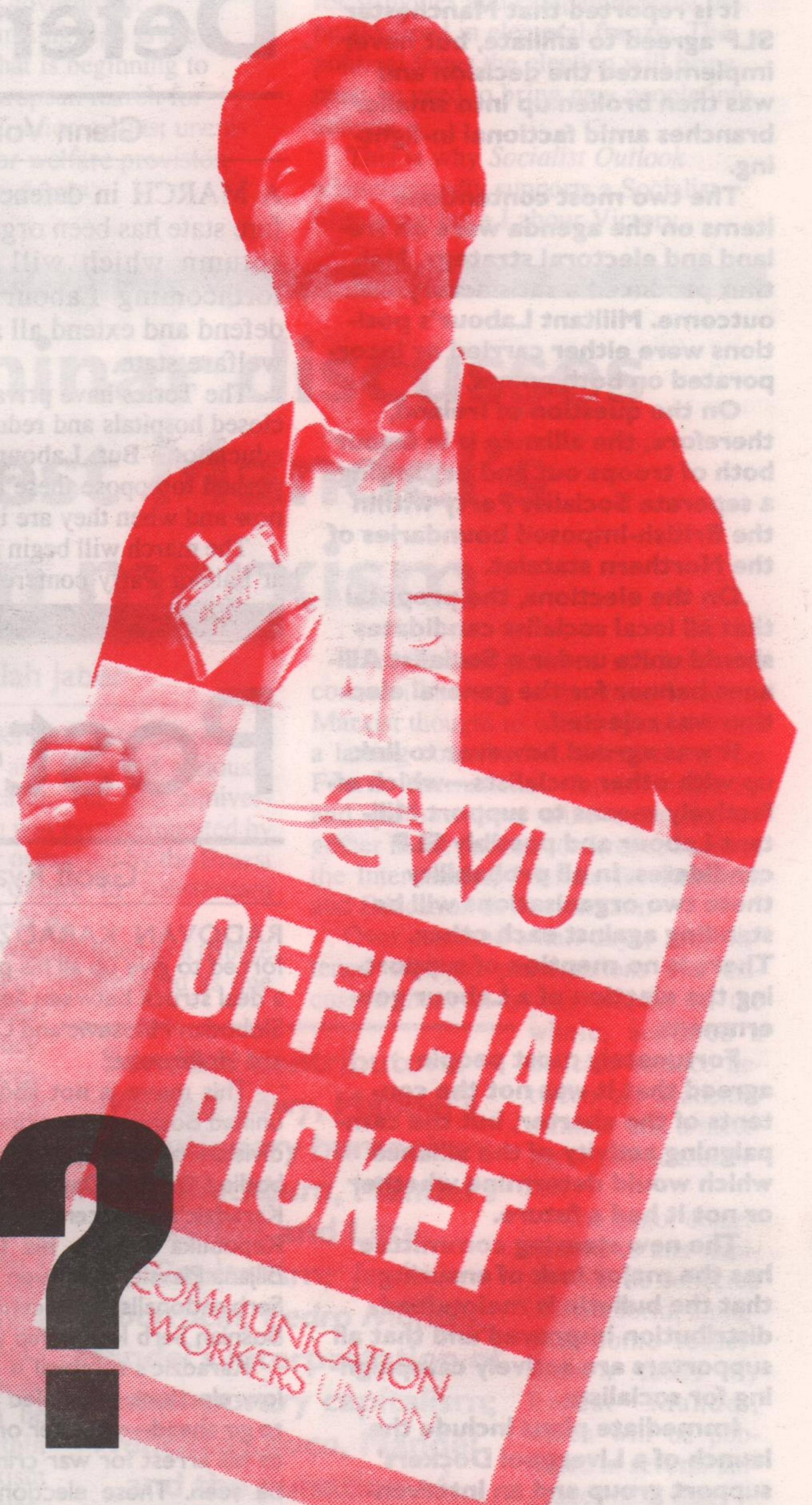
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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Tories vs. the postal workers

# Who holds the future?



**POSTAL** workers have shown determination to win their dispute with Royal Mail.

The new management deal proposed was rejected by the strike committee. Further strike action has been organised over the next month, rather than continuing fruitless negotiations.

This decision should be strongly applauded throughout the union. The decision to re-instate the industrial action followed a national meeting of branch secretaries and the union leadership. This meeting made it clear that any settlement could not include Royal Mail's proposal on team working and the second delivery.

The consultation process has made the negotiators more ac-

countable and clearly has been a great strength within the dispute, leading to three successful one-day strikes.

Royal Mail have misjudged the mood of postal workers again. The new deal aimed to divide the workforce by linking an agreement to team working with a one-off lump sum payment of £550 to Postman Higher Grade and £150 to Postwomen and Postmen.

They then tried to mislead the indoor staff by saying the only outstanding issue was protection of the second delivery. Once again they failed to divide postal workers, with well over 95 per cent on strike.

The issues that divide the two sides are vast. The negotiations at ACAS can only lead to a quick

settlement if one side compromises. ACAS could at some point give the CWU negotiators a deal they find acceptable.

CWU branches should ensure that the leadership remains accountable and that no agreement is given without full consultation with the branches. Industrial action should not be suspended without this.

The government has made it crystal clear that it expects the Post Office board not to give any ground to the union.

Heseltine's statement that the next Tory government would privatise Royal Mail, splitting it into eleven regions, turns the heat on both the employers and the union. Tory threats to ban strikes in the public sector and Blair's

noises about binding arbitration also raise the stakes.

The threat to suspend the Post Office monopoly for one month has the clear aim of putting pressure on the union to settle the dispute, although European regulations imposing VAT on non-monopoly suppliers make it difficult to see how this could happen.

Royal Mail is likely to escalate the dispute by trying to provoke unofficial strikes to force a lock-out.

The national leadership should not allow a situation to develop where CWU branches are locked out. A national indefinite strike must be the response.

The dispute is likely to take a number of twists over the next few weeks as Royal Mail and the

government try to defeat the Postal workers. Solidarity should be organised throughout the labour movement.

CWU members working for BT should invite a postal worker to branch meetings, and be prepared to levy their members if the dispute becomes an indefinite walkout.

Trades Councils and Labour Parties should help CWU branches organise public meetings to build support for the dispute.

The disputes across the public sector offer a focus for labour movement solidarity activity. The best way to sink these plans will be a series of successful disputes in the public sector this summer.

## No smooth ride for Socialist Alliance in Manchester

Chris Jones

**GREATER Manchester Socialist Alliance** agreed a founding charter at its July 13 conference. About 60 people attended—including visitors from Scottish, Coventry and Liverpool alliances and the Walsall Democratic Labour Party.

Militant Labour made up over a quarter of those attending and around a half were independent socialists. A handful were Labour party members. Five SLP members attended, though mainly as independents.

It is reported that Manchester SLP agreed to affiliate, but never implemented the decision and was then broken up into smaller branches amid factional in-fighting.

The two most contentious items on the agenda were on Ireland and electoral strategy. Neither produced a satisfactory outcome. Militant Labour's positions were either carried or incorporated on both points.

On the question of Ireland, therefore, the alliance is in favour both of troops out and organising a separate Socialist Party within the British-imposed boundaries of the Northern statelet.

On the elections, the proposal that all local socialist candidates should unite under a Socialist Alliance banner for the general election was rejected.

It was agreed however to link up with other socialists—which effectively means to support Militant Labour and possibly SLP candidates. In all probability these two organisations will be standing against each other. There is no mention of supporting the election of a Labour government.

Fortunately most people agreed that it was not the contents of the charter, but the campaigning activity of the alliance which would determine whether or not it had a future.

The new steering committee has the major task of ensuring that the bulletin is maintained, distribution improved and that all supporters are actively campaigning for socialism.

Immediate plans include the launch of a Liverpool Dockers' support group and an intervention into the national meeting of socialist alliances in October.



Women of the Waterfront play an ever more important role in maintaining the strike

Photo: Chris Jones

THERE were amazing scenes at the recent conference of the International Transport Workers Federation. Union delegates had come from all over the world to celebrate its hundredth anniversary. Unfortunately the organisers had decided not to let a representative from the striking dockers onto the platform.

The delegates had other ideas: forcing the organisers to let a striker onto the platform, the conference heard a rousing speech, after which delegate after delegate made pledges of material and political support.

The conference unanimously agreed to call for a one-day strike of all affiliates of the federation to be held in late September or early October.

## Defend and extend the welfare state

Glenn Voris

A MARCH in defence of the welfare state has been organised for the autumn which will demand the forthcoming Labour government defend and extend all aspects of the welfare state.

The Tories have privatised services, closed hospitals and reduced funding in education. But Labour needs to be pushed to oppose these attacks — both now and when they are in government.

The march will begin in Hull and end at Labour Party conference. It will ar-

rive in Blackpool at the same time as Blair makes his key speech.

The march is organised by the Welfare State Network and was endorsed by this year's annual conference of trades councils.

Hull has been chosen as the starting point because of the local labour movement's boycott of a workfare pilot scheme. This has been so successful that the government has completely failed to get its so-called Project Work off the ground.

Commencing on September 25, the march will pass through Goole, Doncaster, Barnsley, Huddersfield and then

move over the Pennines to Oldham, Manchester, Bury, Bolton and Preston, finally arriving in Blackpool on October 1.

Events will be held in all of the major towns through which the march passes. Scargill will speak at most of the events in Yorkshire and several Labour Campaign Group MPs have agreed to address meetings en-route.

On September 28 the North-West TUC will organise a major demonstration in Manchester to greet the march. The next day, a festival will be held in Bury, fully supported by the local Labour authority.

This initiative is an ideal opportunity to start building grassroots opposition, not only to the Tories but also to Blair's intention to attack the welfare state.

The event will also help to build the Welfare State Network into a real national campaign. All labour movement activists should support and build the march to ensure that it has maximum impact.

• Get your organisation to sponsor a marcher for £125. For further information contact the Welfare State Network, tel: 0171 639 5068 or write to WSN, 183 Queens Crescent, London, NW5.

## Post-Dayton double-dealing

Geoff Ryan

RADOVAN KARADZIC has been forced to give up all his political posts in a deal struck between Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke.

This move is not about rebuilding a unified Bosnia—it continues the *de facto* division of Bosnia into two states embodied in the Dayton peace accords. Karadzic's replacement as President of Republika Srpska, his former deputy Biljana Plavsic, is an even more hard-line Serb nationalist and a central figure in the Bosnian Serb leadership in Pale.

Karadzic's removal is designed to allow elections scheduled for September to go ahead—whether or not it will lead to his arrest for war crimes remains to be seen. These elections will tend to confirm ethnic divisions within Bosnia, reinforcing those in favour of partition.

Ms Plavsic's stated opposition to the Dayton accords may strengthen her hand as a supporter of partition, but she will also be faced with opposition from forces loyal to Milosevic.

For Milosevic the most important issue is ending sanctions against Serbia, without which his chances of re-election are slim. For two years he has been organising branches of his own Socialist Party in Banja Luka, the largest city in Republika Srpska, and encouraged activities of the United Yugoslav Left (JUL) associated with Mirjana Markovic, his wife.

JUL has attempted to portray itself as an anti-nationalist party committed to peace. Mirjana Markovic's hatred of the Pale clique is undoubtedly real—she once compared Biljana Plavsic to Dr. Mengele!

September's elections will show how far Milosevic's strategy has worked.

To strengthen his position in Serbia Milosevic has been forced to try to keep the Bosnian Serbs outside of political affairs in Serbia itself. An alliance of the Serbian opposition and the Bosnian Serbs would provide a threat. Hence his decision to act 'on behalf' of the Bosnian Serbs at Dayton, his support for the dumping of Karadzic and his willingness to use the issue of the Brcko corridor as a bargaining counter both to improve his own position and to threaten the Pale leadership. Without the corridor the viability of Republika Srpska is called into question.

Croat President Franjo Tudjman's strategy is the exact opposite. His ability to maintain power depends upon maximum involvement of nationalist Bosnian Croats in the internal affairs of Croatia — so long as his HDZ party remains unchallenged by the majority of Bosnian Croats.

Tudjman's strategy is revealed at its most brutal in the city of Mostar. The HDZ has resisted all attempts to reunify the two halves of the city, divided between Croats (west) and mainly Muslims (east).

Thousands of non-Croats are still living in cellars and sheds in east Mostar even though thousands of flats remain empty in the west of the city.

There is no doubt that the refusal of the HDZ in Mostar to allow the reunification of the city is orchestrated by Tudjman. Mijo Brajkovic, mayor of west Mostar, openly admits he acts under orders from Zagreb.

The continued division of Mostar—which takes place under the noses of EU monitors—is a central aspect of a continued attempt to create a viable, ethnically pure Croat Herceg-Bosna. Despite the supposed Muslim-Croat Federation the real nature of Tudjman's intentions is demonstrated at Mostar.

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## Crown vs East Timor Freedom

Adam Hartman

THE TRIAL of four peace activists, Lotta Kronlid, Andrea Needham, Joanna Wilson and Angie Zetter, opened at Liverpool Crown Court on July 22. Charged with "conspiracy to commit criminal damage, and actual damage", the women face a maximum ten years inside for disarming a Hawk fighter jet bound for Indonesia, in what has become known as the East Timor Ploughshares action.

The women have a powerful defence in British law. They took a reasonable measure to prevent a crime—aiding and

abetting genocide. British Aerospace should be on trial for exporting military jets, which, according to numerous eyewitnesses, have been used to bomb East Timorese civilians and freedom fighters.

At least 200,000 East Timorese have died since 1975 as a result of Indonesia's occupation. The British government should also be in the dock for licensing BAe's current deal to sell 24 Hawks to Indonesia.

The defendants have assembled a formidable array of expert witnesses, including John Pilger, who are testifying to the genocide in East Timor and the

offensive use of Hawks sold as "trainers".

The trial is generating unwelcome public exposure for British Aerospace and the government. They are under pressure and may back down—at least partially—to minimise the damage to themselves.

It is vital that the women receive huge support and that the campaign to stop arms sales to Indonesia is stepped up and widened.

• For more information, contact Seeds of Hope, Box S, 55 Queen Margaret's Grove, London N1 4PZ; tel: 0171 923 9511; e-mail ricarda@gp.apc.org

# A bridge from today's struggles to the fight for a Labour victory



Cheri and Tony Blair: New Labour's manifesto makes grim reading

**WORKING PEOPLE** have suffered blow after blow during 17 years of Tory rule. Unemployment has soared. Those in work are pushed to breaking.

The anti-union laws have criminalised workers' defence against management.

The welfare state is under constant attack. Hospitals have been privatised and closed. Parents have to pay for books and other basics for their children's education. Those on benefits live in real poverty. The homeless sleep under bridges.

When it seems it cannot get worse, it does.

MP vote themselves massive pay hikes and a further public sector pay freeze looms. The Tories amend the Asylum and Immigration Bill to make sure that thousands of refugees are denied benefit. Major presides over a vicious attack on the nationalist community in the six counties.

Heseltine promises the Tory Manifesto will bring an end to Royal Mail's monopoly. Kenneth Clarke's minions dream up further policies to dismantle the welfare state.

The Tories must be removed. A further term would lead to further devastation of working people's rights and living standards.

## EDITORIAL

The list of Tory attacks is endless. No wonder Labour has such a lead in the polls.

But New Labour's manifesto makes grim reading. It promises very little.

Many labour movement activists recognise how few Tory policies Blair will reverse.

It is no accident that, despite the weakness of the Labour left, new Socialist Campaign groups are being set up in many areas.

Left activists in the unions are starting to prepare a new Broad Left federation which will be much needed under a Labour government.

Another promising sign is the broad support that is beginning to build for the European march for jobs. The mobilisation against unemployment and for welfare provision can draw in new forces.

It will be particularly timely if, as is likely, it co-incides with the general election campaign. This autumn's march in defence of the welfare state can be an important launch pad for the European campaign.

All these initiatives are vital. So too is solidarity with postal workers, the Liverpool dockers and other workers on strike: but they are not enough. Something is missing.

It is necessary to build a bridge between the crucial work around these issues and the fight to elect a Labour government.

This is why the Socialist Campaign Group (supporters' network) has called for a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV). The left must have its own independent voice in calling for a Labour vote. Support for struggles and campaigns must not be sidelined in electoral frenzy. The political focus the election will bring must be used to bring new people into activity.

This is why *Socialist Outlook* wholeheartedly supports a Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

## New Labour whimsy

IT COMES as no surprise to find that many of the proposals in the 'New Labour' manifesto have had an airing already.

Behind Tony and his political gophers are a growing number of liberal academics and journo's keen to be part of the New Labour project. Professor David Marquand, Oxford don John Gray, economist John Kay and *Observer* editor Will Hutton are the best known names. Many of the Labour leader's favourite buzz words originate in their writings.

They share a deep hostility to the Thatcherite market philosophy of the 1980s.

They want politicians to use the state to intervene for the national interest. Business cannot be left on its own to deliver the good life for all the state's citizens. After the social disintegration of the last decade "the task instead is to construct a new form of capitalism".

Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle's book *The Blair Revolution - Can New Labour Deliver?* tries to popularise their approach.

They characterise Blairism as democratic socialist, "giving renewed expression to the party's founding beliefs".

Marxism is the heresy here, not social democratic politics. The attempts of Edward Bernstein to reform the agenda of the German SPD in 1899 are described as "astonishingly relevant today".

We are told that Blair's nation of "strong communities" in which all have individual rights alongside individual responsibilities has its origins in an ethical socialism which draws on the ideas of Ruskin and Tawney.

The family is portrayed as the given absolute, the institution which needs to exist in order to create the strong society and the strong community. It is the place where individuals learn their sense



The Union Jack flies over Parliament: New Labour's choice of publicity pictures speaks a thousand words

of right and wrong. Christian morality underpins the whole arrangement.

Mandelson and Liddle talk about how the present "social-security system unintentionally encourages casual, not committed sex" by giving benefits to young women. Furthermore, "the left of centre's commitment to racial and sexual equality" has given the appearance of a Labour party indifferent "to the family and individual responsibility".

The universal welfare state—that great totem of Labourism—comes in for serious criticism. It needs to be substantially overhauled and a new emphasis placed on family responsibility rather than the safety net of state provision. Sons and daughters should receive financial inducements to save for their parents' old age.

Jack Straw's curfews on young people are a taster of this right wing social agenda.

There will be no wholesale increase in public spending, no job creation schemes and no new taxation of the rich and better off. The only new taxes to be introduced will be on inheritance and a once-only tax imposition on privatised utilities. Work schemes will provide a

cure-all for youth unemployment and eventually eradicate long-term unemployment.

This hardly seems enough to fund the grandiose training and education schemes which are to create new prosperity.

It is whimsy of the highest order.

For all the aspirational talk of the boys in the backroom, the reality of the New Labour project is a continuation of the reactionary social policies we have had rammed down our throats for the last twenty years. Even the targets are the same—miscreant teenagers, young women who get pregnant without getting married, the poor in general.

So too are the politics. The demands of big business outweigh all other interests. There is nothing all that new here.

Even the constitutional reform that the liberal political classes have favoured for the last decade or two is now being quietly dropped.

For all the huff and puff of the ideologues Blair is finding it very difficult to distinguish New Labour from mainstream British conservatism.

Aidan Day

## Seminar discusses Ernest Mandel's open marxism

Salah Jaber

ERNEST Mandel died last year on July 20 after a year and a half of seriously deteriorating health. The first anniversary of his death was commemorated by the first seminar organised by the Ernest Mandel Study Centre in Amsterdam from July 4 to July 6.

The seminar was intended as a tribute to a man who will be remembered as one of the great intellectuals of this century. It was also an occasion for a critical examination of Mandel's work.

In doing so, the organisers were faithful to Mandel's legacy: his conception of democracy applied to the ranks of the movement he led, which can be singled out within organised Marxism for the high tolerance for debate and divergence that it exhibits.

The best tribute to the democratic example set by Ernest Mandel is that this is perhaps the first time that the key leader and theoretician of a political movement is not sanctified by his followers and co-thinkers right away after his death.

Instead, his important intellectual achievement was appraised and discussed in a truly critical manner.

For Marxists, this is the only real way of grasping and testing the validity of political theory.

The seminar gathered scholars with common interests in the many issues in Marxist thought to which Mandel made a lasting contribution. Members of the Fourth International, former members and non-members alike squeezed together in the packed conference room of the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam.

Over two-and-a-half-days, they listened to eight presentations and discussed them in a way which, on the

whole, achieved a delicate balance between an academic seminar and a meeting of political activists.

The major contributions to this seminar will be collected in book form, alongside some lesser-known texts by Ernest Mandel, which will be published in several languages next year.

The success of this first seminar convinced the directors of the Ernest Mandel Study Centre to organise an annual seminar, with similar conditions, including the participation of socialist scholars of various opinions.

Future seminars will deal with specific topics. Two debates are priorities: the transition to socialism; and the long waves of capitalist development.

In this way, the Ernest Mandel Study Centre is trying to carry forward the huge task of renovating Marxism that Mandel undertook in his lifetime.

**Seminar contributors:**  
**Michael Löwy, Mandel's revolutionary humanism;**  
**Robin Blackburn, Mandel's politics and Late Capitalism;**  
**Jesús Albarracín, Pedro Montes, Mandel's interpretation of contemporary capitalism;**  
**Francisco Louça, Mandel and the pulsation of history;**  
**Alan Freeman, Mandel's contribution to economic dynamics;**  
**Catherine Samary, the transition to socialism in Mandel's view;**  
**Charlie Post, the marxian theory of bureaucracy;**  
**Norman Geras, Trotsky, Deutscher and Mandel: marxists before the Holocaust.**

# Ireland at centre of politics

**IRELAND IS** back at the centre of British politics after the events of the last couple of weeks. Major sanctioned the brutal assault on the nationalist community partly as a result of pressure from the unionists. His majority is in hock to sectarian loyalism. But the Tory right were keen to reassert their identity as the Conservative and

Unionist Party. In their view, too many concessions had been made to the nationalists in the 'peace process'. The strategy of the 'peace process', for a settlement in the north, with Dublin's agreement, was an attempt to stabilise the situation and modernise both parts of a partitioned Ireland.

Europe and America are not happy with the unravelling of the peace process—and by and large blame Britain. The facade of a neutral state has once again been dramatically destroyed. The sectarian statelet in the six counties has been unveiled in all its horror.

## The future is Orange?

POSSIBLY the angriest person in Ireland last week, even angrier perhaps than the nationalists living alongside the Garvaghy Road, was Taoiseach John Bruton.

"John Unionist" was not mainly troubled by the batoning of nationalists out of the way of Orange marches through the Garvaghy and Lower Ormeau Roads, nor the more than 5,000 plastic bullets fired by the RUC at nationalists.

Even Unionist leader David Trimble's orchestration of the Orange riots with the UVF, the same UVF which had just killed a Catholic taxi-driver, was not his main concern.

No. What upset John was that the British had torn up the carefully constructed joint approach to Northern Ireland operated by both governments since the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement and embodied in the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Documents.

The reason for Bruton's fury is that Dublin's strategy has been totally flattened. It was for long based on acceptance of the Unionist veto and attempting to undercut support for Republicanism by modest reform of the 6 County statelet — reforms guaranteed by Dublin.

This led for example to the Inter-governmental Secretariat at Maryfield in Belfast staffed by British and Irish Civil Servants. This direct link was meant to allow Dublin to "advise" the British government on sensitive issues like the behaviour of the RUC or the routes of marches.

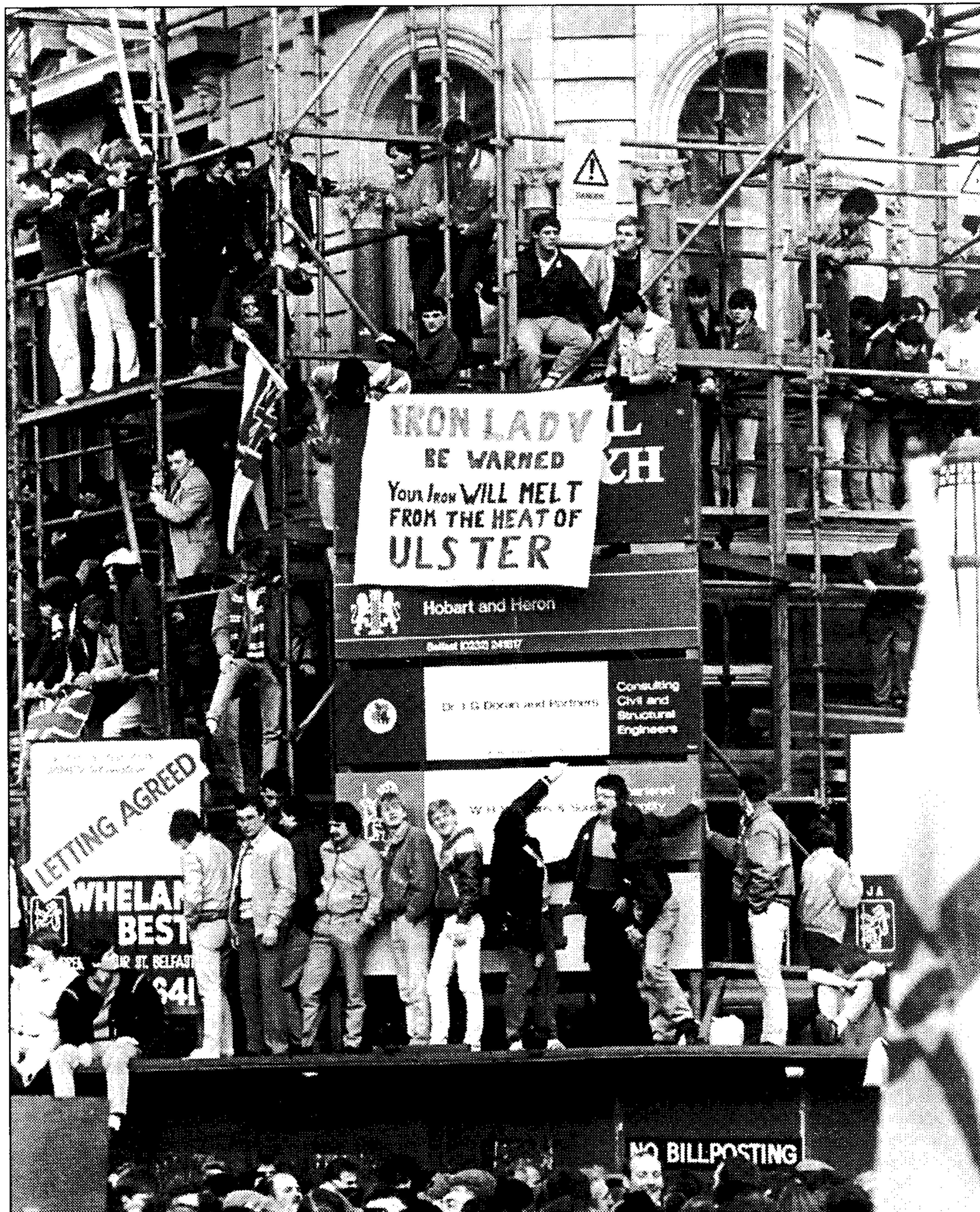
Dublin was not informed of the change of policy at Drumcree — the British claimed it was an operational decision which it left to the RUC Chief Constable.

This is a clear indication to Dublin that they are no longer to be allowed even this minor role in the North. The British it would appear, have changed their minds.

John Major now describes Northern Ireland as "part of the United Kingdom just like Surrey". The line of The Times and The Telegraph is that too many concessions have been made to nationalism and that what is necessary is to restore Northern Ireland to its proper place within the UK.

The original Anglo-Irish Agreement was pressed on a reluctant Thatcher government in 1985. Dublin was afraid that the rise in Sinn Fein support after the Hunger Strikes would combine with the economic crisis to destabilise the South.

They attempted to boost John Hume's Social Democratic and Labour Party by seeking to persuade the British to make minor concessions to the Nationalists in order to woo them away from the Republicans.



The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement was pressed on a reluctant Thatcher government: reactionary Unionist mobilisations resulted

Hume carried this further in his talks with Gerry Adams. He couldn't do a deal with the British which left the Republicans outside. They represent 40 per cent of the nationalist vote. So he persuaded Adams that the British had no "selfish, strategic or economic interest" in Ireland and that the only obstacle to Irish unity was the Unionists, who had to be persuaded of the benefits of a united Ireland.

Both Adams and Hume accepted this was a long way off. The discussion then

was what kind of settlement was to be built in the meantime.

The Unionists opposed the Anglo-Irish Agreement but were faced down by Thatcher. John Major however, can't

deliver even the token gestures which would satisfy Dublin.

Unionist leader David Trimble has been able to exploit Major's political weakness, constantly raising obstacles

to talking to Sinn Fein, persuading Major to hold elections and wasting endless hours in procedural wrangling at the "peace" talks.

Drumcree (and the Lower Ormeau Road) show that everything has changed. The RUC forced loyalist marches through Nationalist areas in a blatantly partisan way, with baton charges, plastic bullets and by putting whole areas under curfew.

Any hopes that Nationalists had of negotiating a settlement have been shredded. Nationalists can see that they will forever be second-class citizens in the Orange statelet, hence their anger at the Tories and their Labour camp followers.

The ground has been completely cut from under John Hume. The "Irish Peace Initiative" began with the Hume Adams talks. It was based on an approach which has its origins in the 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement.

But Drumcree was the clearest possible demonstration since the loyalist's strike brought down the 1974 Power Sharing Executive that the Unionists will not concede an inch and that the British will back them.

The position is even more acute for Republicans. The British, far from being "persuaders" for Irish unity as demanded by the Republicans, have gone back to their "as British as Finchley" line. Why do Sinn Fein still demand to be allowed into talks? What could possibly be the point of taking part in this farce? If reforms are no longer on the table, what is the point of the "Irish Peace Initiative"?

*Socialist Outlook* has always argued that the 6 County statelet cannot be reformed. We backed Bernadette McAlisley's call for Republicans to withdraw from this process well before the latest displays of Orange reaction.

It is clear that even the mildest of demands by nationalists will bring a murderous response from the loyalist death squads and their British backers. It would be suicidal for the IRA to disarm: the weapons are needed to defend nationalist areas.

The return to an offensive strategy is also wrong: the other lesson of the past 25 years is that the IRA cannot militarily defeat the British. What is needed is a political strategy which unites the working class North and South and which can begin to break Loyalist workers away from Orangeism.

Otherwise the future is Orange.

David Coen

**Even mild nationalist demands bring a murderous response from the loyalist death squads and their British backers. It would be suicidal for the IRA to disarm: the weapons are needed to defend nationalist areas**

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# Sinn Fein clings to peace process

IN THE course of one week the Irish nationalist population of the north experienced an Orange-Unionist pogrom, a massive wave of RUC brutality and a political mugging by a totally unsympathetic British government.

Drumcree showed once again why the RUC cannot be trusted to safeguard even the minimal rights expected from a democratic state.

The mass intimidation of the nationalist population has reminded everyone of the real nature of the state police force.

The police force is a willing tool of Orange bigotry. The British ruling class has been shown as a passive sponsor of sectarianism. The Orange State still rules from behind a facade.

A mass radicalisation has appeared in reaction to the Orange attacks. The previously accommodating middle classes are reeling in disgust at the RUC.

With thousands coming back onto the streets to demand justice there is a splendid opportunity to rekindle revolutionary ideas. Yet all the early signs are that the Republicans intend to channel the anger in support of all-party talks.

Sinn Fein is busy trying to put the faltering nationalist consensus back to-

gether again. The consensus was badly damaged by IRA bombings in England.

Already the Republicans are protecting the SDLP from heavy criticism. The SDLP has escaped from a potential embarrassment with Sinn Fein's help.

After Drumcree many are openly querying the possibility that a just settlement could flow out of talks which require an even-handed British government to put pressure on the reactionary Unionists to recognise the rights and national identity of the nationalists.

Even the editorial in the local newspaper, *The Irish News*, which has been a strong supporter of the peace process strategy now expresses doubts about calling for talks. Unionism is on a reactionary high and the British government is keen to support their demands.

Many are saying that the nationalists are back to where they were in 1968.

This mood runs counter to the SDLP approach, which has always stressed the gains possible from all-party talks. Sinn Fein has failed to provide an alternative.

Such a strategy is not only certain to dissipate the energies and potential of the opposition inherent in the mass mobilisations, but it will in all probability fail to get the Republicans into talks on acceptable terms.



Leicester demonstration raises demand for all-party talks now

Photo: Stalingrad O'Neill

The angry thousands are being led back into the trap set for them by the imperialists.

Anger is not enough. The anger needs to find an alternative political strategy and a new leadership. There is no way forward through an alliance with

the SDLP and the capitalist government in Dublin.

All-party talks are the surest way to shore up the sectarian state—there is no acceptable accommodation with the rabid form taken by contemporary loyalism.

We do not need a pseudo-nationalist family, but a socialist movement armed with an anti-imperialist programme which reaches out to all those Protestant workers who are not members of the Orange Lodge and who start out from the rejection of sectarianism.

We need to hear from all those trades union leaders like Peter Cassells, the general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions, who did not hesitate to organise rallies against the violence of the IRA when the ceasefire ended.

The same leaders have kept silent in the face of the present sectarian violence. This needs to be broken if a socialist movement has any chance of winning respect on the streets.

We need the labour movement to fuse with those thousands already on the streets. We need to step up the mass demonstrations, not to chase them off the streets into a reactionary forum.

We need to demand:

- the disbanding of the Orange RUC;
- the SDLP out of the talks process;
- Dublin to break with the Unionist veto;
- Irish self-determination now;
- the labour movement to break its silence.

## Major sanctions pogrom

Paul Flanagan

**DIMBLEBY:** Were you dismayed to see the actions of the political leaders of the Ulster Unionists at Drumcree?

**MAJOR:** It depends which particular actions you have in mind. I was delighted that they urged people to be restrained. I was delighted that the political leaders all urged the loyalists not to respond.

NOT only did Major refuse to condemn the mass unionist law-breaking, he made light of the sectarian violence directed at the nationalist population, telling their political leaders to "rise above these relatively minor matters".

His interview is without doubt the most deceitful and the most offensive given by a Prime Minister in relation to the north of Ireland.

When asked about the assault on the Garvaghy Road he said: "the Orange Lodge were wrong in seeking to proceed as they did, and I think the Garvaghy Road residents were unreasonable to

refuse to discuss and to compromise for a long time on how a peaceful Orange march parade could have passed through the estate."

Last year the residents, perhaps naively, conceded that the march could go through on the basis that the march not be turned into a sectarian victory parade. This concession was spat back in their faces. This year independent mediators confirmed that they made attempts on behalf of the residents to get the Lodge involved in talks to find long term solutions—the Lodge would have none of it.

Dimbleby also asked Major: "did the Chief Constable not ask for advice?"

Major replied: "He didn't ask for advice and he has made that clear".

He claims that no pressure was put on the chief constable to reverse his decision.

But he has yet to explain how Trimble and Paisley were able to assure the Orangemen that they would be walking in the morning the night before the decision was made public.

Major promised the unionists the decision would be changed when he met

them a few hours before they flew off to Drumcree to pass on the good news.

The events were a political trial of strength not about the right to march, but about the future of the peace process.

The Unionists chose the moment to set out the demands of the grass roots before substantive talks had got underway. The message is loud and clear—the unionist veto is not to be touched.

An important political victory has been won. The Unionists know it. Major knows it.

Major would prefer the Unionists to trust him; and to be a little less reactionary.

But he is quite prepared to accommodate to their gangsterism. He has the nerve to say that the victims of sectarian aggression are more-or-less to blame for their own misfortune. He dresses his vicious advice up with the language of modesty and moderation.

He is nothing of the sort. He is an arch reactionary, leading an increasingly reactionary government. The sooner British workers get rid of him and his party the better.

## Mo blames Mayhew shock

AFTER the events in Portadown, something quite remarkable happened.

Labour's spokesperson on Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, criticised the Northern Ireland Secretary, Patrick Mayhew, for contributing to an impasse which led to the subsequent 'rioting'.

What was unique about this was not what she said—he media characterised her reproof as being restrained—but that she disagreed with Mayhew at all. As she herself put it after her slight indiscretion, "we are not breaking bipartisanship, but will continue to state our views clearly".

Labour's frontbench has 'stated its views' so clearly over the last two years that sections of the Irish community in Britain have questioned whether they should continue to support the party at all.

Former Northern Ireland spokesperson Kevin McNamara, hardly a raving lefty or Sinn Fein sympathiser, has spoken out several times against Labour moving closer and closer to the Unionists. Mowlam's remarks after Drumcree were nowhere near as critical of the

government as those of the Irish Taoiseach, John Bruton.

Since the 'peace process' began it has been hard to distinguish Labour's policy from that of the Tories'. As the 'New Labour' manifesto says, 'Labour will attach as great an importance to the peace process as the Tories have'.

After the Canary Wharf bomb the left pointed out that blame for the breakdown of the ceasefire rested with Major. Blair and the Shadow Cabinet also shared some of the responsibility because of their lack of criticism of the government.

Labour's convoluted explanations for its bipartisanship are in themselves extraordinary. We are told that if any party to the talks thought it was going to get a better deal from Labour it would drag its feet until after the general election.

The parties that Labour has in mind are the unionists and what it is really saying is that they will get a better deal under Labour! Blair and Mowlam are however not going to say this openly because it would undermine the 'peace process'.

In the final analysis Labour's policy is no different from the Tories. A united Ireland by consent means that the unionist majority in the North of Ireland maintain a veto just as they do in the Tories' proposals.

Supposedly committed to unity, in reality Labour is moving further and further towards a position of maintaining the union.

Even on basic civil rights, where Labour has been critical for many years, Jack Straw this year dropped Labour's opposition to the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act - an act it originally introduced.

There was however considerable opposition within the Labour Party to this latest manifestation of support for 'law and order' and what it involves - repression of the Irish community in Britain.

Socialists should use this discontent to point out the reactionary role Britain plays in Ireland and raise the demands for British withdrawal and self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole.

Pete Firmin

## Ban plastic bullets

**THE UNITED Campaign Against Plastic Bullets** has called for a major campaign to demand the British government end the firing of plastic bullets.

Only in the North of Ireland are these lethal weapons used by the police. Whenever a disturbance breaks out in any other part of Britain the weapon is not used to quell the trouble.

Yet in the North of Ireland they are brought out for every occasion, including the slightest problem at a football game.

A group of human rights legal activists has pointed out that over 6,000 plastic bullets were officially fired by the security forces this past week; it is believed that the unofficial count is a lot higher. Mrs Reilly (UCAPB) said that the inadequate rules limiting in theory the use of the weapon are being routinely and openly flouted, especially this past week.

Quoted in local newspapers, she said: "Dozens of people have been badly injured this week, several are critically ill in hospital. What we have seen is plastic bullets being fired at point blank range, and being routinely fired above waist height. All this is supposed to be against the rules of

engagement and yet not a word is said against it."

What was noted by many foreign journalists, but left unsaid by British newspaper reporters, was that almost all the plastic bullets were used against nationalists.

Using RUC figures, 163 plastic bullets were fired at loyalist protesters, and the rest reserved for the nationalists. The RUC admitted firing over 900 bullets at nationalists in Derry on one night. The injury count in the Derry hospital is a long one.

Lewis Creme was shot in the arm and then in the jaw; the non-lethal weapon shattered his jaw and ripped off his ear. Michael Smith was shot in the head. He remains in intensive care with a fractured skull and broken ribs. John Travers was shot twice; once in the knee and once in the side.

In one night in Derry 41 people were kept in hospital for plastic bullet wounds. Thankfully nobody has been killed, though some victims remain in a critical condition.

Socialists in Britain should demand that this version of the turkey shoot be banned by a future Labour government.

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Yeltsin re-elected with 54 per cent but...

# Russia's crisis continues

Boris Yeltsin's election victory solves nothing. Here DAVE PACKER explains how the project of capitalist restoration, pursued in different ways by all the main contenders in the Presidential elections, is in deep crisis.

THIS crisis and the political paralysis cannot continue indefinitely. Unfortunately the crisis of the pro-bourgeois forces within the bureaucracy is matched by the continued absence of an independent working-class political voice despite growing working class struggles.

An independent working-class party could begin to challenge the bureaucratic counter-revolution and organise for genuinely democratic socialism. Such a party is desperately needed.

Yeltsin's sudden electoral resurrection came with the help of \$11 billion in

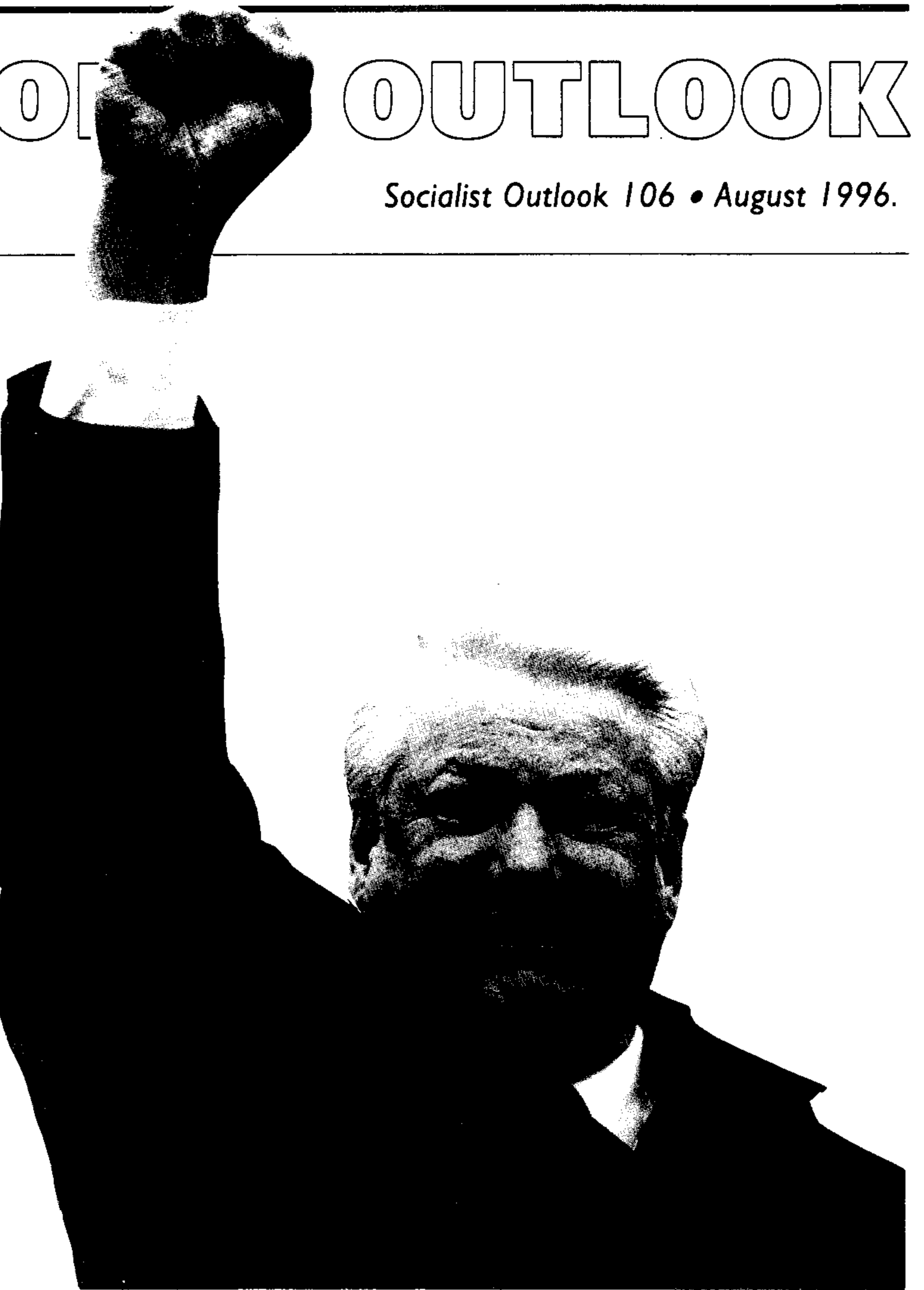
Western loans. He was helped by supporters in the tightly controlled television and media who feverishly promoted an apocalyptic vision of his opponents as the gulag. Bribery was rampant. Costly promises, including back payment of wages on a huge scale, were made as if the IMF did not exist! The Western agencies and banks, it seems, were all looking the other way at the time. It was hardly democratic.

Now President Yeltsin constructs his new government cocktail in the wake of his easy victory in the second round. The workers should be preparing for the worst. A sharp economic crisis, a continuing catastrophic drop in production (3 per cent of GDP in first quarter of 1996) and huge budget deficits underpin the situation. The crisis is predicted to come to a head in the autumn. It is the result of market reforms which failed partly because of growing resistance by workers. At the same time, state planning and investment mechanisms are not working.

The Soviet Union used to produce eleven million TVs a year. Now production has collapsed to a mere 700,000. The huge Izmash car and engineering factory in the 1980s employed 60,000 workers. Today it still has 40,000 workers but produces only 3 per cent of what it did a decade ago. These figures illustrate both the scale of the crisis and the non-capitalist nature of the society.

Capitalism could not sustain this for more than a few weeks. The continued employment of 40,000 workers at Izmash and in hundreds of factories like it is proof of the absence of the rule of the market and of the law of value which characterise a capitalist society.

The crisis could propel some sectors of the ruling bureaucracy into seeking an authoritarian solution. Confronted with this Yeltsin may attempt to unite the various components of the bureaucracy under his own paternalistic bonapartism. A deal with Zyuganov and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) might be in the offing,



although some of Yeltsin's advisors are opposed to this. "I'm sure" he said, "that there will be room in the new team for all those in whom you (the electorate) placed your trust" (The Observer, July 7 1996).

The trend is away from the aggressively 'liberal bonapartism' of a fading

Yeltsin, towards an increased authoritarianism. The world of the 'Iron Heel', may not be far over the horizon! At the centre of power today stands the grim-faced General Alexander Lebed. However, there may be other candidates representing different corporate social forces.

## The background: bureaucracy spawned pro-capitalist parties

BEFORE December's Duma elections, Yeltsin had to temporarily pull back from his most extreme liberal policies. He introduced measures to marginally improve the conditions of those most affected by the privatisations and cuts because of a growing wave of discontent. They failed to stop the reconstituted CPRF from making dramatic gains.

Yeltsin also sacked those ministers most associated with the failed market reforms. The new men were more cautious. They wanted to postpone the Presidential elections in order to build a new coalition with their strident new opponents, the CPRF. The latter were of course more than willing.

However Yeltsin's vote in June was better than some expected. Seizing the moment he made another sharp turn. Within 48 hours he moved to co-opt his second main opponent, the ultra-nationalist and 'neo liberal' General Lebed.

Lebed immediately secured the demotion of all those ministers opposed to him, most notably defence minister General Pavel Gratchev and several other generals.

It was a typical Yeltsin manoeuvre to use the size of Lebed's vote to his own advantage by bringing him into the government. However Yeltsin was more interested in his rival's link with the armed forces: this was the real basis for



Russian troops in Baku

his move. This new alliance has strengthened the President's hand.

Yeltsin's twist reflects the precariousness of the present situation.

The precise deal struck is not at all clear. It may signal a renewed 'neo-liberal', i.e. capitalist, drive combined with strong government.

On July 17 Lebed got his way. Yeltsin was persuaded to appoint Lebed's side-kick General Igor Rodionov as his new defence minister. This both underlines the policy of strong government and greatly strengthens Lebed's position as potential heir to Yeltsin.

General Lebed is noted for his military service in Afghanistan and his ad-

miration for Chile's General Pinochet. Rodionov is remembered for brutally dispersing pro-independence demonstrations in Georgia in 1989 with the loss of 19 lives.

Lebed will undoubtedly use his brief to "crack down on crime" to strengthen and professionalise sections of the police and military apparatus.

This will go hand in hand with Rodionov's brief to streamline and professionalise the two million strong conscript army.

Western governments will be watching developments anxiously. This is not because the men in power lack a commitment to capitalist restoration: but their extreme nationalism raises concern in terms of how open their hopes for markets would be to the West. The Western governments are opposed to the CPRF for similar reasons.

The top layers of the national bureaucracy spawned Gorbachev, Yeltsin and the most openly pro-capitalist, so-called "democratic" and liberal parties.

The multi-millioned middle and factory managerial sectors of the bureaucracy found their most reliable champion in Zyuganov's CPRF, which has strong links to the military-industrial complex.

Their corporate interests are not at all secured by the untrammelled rule of the market proposed by the ultra-liberal wing of the bureaucracy.

They want a controlled and planned market, more selective privatisation, cheap raw materials, some protectionism, order, and the 'restoration' of the Great Russian state. This would not bode well for Chechnya or other nationalities.

## The future: capitalism requires a military crackdown

LEBED recently said that his powers are enough for the moment. This brutal soldier and Great Russian chauvinist, supported by Rodionov, will surely reinforce his position within the government and state apparatus to ensure that he succeeds Yeltsin.

However the same swoop that pulled in Lebed also brought in previously expelled free marketeers like Anatoly Chubais and the liberal economist Victor Chernomyrdin as Prime Minister. Both are favourites with the West. This has led some bourgeois commentators to believe these appointments represent a check on the rise of General Lebed: but they should not simply look to the power struggles around the throne. If the economic situation deteriorates quickly, Yeltsin himself may need to rely on the

Lebed-Rodionov axis and its base in the armed forces.

All the main political expressions of the bureaucracy from the ultra-liberal Yabloco, through to the Yeltsin bloc, General Lebed, Zyuganov and the CPRF-led alliance, are based on ruptures over who is going to get the spoils and whose corporate and sectoral interests are being promoted in the scramble to accumulate private property.

The whole bureaucracy is intent on restoring capitalism although there are deep and often bitter divisions about how to do so. This has led to tanks on the streets on more than one occasion. For over six years the vast bureaucratic apparatus of the state and party has been dividing politically and disintegrating into corporate power structures and

gangs. Now a profound economic crisis is reaching the limits of social stability.

A primary cause of the paralysis of the bureaucratic project however is fear of the working class, as Trotsky explained so well in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936). Unfortunately the working class, faced with economic and political catastrophe, still has no independent political expression or coherent alternative policy. Although its social weight, economic power and growing militancy is self evident in the main it is still tied to the various wings of the bureaucracy. The genuinely socialist left organised in currents like the Democratic Left remains a small and marginal force.

The traditional corporate dependency of workers on their enterprise managers

for work, housing and all kinds of necessities has helped mobilise many workers behind the CPRF. Today this is breaking down representing a growing independence of the working class. A lot of people voted against all the candidates in the first round. In the second round Yeltsin managed to win majorities in many cities within the industrial belt of the Urals where Zyuganov was strong. The Vorkuta miners did not believe in any of the ephemeral promises and went on strike during the voting. These contradictions and divisions within the working class can only be overcome by struggle.

Here lies the importance of the strike waves over back pay and the anger at Yeltsin's failure to fulfil his promises. The tasks today are to convince the

workers to fight but also to build a new independent workers-party through extending the struggles in defence of socialised property, a defence of all democratic and national rights and for international solidarity.

In the increasingly bitter power struggle all wings of the bureaucracy fear the full entry of the working class into the political arena.

Against this potential danger, like a ruling class, they unite in terror. At the same time their fear of working-class resistance highlights their inability to restore capitalism without violence or even civil war against the workers.

Without a military regime that will physically crush the resistance of the working class a full restoration of capitalism is beyond their reach.

# Discovering women's history

MARIAN BRAIN reviews *Women's Work: the first 20,000 years* by Elizabeth Wayland Barber. Published Norton, New York. \$13

AS A feminist active from the late sixties onwards, I found uncovering the role that our gender played in pre-history one of the most powerful aspects of the early women's liberation movement.

Unveiling a past in which women played different roles is a crucial weapon in challenging biological determinism which underpins and justifies women's oppression.

It is remarkable that such a progressive and enjoyable book should come out of the American university system given the backlash against analysing women's role in pre-class societies. Books like this are important in fighting against this backlash.

Marx and Engels drew on the work of early anthropologists such as Louis Morgan and Edward B Tyler. Through their research, conducted over 20 to 30 years, they found remnants of societies in different parts of the world where equality existed between women and men. Through reading this material, the early founders of the communist movement saw that what was being uncovered were pre-class societies. These societies were based on subsistence economies and they classified them as primitive communism.

Early developing capitalism was often accompanied by the development of progressive and scientific ideas—classically the development of the Enlightenment which preceded the French bourgeois revolution of 1789. Such ideas were in the



"Women's work consisted largely of making perishables"

interests of the emerging bourgeoisie in the battle to overthrow decaying feudal societies.

Capitalism ceased to have any progressive dynamic once the material basis had been laid for the development of socialism—a stage that was reached in the 1880's. From this time scientific ideas which describe the laws of progress in history became a major threat to the ruling class and its system.

In anthropology this was reflected in the ideological counter-revolution against the ideas of Morgan and Tyler which started in the 1920s. This had three strands: the denial of progress in history, the denial that there were any general patterns in relationships between the genders and the denial, from the functionalists, that gender had any 'function' in society.

When Wayland Barber was a student of Classical and Bronze Age Mediterranean archaeology she became fascinated by the fact that many decorations on durable materials such as wall decora-

tions and pottery looked as if they had been copied from typical weaving patterns. When she questioned experienced archaeologists, they responded that it was impossible that such complicated textiles could have been woven so early.

Dissatisfied by this response, she began a journey of discovery which was first to lead to the publication of another book: 'Prehistoric textiles' (Princeton University Press 1991). Then she realised that it was women who developed cloth and textiles.

This is how she explains it in the preface to 'Women's Work - the first 20,000 years':

"Along the way I kept running across wonderful bits of information about the women - virtually always women - who produced these textiles and about the different values that different societies put on the products and their makers. When I talked about my work, people seemed especially eager for these vignettes, stories that told of women's lives thousands of

years ago. They urged me to write a second book on the economic and social history of ancient textiles, in effect on the women who made the cloth and the clothing."

This book brings to light new material on the role that textile production played in pre-class society and women's role as the producers of this important resource. The conclusions come close to Marxism. She argues that inventions are dependent on the productivity of labour and technology existing within a particular society.

She shows that 20,000 years ago women were making and wearing the first clothing, created from spun fibres. Fibre Arts were an enormous economic force right up to the Industrial Revolution—in women's hands. But despite the technological challenges, artistic excellence and economic significance this story is absent from most texts on ancient history and economics.

In her postscript, Finding the Invisible, Wayland Barber concludes:

"Past scholars have generally dismissed the history of early perishable commodities like cloth as unreconstructable, on the grounds that there was no evidence. By tracking down a great deal of evidence from unusual sources, we have reconstructed much about ancient textiles, and the people and societies that made them."

Women's work consisted largely of making perishables—especially food and clothing. So if we are to retrieve significant amounts of women's history, and I am thinking of such things as music and dance as well as clothing, we need better evidence than that which just falls into our laps. We need the skill to glean all the surviving evidence and wring out of it every last drop of information and useful analysis.

## Socialist Outlook's politics

# WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

**U**P AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public 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 build a new type of working class leadership, based on the class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the politics of "new realism", effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that 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 the 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 on 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 to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries. Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

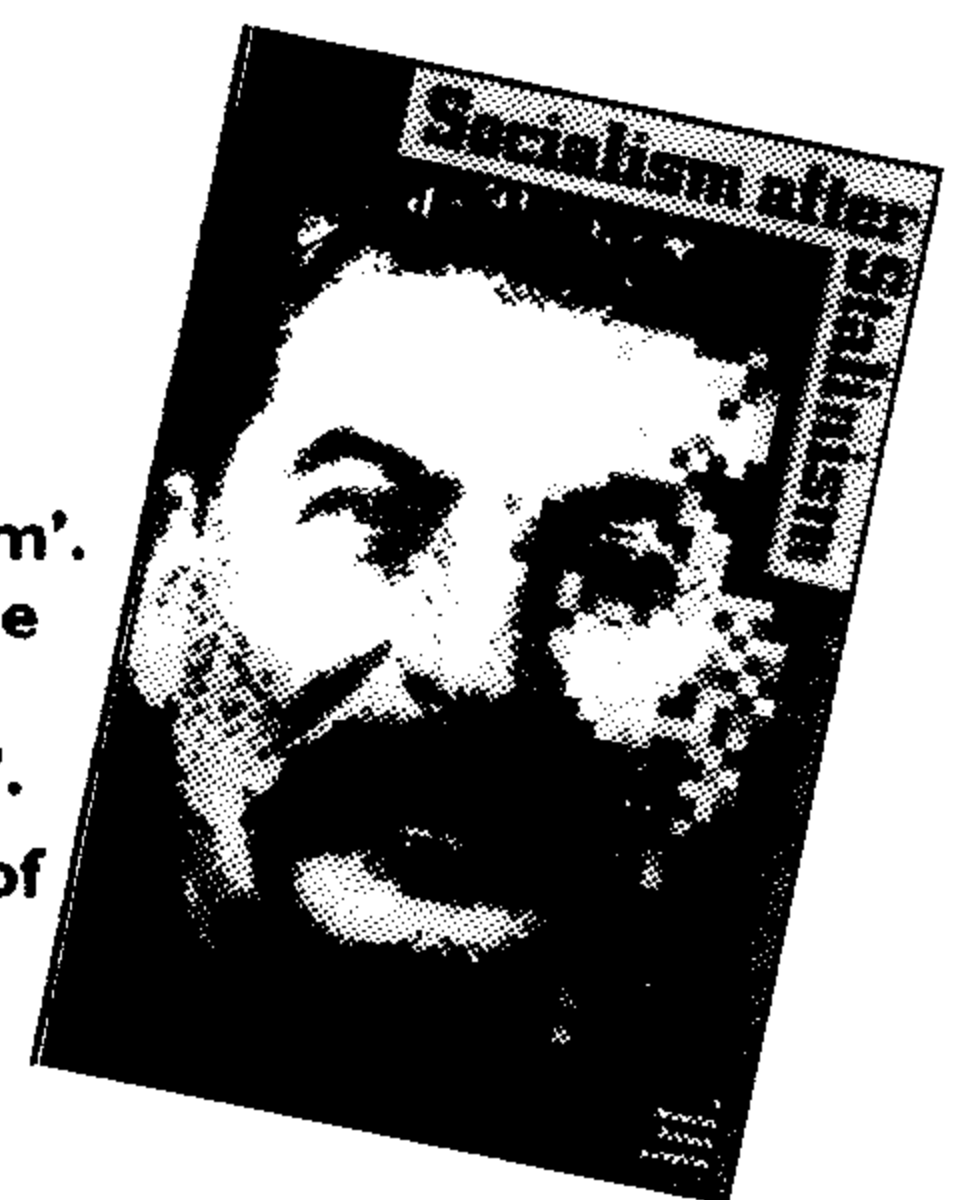
Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are part of the struggle for socialism. But propaganda 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 racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences. If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in cities across the country.

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

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# China's urban revolutionaries

NEIL MURRAY reviews *China's Urban Revolutionaries: Explorations in the History of Chinese Trotskyism 1921-1952*, by Greg Benton, published by Humanities Press, New Jersey. £12.99.

THE early Chinese trotskysts are nothing like as well known as those in Europe or the United States, yet the Chinese Left Opposition, formed from four separate groups in 1931, was among the largest in the world.

The SWP in the US had more members, but the conditions under which it operated were quite different from those in China. Trotsky himself wrote in 1931 that, unlike the opposition elsewhere, the Chinese trotskyst organisation "did not develop on

the basis of petty backroom intrigues but from the experience of a great revolution that was lost by an opportunist leadership."

The nature of the Chinese revolution and the strategy of Chinese communists was one of the chief issues that engaged Trotsky in 1927, and it was their first-hand experience of this which brought so many Chinese communists into the opposition, including the General Secretary, Chen Duxiu.

Stalin held that the Chinese revolution was bourgeois democratic. In line with this he argued that the Chinese communists should join and remain in the bourgeois nationalist Guomindang. Chen Duxiu, along with other Chinese communist leaders, opposed this but nevertheless loyally carried out the policy.

This led in 1927 to the slaughter of many Chinese workers and communists at the hands of the Guomindang. Trotsky argued after 1927 that the Chinese revolution had been defeated, while Stalin—the architect of the defeated strategy—argued that the victory of the revolution was in the party's grasp. Benton charts how many Chi-

## Chinese trotskystism "did not develop on the basis of petty backroom intrigues but from the experience of a great revolution that was lost by an opportunist leadership"

nese communists first came into contact with Trotsky's ideas when several hundred young survivors went to Moscow to study. He describes how they had to set up a secret organisation but were then discovered and expelled from Moscow.

The Chinese trotskysts could not develop to their potential. Not, primarily, because of political shortcomings (although Benton discusses them too), but because of the odds they confronted. The cities in which they worked became so dangerous under the Guomindang's terror that even the Central Committee of the official Communist Party, with its vastly superior contacts and resources, was forced to flee to the villages in 1931.

The Chinese trotskysts also faced the hatred of the stalinists. Some were killed by the stalinists during periods of armed struggle, but in general there was a tacit division of labour between the Guomindang that jailed them and the CCP that slandered and isolated them, closing off areas of politics in which they might otherwise have intervened.

As Benton says "the Central Committee of the Chinese trotskysts is distinguished above all by its long, long prison record after 1931."

Not only did they suffer long prison sentences under the Guomindang, but in 1952 one thousand or so Chinese trotskysts and their sympathisers were arrested, tried secretly and imprisoned for "counterrevolutionary crimes". Many died, but in 1979 a dozen survivors of the 1952 purge were finally released.

The early Chinese trotskysts were prolific in their publications, but in the 1930s and again in 1952 the bulk of their archives vanished into government vaults and is still only available to a few selected historians. This history is constructed from the limited amount of material in archives outside China and from the fading memories of survivors. Benton's book is a massive achievement.

# FEEDBACK

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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Build support for dock strike

Greg Tucker

**SUPPORTERS** of striking Liverpool dockers, meeting on July 20, launched a national campaign to raise "£1 a week per worker" levies to keep the dispute alive.

After building for a major mass picket in Liverpool they will be taking the fight to the TUC with a lobby on September 9.

Ten months after having been locked out the Liverpool dockers remain steadfast. They have built an impressive base of support in Liverpool and among dockers world-wide. Their effective action has seen Mersey Docks' share price drop 28 per cent, wiping millions of pounds off its value. Such has been the level of international solidarity that one major port user, ACL, has now pulled out of Liverpool. The dockers are now focusing on a Canadian company, CAST. Signalling the start of this campaign Liverpool dockers occupied dock-side gantries in Montreal stopping the loading of a CAST vessel.

But despite having addressed over 4,000 meetings the weak point in the campaign remains the patchy support of the British labour movement. A National Solidarity Committee has now been set up to co-ordinate activity across the country and try to build effective action in Britain.

The 70 delegates representing Support Groups from many areas met last weekend to plan a way ahead. They heard of successes: major donations by unions such as the CWU and RMT, unprecedented support for 'unofficial' action by the Scottish TUC. There



T&G leaders must match the commitment of Liverpool dockers

Photo: Chris Jones

had also been problems. The CPSA national executive refused to honour donations agreed by their Annual Conference. The T&G dragged its feet in meeting commitments support the dockers. Even against a media black-out it was clear that dockers have been able to reach out to workers. Support has been overwhelming. Despite all sort of warm words, action by union leadership has been slow to appear.

In many areas everybody was working together. But in some places sectarianism by some or-

ganisations was hampering progress. The dockers themselves urged everyone to work through representative local support groups and not "do their own thing".

Doreen McNally from Women of the Waterfront explained the key problem. £35,000 is needed every week if the dockers and their families are to survive and if they are to build an effective campaign of action. Despite some major donations this level of support is proving difficult to sustain.

In response, the meeting adopted a three point plan of action: to launch the national levy campaign; to organise national support for a major mass picket in Liverpool; and to lobby the TUC on September 9.

While collections at meetings and donations from organisations' funds are welcome what is needed is regular commitments. Already some workplaces, such as AC Delco in Kirkby and Rolls Royce in Coventry have committed themselves to weekly levies. The need now is for this to

spread. What was seen as automatic a decade ago for the miners will not be so easy this time round. Traditional methods of organising have proved hard to sustain in the face of the bosses offensive. But the meeting was confident that workers will respond.

Mass pickets have been an important feature of the dispute, gaining a good response from across the country. The plan is now to organise a well-publicised day of action. The International Transport Federation has promised a world-wide day of protest and the dockers are to discuss setting a date tied in with this.

A lobby of the TUC on September 9, in support of a clear policy on the minimum wage, is already being planned by UNISON. It is hoped to maximise support by building a dockers' lobby at the same time. The dockers are demanding to be allowed to address the TUC. Whether or not they succeed, a major lobby can help to break down the wall of silence that has kept many ignorant of the dockers' campaign.

The meeting was a major step forward in setting clear realisable targets, moving away from abstract demands for general strikes. It is vital that broad-based Support Groups are built in every locality. Speakers from the dispute are always willing to come and address meetings and good publicity material is available. The dockers are providing the ammunition we need. The ball is now in our court.

• Contact Liverpool Docks Shop Stewards Committee c/o 19 Scorton Street Liverpool L6 4AS or 'phone 0151 207 3388.

## Unions united on Underground

IT WAS amazing stuff: both Lou Adams and Jimmy Knapp, the general secretaries of ASLEF and the RMT, sharing a platform at pre-strike rallies.

The mass meetings enthusiastically applauded calls for unity in the fight with London Underground Limited (LUL) management. They promised the two unions would strike together and "go back together".

This is a complete contrast to the normal divisions in dealing with LUL.

Two days later the result of that unity was apparent. There was a near 100 per cent stoppage of underground trains across London. There were more people volunteering for picket duty and less scabbing.

It is a good feeling. We know that as long as we keep it that way we can win.

Management has always profited from the division of the unions. But this time their "understanding" with ASLEF leaders has broken down under pressure from rank-and-file train operators and guards.

At 4.30am there were nine workers on our picket line looking up and down the road for any scabs to come into sight. A couple of hours later only two had turned up and one went home again.

No trains running. A few hours more and we are bored enough to chat to the cops sent to watch us. But nothing can lower our spirits.

Tony Blair's weasel call for us to end our strike pending arbitration has not been a subject of interest. The only people to talk about him are reporters.

Did we feel "betrayed" by Tony Blair? Answer: "No, the geezer never supported us in the first place". Dissatisfied, the reporter wandered off to interview members of the public.

What seems to upset a lot of the establishment is that workers are actually going on the offensive for once. Calls for strikes to be banned in the public sector shows us that we are on the right track.

## Why we are stopping the trains

By an LUL train operator

THE MEDIA and LUL are trying to undermine support for our strike by constant exaggerated references to so-called high pay. There is no doubt that they would be much happier if we were worse paid, but our pay is not the issue. We want a reduction in stress levels and the best way to achieve that is a shorter working week.

More and more train operators are ill with stress, simply because management restructuring has intensified work load—especially the switch to one person operations and the forced introduction of the Company Plan.

Teams of consultants have designed ways of working us harder. Flexible rostering, remote booking on and off for work at different locations and unpaid meal relief mean that our working days are longer, even though our contractual 38.5 hours per week are shorter than they used to be.

Parts of our day are effectively unpaid. We have to operate a train continuously for up to four hours and forty five minutes.

Last year LUL promised an hour off the week in 1996 depending upon improved business performance.

Performance went up last year whatever standards you use—recognised by the payments to LUL bosses. But management insist that we pay for the hour off the week with further productivity measures.

They are hitting us with restructuring and cuts in staff—we are responding with demands for a shorter week. We want the hour we were promised last year, plus another half an hour for this year and a timetable to take us to a 35 hour week. There are some differences between the unions over how a shorter working week would be implemented. But the main thing is to unite and win.