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socialist OUTLOOK

Stop the Asylum Bill!

As the general election approaches the Tories are starting to play the racist card. A new offensive against 'illegal' immigrants is under way, and a new racist Asylum Bill is being pushed through.

Police and immigration officers are staging spectacular mass raids on workplaces to net low-paid black workers for deportation.

The Asylum Bill is aimed at the relatively small number of refugees who enter Britain each year, making it harder for them to come into the country, and easier to quickly deport them without right of legal appeal.

The aims of the Bill are racist through and through. It will add another weapon to the battery of immigration laws to keep black workers out and harass those who are here.

Racism and fascism are on the increase throughout Europe; but it is more than ever necessary to fight back against *state* racism. A first opportunity is to get a big turnout on the demonstration against the Bill on 18 January.

● *Asylum Bill, Le Pen vist,*
see page 2



● **Demonstrate** ●
January 18, 1pm Embankment tube London

After Le Pen protests

Step up the anti-racist struggle

HUNDREDS of anti-fascist demonstrators turned out to protest at the arrival of French fascist leader Jean Marie Le Pen in Britain on December 5.

Le Pen, invited by the fascist group of the European Parliament, met with Tory MPs during his visit. The meeting was organised by the Tory fringe group 'Western Goals', which has been associated with such figures as Roberto d'Aubuisson, chief of the death squads in El Salvador.

The Tory MPs remained anonymous - but Le Pen was quite happy to attract more publicity for his new, clean-cut image. The neo-nazi leader insisted that his party was not 'extremist', but 'democratic and republican'.

But the grey suits didn't cut much ice with the thousand demonstrators who had gathered outside his hotel. A broad spectrum of the left and anti-racist organisations came together to make it clear that the Le Pen's racist ideas are not welcome in Britain.

But the French nazi's departure does not mean that anti-racists can relax. Both the British far right - in the form of the BNP and the NF - and the racist Asylum Bill mean that there is a growing threat to black people in Britain.

Since the Asylum Bill came in, police have launched a systematic campaign of harassment of black workers.

Hundreds of police stormed into a factory in Mitcham, South London, accompanied by immigration officers. More than 60 workers were arrested; over 20 were still in custody a week later.

Workers in the factory made it clear that it was black workers who were picked on. The next police target was cleaners at accountants Price Waterhouse. The racist tabloids cheered as more low paid black workers were hauled away.



Nazi in a grey suit - Le Pen

Now anti-racists are fighting back. A call has been launched for a national demonstration against the Bill by a range of MPs, trade unions, student and anti-racist groups. All socialists and anti-racists need to start organising now.

We need thousands on the streets in January, telling the Tories loud and clear that we won't sit back as they do the far right's dirty work.

Stop the Tories' Asylum Bill!

Demonstrate January 18, 1pm Embankment tube, London

socialist
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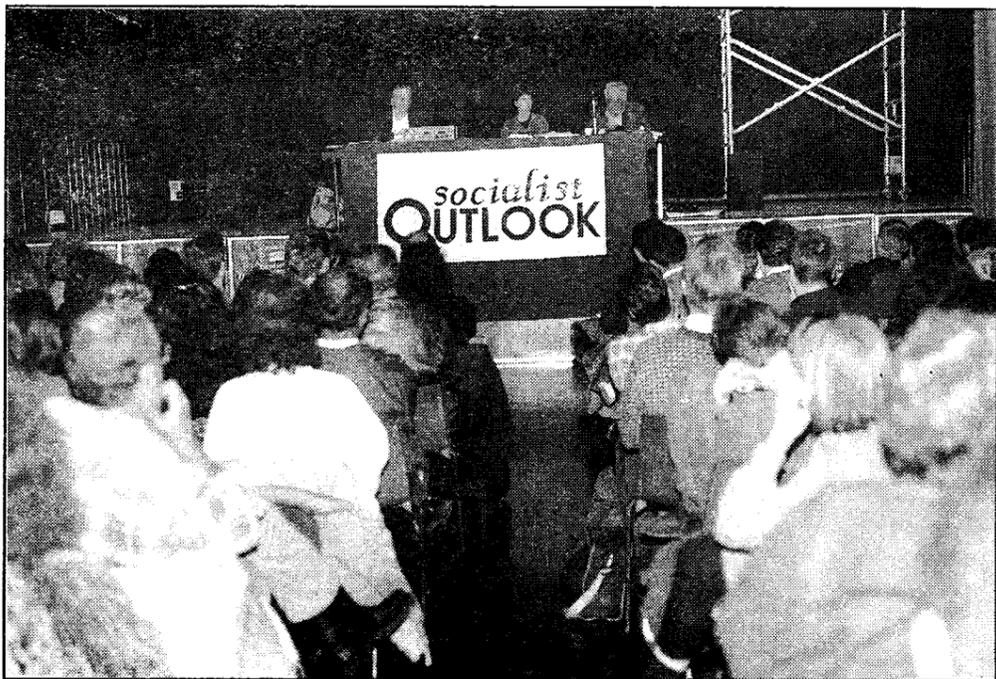
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What is the Asylum Bill?

- It shortens to just 48 hours the time refugees have to apply for asylum.
- It means that refugees can be thrown out of the country much faster.
- It removes refugees' right to free legal help.
- Councils won't house refugees' families while they are waiting for a decision on their applications.
- It will be more difficult for refugees to get to Britain - airlines will be fined if they bring in refugees without travel documents.



Socialist Outlook rally success

THREE HUNDRED people packed Kingsway College in North London for Socialist Outlook's rally 'Socialism in the new world order' on November 29.

The rally was addressed by Fourth International leader Ernest Mandel, Salim Vally of the South African organisation WOSA and Rebecca Flemming on behalf of Socialist Outlook.

The speakers outlined how the collapse of the Soviet Union as a world power,

together with the imperialist victory in the Gulf War, was reshaping international politics.

Salim Vally explained how the ongoing struggle in Southern Africa formed an integral part of US imperialism's plans. His speech is reprinted on our centre pages.

Both Vally and Ernest Mandel stressed how the new world order, portrayed as the forward march of 'western democracy', in fact meant re-

pression and starvation for millions, particularly in the 'third world' and eastern Europe.

Both speakers stressed the continued relevance of revolutionary socialism, the only current based on the self-organisation of the workers and oppressed.

Activists at the rally, Socialist Outlook's largest public event of the year, donated more than £700 in a collection to support the newspaper.

Martyrs to the witch-finders general

THE EXPULSION of Terry Fields and Dave Nellist, together with the removal of Ken Capstick, the democratically-elected candidate in Hemsworth, marks a new stage in Labour's witch-hunt. These bureaucratic assaults are not just directed against Militant, but are aimed against all dissenters. As MARK JONES argues, Kinnock's attempt to rule the party with an iron grip, erodes the very foundations of democracy in the labour movement.

Ken Capstick was the NUM's nomination as PPC for Hemsworth, and he had an unassailable majority in party branches and affiliated unions.

In Sunderland North, there is a potential re-run of Hemsworth. There, Billy Etherington, also a prominent NUM left winger is threatened.

This police method was taken to absurd lengths in Walton, where official spies were photographing for their hit-lists.

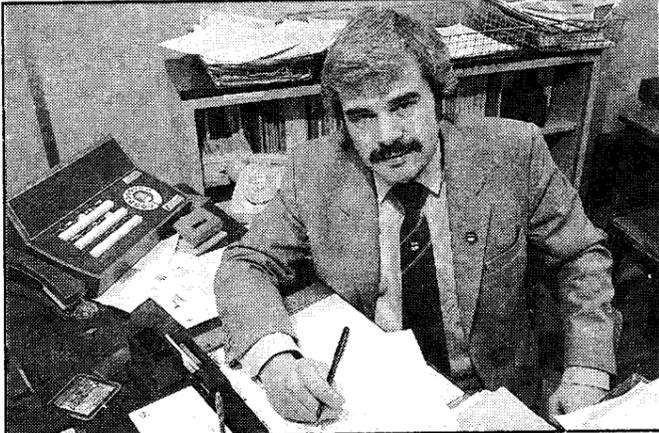
In Brighton a dossier has been produced which lists dozens of active, long-standing party members.

They are accused of being supporters of this or that current. There is little pretence at accuracy or truth in this list.

The two Brighton Labour Parties were suspended purely for defending those Councillors who had fought the Poll Tax. At first, only 25 Brighton members were to be suspended.

But when Joyce Gould reported to the NEC she circulated a piece of paper for any further names to be added - without any pretence to an investigation!

In Bedford, a number of



Kinnock's witchfinder general: Larry Whitty

councillors face discipline purely for supporting Labour Party policy and opposing a local pact with the Liberal Democrats.

In Lambeth, 13 Councillors were suspended from their Labour Group by the NEC for opposing cuts, poll tax and the Gulf War. The remaining 27 Councillors were twice forced to meet behind locked doors and threatened by Larry Whitty that if they did not accept the suspensions, they too would be disciplined.

The activities bring to mind Matthew Hopkins, the seventeenth century 'witchfinder general'. But in reality the Kinnockite bureaucrats have more

in common with the methods refined by that other bureaucratic current inside the workers' movement - Stalinism (indeed many of today's bureaucrats received their training in manipulation, unprincipled manoeuvre and semi-gangsterism in the Communist Party).

Every Labour Party member, whatever their political stance or affiliations, must help call a halt to bureaucratic suppression of the right to dissent. We must demand the right of free expression of ideas in the party.

If democracy is to have any meaning, it must include the right to organise around a point



Fields and Nellist: expelled along with dozens more

of view, circulate resolutions, publish broadsheets, and build up support for different views. A new fight for 'glasnost' and socialist democracy in our own movement, including centrally the trade unions, must be launched. Labour Party Socialists must campaign for its Charter of Democratic Rights in the labour movement.

The forces in the existing Campaign Against the Witch-hunt are growing, but we must reject those who wish to abandon this fight when it has just begun.

To give up would be tantamount to abandoning the labour movement itself to the mercies of the bureaucrats. Nor is the campaign helped by the refusal of some currents, including the Militant itself, to build the broadest unity.

In the coming election, despite all the outrageous witch-hunting attacks of Kinnockism, the maximum Labour vote is needed to defeat the Tories. A Labour victory, despite Kinnock's pro-capitalist programme, could remobilise and re-mobilise central sections of the labour movement.

But now Dave Nellist and Terry Fields have been expelled, they under coming under heavy pressure from local activists to

stand against Labour. Fields has already announced his intention to stand, and Nellist will almost certainly stand as well.

Their candidacies could find a wide echo of support inside the labour movement, way beyond the ranks of the organised hard left. But for these candidacies to be worthwhile, they must seek endorsement in their local labour movements, and they should campaign for the widest possible backing within the official labour movement, on a national and local basis.

Now is not the time to declare a global alternative to Labour, and adopt a generalised policy of standing against official labour candidates. But these two exemplary candidatures, if the campaign was conducted on the basis outlined above, could mobilise large numbers of votes, and Nellist at least could be elected. It could be possible to strike a real blow against the witch hunt through these campaigns. If either of the two are elected, they should demand admission into the PLP, as the real representatives of Labour voters.

Whatever the outcome of this sorry affair, the responsibility must lie squarely on the shoulders of Kinnock and the New Realists.

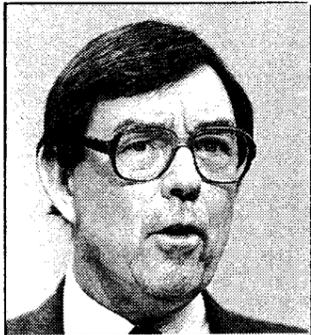
Sunday trading - who benefits?

Even the Co-op has joined the rush to open its supermarkets on Sundays, its directors claiming they have to stand up to the competition. Sainsbury's, Tesco's, Safeways are all joining the law-busting rush.

While shop workers have long complained about Sunday opening, and the trend to longer opening hours on weekdays, many workers see it as a boon.

The reason is obvious. For the vast majority of workers, starting at 8.30am or 9am, and not finishing until at least 5pm, there are numerous difficulties in shopping, going to the bank or building society, and generally coping with the increasing burden of household administration which workers face.

Office workers generally have it easier. An hour at lunchtime, with offices near shops and banks, gives an opportunity to dash out and save some time.



USDAW chief Garfield Davies

Most manual and factory workers, stuck out in industrial estates, don't have that luxury.

The problem for factory workers is worsened by the long hours of overtime, with millions still working on Saturdays to make ends meet.

Thus it is easy for the big retailers to set workers interests against one another. To millions it appears obvious they should be able to go to the shops on a Sunday, and opponents of Sunday opening seem old-fashioned or religious nutters.

The basic problem is the long hours worked by millions of

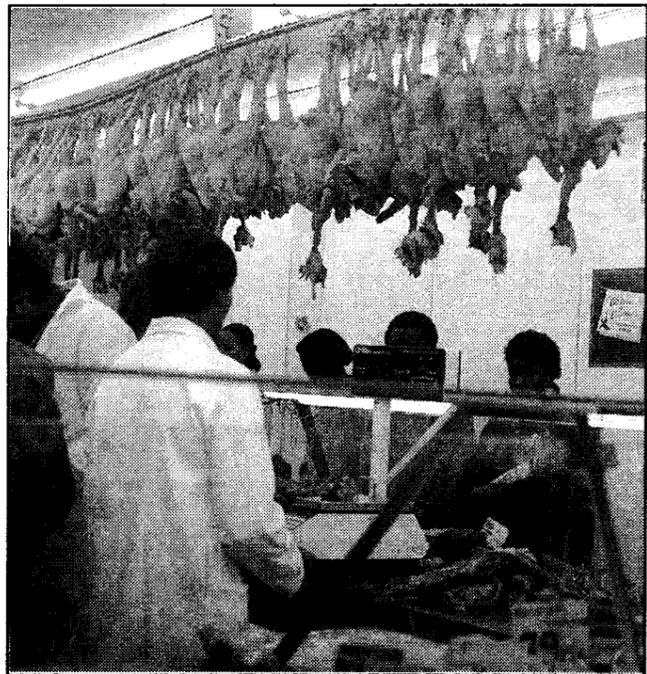
workers in Britain.

Many white collar local government workers work a 37.5 hour week (outside London) or 36 hours (London). Lots of other clerical and administrative workers have a 35 hour week. Even if they total millions of workers, they are still the small minority.

Low-paid shop workers shouldn't be asked to work astronomic hours to make it easier for others. Socialists should oppose Sunday opening in the present conditions.

This is particularly true because of the changes which have taken place in retailing. Shop-work has been massively casualised and de-skilled. Part-time and casual working is becoming the norm, making unionisation even more difficult. Pay rates are horrendously low. And shop union USDAW is notorious for its lack of serious efforts at unionisation and fighting on basic issues of pay and conditions.

In a socialist society the



answer would be immediate shorter working hours for everyone, with a lot more free time to get on with living. But even in the initial stages of a socialist society, the idea of one or two days a week where most people didn't work is a good one. Shift workers know that having free time when all your

family and friends are working makes socialising a lot more difficult.

Socialists should oppose Sunday opening even in the festive season. It means working longer, consuming more products of the capitalist Christmas spectacle. Not our idea of a socialist Christmas!

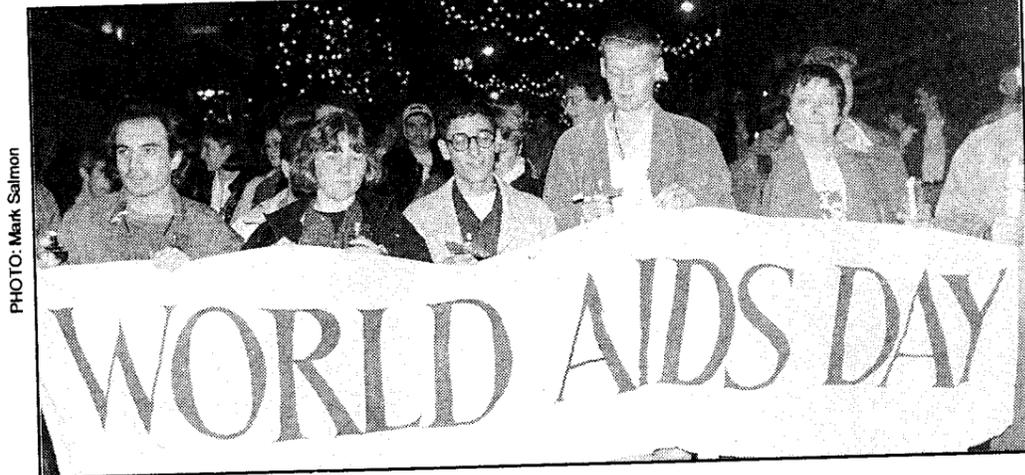


PHOTO: Mark Salmon

AIDS – looking behind the headlines

By Rebecca Flemming

AIDS has clambered back into the headlines over the last few weeks. But the coincidence with World Aids Day was largely by chance.

It was dragged into the limelight again by its involvement with famous individuals than the needs of the millions around the world who are, and will be, affected by the disease.

The announcement of the US basketball megastar Magic Johnson that he had tested HIV positive has had a particular impact in putting heterosexually transmitted HIV back on the West's agenda.

Immediately after Johnson's press conference the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation reported a tenfold increase in calls.

Free condoms

His strong advocacy of condoms is thought to have provided the final push in getting free distribution throughout the New York public high school system.

Martina Navratilova's comments that Johnson has been categorised among the 'innocent' victims of AIDS are particularly poignant. He has received a very different response to his revelations than she would have had.

The British media's reaction to the death of 'self-confessed bisexual', but nevertheless talented and famous, Freddie Mercury bears this out. 'Why There's Nothing Courageous About Dying of AIDS' the *Evening Standard* was at pains to explain. Others simply ignored

the less palatable aspects Johnson has repeated in all his interviews that he is 'as straight as they come'.

He says he caught the virus from a woman in his promiscuous bachelorhood. She has been portrayed as the guilty party. Despite the fact that it is much easier for a woman to become infected through heterosexual contact with a man than vice versa. There are no completely confirmed cases of female-male sexual transmission.

Triple standard

Johnson has *not* wrought his magic on the sexual triple standard, but reinforced it. The promiscuous heterosexual man is an envied stud, while the sexually active woman is a depraved slut, a notorious spreader of disease, and the 'rampant homosexual' – of either sex – is even worse and probably emotionally crippled.

This one-way transmission significantly contributes to women being the group in society with the fastest increasing incidence of HIV. In New York AIDS is the number one killer of women between the ages of 24-29, and the majority of fatalities are black or latino.

Poverty

Poverty is the driving force behind these shocking figures. The poverty which underlies much prostitution and drug use, which makes being willing to accept punters that refuse to use condoms a much more immediate question of survival than the risk of HIV infection, and which puts adequate healthcare out of reach.

A healthcare system which consistently discriminates against women and black people – *no* women or black people were included in early test programmes of drugs such as AZT.

There is also a refusal to see HIV and AIDS as a gendered issue. To do so would involve an exploration of the difficult and dangerous arena of women's sexuality.

Male sexuality, in relation to other men, seems easier to deal with in some quarters than *any* form of active female sexuality. The fact that dental dams have only just begun to be available amply demonstrates the point.

The threat of HIV and AIDS, to children rather than to women, has been used to circumscribe still further women's sexual and bodily self-determination.

Sterilised

Women, particularly in the Third World, are being forcibly sterilised under the pretext of the risk of infection to any babies they might have.

In East Timor this strategy is being consciously used to continue the government's strategy of genocide against the indigenous populations. In the West, the far right have used the issue in their moral crusade against the gains of the women's and lesbian and gay movements.

The fact that in Britain we have not witnessed as many deaths as in the US is no reason for complacency. Rather the reverse, it means an added responsibility to act *now*.

Facing the AIDS challenge

By Matt Gibbons and G. Anderson (Chair, Beacon AIDS Trust)

WITH AIDS cases predicted to increase tenfold over the next eight years, we are facing a health crisis that is unprecedented in the modern era. What action is taken now to face this challenge will affect the lives of people for generations to come.

In Britain the crisis is set to escalate. The situation is made even worse by government negligence and inaction, at the cost of thousands of lives. As a direct result of Tory policies, health care services and education around AIDS and HIV infection are being cut.

Discrimination against people tested HIV antibody positive is widespread. In the workplace, in housing and in health care. GPs are often reluctant to take on HIV positive patients and many dentists refuse to treat such people.

Safe sex information for gay men is often censored or obstructed. A leaflet produced by the Terence Higgins Trust has been considered for prosecution because of its plain language and illustrations.

Still there is blame attached to people. These ideas are grounded in homophobic prejudices, fuelled not only by Tory laws like Section 28, but also by the hysterical response of the tabloid press to AIDS and HIV.

Meanwhile drug companies cash in and profit from the crisis. The Wellcome Foundation which

produces the drug Retrovir (AZT) has seen its share prices more than double over the last year. Retrovir is estimated to soon have an annual turnover of \$500 million.

Socialists too should be facing the challenge of AIDS. Solidarity has to be built with people who are HIV positive and who have AIDS. It means campaigning for a quality health service, for the right to live without discrimination and prejudice, and for the right to quality hospice care.

Trade unionists should be campaigning for a person's antibody status to be written into equal opportunity policies. Above all people with HIV and AIDS have the right to dignity, regardless of whether they are a famous pop star or a young person on the dole.

What next now Tottenham Three are free?

By Patrick Baker

AFTER YEARS of imprisonment for a crime that they did not commit, the Tottenham Three are finally free.

The state, of course, has not been prepared to admit that the three were the victims of frame-up right from the start; merely that the evidence on which they were convicted is 'unreliable'.

Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite were, in fact, the chance victims of a wave of racist hysteria following the 1985 uprising on Broadwater Farm.

There was not a shred of real evidence against them from start to finish. Silcott, the main butt of the right-wing tabloids, did not even appear in the 1,000 photos taken of the events.

But despite the hypocrisy of the legal rhetoric of 'unsafe' convictions, there are a number of positive results coming out of the cases. First and foremost, that the three are free after years of ill-treatment by racist prison officers.

Second, that the pressure is mounting for a conviction of Superintendent Melvin, the principal concocter of false evidence. It will be difficult for the state to argue that Melvin, currently suspended from duty, should not be subject to any punishment after lying on oath.

And third, the collapse of the case has contributed massively to the growing pressure on the British judicial system.

The use of uncorroborated 'confessions', forced from victims who are denied any legal representation, has been completely discredited. A reform in this area at least seems increasingly likely.

Police confidence has been dealt a blow – in the aftermath of the Birmingham Six and the Tottenham Three, public protest at police corruption has been widespread. But though reforms would be welcome, discussion of the role of the police has hardly got to the heart of the matter.

During the 1980s, the police were increasingly built up as a semi-militarised force to smash political protest by the Thatcher government. This started with the systematic harassment of black people under the notorious 'sus' laws and then moved to focus on industrial action.

The test case was clearly the 1984-85 miners' strike. During the year-long conflict, tens of thousands of police were mobilised on a national level, coordinated through the centralising body ACPO (the Association of Chief Police Officers) and the new Police National Computer.

This, symbolised by the 'Battle of Orgreave', gave the lie to the myth of a localised police force composed of 'bobbies on the beat'.

The case of the miners strike, together with the print workers struggle at Wapping in 1986-87, played a key role in Thatcher's war on organised workers.

Together with successive waves of anti-union legislation, mass industrial struggle was effectively wiped off the scene. The Wapping strike was the last attempt to use mass picketing as a method of industrial action.

But it was not only the 'shock troops' of the industrial unions that were targets for the Thatcherites in uniform. Any collective defiance of the police was regarded as fair game, from hippies at Stonehenge to black youth in the inner cities.

The Tories may have cheered at the 1989 demonstrations in eastern Europe, but their response to any such display of mass protest at home had more in common with Ceausescu's Securitate.

It is the political role of the police – as the strong arm of the state – that has been often ignored, or misinterpreted, by the left, to its cost.

Though the left has not generally fallen for the now discredited 'bad apples' propaganda, major far left currents such as the Militant have treated them as a part of the workers movement.

Militant argue that police are 'workers in uniform' – as they do with the army, ignoring the difference between a conscript and a professional army. As a result, their approach is to call for unionisation.

But given the key role that the police have played in smashing the most promising mass workers' struggles over the last decade, the argument that these 'brothers and sisters' are a little misguided is wearing a bit thin.

It is only a new growth of confidence in the labour movement and a new wave of workers struggle that will lay the groundwork for a real assault on police powers. But in the meantime, any sapping of their credibility and limiting of their powers should be welcomed by socialists.



Home Secretary Baker

Fighting for the 'disappeared'

DURING the 1987-90 State of Emergency in Sri Lanka, government-sponsored death squads waged a campaign to exterminate the Sinhalese chauvinist terrorist organisation, the JVP. But the JVP were not the only victims. Estimates put the number killed or 'disappeared' at 60,000, with more than half of that number being innocent civilians or leftist opponents of the UNP government.

Socialist Outlook talked to JAYANTHA DANDENIYA, a leader of the movement of the parents and families of the disappeared.

SO: How did you become involved in the movement of the families of the disappeared?

JD: My husband Ranji disappeared on 29 October 1989. I needed shelter and protection, and I wanted inquiries made about what had happened to him. So I turned to the NSSP in the Negumbo region where we lived. They sheltered me, and their MP 'Vazu' raised the question in parliament demanding to know what had happened.

SO: Why was your husband 'disappeared'?

JD: My husband was a supporter of the UNP government, actually a member of the UNP branch of the prime minister. But he was also a trade union activist in the 'free trade' zone in Negumbo. These free trade zones, tax exempt areas for foreign businesses are being promoted by the government as part of the IMF plan.

In the plant where my husband worked, 'Floral Greens' a Hong Kong company making artificial flowers, many workers get bad industrial injuries, for example many losing their fingers in machinery.

My husband raised this

Jayantha Dandeniya - her husband was abducted for union activity

issue vigorously with the management, and got the issue raised with the National Labour Office. The company or its agents abducted him.

SO: But there were attacks on other members of your family?

JD: Both my elder and younger brothers were abducted by security forces and one of them certainly killed.

My elder brother was one of a group building new houses in a village. They were told to leave the village by the army, using the security situation as an excuse. My brother refused,

and was abducted in the middle of the night. After enquiries, the authorities said he had been killed in an accident.

My younger brother was taken away from our village by the JVP, who took him to one of their encampments as a labourer and cook. But after about 30 days he escaped and returned to the village. When the army heard he had been with the JVP they took him away, and he has not been heard of since.

After that time I was regularly followed by the security forces, and again the NSSP got it raised in parlia-

ment and stopped. Since that time I have devoted my time to campaigning for the disappeared.

Also I have been building an organisation called the Negumbo Womens Committee. Our aim is to organise the young women in the free trade zone, who are terribly exploited. Last year we set up a magazine for free trade workers, but as a result some of us were arrested and it was effectively closed down. But we continue our work; the party will not abandon this struggle.

Religion and the fight for Marxism

SRI LANKA is a country in which Buddhism, Islam and the Roman Catholic church all have a large following. It is also a country in which many religious faiths rally to the fight for socialism.

Socialist Outlook talked to two members of the NSSP leadership, LINUS JAYATILAI, a Catholic priest, and Buddhist monk BADDEGAMA SAMITHA, about their faith and its relation to socialism.

Linus was previously the priest at the largest church in the Negumbo region, but now devotes himself full-time to politics and trade union organisation. Samitha, while already a Buddhist priest, was a student at Lancaster University and active in solidarity work with the 1984 miners' strike.

SO: Linus, how did you get involved with Marxist politics?

LJ: In the late 1950s, well before Liberation Theology developed, I was a youth leader in the Church and sought ways to fight for justice, which for

meant the struggle of the poor against the rich. I was identified as a leftist, but the hierarchy were powerless to do anything about it.

For me it started with the 'mystical' or spiritual side of Christianity, which many Marxists might find difficult to un-

derstand. But I was struck by the history of the people of ancient Israel being led out of exploitation, towards the 'promised land'.

In my area, Negumbo, people are Christians and those who thought like me wanted to probe into the depths of Christian belief. We felt that serious Christian people have to take sides in society, to take a class position, to side with the exploited, the oppressed and the unjustly imprisoned.

After serious analysis of how you could identify with the exploited class, the working class, we decided that it was the Marxist tools of analysis that you need.

SO: Samitha, as a Buddhist monk, what do you think of Christianity?

BS: That's a big question! I can't give a complete answer in a short interview, but I think that, contrary to establishment Christian view, Jesus was a rebel who defended oppressed people. You can look at the story of how he cleared the money-lenders out of the Temple, and how he attacked the tax collectors. Of course, that was a long time ago in the history of Christianity, but I think that original Christianity is definitely in contradiction with a profit-making society.

But I think a serious problem, a serious question every Christian has to face, is the whole Christian idea of Creation and the idea of an external 'God'. I think that Christians will find reconciliation with Marxism much more difficult than I do, especially since Christianity often clashes face-to-face with Marxism in Europe. I think



Buddhist monk: Baddegama Samitha

PHOTO: Phil Hearn

Buddhism is more logical and consistent in its concern for all living things.

My impression is that, because of Liberation Theology, Christianity in the third world is often very different to that in the advanced countries.

Anyway, I think that any religion that listens to its followers, then that religion cannot ignore the cries of the people.

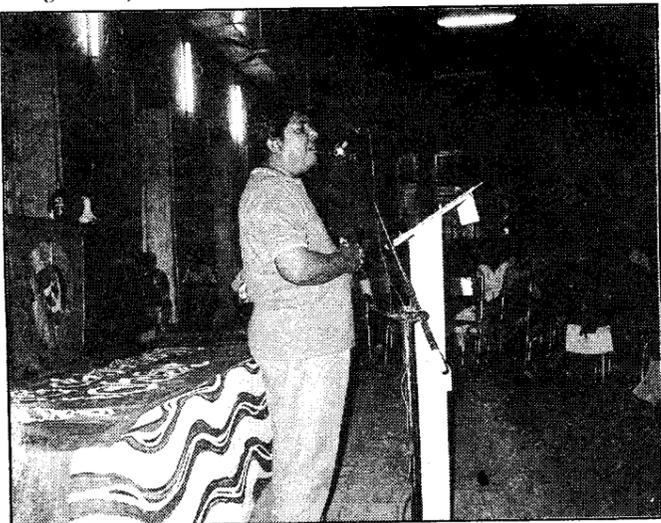
SO: Linus, what do you think about Buddhism?

LJ: Well I try to understand original Buddhism, not Buddhism as it is practised now, which seems to me to have become too narrowly concerned with the needs of individuals.

I think that there should be a

serious attempt by all religious people, including followers of Islam, to go into the history and roots of these religions, and what human needs they responded to. Obviously you have in the roots of all religions the need to comprehend the world, to make sense of the universe, but also deep-seated needs of human beings to express their most deep-rooted hopes and fears, including those for a better world.

On Buddhism, I must say that it is more logical in its basis than Christianity, and therefore has a more straightforward foundation to develop towards Marxist thinking. The problem is that its logic is not yet dialectical logic. For that you need Marxism!

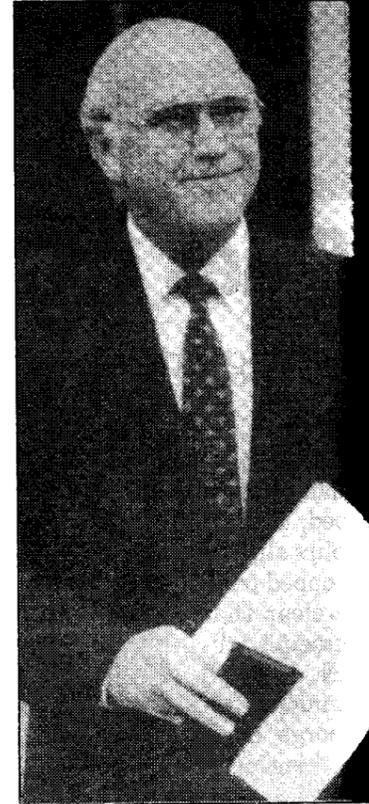


Linus Jayatilai

PHOTO: Phil Hearn



Pressing for freedom: a 1989 SWAPO rally in Katutura



Reform broker and chief stooge: De Klerk



No food but bullets aplenty for the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa

A continent su

SALIM VALLY, a leading activist in the South African Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), was one of the keynote speakers at Socialist Outlook's November 29 rally.

Vally is a leader of SACCAWU, the militant South African commercial and catering workers union, in Johannesburg. Here we are reproducing his speech entitled 'Socialism and the new world order'.

FOR US, the oppressed in South Africa, the new world order means a continuation of the misery, suffering and plunder that international capital has bestowed on our people for over three centuries.

The international bourgeois media tell us that apartheid is dying, but there is no dancing in the streets of South Africa.

Yes, our organisations are unbanned and our leaders are free; but fear walks our streets, and death catches a free ride on our trains.

Over 15,000 people have been killed in South Africa since the signalling of the new world order. We find ourselves walking to the graveyard when we thought we would be walking along the road of peace.

Bantustan puppets

The national situation in South Africa is shaped and dominated by the government's reform project and the urging of international capital.

Over the last two years this project has turned our world upside down. Bantustan puppet leaders who yesterday fragmented our country today appear before us as the standard bearers of a new South Africa.

The police who yesterday could find every hidden copy of Lenin today cannot trace whole gangs of killers who openly roam our townships.

Times have definitely changed when sections of our liberation movements, once so single minded and clear about taking power in the name of the people, today manoeuvre for seats on a non-elected government.

Broker

In WOSA's view the De Klerk regime is acting as a reform broker on behalf of national and interna-

tional capital.

Comrades, the reforms in South Africa are the result of three things coming together: the depth of the social and economic crisis of apartheid-capitalism, the mass struggles in South Africa, and the world situation since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War.

Sharpeville

FW De Klerk's speech of February 1990 in which he announced the legalisation of the ANC, PAC, and other banned or restricted organisations marked the beginning of a new phase in the struggle for freedom.

In 1960 the murderous volleys of bullets during the Sharpeville massacre sounded the end of the collaborationist and pacifist forms of struggle and catapulted the entire liberation movement into three decades of armed struggle.

De Klerk's moves are a part of an orchestrated attempt to draw a line under that period. It signals an invitation to the liberation movement to probe a different trajectory of struggle, one which centrally involves a negotiation process between the ruler and the ruled.

As I've said, various developments have given rise to the new situation. It is important to emphasise the international factor.

Fundamental to the situation is the change in the geostrategy of the Soviet Union. This involves a withdrawal from the arena of military conflict in Southern Africa.

The 'targets of opportunity' - Brezhnev once viewed the situation brought about by the anti-colonial struggles in the Portuguese colonies, in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa - are no longer seen as such.

Soviet academics and theorists have said quite openly, long before the abortive coup, that the notion of socialist revolution in South Africa, even within the next century, was mere pie in the sky.

The events in eastern Europe have diverted the attention of the West. Although it is not always admitted publicly, for both economic and political reasons investment capital will tend



and Zulu leader Buthelezi



Carrying the hopes of western liberals - Mandela with US Democrat Jesse Jackson

Offers in the 'third world war'

flow into eastern Europe over the next decade, thus reducing the flow to Africa, Asia and Latin America.

This will strengthen the relative strategic position of the South African regime as the 'regional superpower' in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean.

Cuban victors

The Russian decision to stop its commitments in Southern Africa had much to do with Angola's willingness to settle the Angola-Namibia issue.

The Russian stand facilitated Cuba's willingness to withdraw its forces from Angola, especially since they could do so with some credibility as the victors of the battle against the SADF at Cuito Cuinavale in South Angola.

For its part, the SADF knew that it would once again be the undisputed military heavyweight champion of Africa south of the Sahara, once the Cuban forces were withdrawn.

The Frontline states, especially Mozambique, Angola and Zambia could not withstand much more destabilisation from South Africa.

It caused an estimated 1.5 million deaths and \$60 billion in damages to its neighbouring countries in 1980-88, excluding its war against the Namibian people. In Mozambique, the social fabric has disintegrated.

The pressure from these frontline states on the liberation movements to adopt different, non-military tactics and to negotiate with the government has been overwhelming.

The fact is that the security of some of these regimes has become doubtful because of the struggle in South Africa.

Unlike major Arab states in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the frontline states are simply not in a position to keep up even a pose of belligerence for very long. This is the international background to the present negotiations between the South African regime and a section of the liberation movement.

The prizes for the South African state include international acceptance, apparent economic recovery, and expansion into the markets of the African hinterland and the Indian Ocean, as well as co-opting a section of the liberation movement.

Dependency and starvation

In Southern Africa, as all over the ex-colonial world, the economic stranglehold of imperialism, aided and abetted by neo-colonial and comprador regimes, condemns the people there to perpetual dependency, to cycles of ac-

celerating social revolt followed by debilitating repression, internecine conflict and starvation.

In our own region, Namibia is an example of the 'neo-colonial' solution.

The forces of imperialism, led by the government of the USA, are taking full advantage of the world-historic opportunity presented to them by 'the end of the Cold War', in order to stamp their authority on every region of the world. One consequence of this is bound to be a series of wars, such as that in the Persian Gulf.

This third world war against the 'third world' is reinforced by the needs of the military-industrial complex in the advanced capitalist countries, one of the economic pivots of the world capitalist system in terms of investment opportunities, employment provision, profitable research and development.

This war is also against the black workers, women, youth and children of the advanced capitalist countries. The free market has bequeathed crime, pollution, sexism and racism.

The leader of this war against the poor, George Bush, is well-suited to the job. This knight of the free market with shining military armour opened the post cold war era with the invasion of Panama, imposing the rule of the 10% white minority, guaranteeing US control over the canal and the bases that have been used to train gangsters all over Latin America.

Genocide

He was head of the CIA in 1975 just in time to support the near genocide in East Timor, where 200,000 of the 600,000 population were murdered.

He then lent his talents to the oligarchies of Central America, now littered with tortured and mutilated bodies. He nurtured a loving relationship with Israel, the neighbourhood bully of the Middle East. Plainly, this butcher should be lauded for the rare principle he shows as he leads us into the sunset of the new world order.

In the last redivision of the world between the imperialisms of North America, Europe and Japan, Africa south of the Sahara occupied a marginal position.

Most of the continent is in a pitiable mess, the result of decades of neo-colonial, parasitic economics and petit bourgeois ethnic politics.

Although it is not spelled out anywhere, there can be little doubt that the region is being left to South African capital as its natural hinterland to be

'developed' - exploited - in the interests of international monopoly capital.

One after the other, African countries are going to be pushed into a pyramid of nations, at the apex of which will stand a 'non-racial, democratic South Africa', in a position not unlike Japan in East Asia today.

This is the trajectory of De Klerk's reform initiative. As such, it can be easily understood as an integral part of the new global redivision of spoils among the 'victors' of the Cold War.

The petit bourgeois regimes of Southern Africa are in no condition to generate a countervailing force, even if they had the motivation.

Black workers

The simple fact is that most of them are humiliatingly dependent on the S.African regime. Countries such as Zaire, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho and Swaziland are already client states of the racist Pretoria regime. The task is then left to the workers of Southern Africa, particularly the black workers of Azania.

And comrades, despite what happened in eastern Europe, socialism is not dead. It was never born. There are many, including our own S.African Communist Party, who want to throw the baby of socialism out with the dirty bathwater of stalinism.

But the socialist critique of the capitalist mode of production is even more relevant now than at the time Marx and Engels began their systematic critique of capitalism.

Most of the ex-colonial world and large parts of the 'First world' - think of Portugal, Spain, Greece, the US ghettos, northern Ireland - know capitalism only as a condition of hellish poverty, suffering, disease and frustration.

These forces potentially represent an unconquerable base from which to launch a series of decisive assaults on the system.

How and when the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system will signal the moment of assault, it is impossible to say. It is however axiomatic that such a moment will come.

WOSA

As a tendency, we in WOSA have always warned against equating socialism with what existed in eastern Europe, China and the USSR. We stood by the understanding that socialism meant a much more democratic society than what exists in the most democratic of capitalist states.

It is necessary to renew our conception of socialism. For more than 150 years, socialism has meant a society qualitatively superior to capitalism in terms of standards of living, of social equality, human freedom, pluralistic democracy, cultural diversity and the weakening of institutionalised authority.

For marxists, this implied a withering away of the market economy, social classes and the state.

Only in the late 1920s and early 30s was that consensus broken in favour of a radically reductionist definition of socialism. That definition was produced by stalinism, together with its syphilitic spread into large sections of the workers movement.

Wrecked economies

In eastern Europe in 1989, what occurred was indeed mass uprisings of workers and youth.

That they have taken on a direction of restoring capitalism can be understood when one examines the consequences of 40 years of stalinist rule that has led to wrecked economies, lagging far behind the west. It is therefore understandable that the masses identify prosperity with the market - but this is rapidly changing.

If we take this with the way 'Communist' regimes acted to depoliticise the people as a means of retaining their control (as can be seen from the ease with which the Hungarian government has embraced the S.African regime and others have embraced fascism) then we can realise the extent to which the cause of socialism has been damaged. But in the medium term we believe the cause of socialism is assured.

This is not simply because of the continued existence of revolutionary currents through most parts of the world, but because of the continued class struggles which inevitably arise from capitalism.

The periodic attacks on wages, the sacking of millions of workers in the interest of profit, the growth of social inequality to the point that it provokes mass revolts, and the way the toiling millions of the 'third world' live in misery, poverty, starvation and homelessness are examples of capitalism in practice.

It is these inevitable contradictions that ensure the continued growth and spread of a political current that goes beyond immediate demands to a programme that seeks to restructure society in the interests of the workers and peasants of the world.



Stalin signs a death warrant

Where now for socialism?

WITH THE vote for Ukrainian independence the break-up of the Soviet Union is in full flood. The socialist movement internationally is in ferment; the official Communist parties in chaos.

In the last two weeks the British CP has moved towards dissolution, while the South African CP has strongly affirmed the validity of socialism. As part of the debate we are publishing here an article by MICHAEL LÖWY, a Brazilian writer living in Paris, and author of numerous works on Georg Lukacs, Permanent Revolution and Nationalism. To continue the discussion in the next issue we are publishing long extracts from an article by South African CP leader Joe Slovo, with a reply by Charlie van Gelderen.

1
One cannot die before being born. Communism is not dead, it is not yet born. The same applies to socialism. What the Western media call 'the Communist states' and the Eastern official ideology 'really existing socialism' were neither. At best, one could call them 'non-capitalist societies', where private property in the main means of production had been abolished.

2
What the conservative or liberal media call 'the death of communism' is in fact the crisis of the authoritarian and bureaucratic system of development first established in the USSR in the

1920s and 1930s on the ashes of the Russian Revolution. It is a model which had already been criticised and rejected in the name of Marxism by a whole generation of radicals, including Leon Trotsky and Christian Rakovsky, Isaac Deutscher and Abraham Leon, Heinrich Brandler and Willy Muenzenberg, Victor Serge and Andre Breton.

What is moribund and dying in Eastern Europe is not 'Communism' but its bureaucratic caricature: the monopoly of power by the *nomenklatura*.

3
This crisis is unfolding in the USSR in a more contradictory form. After several decades of bureaucratic stagnation, a vigorous process of

demolition of the Stalinist heritage took place, whose moving force was the dialectic between reforms from above – promoted by Mikhail Gorbachev and his collaborators – and the democratic movement from below – the Popular Fronts, and socialist, ecological and reform clubs.

The politics of reform implemented by the new Soviet leadership is a mixed blessing, combining a remarkable political opening (*glasnost*) with a market-oriented economic restructuring (*perestroika*) which endangers some of the traditional rights of workers.

4
In the political and social struggle which is developing in the USSR and the other non-capitalist societies, both inside the *nomenklatura* and in civil society, several alternatives confront each other in the search for a way out of the Stalinist model. The contending projects are:-

- the authoritarian political system combined with significant market-oriented reforms – the Deng Xiaoping 'Chinese' model.
- the relative democratisation of political structures and the introduction of market mechanisms in the economic management – the USSR, Bulgaria, Romania.
- a democratisation according to the Western model and the generalisation of the market

economy – that is, the restoration of capitalism – as in other Eastern European countries.

- the thorough democratisation of political power and a socialist/democratic planning of the economy – the programme of radical trade unionists and socialist oppositionists, not implemented anywhere as of yet.

5
There is not much room for optimism about the outcome of the struggle in the short run. In most of the East European countries, the radical movements which struggle for the socialist/democratic alternative, or claim some link to the Marxist tradition have been defeated, even those with a history of bitter opposition to the bureaucratic system.

A common element explains this setback: for forty years, socialism and Marxism had been identified with the Stalinist bureaucratic system.

That had been the only point of agreement between propagandists of the Eastern governments and their Western antagonists, between Radio Prague and Radio Free Europe – that these states are 'socialist', that their leaders are implementing Marxist politics.

Confronted with such a unanimous and formidable consensus, what weight could the opinion of a small group of Marxist dissidents have?

Nobody would make Des-

cartes responsible for the French colonial wars, nor Jesus for the Inquisition, even less Thomas Jefferson for the US invasion of Vietnam. But it has been made to seem that Karl Marx built the Berlin Wall and nominated Ceaucescu leader of the Romanian Communist Party.

6
There is no reason to accept the contention, presented as a kind of self-evident truth by establishment economists, neo-liberal ideologues, Western political leaders, and mainstream editorialists that the capitalist market economy and the profit system are the only possible alternative to the failed totalitarian command economy – a system where a small group of (incompetent) technocrats decided what to do with the economy and despotically imposed their decisions on the society.

There is another road, the democratic planning of the economy by the society, where the people decide, after a pluralist and open debate, the main economic choices, the priorities of investment, the general lines of economic policy – that is, socialist democracy.

7
The dogma, implied by many reformist economists and leaders of Eastern countries,

Hell at Castlereagh



ON WEDNESDAY 26 June 1991, a 28 year-old single mother of two young children, Geraldine O'Connor awoke from her sleep at 6am in the bedroom of her West Belfast home to find several police and army personnel standing over her bed. Her sister, long-time activist FRANCIS DUFFY wrote this account based on interview notes from Geraldine's solicitor.

THEY TOLD her she was being arrested under Section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. No time was given for Geraldine to make arrangements for the care of her children who were by this time upset and crying.

The security forces then began their search of the house which later, the police admitted, uncovered absolutely nothing of an incriminating nature.

Meanwhile, Geraldine was taken to the infamous interrogation centre at Castlereagh Barracks in East Belfast.

Throughout her seven days at Castlereagh she was interviewed 49 times and assaulted during 41. At Musgrove Street station she was charged with allowing the IRA to use her house to plan attacks on the security forces.

Geraldine was repeatedly slapped, punched in the stomach, and sexually intimidated. She was threatened with electrocution. Although one of her fingers was already fractured at the time, the police forcibly straightened it out to take fingerprints. By the end of the second day the plaster of paris on her arm had been cracked open by officers banging her arm against a table.

On the third day, after an Extension Order had been granted, she was told not to bother making any complaints as the papers would be flushed down the toilet. She was also told that her children would be taken into care and she would never see them again. Verbal, psychological and physical intimidation continued throughout her detention.

On Wednesday 3 July, she appeared at Belfast Magistrates Court where her lawyer pointed out that there was not a single shred of evidence against her.

A police officer agreed that

she had made no written or verbal admissions while in custody for seven days. He conceded that the only evidence against her was based on fibres allegedly connecting a man suspected of involvement with a bombing, with Geraldine's living room. The resident magistrate said he believed the evidence was 'just marginal enough' to sustain the Director of Public Prosecution's application for a remand and bail was refused. Geraldine was taken to Magaberry Prison where she was strip-searched on arrival.

The next day her lawyers applied to the High Court to overturn the magistrate's decision. The High Court judges said they had no jurisdiction to interfere with the decision. However, an application for bail was successful.

Later that day after much to-ing and fro-ing between the High Court and Magistrates by lawyers and members of her family, she was eventually released from Magaberry Prison, but not before being again subjected to a strip-search. She was released on bail of £100 with a surety of £100 and ordered to report to one of two named police stations at the same time twice a week.

Throughout the time in police custody and following the court appearance, television, radio and newspaper reports linked Geraldine with serious bomb incidents, her name and address was freely published. Two days after she was released on bail, the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), an extreme loyalist terror group, made an unsuccessful assassination attempt on her life.

It was pure chance that she and her children were not at home when the loyalist gunman kicked down the front door of her house at 7am. She was later told by the police that a threat had been made by the

UFF to the BBC's Belfast newsroom.

Yet, despite the obvious danger of having to report to one of two police stations at the same time twice weekly, the police refused a request by Geraldine's solicitor to vary the conditions of her bail. Their only concession was that she could report to one of three police stations, which still meant that she was a sitting target for loyalist killers. She has had to leave her home, and she and her children live in constant fear.

At the next court hearing the police dropped the only charge against Geraldine. She, who incidentally had never been charged nor convicted of any offence whatsoever prior to this event, has filed civil charges against the police alleging ill-treatment while in police custody.

She now faces daily harassment from the security forces, police and army, as they try and intimidate her into abandoning her legal action.

In the meantime this young woman is trying to come to terms with all that has happened to her since this nightmare began. Her bruises have healed but she will continue to bear the psychological scars of her seven days in custody for many years to come.

Geraldine will live in constant fear of an attack from loyalist killers for the rest of her life. The fact that she is, and has been proven to be, a completely innocent victim will not make these tasks any easier.

Geraldine O'Connor's case does not, as yet, appear in the Amnesty reports. Socialist Outlook has forwarded the information received from Francis Duffy to Amnesty.

Torture – the foundation of British power

By John McNulty

A CENTRAL section of the Special Powers Act, through which the Stormont government ruled the North of Ireland, gave the Unionist administration the power to ban inquests. Today British legislation sets a number of conditions on them.

Inquests can be delayed for many years. RUC and Army members cannot be required to attend. The jury can only select from a limited number of verdicts, and a murder verdict is not a permitted outcome.

This lays bare the overall basis of British rule in Ireland and the overall responsibility for the violence there. British rule is based on force. The law is tailored to hide this fact and protect state forces from the consequences, rather than defend working people or point to the need for a political solution.

The search for a British military victory leads to a 'streamlined' legal system and the Diplock 'no jury' courts. A key component – often the only component – of convictions consists solely of statements from defendants. The foundation of the whole system is torture or the threat of torture.

It is from Republican and anti-imperialist forces that the main opposition has come. The political crisis in Sinn Fein has left a vacuum, filled at the moment by community and relatives groups.

A new force is from a small layer of the intelligentsia. Many within the legal profession have managed to link with bodies like Amnesty International and

exploit a growing international dissatisfaction with the British state's brutal record. Absent from the equation are the Irish bourgeoisie, the trade unions and the reformist left.

The Anglo-Irish agreement was supposed to end the 'nationalist nightmare' in the North. In practice it made the Irish bourgeoisie a junior partner in the repression there. They run a mile from any anti-repression movements and sections of the right, such as Fr Denis Faul, are now calling for Amnesty reports on IRA atrocities. This attempt to blur the difference between a guerrilla movement and the holders of state power can only legitimise further torture.

Trade unions define workers' unity only in terms of policies that do not offend the far right minority within the protestant working class. They go no further than the palest of milk and water resolutions.

Far to the right of this position, but winning a great deal of support, lies the Workers' Party. Their 'Peace Train' and 'New Consensus' movements attack the symptoms of paramilitary violence while essentially supporting the cause – the British presence. In fact they go further in demanding 'peace' through more repression.

Socialists should work with all forces resisting torture in Ireland today. For them especially, a key task is confronting and defeating the collaboration of trade union bureaucrats and the reactionary apologia for British rule posed by the 'Peace Train' movement.

John McNulty is a member of People's Democracy – Irish section of the Fourth International

Amnesty International issued an 'Urgent Action' appeal at the end of August 1991 on the case of 17 year old Damien Austin, a Catholic from Belfast. The son of a local Sinn Fein councillor, he had been one of 18 young people held in Castlereagh in May after the killing of an RUC officer.

During his first detention in May he was verbally abused, punched, slapped, spat upon, burned on the face with a lighted cigarette, his trousers and underpants were repeatedly pulled down, a lighter held to his pubic hair, and death threats were made against him. Damien was also regularly harassed by the police in the period following his release and before his second arrest in August.

During his second detention in Castlereagh Damien was regularly punched in the stomach, throat, on his arms and on the back of his head. One officer placed his boots between Damien's legs and applied pressure to his testicles. Shortly afterwards his neck was held so tightly in an armlock that he was choking and nearly passed out.

Other Castlereagh cases included in the Amnesty report are: Liam Coogan, aged 18; Mark Prior, aged 19; James McCabe, aged 19; Kevin Mulholland, aged 17; Lawrence Hillick, aged 17; Martin Sweeney; Rose Ann Maguire; Monica Boyle; Eamonn McPhillips.

There will be many hundreds more.



Two days after her release Geraldine's life was threatened by the UFF

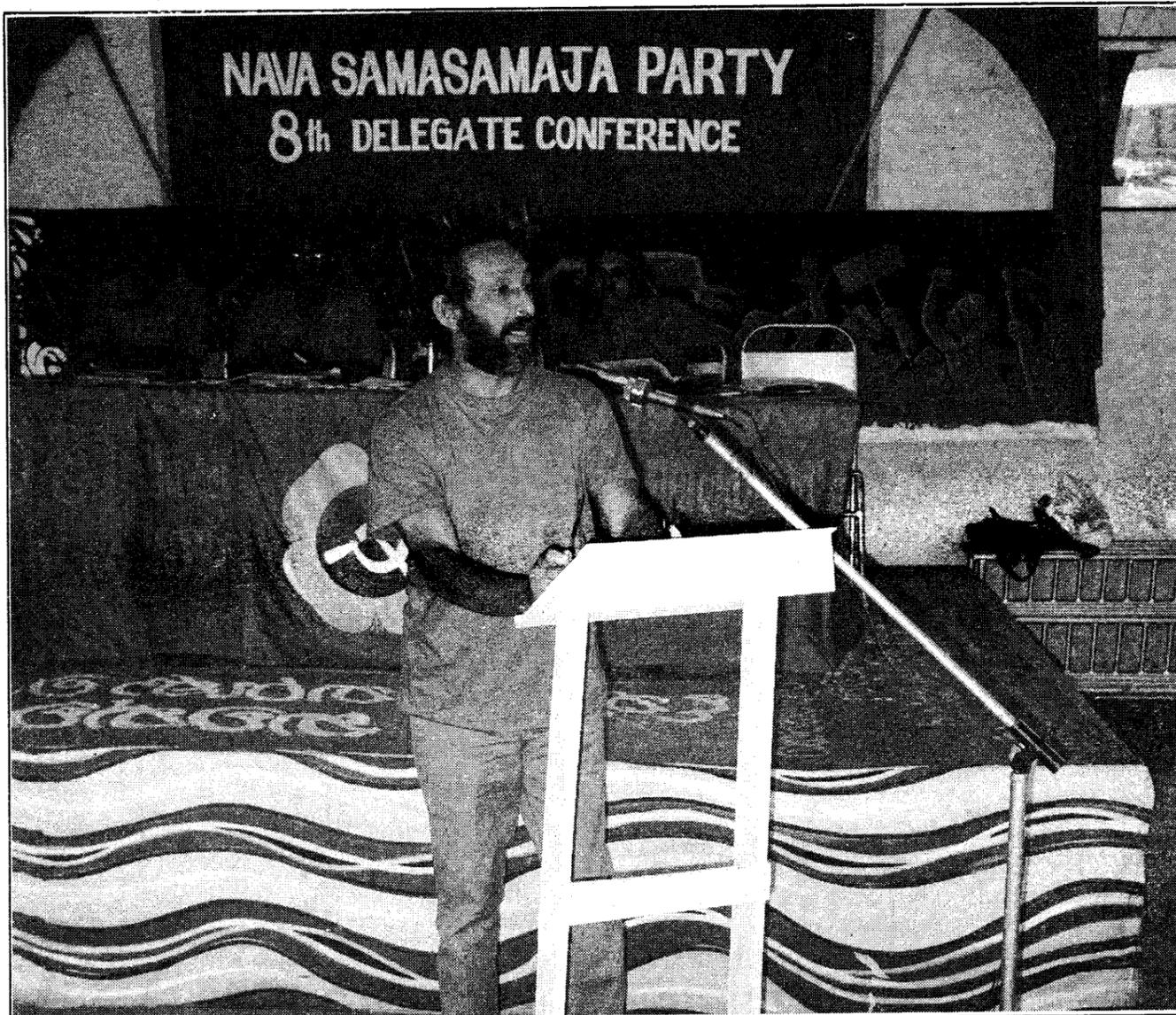


PHOTO: Phil Hearse

An MP in a red T-shirt: Vasu addresses the NSSP conference

Sri Lanka marxists rally to Fourth International

By Phil Hearse
THREE HUNDRED delegates to the conference of the Sri Lankan Nava Samasamaja Party (NSSP - New Socialist Party) voted for affiliation to the Fourth International at their conference at the end of November. The NSSP has around 3000 members and leads two important trade union federations, which makes it a powerful force on the Sri Lankan left. One of its leaders, Vasudeva Nanayak-

kara ('Vasu' to everyone on the island) is an MP and among the most popular leaders of the Sri Lankan left.

Two major questions dominate the tasks of the working class and the political left in Sri Lanka: the IMF-sponsored austerity and privatisation policy imposed by the UNP (United National Party) government of prime minister Premadasa, and the prolonged war between government forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) who seek an independent Tamil state.

At the conference there was a lively debate about the policy to be followed in the fight against the government. According to NSSP leaders, the bourgeois opposition SLFP party and the opportunist left (LSSP, SLMP and Communist Party) are trying to force all anti-government forces into a 'popular front', a policy rejected by the conference. NSSP leaders pointed out that the bourgeois opposition had no clear alternative policy to that of the government.

The NSSP put forward the proposal for a four point platform for a principled opposition to Premadasa:-

- Opposition to the IMF plan, privatisations, and the 'free trade zones' handed over to foreign firms.
- Stop the war against the Tamils
- Land reform - 'land to the tiller'.
- The formation of united workers committees to fight for these objectives, and support for mass struggles like those of the students for land reform currently going on.

Given the powerful role played by the NSSP in Sri Lankan politics a big campaign against the policy of the NSSP is being waged by the bourgeois opposition and opportunist left. In particular they want to incorporate the popularity of 'Vasu' into their popular front.

Immediately before the conference Colombo newspapers reported that 30 government soldiers had been killed in an ambush by the Tamil Tigers.

According to hospital workers, the real figure was much higher. The war in the north and east of the island, far from being a sporadic campaign, is a daily war on a huge scale. Armed police, soldiers and sailors guard road-blocks all over Colombo, despite its distance from the war zone.

The NSSP calls for self-determination for the Tamil-speaking people, but does not give support to the LTTE. NSSP leaders I spoke to compared the Tigers to the authoritarian 'Shining Path' guerrillas in Peru, and the Pol Pot's movement in its early stages. The Tigers murderously repress all other Tamil organisations in its Jaffna stronghold, and have assassinated NSSP members.

During the last decade Sri Lankan socialists have faced enormous difficulties in maintaining and developing their organisation. Between 1983-5, the NSSP was banned and operated underground with its key leaders in hiding.

Between 1987 and 1990 the Sinhalese terrorist organisation, the JVP, waged a fierce campaign against the government and left wing parties. NSSP general secretary Vickremabahu Karunaratne ('Bahu' to the Sri Lankan left) was seriously wounded in a JVP machine-gun attack in 1989.

In response to the JVP campaign the government unleashed a reign of terror by security forces and death

squads. In the 1987-90 period 60,000 people were slaughtered in this campaign, and according to the NSSP more than half of these people had nothing to do with the JVP.

As a result a movement of the parents and families of the 'disappeared' has developed, and the NSSP considers building this movement a major task for its supporters.

Political unionism

Trade unionism in Sri Lanka is 'political' unionism, with left wing parties controlling their own union federations; these federations co-ordinate their activity through the Joint Council of Trade Unions, but there is fierce competition for membership between them.

The NSSP leads two union federations, the United Federation of Labour, and the Government United Federation of Labour for public sector workers. These two federations organise a wide range of workers, including those working on tea plantations, rubber factories, shoe factories, hospitals, fish processing plants, banks, print works, the garment industry and a wide range of national and local government offices.

A major UFL affiliate has been leading a long strike of hundreds of young workers, mainly women, at the Pollypack plastics works over union recognition. A one-day solidarity strike, and rally addressed by NSSP leaders, was organised on 20 November. During the conference it was learned that the NSSP-backed GULF had won a fiercely-contested election for union representation at the Peoples' Bank, the largest in Sri Lanka.

In addition to political perspectives the NSSP conference held debates on international perspectives and organisation. At the centre of the debate on international perspectives was the question of the semi-collapse of Stalinism.

While recognising the offensive against socialism which international capital has launched, delegates stressed the new possibilities for building the international Trotskyist movement. The international perspectives resolution, including the proposed affiliation to the Fourth International, was carried with just one abstention.

Women

Looming large in the organisation debate was the special problems which women have in participating in Sri Lankan politics. Women are a very low proportion of the NSSP's membership, although the party has a high percentage of women members compared with other parties. The party leadership stressed the importance of making it easier for women to join the party and become part of its leadership.

For historical reasons, Trotskyism plays a particularly important role in the life of the left in Sri Lankan politics. For example, the old Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP), which joined a bourgeois coalition government in 1964, and is today a social democratic party, still calls itself Trotskyist. A large hammer and sickle with the figure '4' still adorns the front of the LSSP headquarters!

But the NSSP conference showed the possibility exists of building a mass Trotskyist movement in that country.

Just published! Fallacies of State Capitalism

The debate between Ernest Mandel of the Fourth International and Chris Harman of the British SWP on the crisis of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and the tasks for Marxists in the eastern bloc today. Includes Ernest Mandel's previously unpublished 45-page 'Fallacies of State Capitalism', summing up the debate.

fallacies
of
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Ukraine demonstrations have culminated in the new 3-way block of Slavic republics



From disgrace to adulation, Czech leader Dubcek



East German protestors overthrew Stalinism

that there is a direct and logical link between market-oriented economic reforms and political democracy, economic 'freedom' and political freedom.

Deng Xiaoping's model is a good counter-example, as are the many third world countries which combine neo-liberal economies with extremely authoritarian forms of state power.

Moreover, the recent Chinese experience shows that although market-oriented reforms can temporarily solve certain difficulties created by bureaucratic centralised planning, it generates new and equally serious problems: unemployment, rural exodus, corruption, inflation, growing social inequalities, decline in social services, growth of criminality, subordination of the economy to the multinational banks.

8

The crimes committed in the name of communism and socialism by the bureaucratic regimes – from the bloody purges of the 1930s to the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 – have deeply injured the very idea of a socialist future and reinforced bourgeois ideology among large sections of the population, both in the East and West.

But the aspirations for a free and egalitarian society, for social and economic democracy, for self-administration and control from below, are deeply rooted among significant parts of the working class and youth, both in the East and West.

From this standpoint, socialism and communism, not as an 'existing' state, but as a programme which has inspired emancipatory struggles of the victims of capitalism and imperialism for a century and a half will remain alive as long as

exploitation and oppression.

9

Understandably, in the present situation of crisis, one can find among many leftists a deep state of ideological confusion, disarray and perplexity. Even those who are not yet ready to give away the whole Marxist heritage are preparing themselves for a retreat in good order.

The dominant tendency on the left, both East and West – with the exception of a few heretics who still believe in the need for social revolution – argues for 'modernising' Marxism, adapting it to the ruling ideas, to liberalism, to individualism, to social positivism, and above all to the market, its idols, its rituals, and its dogmas.

In this view, the failure of 'really existing socialism' has its origins in the attempt of the Russian Revolution to break away (at least partially) from the model of capitalist civilisation, from the world market; the modernisation of Marxism would therefore imply a certain return to the canons of the Western social and economic system.

The social-democratisation of several communist parties, both in the East and West, is one of the major forms of this attempt to dilute the socialist program. What is being thrown away with the (extremely) dirty bathwater is the baby – the idea of moving beyond capitalism toward a democratically planned economy.

What are put forward in this attempt at 'reconciliation with reality' (to use a venerable Hegelian formula) are not the universal values negated or perverted by Stalinism – democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, social equality, solidarity – but those publicised by Western elites –

'free competition', 'free enterprise', monetarism, market culture.

10

There is no doubt that Marxism needs to be questioned, criticised, and renewed, but this should be done exactly for the opposite reason from that given by its bourgeois critics: because its break with the productivist pattern of industrial capitalism and with the foundations of the modern bourgeois civilisation was not sufficiently radical.

Marx and Marxists have often walked in the footsteps of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in presenting the development of productive forces as the objective foundation of the revolution and as the main argument legitimating socialism.

In certain forms of vulgar Marxism, the supreme aim of the social revolution is not a fraternal and egalitarian reorganisation of society, not a 'utopia' with a new way of producing and living, with productive forces of a qualitatively different nature, but simply to remove those relations of production which are obstacles to the free development of productive forces.

One can hardly find in *Das Kapital* – excepting one or two phrases – any elements for understanding that the 'growth of productive forces' can endanger human survival by threatening to destroy the natural environment.

As a social scientist Marx did not always transcend the mechanical model, based on the arbitrary extension to the historical sphere of the model of the natural sciences, with its laws, its determinism, its purely objective prediction, and linear development – a tendency pushed to its logical conclusions by a certain kind of

Marxism, from Plekhanov to Louis Althusser.

11

The essence of Marxism is elsewhere – in the philosophy of praxis and the dialectical materialist method, in the analysis of commodity fetishism and of capitalist alienation, in the perspective of the workers' revolutionary self-emancipation and in the utopia of a classless and stateless society. This is the reason why Marxism holds an extraordinary potential for critical and subversive thought and action.

The renewal of Marxism must start with a humanist, democratic, revolutionary, dialectical heritage to be found in Marx and his best followers, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Gramsci among others, a tradition which was defeated during the 1920s and 1930s by counter-revolution, Stalinism and fascism.

Moreover, in order to radicalise its break with bourgeois civilisation, Marxism must be able to integrate the practical and theoretical challenges raised by the ecology and feminist movements, liberation theology and pacifism.

This requires the vision of a new civilisation, which would not be just a more progressive version of the industrial capitalist system based on state-controlled development of the same productive forces, but a new way of life, based on use-

value and democratic planning; renewable energies and ecological care; race and gender equality; fraternity, sorority, and international solidarity.

The present worldwide triumph of neo-liberalism and bourgeois modernisation results from the impossibility of both Social Democracy and post-Stalinism to offer a significant – that is both a radical and democratic – alternative to the world capitalist system.

12

More than ever, Marxism must be, as Marx suggested, the 'ruthless criticism of all that exists'. Rejecting the modernist apologies for the established order, the realistic discourses legitimising the capitalist market or bureaucratic despotism, Marxism represents what Bloch called the Principle of Hope, the utopia of an emancipated society.

But it has no ready made answer to all the questions of the transition to socialism: how to combine representative and direct democracy, how to articulate democratic planning with the inevitable relics of the market, how to reconcile economic growth with ecological imperatives. Nobody can claim to have the monopoly of truth; these questions call for open and pluralistic debate in a process of mutual learning.

Edward II

Obsession of a gay king

Edward II

Directed by Derek Jarman

Reviewed by Peter Purton

TAKE the captivating poetry of Christopher Marlowe, unusually sharp direction by Derek Jarman, and a story of high political intrigue, homosexual and straight love and jealousy, murder and revenge, mixed concisely in under ninety minutes and the result is an excellent film.

Edward II succeeded his warrior-king father in 1307. In 1327 he was deposed and murdered with a hot poker up his anus in the dungeon of Berkeley castle. His wife Isabelle and her lover Mortimer then ruled the kingdom until overthrown by the dead king's young son, Edward III.

Edward II had alienated the powerful English peerage by ignoring them, and elevating in their place a foreign, low-born 'upstart', Piers Gaveston. After Gaveston's abduction and murder by the earls, another low-born favourite, Hugh Despenser, took over his role.

It was not unusual for English kings to have (often

foreign) favourites and to run into trouble with the mighty feudal aristocracy for interfering with their right to share the government of the kingdom. What added the special spice to this conflict was the undoubted homosexual relationship between Edward and Gaveston.

300 years later, the extra element added by Marlowe was to make this relationship explicit and central to the play - 'For never doted love on Ganymede, So much as he cursed on Gaveston', complains the queen.

However, in his first speech Gaveston cries 'farewell base stooping to the lordly peers' and it is clearly *this* challenge to the established order, and not the homosexuality (a word which existed neither in Edward's nor Marlowe's day) which leads to the next upheaval - the treasonable conspiracy against the monarch by the earls, led by Mortimer and the spurned queen.

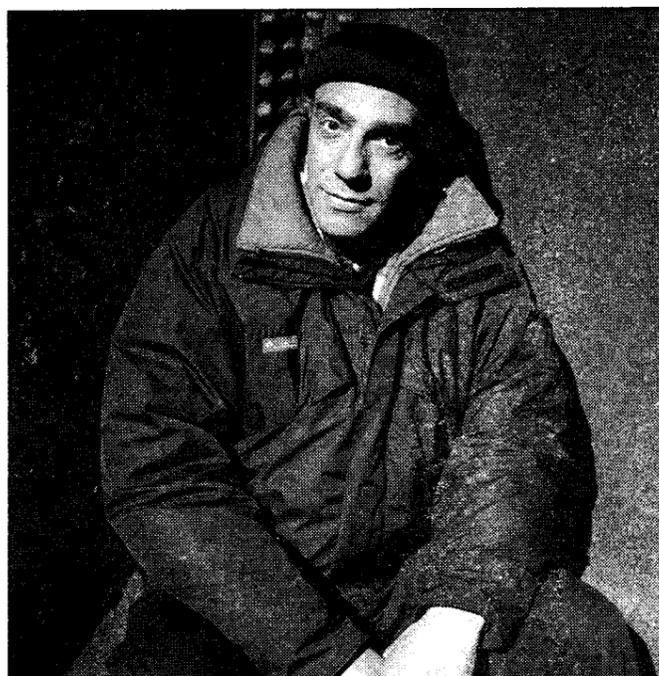
Four centuries after the free-thinking 'avant garde' Marlowe shocked his audience with a story line which threatened the Elizabethan order, Jarman compresses the action still further without distorting the drama. The

anachronisms worked better for this reviewer than they did, for example, in his *Caravaggio*.

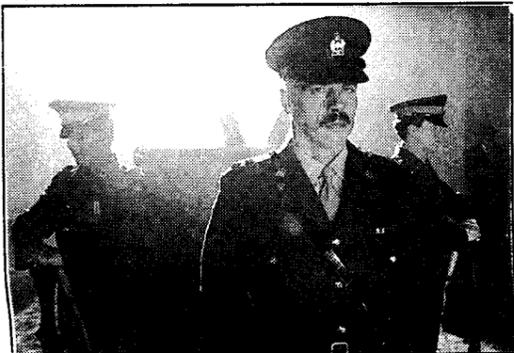
Mortimer appears as an army colonel, the peers as backwoods squires, the church as not just the bastion but the prime mover in defending the existing order. Edward's final defeat, in which the earls' army - a menacing phalanx of police in riot gear - confront a lesbian and gay rights protest, works powerfully.

The acting is uniformly good. Obsessive love between Edward and Gaveston leading the king to abandon the concerns of good government, and the deep despair of Queen Isabelle leading her to adultery and murderous intrigue, are well portrayed.

Both play and film end with good order restored through the assumption of power by Edward III. But Marlowe managed, through the superficial appearance of melodrama with no heroes - a weak and obsessed monarch overthrown by a grasping and selfish nobility - to present a highly ambiguous work which contained real challenges to established order. Jarman's film can claim to have successfully brought these up to date.



Unusually sharp direction: Derek Jarman



Mortimer (played by Nigel Terry)



Deep despair: Isabella

Edward with the 'upstart' Gaveston

Is it really so grim?

As a socialist quite happy to be outside of the Labour Party I would still support the view of Labour Party Socialists as reported by Pete Firmin in SO11.

Namely that while socialists in the Labour Party will probably have only a marginal impact on whether Labour wins and, perhaps most particularly, on how it wins the election that doesn't mean that there is nothing that needs to be done. Clearly there are still struggles around which socialists need to intervene in and arguments which socialists need to raise.

I am puzzled then, to see Firmin arguing that it is the worst time since the 1930s in terms of the class struggle. Puzzled because the class struggle in the thirties was not so grim as Firmin seems to think. It was the time after all when the Communist Party did the ground work for many of its industrial groups which had so much in-

Feedback

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fluence after the war up to the 1970s. But puzzled also by the imputation that things are that grim now.

True, there are no large scale strikes or struggles just at the moment. But neither is the employing side exactly in gung-ho mood. The Tories flounder over every issue which they touch and while they are certainly on the offensive in industry, they can certainly be stopped if workers can free themselves of the 'do nothing until you hear from me' influence of the trade union

leaders.

In short, I would suggest, it is a period not of grim defeat but of stand off. That is just in Britain of course. Elsewhere the class struggle looks pretty lively although, of course, it doesn't always go in the political direction that socialists would like. That is true in this country as well and all the more reason why socialists should be doing as much as they can to influence what does move.

Keith Flett
London N17

Why they are just wild about Harry!

It was good to read such an informative and clear piece on the Labour Party as that by Harry Sloan in Outlook No. 11. It certainly clarified any misinterpretation of the front page of Outlook No. 9 which labelled the Labour Party the 'Bosses' Second Eleven.

As Harry says, Lenin's characterisation of the Labour Party as not simply a bourgeois party but a bourgeois worker's party is still valid today. As, we can add, was Lenin's advice to British Communists to affiliate to it.

Indeed, Harry Sloan, in his catalogue of Labour betrayals, provides a strong counterweight to the idea that Kinnock's policies represent something new. This is especially true when analysing past Labour leaders' attitude to Europe.

Not only did Wilson look to Europe for capitalism's salvation, as Harry states, Callaghan was prepared to go behind the cabinet to press for further Europeanisation. As Benn's Diary entry for Saturday 25 November reveals: 'The big news today is that

Jim has been in Paris ahead of the summit and has agreed with Giscard to vote for setting up an EMS [European Monetary System] which Britain will join at a later date'.

This shows that Martin Allen's letter to Outlook No. 10 is based on a false premise. He argues that the Labour leadership has had a 'recent conversion to the Delors' programme'. And that the Kinnock strategy associated with entry to the EMU is the product of a Labour Party that has somehow 'changed'.

In fact, there is a real political continuity between the last Callaghan Government and a potential Labour government. The only change that has taken place was the rise of Bennism, which put the leadership's Europeanist strategy on the defensive. With Bennism's retreat, the leadership is now in a position to put through the party a position it has long held.

Sean Tunney and Stephen Smith

Kurdistan From 'safe haven' to killing fields

By Hubert Smith

The aftermath of the Gulf War and the break-up of the Soviet Union gives the Turkish bourgeoisie a plethora of alternative ways to achieve its desired status of regional superpower. It can orient north, south, east or west or any combination thereof.

To the north and east are the newly independent, Turkish-speaking, oil rich republics of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan (Turkey is the first state to recognise Azerbaijan's independence). To the south, in defeated Iraqi Kurdistan, lies the oil-rich province of Mosul on which the Turkish state has always had designs. Integration with the West through EC membership has of course been the goal of Turkey's major bourgeois forces for three decades.

Division

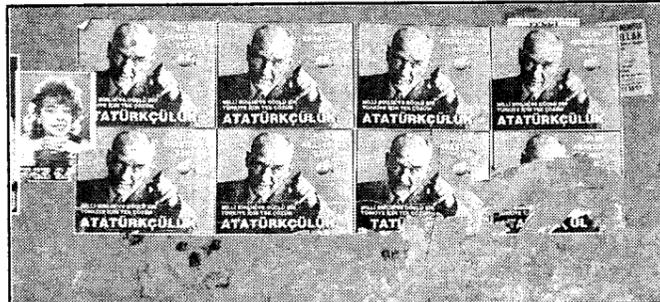
Seemingly spoiled for choice, Turkey's ruling class is divided. In the October 20 election no party won a majority: a coalition government has been formed by the largest party, the True Way Party of Suleiman Demirel and the Social Democratic Popular Party (SHP), the third largest. Demirel is now prime minister for the sixth time - his fifth term having been cut short by the military coup in 1980.

This right/left coalition, which excludes the second, right wing and former ruling party - the Motherland Party - is reminiscent of the 'grand

coalition' project of important bourgeois forces which was much talked about before the 1980 junta. In many ways Turkish political history endlessly recycles Marx's adage about tragedy and farce.

But the issue which has dominated Turkish politics recently is new: the war against the Kurds. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) launched its armed struggle for national independence in 1984. It has escalated dramatically in the past year and is now an insurrectionary war.

There are an estimated 12 million Kurds in Turkey (one

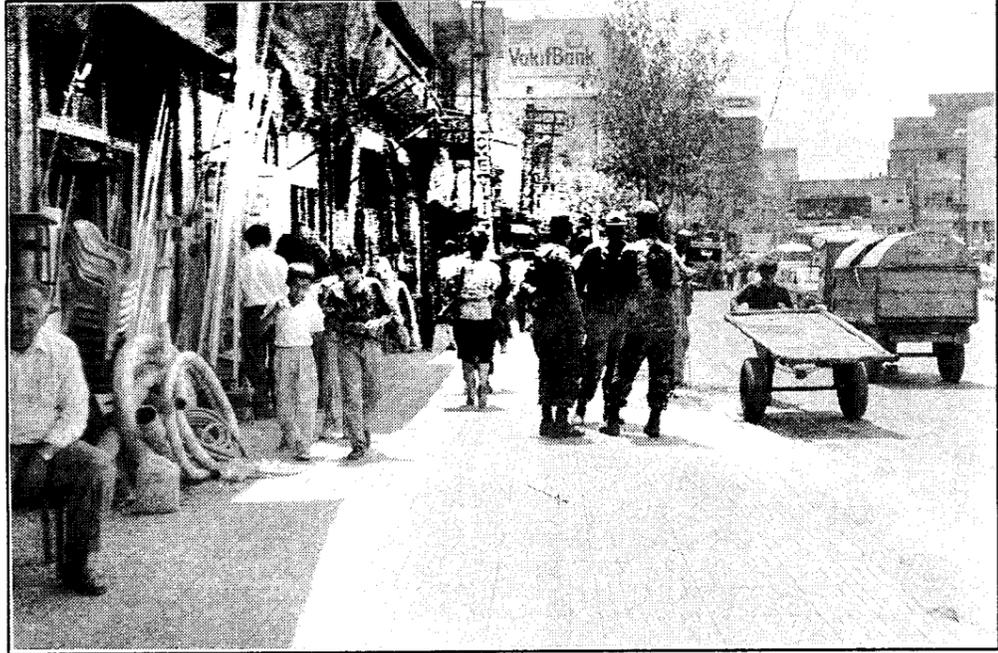


Government poster promoting 'Ataturkism' in Istanbul

fifth of the population) concentrated in the economically backward south east of the country, adjacent to the rest of Kurdistan which is famously divided between four nation states. Turkey's ten year military regime in the area has a long history of extraordinary repression. This included a ban on mentioning the word 'Kurd' as well as the speaking of Kurdish, imposed in 1923 and finally lifted this year. This fuelled support for the PKK, which is widely agreed to be a potent

candidate of the HEP, the Peoples Labour Party, stood as part of an electoral pact with the SHP. When the deputies arrived in the Turkish parliament there was uproar.

Leyla Zana, member for Diyarbakir, a Kurdish town of 400,000, declared 'Long live the Kurdish people and Kurdistan' in Kurdish. She was dressed in the banned national colours of red, yellow and green. There was uproar in Kurdistan too, as whole villages poured out onto the streets in spontaneous ap-



Troops on the streets of Diyarbakir force in Kurdish areas.

The new situation was expressed in the election results. For the first time in the history of the republic a Kurdish party stood - and won 22 of the 27 seats it contested. The can-

proval.

But the arrival of Kurdish deputies in the Turkish parliament, while it is sensational in the political history of the country, offers no immediate solution to the dilemma of the Kurds in Turkey. More urgent still is the fate of the Kurdish refugees from the ill-fated uprising in the embers of the Gulf War. The Turkish army - NATO's largest in Europe - is determined to prosecute its war against the PKK and is terrorising the refugee population as part of its strategy.

Operation destroy

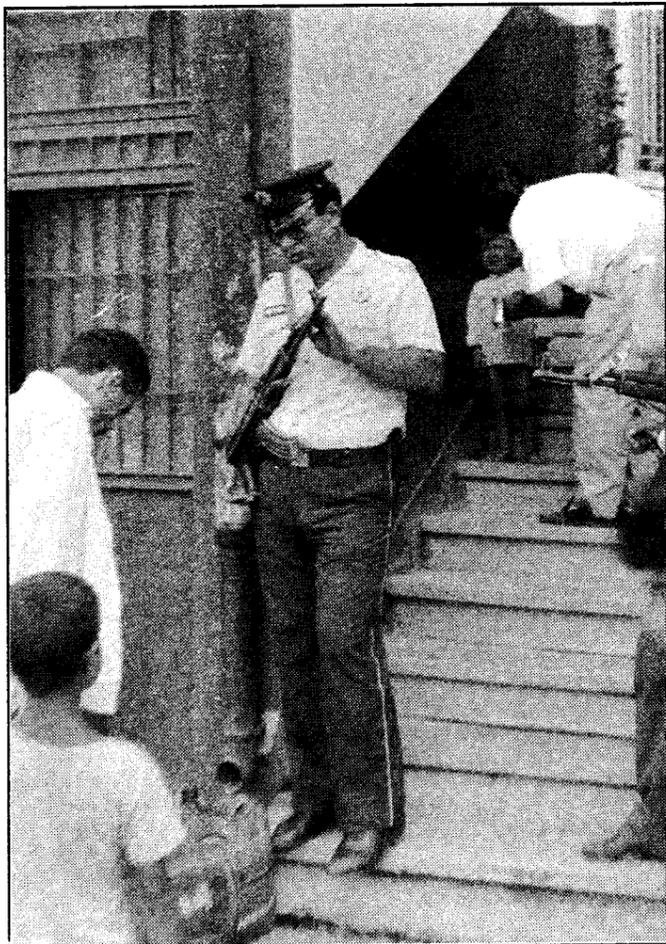
Since August, thousands of Kurdish villagers and refugees have been displaced and many maimed and killed by persistent Turkish cross-border raids into Iraq. Named, with characteristic subtlety, 'Operation destroy PKK', the Turkish army has deployed battalions of elite troops, helicopter gunships and war planes against what it claims are PKK guerilla bases. It has also used cluster bombs and napalm.

Like many such 'bases' in the region - one thinks of Southern Lebanon - these turn out to be the villages of beleaguered Kur-

dish farmers and their families. Cruelly, as was reported in October by one observer visiting after a raid, the villagers 'unanimously reported that they though the Turkish bombers were allied planes dropping food'. With no whisper of protest in this country, John Major's 'safe havens' have become killing fields for the Turkish army.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees are caught between a near total blockade of the south imposed by a renascent Iraqi army and the Turkish army to the north. The Iraqi army, following the March uprising, rapidly gained control of oil-rich Kirkuk (in the southern part of Iraqi Kurdistan) and supply lines to the rest of Iraq - which is itself caught in the vice of the imperialist embargo.

With winter closing in, tens of thousands of Kurds face starvation and death in their mountain-top refuges. Only an international outcry, from a labour movement and youth galvanised perhaps by disgust with western hypocrisy, can prevent another chapter of despair being written in the tragedy of Kurdistan.



Police harass Kurds in Diyarbakir

The end of a terminal disease

By Patrick Baker

THE SOVIET UNION, after a lengthy terminal disease, has breathed its last gasp. And the one figure who tried to keep the patient alive over the last few months - Mikhail Gorbachev - is out of a job.

His attempts to convince the Ukrainians to renounce independence were always doomed. Whether he could persuade the key republics to preserve some form of union was more doubtful - but in the end, decades of being walked over by the union apparatus counted for more than Gorby's warnings of 'clashes, even wars, between ethnic groups and republics'.

Clearly, the new 'commonwealth' of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia will be the most potent force among the republics. Whether they will maintain their stated aim of 'principles of equal rights and non-interference ... observing human rights and rights of peoples' remains to be seen.

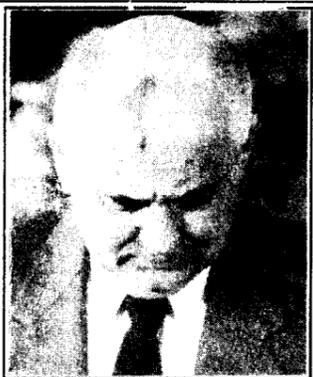
Given the suppression of the many nationalities of the union for six decades, old enmities and conflicts are a potent threat, as Yugoslavia demonstrates. Boris Yeltsin's repetition of

threats over Russia's borders do not augur well for the future.

But he is far from the most extreme exponent of Russian nationalism. Extreme, anti-semitic Russian nationalists - whose views are undistinguishable from fascism - are gaining increasing support as its people slide further into poverty.

As elsewhere in eastern Europe, the idea that there will be 'a controlled and flexible transition to the market economy' as The Guardian suggests, is pie in the sky. With socialism off the agenda as an alternative in the short term, the potential for a slide to the far right is there. The popularity of fascism among the disillusioned and desperate youth of eastern Germany - who have the economic 'cushion' of western support - illustrates the threat.

The economic threat from the West also looms large. The Ukraine, the latest republic to massively vote for independence, may be one of the largest European nations and the 'bread basket of the USSR', but economically independent it is not. While strong in terms of grain and iron, it is totally dependent on outside sources for oil and gas. Over the decades it



Gorbachev

has become totally interdependent on the other republics.

With economic collapse looming ever closer, so too does the threat of the IMF and the G7 industrial countries' control over the republics' economies. The best defence against reduction to 'third world' status, struggling under a mountain of debt to the Western banks, is independence in raw materials. But with no real union and an economy sliding towards bankruptcy, the peoples of the east may become the 'new poor' of Europe.

The Ukraine's vote for independence is a positive step - a vote against Great Russian domination and for national autonomy. But for all the peoples of the ex-USSR, the death of the union and the moves towards the market mean that there are many threats to come.

West Berks health chiefs Privatising the elderly

By John Lister

MONEY is the crude motive behind a new plan from West Berkshire health authority to close up to 350 NHS beds for elderly patients and farm them out to private nursing homes.

The plan - which has been condemned by health union COHSE - bangs a massive wedge of privatised provision into local NHS services, and could force hundreds of elderly patients to pay for their own health care. It is the biggest scheme in the country so far for hiving off costly elderly patients to the care of profit-seeking private companies.

If their scheme goes through, patients, relatives and staff will lose out, while the health authority (WBHA) stands to make a 3-way cash gain:

- WBHA would save money by ducking financial responsibility for the continuing care of 350 elderly people, passing the buck initially to the Department of Social Security, and after 1993 to local councils. In place of the full cost of providing care for each patient in an NHS bed, WBHA would only have to pay a limited "top-up" payment to help cover the nursing home fees of existing patients.

- WBHA also profits by closing hundreds of its existing beds for the elderly (and presumably axing the jobs of the staff involved). This will of course restrict its future capacity to offer continuing care to some of the most vul-

nerable patients in the NHS, and will force more families and individuals (mostly women) to cope unaided with elderly relatives at home.

- To cap it all, WBHA expects to coin in around £730,000 by selling NHS land in Henley and Wokingham to private firms building profit-seeking nursing homes. There is even a danger that the new, purpose-built Hungerford House in Newbury, together with its staff and patients, could be leased or sold off lock stock and barrel to a private company.

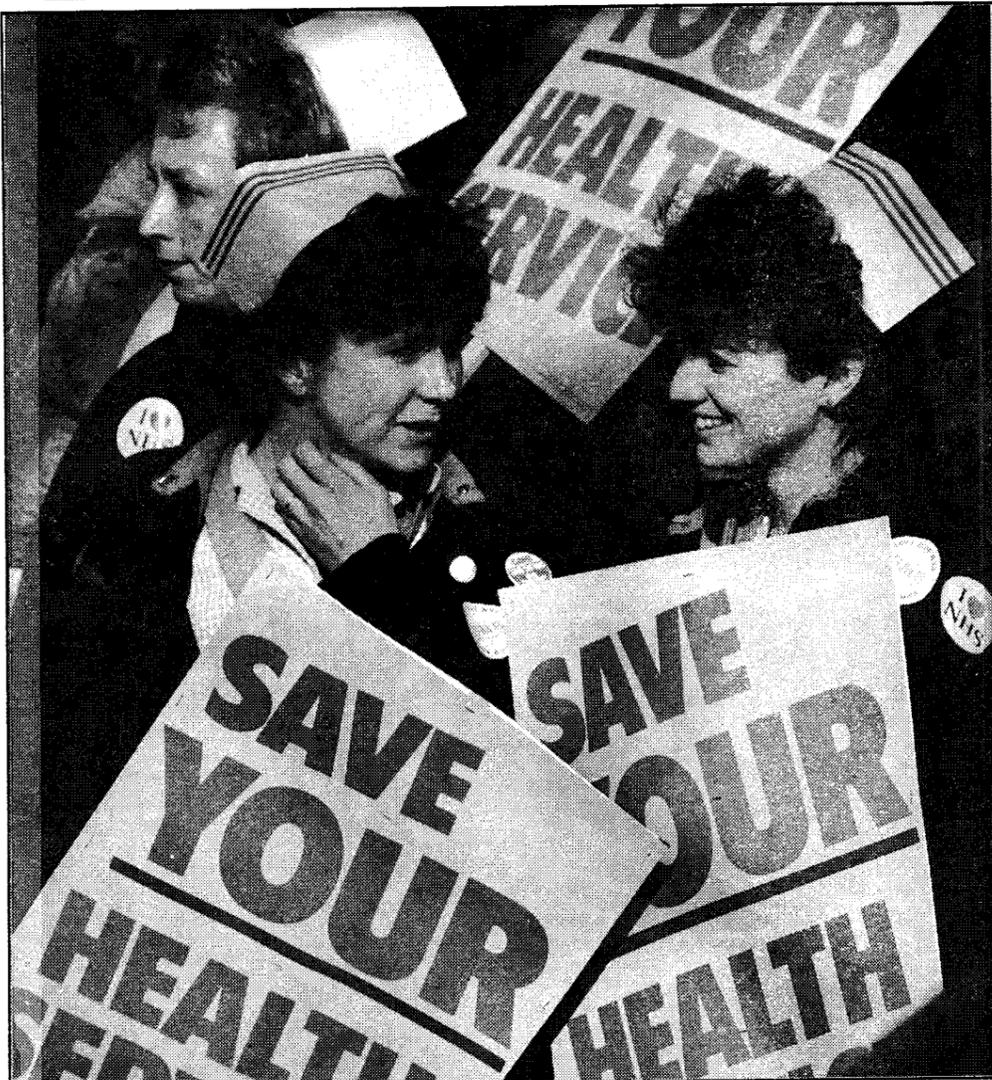
Close down NHS care

Other health authorities before West Berkshire have done similar deals to privatise continuing care of the frail elderly.

What distinguishes the WBHA proposal is the sheer scale of the privatisation, and the inclusion for the first time of large numbers of elderly mentally infirm patients (EMI), for whom no private nursing home facilities yet exist.

The plan would effectively close down the present NHS services for EMI patients in West Berkshire. Worse, it appears to ignore completely the fact that EMI patients have very different problems and needs from the frail elderly. Many are far from frail, and may even be violent: all of them need to be cared for by trained psychiatric nursing staff.

The WBHA scheme rides roughshod over NHS staff. Dedicated and experienced



Privatisation of elderly care is driving deep into the NHS

teams of nursing and support staff could be broken up or made redundant, while the private firms will seek to cut their staffing costs to a minimum by employing as few qualified staff as they think they can get away with.

At Hungerford House in Newbury, NHS employees could be transferred against their will to work under contract for a private employer, or risk losing their jobs.

The WBHA plan also implies massive job losses in other hospitals, with the effective closure of all 91 EMI beds at Fair Mile Hospital and up to 120 more continuing care beds - with no consultation or suggestion of alternative employment. West Berkshire has ignored

the need for joint planning and liaison with local councils which will be responsible for community care of the elderly after 1993, and WBHA makes no proposals for community-based health services - such as day hospitals, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, or speech therapy - to support the elderly people they plan to dump into single rooms and "sitting areas" in four new nursing homes.

Illegal

The whole scheme for WBHA to contribute "top-up" payments to supplement Social Security income support may be illegal: it certainly appears to flout DSS rules in the case of

EMI patients, who are clearly in need to continuing therapy, treatment and medical support.

Neither of the private firms involved, Haven Services and Health Resource Management Ltd. have any experience in the uncharted area of providing private services to EMI patients.

Nor is there any guarantee of easy profits to be made.

Big private health concerns like BUPA have been losing millions on long-term care of the elderly. Small firms like Haven and HRM would not be able to absorb losses, and could quickly find themselves forced to cut standards and staffing levels or even to close down - leaving West Berkshire with no EMI services at all.

Hundreds hear South African socialist

Hundreds of people attended meetings addressed by Salim Vally of the Workers Organisation of Socialist Action (WOSA) during his three week tour. The tour was sponsored by *Socialist Outlook* and *Front Line Worker*.

Despite the decline of the movement of solidarity with the South African struggle, 19 meet-

ings were held as far apart as London, Oxford, Swansea and Glasgow. In addition to evening public meetings, Salim addressed meetings of students and shop stewards.

A fringe meeting at the Anti-Apartheid Movement AGM drew 25 of the 120 delegates. The tour has made WOSA and its political challenge to the retreats of the ANC leadership better known in Britain.

Women in the Unions conference success

OVER 50 women from a broad range of unions (MSF, NUT, TGWU, RMT, Nalgo, COHSE, NUJ, NATFHE, NUPE, NCU) attended the 'Women in the Unions' conference organised by Women for Socialism and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee on 23 November.

The conference aimed to bring together active women trade unionists to assess the current situation facing women both in the unions and in the workplace, share experiences, and start to develop strategies to defend and extend women's position and their rights. This was the first such meeting organised for many years.

Valerie Couitas, in the opening plenary, showed how the number of women in work and in the trade union movement has increased since the Second World War. The unions have responded to this - and the decline in union membership - by making special efforts to recruit women.

While they have, to some extent, taken up issues which specifically af-

fect women, at the same time, in many unions, women's right to organise as women within the unions is under attack. This is particularly the case where union mergers are leading to new constitutions and rules.

Jan Pollock from Women for Socialism, for many years an NUT activist, rivetted the conference with the history of how women had fought in the NUT - and at times outside it - for equal pay and issues affecting women over the last 90 years.

The hidden history of women's militancy emerged as a theme of the day. It was reinforced by the excellent video *Needs Must When the Devil Drives*. This revealed that the legal right to picket had been won by women agricultural workers, who in 1873 were sentenced to hard labour for picketing.

Allied to this theme is the crucial question of why women's militancy and dedication is so easily lost after a struggle and why women are so poorly represented within the structures of the unions.

The workshops focused in on these issues plus sexual harassment, abor-

tion and lesbians at work. Women then met in union caucuses to discuss taking up the issues within their own union structures. Industrial action is needed to defeat anti-union legislation and with the history of women's militancy it is not unlikely that women will be at the forefront of defeating the laws.

Those attending were very encouraged by the conference and enthusiastic that further events took place. It was agreed that there should be a second conference on September 12, 1992 and an organising committee which would be represented in WfS and on the SMTUC was set up.

Anyone interested should contact Carolyn Sikorski 53a Geere Road, London, E15

The film *Needs must when the devil drives* is produced by Oxford Film and Video Makers and is available for purchase at a cost of £25 plus £1.50 p&p or for hire at a negotiable rate. Contact them at The Stables, North Place, Headington, Oxford OX3 9HY. Tel 0865 60074

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Labour council uses Tory laws

by Doug Thorpe

Thousands of Islington Council workers took strike action on December 5 against cuts in jobs and services, despite threats of victimisation.

The response from the Labour-controlled council was unequivocal. Using Tory anti-union laws, they declared the action – for which there had been no ballot – illegal. One Labour councillor described the laws as ‘a gift from the Tories’.

Union leaders quickly joined the council in condemning the strike. Leaders of the teachers’ union, the NUT, were rapidly followed by the General Secretary of the local government workers union NALGO, Alan Jinkinson. He wrote to the council stating that the action ‘does not enjoy official NALGO

support’, allowing them to send threatening letters to staff.

But over 90% of the 2,500 strong NALGO branch came out on strike, alongside sections of other council unions including NUPE schoolkeepers, closing sixteen schools. And a strong joint response by the unions to the threatened victimisation of a NUPE steward forced managers to back down.

Hundreds of workers and anti-Poll Tax activists followed up the action with a vocal picket of the council meeting, which agreed a 11 million package of cuts. As council leader Margaret Hodge tried to justify cutting 250 jobs, jailing Poll tax non-payers and using Tory anti-union laws, demonstrators gave a new lease of life to the chant ‘Maggie, Maggie, Maggie – out, out, out!’.



The militancy of the grants campaign seems to be reappearing

Battle for the Underground

By Peter Olinu

London Underground unions are lurching towards a confrontation with management and the government over the new Company Plan. The Company Plan would smash up one of the few remaining bastions of old-style trade unionism and parcel up the Underground system for privatisation.

‘Restrictive working practices’ would be abolished – for example the 8 hour day, which is obviously a Victorian relic! Unskilled staff would be trained in welding, electrical, technical and carpentry work.

Enthusiastic workers are of course excitedly discussing the prospect of walking down the platform with a broom tied to their bum, pausing to weld together an essential piece of signalling equipment, before dealing with the queue of customers waiting happily to buy a ticket.

London Underground Managing Director Dennis Tunnicliffe has announced a big publicity drive to sell the plan to the public and the staff, explaining that it will improve safety, quality and efficiency. This will mainly be achieved by dumping 5,000 staff, a quarter of the workforce. Whole areas of cleaning and maintenance

would be put out to tender, leading to low pay and an inevitable loss of safety in signalling, train and track maintenance.

600 train operators and guards jobs would go, with the remaining staff expected to run the same level of service, much to the horror of the elitists and sectionalists among the operators. Lines would become more independent of each other and would run as businesses, leading to steep rises in fares unless the government holds them back.

The whole plan has an air of unreality about it. It has clearly been drawn up by the Tories as the price of further investment in the underground system. Rather reluctantly, the workers are getting ready for a big confrontation, with one eye on the Labour Party.

With the general election just over the hill, public support for the underground network is an important card. But will Labour denounce the London Underground plan? The fact that Dennis Tunnicliffe is actually a Labour parliamentary candidate does not bode well. With friends like that, who needs enemies!

Activists are therefore preparing to fight on the political front as well as laying the basis for an all out strike by all the workers together.

Student occupations signal change in mood

TERM IS ENDING with a bang in many colleges throughout Britain. A wave of student occupations and other actions at Lancaster University, Middlesex, City of London, Thames, Brighton, Bristol, and North London Polytechnics, Goldsmiths College and Luton College of Higher Education, have caught college directors on the hop.

There have been numerous local victories. At Goldsmiths, for example, the principal was forced to resign. Students in other colleges have seized the opportunity to popularise their demands for action.

At Middlesex Poly in Tottenham, London, in occupation since 21 November, students are demanding no victimisation; a return to at least 1990-91 staff: student ratios ie. restoring all posts that have been cut; the immediate re-opening of one teaching site and the assurance of no further closures; improved educational and student support facilities; overcrowding is reduced; a public acknowledgement from management that educational

provision at Middlesex is inadequate; the restoration of all benefits and grants.

Throughout the occupation there have been student-controlled lectures and seminars, given by sympathetic lecturers and post-graduate students. Students have sent delegations to workplaces, and see getting support from workers, trade unions and the local community as an essential part of their fight for education.

Shop stewards at the Ponders End Bus Garage have provided coffee at 5.30am for the all-night picket and invited students to address their branch meeting. Shop stewards at Edmonton Ambulance Station and Church Street Fire Station also promised to raise the occupation at their branches.

At the City of London Poly students went into occupation on 3 December. Committees were formed to deal with security, health and safety, catering, information and entertainment, and a central committee established with representatives from all.

Here, students are demanding no victimisation; better housing; support from their directorate; reduction of can-

teen prices, extra money for the library, better creche facilities; reduction of the student:staff ratio; increased general funding in line with student numbers; the guarantee of wages for canteen staff who cannot work during the occupation.

City of London students are also taking up national demands. They want to see occupations on a national level around student poverty, caused by the freezing of grants, withdrawal of benefits and lack of investment in education.

City of London Poly Occupation Committee (OC) are coordinating an inquiry about the national issue of student poverty, underfunding, and past, present and imminent occupation protests. With NUS conference deciding *not* to call for national action, and a month to go before next term begins, it is even more important now to coordinate college occupations. City of London Poly OC will be drafting a document based on replies to sum up the mood and demands of the occupation movement as a whole.

Fax or phone City of London Poly OC on 071 247 1441 – ask for Occupation Press office.

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Demonstrate

For British Withdrawal From Ireland on 20th Anniversary of Bloody Sunday

Saturday 25 January

12 noon Hyde Park, London, Marble Arch Tube

Rally: Quex Road, Kilburn

Organised by the Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland. Tel: 071 609 1743 for transport/creche details.

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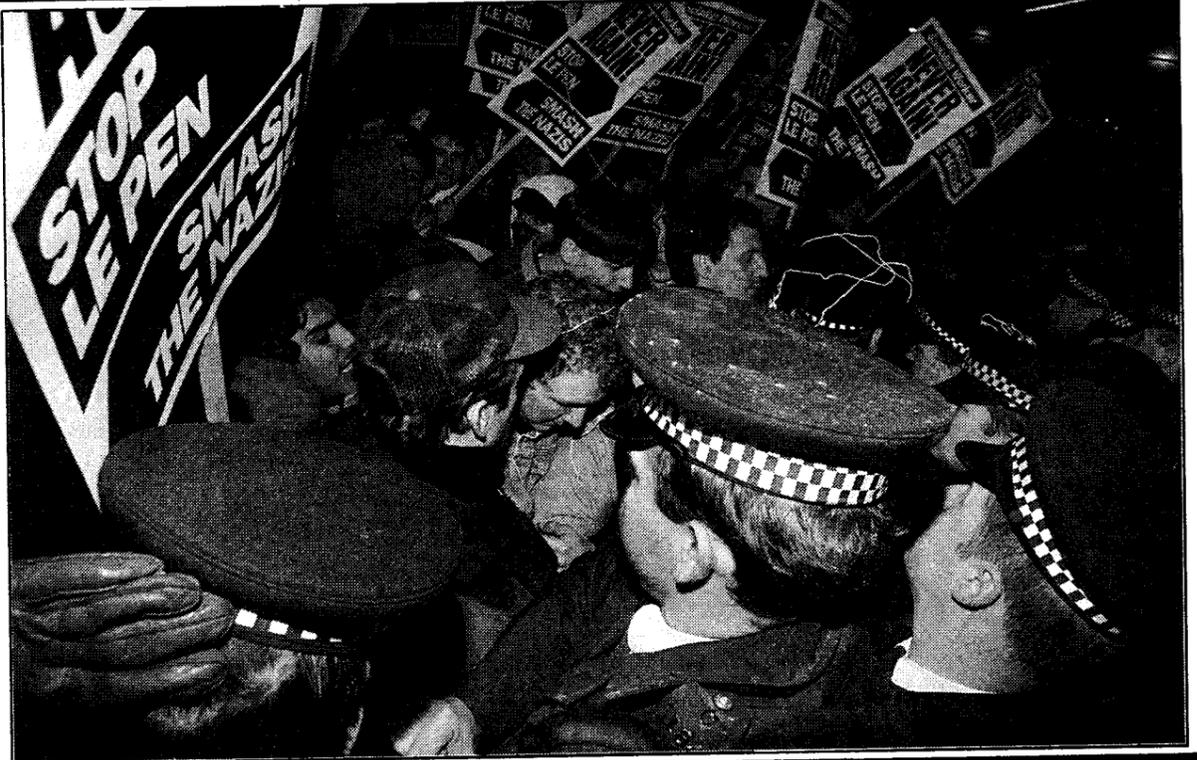
socialist OUTLOOK

A thousand demonstrators turned up last Friday night to jeer French fascist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, speaking at London's Charing Cross Hotel.

Le Pen was in Britain for a Europe-wide fascist meeting, as well as taking time out to cultivate well-heeled right-wing Tories.

'Monsieur Le Pen thinks he's misunderstood in Britain' said an aide. Le Pen's problem was that he was understood only too well.

French socialists, trade unions and immigrant workers plan a huge anti-fascist demonstration in Paris on 1 May.



Maxwell fiasco

Where is Labour's answer?

By Harry Sloan

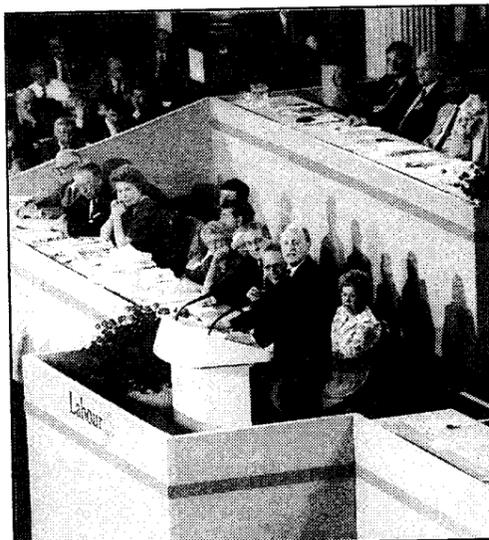
WHILE Terry Fields and Dave Nellist and dozens more socialists are being witch-hunted and expelled, Robert Maxwell, scab, capitalist and crook died a member of the Labour Party.

While hacks on his newspapers, egged on by Maxwell, obediently concocted malicious stories of alleged corruption involving to witchhunt Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, their own Mirror Group pension funds were being systematically plundered of hundreds of millions, and the company's own bank balances raided to prop up Maxwell's private interests.

While banks and finance houses foreclose on loans to recession-hit small businesses, and building societies repossess ever more family homes as soon as their owner fall into arrears, huge consortia of international banks from three continents admit lending Maxwell over £1.2 billion without proper security: much of it may never be recovered.

The ramifications of the Maxwell scandal are reverberating more strongly throughout the capitalist world a month after he died in mysterious circumstances.

As Tony Benn points out, if a similar scandal had taken place in a Soviet bank or industry it would have been trumpeted in the press as a failure of communism.



Kinnock's team has held back calls for Maxwell's expulsion

In fact it is yet another failure of capitalism – one of a growing line of embarrassing recent fiascos that have included the collapse of Polly Peck and the BCCI scandal: the Maxwell debacle, with clear signs of top-level fraud, includes strong elements of the Guinness case.

Ex-cronies

All of a sudden, Maxwell's cronies and stooges, all of whom were ready enough to pick up their directors' fees

and look the other way as he fleeced the company, or who actively helped him in sacking staff, attacking unions and asset-stripping, are rushing to disclaim any responsibility for what happened.

Like the top Nazis after the war, we now hear them claim that they were only carrying out orders, or didn't know what was really happening.

This is the sorry story from the Mirror Pension Fund trustees, who were installed by Maxwell after he took over the company in 1985 precisely to enable him to siphon off millions from this pool of workers' savings.

Maxwell himself took the chair of the pension fund: by the time he died there was just one token union representative, massively outnumbered by Maxwell's top managers and dogsbodies. Now all of them throw up their hands and weep crocodile tears in the hope it will keep them out of jail.

Control

The Mirror is not unique. Most private pension funds have little or no trade union supervision, allowing the management in many cases to decide how to invest and use their employees' savings. Mirror Group pensioners are

belatedly demanding a majority on a revamped pensions board – while management try to fob them off with many of the spineless old executives who watched the millions disappear into Maxwell's chosen companies and accounts.

Of course the unions must step up the fight for workers' control over pension funds. But while the Labour Party of Kinnock and Maxwell seeks to exorcise the spirit of socialism, here is a stark reminder that the privatised pension plans shamelessly boosted by Thatcher at huge cost to the taxpayer are not a reliable alternative to a decent state earnings related pension scheme.

Corruption

Now Gerald Kaufmann is back from Maxwell's funeral, Labour chiefs are trying without conviction to put some political space between themselves and the corrupt tycoon.

For years successive right wing Labour and trade union leaders have obstructed socialists who called for Maxwell's expulsion from the party and from his union membership in ASTMS (now MSF). Now they must reap the consequences.

The left must demand the party spell out a socialist alternative to a crisis-ridden capitalist system that is dragging down with it the hopes and dreams of millions of workers and pensioners.