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Socialist OUTLOOK

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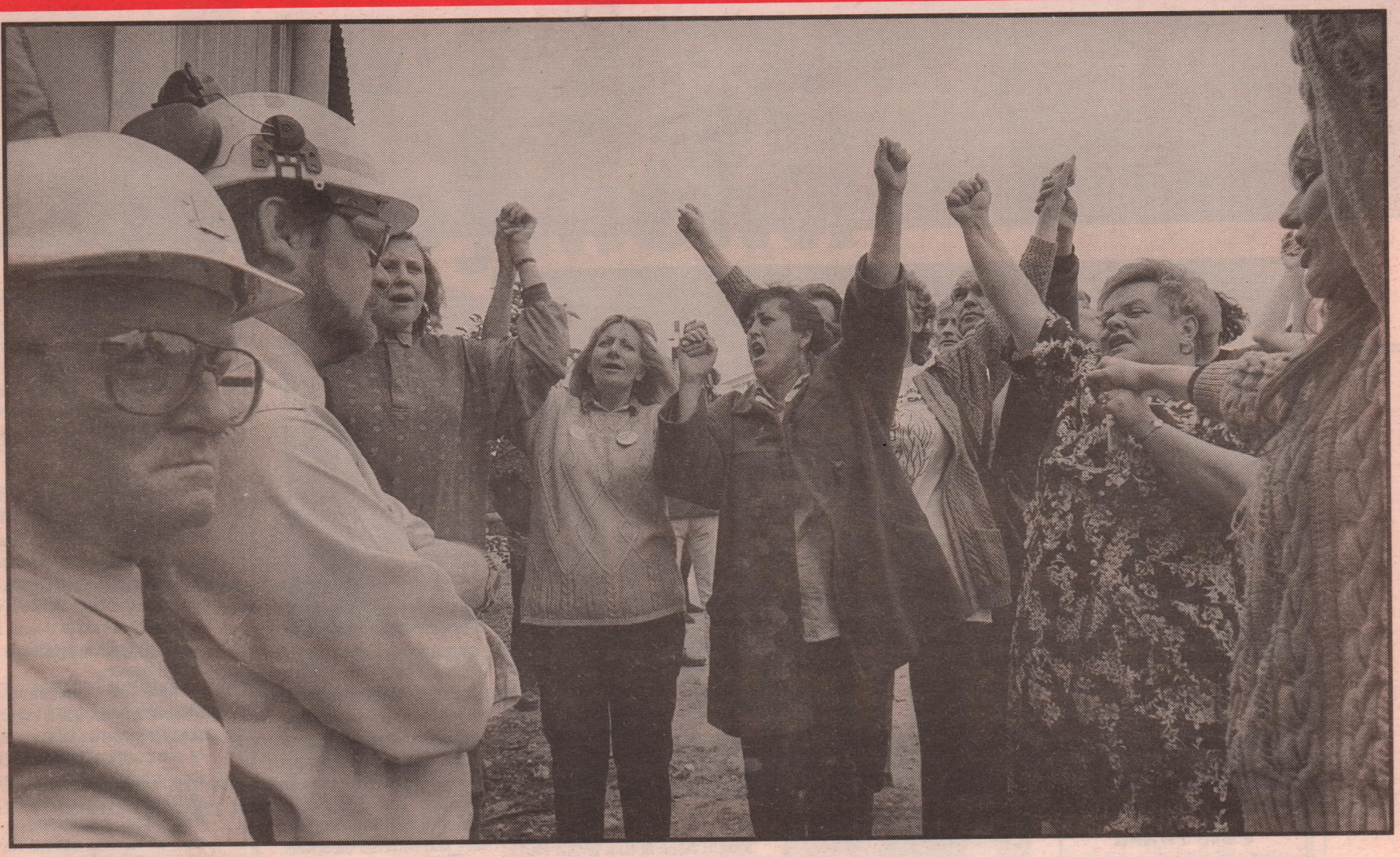


Trentham women show the way

STEP UP

FIGHT FOR JOBS!

Who will get the vote if Smith and the bureaucrats get their way?

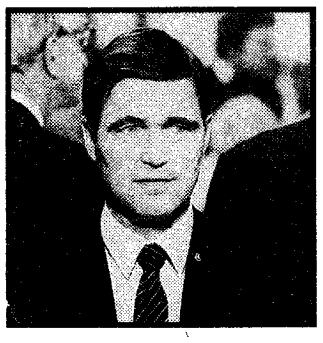
HOME NEWS

Don't let Smith dump union link!

Pete Firmin

Socialists knew it: now the opinion polls have proved it: most trade union members think their unions should remain linked to the Labour Party.

Of course this evidence will not placate John Smith and the right wing Labour 'modernisers', or the hard right of the trade union bureaucracy. Immediately after the poll was published, the engineers' and electricians' union AEEU announced it would continue paying £1 million a year to Labour,



AEEU chief Bill Jordan

despite campaigning for unions to have no say on how such money is spent.

With John Smith singling out the issue for his speeches to union conferences this summer, it is clear that the Labour-union link will be the most hotly-fought issue at this year's Party conference.

Of course, for many labour movement activists it all seems like an argument between bureaucrats – far less important than the question of how to organise a fight-back against the ongoing Tory attacks.

But the two are different aspects of the capitulation of the bureaucracy to the Tory onslaught.

Labour's right wing find the very idea that they should represent the working class embarrassing.

After the left gains of the late 1970s and early 1980s, achieved by an alliance of the constituencies and left unions, the right were determined not only to reverse those gains, but to ensure they couldn't happen again.

Fearful

The union bureaucracy, fearing the extension of the demand for democracy into their own ranks, and moving to the right in a vain attempt to deflect Thatcher's attacks, were willing accomplices in defeating the left constituency parties on deocracy and on Labour policy.

But to consolidate their counter-revolution, Labour's right want to ensure that when the unions move left again there will not be a repeat performance. To do this they have to weaken, and if possible scrap, union input into decision-making and internal elections.

Having moved policy so far to the right that it is virtually indistinguishable from the Liberal-Democrats, they want to sever the link which differentiates the two. The Labour Party came about as a result of a fight in the unions to break with 'Lib-Labism' (Trade Union leaders elected as Liberal MPs) and form an independent party.

For many union leaders, of course, the issue has never been of retaining the collective input of their members into the Labour Party's policy-making, but of preserving their personal influence.

Others believe that with Labour leaders publicly distancing themselves from the unions, there is little point in funding a party which makes no pretence of defending their interests, and gives no union input into decision-making. Hence the bureaucrats' slogan of 'no say, no pay'.

It is clear therefore that union leaders' responses to the proposal to scrap the link span the whole spectrum, from outright opposition, through various watering down schemes, to enthusiatic support.

Left to their own devices, especially if it is posed as a 'loyalty' issue by John Smith, most union leaders will seek a compromise that the majority of them can live with, but which goes against the interests of the rank and file.

This is why the left must take the lead in explaining why the link is important, and how it should be made democratic.

Defence of the link needs to be combined with demands for Labour to get off the fence and give full support to those resisting the Tories.

Because of the union leaders' self-interest, the link will not simply be scrapped this autumn. But this does not mean that there is no danger. Most of the 'compromises' being floated would seriously weaken it and act as stalking horses for its abolition in the future.

All the 'intermediate' schemes, such as a register of party supporters or a topping up of the political levy abolish unions' traditional collective decision-making in favour of individual participation – as well as having serious flaws in their implementation.

The idea of unions having to construct a register of party supporters constituency by constituency is an administrative nightmare, while the lower 'trade union rate' for membership has been a flop, like all of the national membership scheme.

The risk is that such proposals would be scrapped in a few years as unworkable in favour of simple individual party membership.

In the situation, the left has no option but to defend the current mechanisms for union participation against all attempts to weaken them.

'Compromises'

This means rejecting any call to choose between different spurious 'compromises'.

The link can be defended and the right beaten back, but it means ensuring that as many unions and CLPs as possible have clear policy, leaving as little room as possible for manoeuvres by the leadership.

The 'Keep the Link' campaign has produced leaflets for use in unions and CLPs and briefing material on the Party's consultation paper.

■ Keep the Link can be contacted c/o 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7EB.

Fighting new management techniques

Post-Thatcher Britain is a nation of wage-cutting, long hours and vicious 'new management techniques' which go under the name of 'flexibility'.

Last week's *Panorama* exposed some of the new employment practices. These include:-

*** Sacking full time workers and making them part time.**

*** Employing workers on zero hours – working [illegible] as management [illegible] some weeks [illegible] time others [illegible]**

*** Lengthening hours. Hundreds of thousands work compulsory overtime with no extra pay.**

Fighting these and other 'new management techniques' will form part of the discussion at the Socialist Outlook day school on 3 July.

Fighting the new management techniques

Socialist Outlook day school

3 July, 10.30am-5pm

Conway Hall

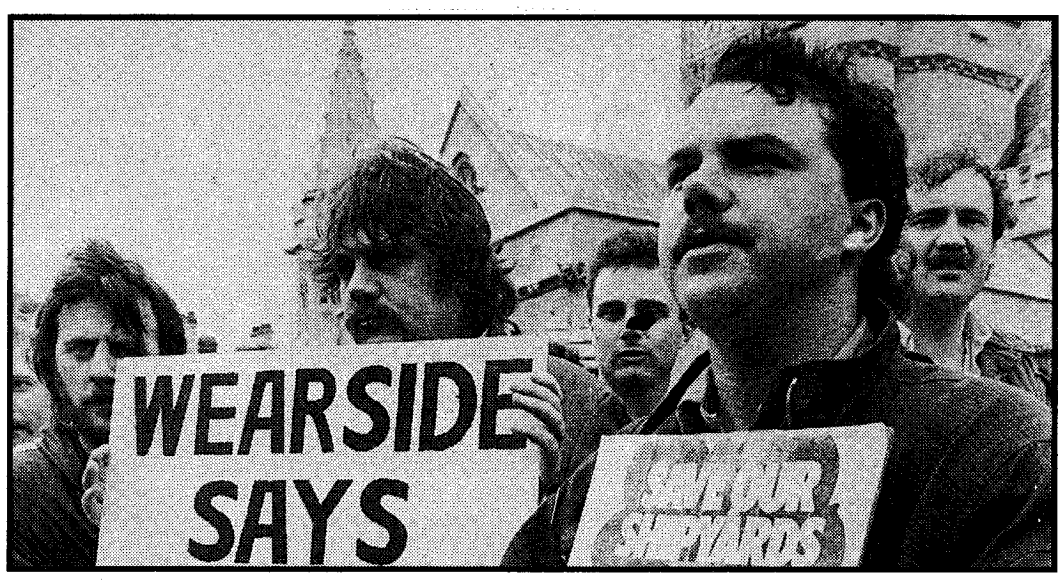
Red Lion Square

London WC1

Admission: £5/£3

Learn lessons from Miners, DAF, Swan Hunter ...

Rebuild the fight against unemployment!



This shipyard campaign was allowed to die away, like so many jobs struggles. It's time to make a stand.

THE GOVERNMENT decision to effectively close the Swan Hunter Tyneside shipyard is another practical refutation of Michael Heseltine's allegedly 'interventionist' industrial strategy.

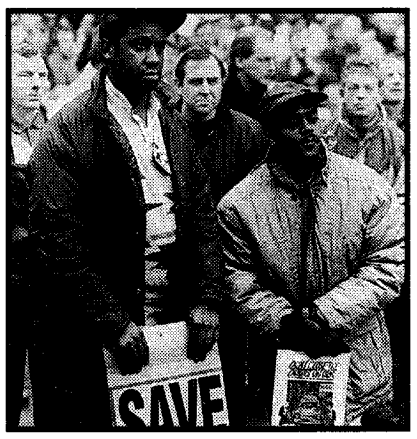
Tarzan promised to intervene 'before breakfast, after lunch and after dinner' to defend Britain's industrial base. Major claims he rejects the fashionable 1980s hostility to industry.

Lame ducks

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating Major and Heseltine are running an old-fashioned Thatcherite 'lame ducks' strategy.

As with the coal mines, the argument is that 'there isn't a market' for new ships.

Not building new warships should be welcomed. But the decline in the international shipping market is a product not so much of a decline in world trade, but the fact cargo is being ferried round the world in clapped-out, unsafe, rust-buckets run under 'flags of convenience'. These ships are increasingly crewed by cheap (and expendable) Asian labour.



Jobs destroyed: Leyland DAF

Far from countering this trend, the British government intends to establish its very own British flag of convenience, an off-shore 'British' registration which will enable ship owners to evade all the safety and pay regulations.

As with the mines, as with DAF, as with countless industries the closure of Swan Hunter is economic madness. It would be cheaper for the government to keep the yard open by paying the whole cost of new merchant ships which were then given away free, than for society to pay the endless costs of unemployment and economic depression in the North East.

A nationalised merchant marine would have need of new and modern ships; even a properly regulated shipping industry with real safety regulations would need them too.

But social calculations like these are not made by those who worship 'market forces'. Because the Labour and TUC leaders have capitulated to the laws of the market they are unable to deploy the fundamental arguments about closures and redundancies.

Nit-picking

Instead the snipe around the edges criticising the government's timing and nitpicking over details.

The same arguments apply to the railways, the mines, to DAF and countless industries. If they are not profitable here and now, according to the laws of the world market, they must be closed. Huge amounts of social capital are thus junked, lives wrecked and industries devastated.

For the left, the arguments about the laws of the market versus social costs and control are vital. But immediately the need to practically fight against closure and redundancy, and against cheapening labour through the 'new management techniques', has to be hammered home.

Timex

As the miners and the struggle at Timex have shown, industrial action is the only way to fight redundancies and closures, and that action must culminate in occupations and if possible the continuation of production under workers control.

This must be combined with the political fight for nationalisation of so-called 'bankrupt' industries.

Most importantly the fight for the *right to work* centred on the demand for worksharing, to start with a 35-hour week with no loss of pay, has to be popularised again in the labour movement.

The lack of struggle against unemployment, and its lame acceptance by the movement's leaders, is a massive indictment of the Labour leadership and the TUC. Once you accept 'market forces' you capitulate to every single anti-working class abomination that goes with them.

After Labour's Maastricht betrayal

Link up with European socialists

NOW THE Danes have voted yes to Maastricht, and the British government – with Labour backing – has ratified the Bill, what are the implications for socialists across Europe?

Thousands of activists will meet in Paris on June 12/13 to debate the socialist response to Maastricht, the economic crisis, unemployment and racism.

Capitalism is organised on an international basis; the states of Fortress Europe co-ordinate their racist immigration and security policies and the right-wing organise their actions across Europe as a matter of course. The left and the working class movement are way behind.

The conference in Paris is an attempt to begin to develop a common socialist approac'. across Europe.

The conference appeal calls for a Europe which 'accords women their full place in society, whose peoples are mobilised and fighting against unemployment and social exclusions, where minorities enjoy equal rights,' which is 'without racism, protects natural resources' and defends the environment and is independent and pro-peace... open to the East and in solidarity with the South.'

Backed by the 150,000 strong Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy, the conference also has support from the German Greens, the Spanish United Left, numerous left-wing currents in France and leaders of the Spanish Workers Commission.

It starts at 2pm on 12 June in St Denis in the Paris suburbs. There will be forums during the day and a major rally at 8pm followed by an all-night Euro-social.

Travel to the conference from Britain will be by coach, leaving London at lunchtime on Friday 11 June and returning Sunday afternoon. Friday evening will be free for a night out in Paris. The price of £50 waged, £40 unwaged includes travel, accommodation and entrance to the conference.

The number of places is limited, so book your seat now! Send bookings to: European Conference, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Make cheques out to 'T1 Research'.

Conference sponsors include:

● *Luciana Castellina, PCR member of the European parliament;* ● *Wilfried Telkamper, German Green member of the European parliament;* ● *Tony Benn, MP;* ● *Armando Cossutta, president of the Italian PRC;* ● *Marcelino Camacho, National Secretary of the Workers Commissions, Spain;* ● *Fausto Bertinotti, Confederal Secretary of the CGIL union federation, Italy;* ● *Ernest Mandel, Fourth International;* ● *Alain Krivine, LCR France;* ● *Julio Anguita, United Left, Spain.*

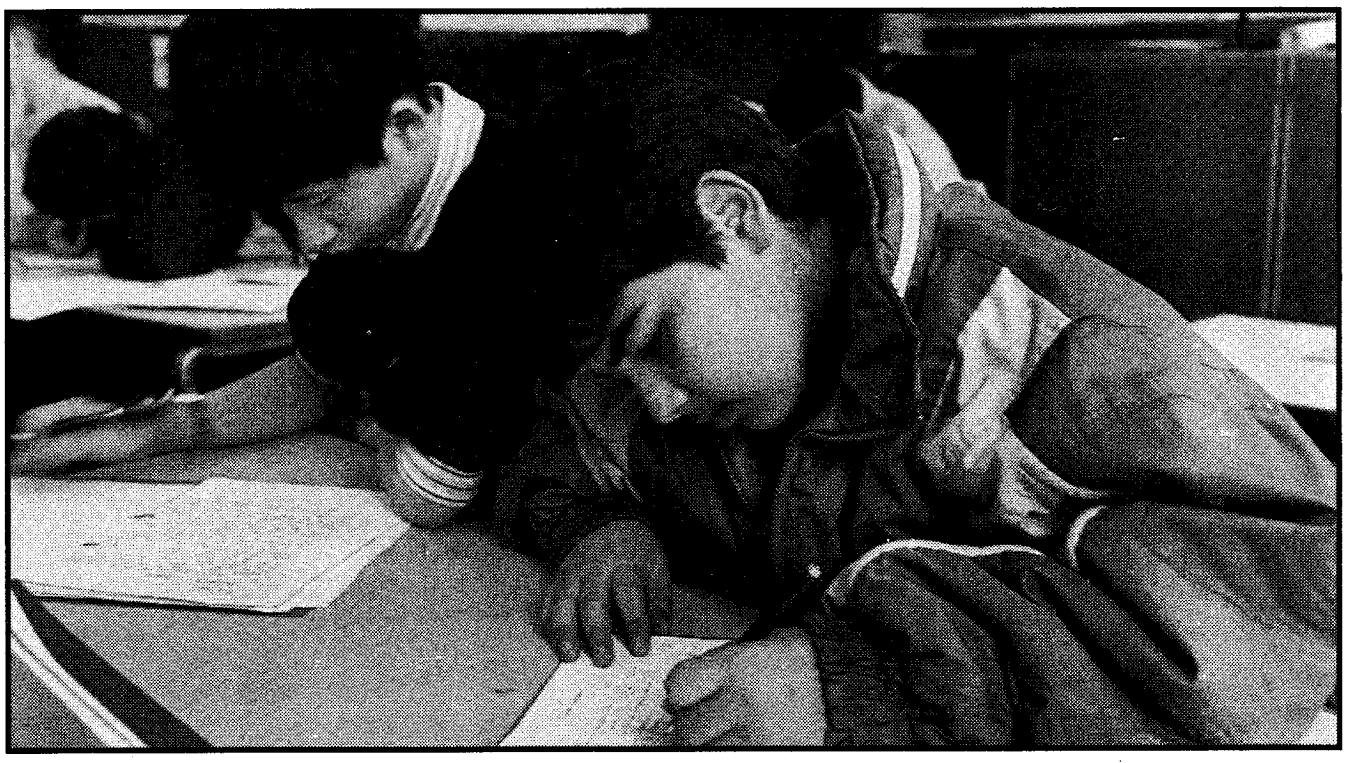
EDITORIAL

TRADE UNION NEWS

Why school tests are so important to Wandsworth

Kids used as guinea pigs in Tory experiment

By Elizabeth Pitt



The Wandsworth tests are not comparable with each other, and have no educational value

WANDSWOTH'S Tory council has so far spent £120,000 on court action against a teachers union.

The failed case against the NAS/UWT has been a centrepiece of the government campaign to scare teachers into following through the new national school tests, SATs.

The hard-right council administration has allocated an extra £30,000 – no-one knows where from – to ensure the SATs are handed in.

The stakes are high for the Tories. If they can't enforce tests in the state schools they will try to make it illegal for teachers not to carry out the tests.

Why so desperate? Because the plans for bringing the market into education are founded on the SATs.

In Wandsworth four year old children are tested on arrival in Reception classes. This testing consists of teacher assessment of a child's experience of maths, science and english with some social context.

Booklet

In addition they have to complete a 12 page booklet that is intended to indicate their 'readiness to read'.

One question asks the child to put a ring round anything edible on the page. A girl who put a ring round a balloon, explaining that she would burst if she eat it got the answer wrong in spite of showing an understanding of the question and an imaginative idea about what balloons can do. No marks for a sense of humour!

These tests are collated on the Council's database and a figure produced to show how well, or not the child has done. These are then compared with the Borough average and schools can be league tabled on the potential children show on entry to school.

At seven, children do the SATs, involving half a year's work when the timetable has to be completely transformed to cope with the level of testing that has to be done everyday.

At 11 children are tested again with Wandsworth's own tests. One is an intelligence test, the other two test reading and maths. Again the database that is held on every school is used to analyse the results and claims to show whether a school is adding value to the child.

If a number of pupils are not achieving as highly as their intelligence tests would predict the school is asked to explain itself to the Chief Inspector and the Council's Performance and Standards monitoring group.

These tests will form a basis for selection to Secondary school, possibly as soon as next year.

Tests are part of the formula by which schools are funded. Refusal to test has meant one school has lost tens of thousands of pounds. Wandsworth has consistently refused to use any other method to calculate the social context of the school.

The public debate around testing focuses on parental rights. Parents are supposedly given the right to know how well their child and the school is doing compared to the 'national average'. When parents read these results the information is disappointingly crude. The parent of a seven year old may be told that their child has achieved level two.

Short of reading the heavy tomes produced by the government on how to assess and construct the total mark a parent is not going to find out whether their child can, for example, read a short story and read the text aloud with expression and understanding.

Many schools have devised very informative ways of reporting to parents that helps to involve them in supporting their children's learning.

Chief tester: Patten

Confusing

The league tabling of schools themselves continues to confuse parents. In Wandsworth lists of schools are published, sometimes by result, sometimes in alphabetical order.

It is never clear what criteria are used for public lists and schools whose names begin with A are often perceived as those at the top of the league table!

At other times the direct ordering of schools by result produces a mass of telephone calls to the schools at the top of the list asking for an immediate transfer.

The idea that standards can be raised by testing is a cynical manipulation of all parents' desires for the best for their children.

What it is really about is more for less. In a recent committee paper Wandsworth's Tories explained that the testing and measuring of a schools performance is in order to obtain the same quality for less money.

Once the standard is outlined then a lower paid teacher, or one whose salary will only be raised at the whim of the governors, will be expected to produce the same results.

'Added value'

Performance related pay will be easier for governors to administer as they will be able to see which teachers are adding value to the pupils education. Costly appraisal schemes would not be needed to judge teacher performance.

Though Wandsworth's three sets of tests make no attempt to establish uniform criteria, and cannot be used to compare with each other, the council intends to use them to measure 'school effectiveness' – alongside other information such as the ethnic mix of schools.

Thi information will be available in local libraries to help parents make choices about schools. Decisions made on racist grounds will be far easier.

These tests represent the face of an authority which monitors and measures obsessively in an attempt to cut unit costs. They also indicate an authority that has clearly stated that the personal and social development of students is not the business of the school.

Without the SATs Wandsworth's project to bring down the unit costs of education will be seriously under threat.

The offer of extra supply teachers to come into schools and administer the tests is completely unmanageable in secondary schools.

In primary schools the offer of one day's supply cover would go nowhere near covering the amount of paperwork that has to be done to collate the results of the SATs which teachers have been working on since January.

Wandsworth have indicated that they do not wish to fine teachers who do not do the SATs. They know they can't after the court case. They want to be as helpful as possible in giving schools extra staff and time! It is part of their policy to publicly state they are giving schools freedom and flexibility.

(For instance, they have given school governors flexibility to harmonise *down* the pay of manual workers in schools _ losing between 20 and 30 per cent of their salaries.)

However when it comes to the measuring of a school's performance, every effort is put in to make sure that no school is allowed to deviate from the model.

Governors

Governors are now aware that there is grave concern over the educational value of the tests.

They are an important link in the opposition to testing and many governing bodies will be explaining to the Council that they cannot pass on the results of the SATs.

The headteachers association has advised all Wandsworth members to seek the support of their governors in not passing on or collating any results.

The ideological battle over what is to be taught is probably the main reason for such enormous opposition to the SATs, but if 'school effectiveness' cannot be measured Wandsworth's pilot will be on the rocks.

"The idea that standards can be raised by testing is a cynical manipulation of parents' desires for the best for their children"

NW will vote with its feet

PLANS are now well under way for a massive North West 'People's March' in solidarity with the NUM's fight to save Parkside colliery.

The march is also a challenge to the tide of job losses and unemployment throughout the region.

The march aims to help heighten the media profile of the anti-pit closure campaign and to bolster the fighting spirit of Lancashire's 500 remaining mineworkers who continue to stand firm against British Coal.

The march will consist of several 'legs' starting on 17,18 & 19 June, coming together on 20 June – the two hundred and fiftieth day of the NUM's campaign – for a mass demonstration and rally in the vicinity of the pit.

The various 'legs' of the march will be linking up with other workers fighting job losses and closures in the area and there will be representatives from Burnsalls strikers in Birmingham and Timex strikers in Dundee on each 'leg' of the March.

Various events have been organised along the route in solidarity with the march.

The march is jointly organised by: North West TUC, North West Miners Support Group Network and Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC).

Contact 0942 884763 for more information on sponsoring or joining the march.

Thouands rally behind Timex strikers

TEN THOUSAND workers from around the country joined recent protests in support of the Timex strikers.

News reports were dominated by the May 15 Scottish TUC demonstration and the May 22 mass picket addressed by Arthur Scargill.

The 343 strikers of the Dundee factory have shown people nationwide the value of solidarity and struggle.

Support came from the Dagenham Ford plant, Rolls Royce, the Parkside pit camp in Lancashire and elsewhere to the picket, which stopped most of the scabs from entering.

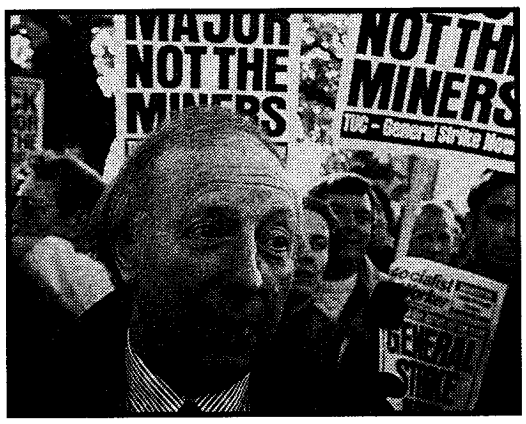
Thirty-five arrests were made by police, who also broke a woman's arm when attacking a peaceful demonstration later that day.

The success of the Timex strike has a special lesson for those confronted by the do-nothing leaders of the labour movement. Bill Jordan condemns the pickets and has threatened to expel strikers from the union.

The AEEU leader warned Arthur Scargill to stay away from Dundee, likening him to the 'captain of the Titanic'.

Despite the union leaders' cowardice, real support has been gained through work at the rank and file level of the union and by that of organised left groups, especially the Socialist Workers' Party.

While some on the left argued the success of the strike hinges on gaining the backing of Willis, Jordan and Smith, the Timex strikers show the need, and the way, to tackle to Tory offensive against jobs.



Leader of Titanic miners' struggle: Scargill

NUT scuppers tests

By Roy Leach, secretary Oxfordshire NUT (personal capacity)

THE 13 May NUT ballot result on boycotting SATs delivered the tests the final knock-out. The majority for the boycott was overwhelming – 96.2 per cent of the votes were cast in favour.

The turn-out of 70 per cent on a full postal ballot represents the strength of feeling, and the effectiveness of the campaigning by activists.

This result was much better than that achieved in the NASUWT and the ATL who focused solely on the issue of workload. The NUT addressed the political and educational issues. The NUT remains committed to a boycott of the tests next year unless a more acceptable form of assessment is introduced.

The NASUWT and ATL have made it clear that once the workload issue is addressed they will co-operate fully with the tests. There is a real danger that the Tories will split teacher opposition to their test and league table project. John Patten has already made it clear that he will 'slim down' the tests for next year.

The key to defeating the Tories education project lies in forging a durable alliance between parents and teachers prepared to wage the political struggle.

With the possible extension of the anti-union laws to prohibit a legal boycott next year the conditions for a further defeat of the Tories will disappear unless the halting of the SATs this year is turned into a mass rejection of the selective education market the Tories are seeking to introduce.

As Tories go for kill on privatisation...

Rail ballot defeat

By Greg Tucker RMT Traincrew Grades Conference Secretary

BY A MAJORITY of just 163, British Rail members of the RMT have voted to accept 'guarantees' that BR will try to avoid compulsory redundancies.

This stops any further action but settles nothing. Most railworkers do not trust BR but many doubted the RMT leadership's commitment to fight.

With the union split our task is to rebuild a fight against BR's plans to attack pay and conditions in preparation for privatisation.

To do that it will be necessary to take on the RMT leadership, who would rather see railworkers defeated than their own cosy conditions threatened.

The formation of the 'Campaign for a Fighting & Democratic Union' in the RMT is timely. The left should take heart that, despite massive threats, 49.8% of the union were still prepared to vote for further strike action.

The union is to ballot London Underground members over pay. With BR pay also unresolved, activists should press for pay to be made a union-wide issue, linked to the broader fight against the government's 1.5% pay limit.

For the RMT bureaucracy the threat to end the automatic deduction of union dues from members pay became *the* major problem to be avoided at all costs.

This was behind the controversial ruling that a two-thirds majority of the executive was needed to prolong the strike.

The confusion this caused led to the ballot defeat and enraged activists. Members from over 30 branches came to the CFDU launch meeting last month and the Campaign has organised successful fringe meetings at the unions' grades conferences.

It will hold a meeting at the unions' June AGM. Conferences of traincrew and signals & telecommunications workers passed resolutions highly critical of the RMT leaders.

Knapp has responded with threats of disciplinary action. Branches and Districts supporting the Campaign have 14 days to answer why their names have been attached to 'unofficial circulars'.

In a connected move Knapp proposes to change the rules to allow those who produce such 'unofficial circulars' to be expelled from the union.

When Knapp was told this might be illegal, he told the Council of Executives it was 'about time someone stood up against the Tory anti-union laws.'

After the ballot defeat, left wing members of the executive called for all EC members to put themselves up for reelection, so that RMT members could have their say on how the dispute was handled.

None of the seven who voted to stop the strike would do so. They knew only too well what their fate would be. Already many branches have passed resolutions demanding the seven resign.

Victory for Telecom left

By Chris Brooks

THE BROAD Left in the National Communications Union swept to a 20-15 victory in this years National Executive elections – the first defeat for new realists in the trade unions for some time.

The left also won an overwhelming 20-3 victory in the Majority Engineering section over the right wing 'mainstream' bloc, more than compensating for the continued 20-0 grip of the right wing (themselves ex-Broad Left) in the clerical section.

The left triumph on a turnout increased by almost 50 per cent stems mainly from the massive reaction to BT's Customer Service Improvement Programme.

The right wing Executive majority sat on these plans for two months before *management* eventually briefed staff. Only after intense pressure from a campaign led by Broad Left militants did they spell out their half-hearted opposition to management's new programme.

Again it has been *management*, in the form of a personal letter to every employee, who have kept staff informed, confirming most of our worst fears. Now the right has paid the price.

The incoming Broad Left majority have been elected to confront an increasingly aggressive BT management. BT has been shedding huge numbers of staff, down from 245,000 in 1990 to 170,000 at present.

They want to reduce this to under 100,000 by 1997-8. So far they have used voluntary means, but the prospect of compulsory redundancy looms next year. The union will ballot for industrial action if this happens.

BT's staff reductions are far greater than those resulting from modernisation and the fall in market share.

They want to sweat the existing workforce and put the rest of the work out to contract at far worse pay and conditions. The Executive's scandalous deal allowing the recruitment of Manpower UK staff in direct labour work must be scrapped.

Already BT is testing the union's defences in London by attempting to impose changes in working hours as a prelude to the new Programme. London militants will be expecting full backing from the new Executive if and when it comes to action.

The Broad Left is committed to the merger with the Union of Communications Workers, but the right-wing UCW leadership are cool towards the idea. Unity will have to be fought for by the left in both unions.

The scene is set for major confrontations. In the meantime there will be much celebrating at this year's NCU Conference.

TRADE UNION NEWS

Anti-Nazi League: did they reject Militant offer of joint demo?

Unite to smash fascists!

By Pete McDonald and Jeff Lowe

STUPID and irresponsible sectarianism is weakening the fight against the far-right.

We now have *three* major campaigns against racism and fascism:

- the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) –was the first to be formed;
- the Anti Nazi League (ANL) is controlled by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)
- Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE) is led by *Militant*.

There is also the much smaller Anti Fascist Action (AFA).

The last few weeks have shown the silliness of these divisions. Only YRE have emerged with any credit – primarily because of the sectarianism of the other groups.

YRE called a demonstration for May 8 in central London. According to their acount, After the murder of Stephen Lawrence they contacted his family and decided (correctly) to move the demo to south east London and focus on the presence of the BNP bunker in Welling.

This march was well supported by both black and white youth, and was the biggest mobilisation against racism for many years. Perhaps 40% of the marchers were black.

According to *Militant* they approached both the ARA and the ANL to jointly organise the demo, including the opportunity to speak from the platform.

Both refused. The ANL went ahead with its own demo on 15th May – much smaller, with far fewer black people and much less militant. Speakers included right-wing Labour MP Nick Raynsford and the Tory mayor of Bexley – strangely omitted from *Socialist Worker's* report of the demo!

Socialist Worker claims 'The best message to send to the police, and the Nazi thugs they defend is the biggest possible anti-Nazi demonstrations'.

Unfortunately their practice is different. If they had been serious they would have called off the ANL demo – organised after the YRE demo was announced – and taken up YRE's proposals for a joint march.

Marc Wadsworth of ARA used the police assault on the YRE march as an excuse to attack the far-left. It obviously escaped his notice that those subjected to the most brutal police attacks were black youth from *Panther UK*.

So despite past rhetoric about closing down the BNP head-quarters 'by any means necessary' Wadsworth condemns those black youth who take Malcolm X's words seriously.

Instead of supporting the YRE march, ARA concentrated on organising for its own demonstration on June 12th. This has the potential for being a massive demonstration – it is sponsored by the TUC and several major trade unions.

Socialist Outlook fully supports it and we call on all anti-racists/anti-fascists to help make it a huge success. But it should not have been counterposed to the YRE march.

Unfortunately the ARA demo also clashes with the national Unity Carnival organised by AFA in Newcastle – testimony to the divisions which must be overcome if we are to go forward.

Militant and YRE are currently able to claim to be the organisations in favour of unity. The only way to do this in practice is to agree joint initiatives.

The SWP refuse because they put their own interests first. The ARA leadership believe they are *the* anti-racist movement and everyone else is irrelevant – or worse, as claimed at ARA's AGM, "part of the opposition".

ARA claim to be the sole voice of Black communities – a claim clearly disputed by the large numbers of Black youth who marched behind the *Panther* banner on May 8th, or those mobilised by the Indian Workers Association on May 15th.

The ARA's exaggerated claims also exclude organiations that are doing strong community work, such as Newham Monitoring Project, Southall Monitoring Group, and GACARA.

In contrast representatives of the Rolan Adams family campaign, Orville Blackwood campaign, Winston Silcott defence campaign and others have correctly spoken at meetings, rallies and demonstrations – whoever the organisers.

It is time the anti-racist/fascist movement followed their example.

Socialist Outlook will continue to support **any** anti-racist/fascist initiative that takes the struggle forward.

It may be stating the obvious to remind the leaders of all groups of what damage has been done in the past by divisions in the anti-fascist movement – now is the time for unity in action!

FIGHTING FASCISM

Rahman campaign

A BOLTON family is continuing to gain support in a fight against racist immigration laws.

Mrs Rahman came to Britain from Djibouti in order to receive specialist cancer treatment.

Now the illness seems to be reversed, but her doctor says she needs continuing treatment that is not available in Djibouti.

She has a daughter with multiple handicaps receiving help at a local special school that is also not available in the Red Sea statelet.

Thy have gained widespread support from the community and the labour movement.

Supported by NALGO nationally, and by the NUT, the campaign's recent demonstration drew together over 1,000 people despite threats of a countermobilisation by the fascist British National Party.

■ For further details write to the Rahman Family Defence Campaign, Bolton Socialist Club, 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1 1DY.

Prepare to challenge Tories' Asylum Act

By Ellen Moore

IN JUNE the racist Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill returns to the House of Commons for its third reading. When it becomes law the Act will introduce draconian measures against asylum seekers and refugees.

The bill is inextricably linked to the Maastricht process and brings British law in line with racist legislation in the rest of Fortress Europe.

One of the worst requirements of the Bill, the introduction of fingerprinting of all asylum seekers, can be linked to the work of the TREVI group.

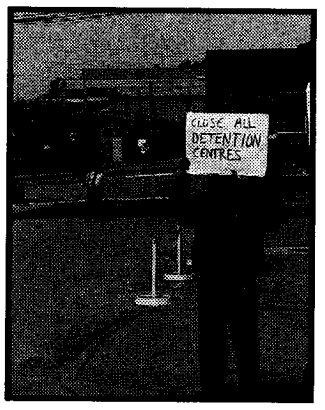
The TREVI (Terrorism, extremism, radicalism and international violence) group is a secret European policing forum attended by the security services and police including MI5.

Its sub committee the 'Police working group on terrorism' is currently working on a common intelligence database on refugees, asylum seekers, visa entrants and migrants from the developing world settled within the EC.

Tony Bunyan, editor of *Statewatch* says 'It is no longer the Soviet threat and, internally the threat from communists that concerns western governments; instead they are directing their resources toward the Third World, towards those countries who do not accept the New World Order'.

Refugees who are 'dissidents' in their country of origin become as a result 'dissidents' within the EC, a fifth column, the enemy within.

Fingerprinting has been justified in the Commons as a measure to prevent 'fraudulent multiple claims' for asylum, benefits and housing. This justification aids the process of criminalisation of asylum seekers in and of itself, but it obscures the real purpose of fingerprinting and the fact that officials will then be able to refuse asylum elsewhere in the EC.



The Bill also means that if a visitor or student applies for asylum and the request is refused they will be imprisoned immediately and then deported. Government cuts in legal aid make the situation even worse.

In addition the Bill is retrospective. So anyone whose application is currently being considered – it can take as long as five years – will be subject to the new provisions.

Linked to the Bill is the recent Court of Appeal decision instructing Local Authorities to report to the Home Office any 'illegal immigrants' applying to them for housing.

The DOE guidelines on homeless families state that everyone 'is entitled to equal treatment under the law' and that information on immigration status is confidential.

Judges at an appeal brought by Tower Hamlets Council said this was 'misleading and wrong' and overturned a High Court decision that immigration control is not a function of a local authority but solely of the Home Office.

Under the Asylum Bill if a local authority has 'reason to believe' that a homeless person is an asylum seeker it will be obliged to investigate that persons immigration status. If it is found that the person is an asylum seeker then they can only offer temporary accommodation.

The effect of this legislation and related disinformation in the media is to create the link that immigration equals criminality, or even terrorism.

It also fuels racist claims that asylum seekers are cheats and scroungers. This paves the way for more harassment and attacks on the rights of all refugees, asylum seekers and black people.

In the 1980s there were successful campaigns and action by trade unionists against the implementation of passport checks and attempts to introduce internal controls. This has dropped off the agenda.

But It is not sufficient to oppose racism by parliamentary means – no significant amendments have been tabled to this Bill – or to focus the fight on getting Nazis off the streets.

The left must develop a united anti-racist and anti-fascist movement which fights racism at every level.

West Germany did indeed swallow East Germany in 1990 but it was rather like a snake swallowing a hedgehog, painful for both parties. The new Germany is not simply a bigger west Germany but is qualitatively different ...

The Bundesbank, having caved in to political pressure in 1990 over the terms of German economic union, has put its collective foot down over inflationary tendencies and is demanding cuts in public spending, increases in taxation and anti-inflationary measures. In other words a classic austerity programme.

There has also been a hike in VAT from 14 per cent to 15 per cent which while helping to balance the budget has also itself contributed to price inflation. The reductions in state subsidies which was supposed to accompany the increased income through raised VAT levels have not been forthcoming.

The CDU's Liberal coalition partner the FDP has once again warned that the cuts which have taken place or are being proposed are almost exclusively in the area of social provision, thereby exacerbating the tension between east and west.

What the engineering workers' strike has done is to reveal once and for all that German unity has gone horribly wrong for the ruling class.

Militant

Instead of the politically docile and grateful and therefore exploitable workforce they had hoped to inherit from the GDR they have ended up with a numerically powerful and potentially militant German working class which is deeply dissatisfied.

This time there is no 'economic miracle' on the horizon to come to the rescue and, perhaps more importantly, the spectre of Stalinism no longer functions as a means of disciplining workers and their organisations.

The end of this strike is also likely to open the eyes of east German workers to the real nature of the machinations of west German dominated collaborationist unions who see their primary role as guaranteeing social peace and the 'national interest' rather than workers' needs.

In addition the workers in the ex-GDR have been outraged by the revelation that the leader of IG Metall, Franz Steinkuhler, has been making a killing on the stock market while they have been out on strike for a few extra marks a month.

Steinkuhler sits as a union representative on the supervisory board of Mercedes-Benz and it has been revealed that he recently made a personal profit of at least 64,000 marks (£25,000) by buying shares in a financial holding company which was later acquired by Mercedes-Benz.

He of course maintains that he had no knowledge of the merger and that his profit was obtained entirely 'ethically', which is not much of a consolation to his members in east Germany. This scandal could well lead to his joining the ranks of prominent German politicians who have resigned over certain indiscretions recently.

This wave of resignations by people from both the ruling bourgeois parties, as well as the SPD's chairperson and chancellor candidate Bjorn Engholm has contributed to the new and growing phenomenon of *Politikverdrossenheit* or disillusionment with politics, which is sweeping the country.

Taken together with an ever-deepening recession and continuing neo-nazi activities against foreigners much of the bourgeois media is full of stories about the decline and fall of Germany and is making apocalyptic comparisons with Weimar Germany.

The question is whether the left can capitalise on the new mood of both militancy and disillusionment with the traditional parties. The truthful answer is that ir has a lot to do to make good their abdication of political leadership at the time of German unification.

It is divided and directionless at the moment and even its most radical representatives in the PDS (the ex-GDR Communist Party) orientate themselves to left social democracy and 'humane' marketisation in the context of the EC.

The Greens in both east and west have recovered a lot of their lost strength and are reaping rewards from their opposition to racism, the Gulf War and the apparent corruption of the big parties. But it is essential that both these parties develop a higher degree of cooperation, particularly in east Germany, and that they both keep open channels of communication with the SPD.

New direction

If this unity can be achieved then the Left could take Germany in a new and more positive direction. Talk of the 'annexation' of the GDR by west Germany was wrong at the time of unification and has been proved so by events.

West Germany did indeed swallow East Germany in 1990 but it was rather like a snake swallowing a hedgehog, painful for both parties. The new Germany is not simply a bigger west Germany but is qualitatively different in terms of its internal relationship of class forces and politics and, of equal importance, its external position in the New World Order.

If the left is to develop a workers' Europe against the trend towards Maastricht and a bosses' Europe then Germany will be at the centre of that project. The German left must therefore achieve maximum unity in action.

If it misses this chance then the whole prospect of a United Socialist States of Europe may be lost for another generation.

Crisis of Italy's Mafia state

By Paul Clarke

AT A RECENT election rally of the far right Northern League, its leader announced that the party had discovered the headquarters of the Mafia in Italy.

At the end of the meeting the address was revealed – the Rome headquarters of the Christian Democrat Party. The laughter was perfunctory; far from being a joke, everyone in Italy knows it's true.

The corruption scandal has enveloped the whole of Italy's political elite. Former Socialist Party prime minister Bettino Craxi has been exposed as totally corrupt, although parliament has voted not to prosecute him.

Now the scandal has dragged down Giulio Andreotti, seven-times Christian Democrat prime minister and one of the major figures of post-war Italian politics. The Senate has now cleared the way for what will be a spectacular trial of Andreotti.

Exposed

The whole system of rule in Italy since the second world war, in which the Mafia has played a central role, is now being exposed. Defeating the Mafia has been impossible not because of the lack of conscientious police investigators, but because the Mafia is part of the system and protected at the highest levels.

When the US troops landed in Sicily in 1944 they immediately made a deal with the Mafia, which had been severely hit by Mussolini. The US installed Mafia stooges in local government throughout the peninsula.

The Mafia link has been maintained in Italy by the system of *clientalism*. The Mafia state was a *cold war* state, constructed to keep the Christian Democrats in power, and Italy's immensely powerful Communist Party (PCI) out. Now the Italian state cannot go on in the old way. That is why the system of proportional representation which has aided the Mafia state is being abolished.

The Christian Democrats kept themselves in power through a super-bloated state apparatus. Control of the state gave access to huge funds, to be distributed to local businesses, local authorities and party cronies. Tens of thousands of jobs went to party loyalists and Mafia henchmen.

At the same time state funding kept the welfare state afloat – underpinning not only health and welfare provision, but also social gains like the *scala mobile*, the sliding scale of wages for industrial workers.

In post-war Italy huge sectors of industry were nationalised, controlled by IMRO, the state holding company. This again was a huge source of state patronage and corruption, under the control of the Christian Democrats. The recent revelation that Olivetti paid out £7m in bribes for state contracts is just one tiny recent example.

The web of right-wing corruption involved Masonic lodges, the Mafia, the Catholic hierarchy, and of course the Christian Democrats.

Murder

It is now thought that the 1978 assassination of Christian Democrat elder statesmen, Aldo Moro, apparently by the Red Brigades, was in fact carried out by far-right forces, possibly in alliance with the CIA to create a climate of fear and anti-left hysteria – when the PCI seemed likely to enter government for the first time.

The old system of rule has been rendered redundant by the economic crisis of the state, compounded with the financial targets of the Maastricht treaty. Huge cuts in state spending are inevitable. The largesse which sustained state corruption, and also the welfare state, is no longer affordable.

Despite the gains made by Italian workers, the social and economic crisis in Italy is now spectacular. Disillusionment with official politics has led to the rise of the Northern League, a right-wing populist organisation which blames Italy's problems on the corruption of the political elite, and subsidising the economically backward South.

The rise of this rightist force has also been spurred by the crisis of Italian Communism, with the mainstream forming the PDS (Democratic Left Party), which is now an openly reformist, social democratic, force and a large minority forming the 150,00-strong Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC).

Splits

The PDS is in permanent crisis, with split after split going to the left; the latest defectors are a grouping around Pietro Ingrao, long-time leader of the PCI left.

The crisis is urgent. Popular discontent with the old system, crystallised in the rise of the Northern League, threatens the break-up of the country.

The question is whether the system is capable of changing, or whether the corrupt elites are too powerfully implanted. Either way, Italy is now set for a prolonged political crisis.

Only two forces can gain in this crisis in the long term; either the far right or the militant left. The challenge for the PRC is to rebuild that power while breaking with the reformist heritage of mainstream Italian communism.

Is the Tory government talking to Sinn Fein?

Major's rocky government would not follow Thatcher

By David Coen

DID the SDLP's John Hume carry any message from the British government when he recently met with Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams?

It is very unlikely that Hume would have talked to 'the men of violence' without the tacit knowledge, if not the approval, of the British and possibly Dublin. Of course both parties have their own reasons for attending such talks.

Sinn Fein is desperate to talk to almost anyone and anxious to prevent its old enemy the SDLP from capitalising on the Republican struggle.

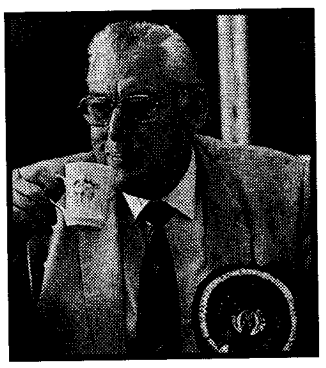
There is also a lot of discontent in the SDLP. They fear that British plans, to be outlined by Northern Ireland Secretary Patrick Mayhew after the local elections offer, in the words of one activist, 'less than what we were prepared to accept in 1974' (the Sunningdale Power Sharing Executive negotiated by Ted Heath).

Nods and winks

Mayhew has been making nods and winks in all directions in order to restart the talks begun by his predecessor Peter Brooke, which lingered for a couple of years without getting anywhere.

His proposals, which seem to

Ireland UNFREE



Partial: Ian Paisley

be for some kind of devolved government with minimal Dublin involvement, are designed to break the logjam.

His optimism is possibly based on an assessment by the Northern Ireland Office that the IRA is being contained militarily and that the Republicans are weaker than for some time.

The message is unlikely to be very different from the one which Mayhew has been playing publicly for the last few months.

He has been declaring that Britain has 'no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland', and praising the Republican tradition, as well as asserting the legitimacy of nationalist demands, namely a united Ireland. All of this is presumably designed to get the IRA to stop the armed struggle in return for a seat at the conference table.

British hopes for success revolve round isolating the Republicans from their base among the Nationalists. The latter were the real targets of the 'peace movement' after Warrington.

But the Hyde Park rally attracted fewer than 2,000 and while the Dublin crowd was about 10,000, its propaganda use was ruined among the target audience when a section of the crowd jeered and threatened relatives of victims of British violence, leading Fr. Dennis Faul, a fiercely anti-Republican Dungannon priest to say 'we must be impartial with our compassion'.

Likewise, British hopes that Irish Labour leader and new Minister for External Afairs, Dick Spring could almost single-handedly win repeal of Articles 2 & 3 of the South's constitution have come to very little.

Repeal

Dublin would dearly love to repeal the Constitution, but refuses to do so outside of an overall deal because they couldn't sell it to the electorate.

The government is anyway a weak one, beset by a continuing series of corruption scandals and in no position to take such political risks.

Mayhew has problems of his own. Many Nationalists believe that a Tory government, rather than the sentimental imperialists of the Labour Party, would be more likely to withdraw from Ireland.

But the Tories are now weak and divided, likely to become more reliant on the Unionists to maintain the majority in Westminster. As the British state slowly disintegrates, its political crisis beginning to catch up with its downward economic spiral, the ever more nationalist Tory right would never allow him to cut the Unionists adrift.

John Hume's publicly stated belief in the impartiality of the British is undermined by apparent unease among the SDLP that Mayhew's plan is decidedly partial – to the Unionists. Hume knows that any British attempt at a 1974-type settlement would lead to another drift away from the SDLP.

The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed by Thatcher with gritted teeth, was designed to halt just such a loss of support to Sinn Fein following the Hunger Strikes.

For that reason, Hume may be happy to be part of what Ian Paisley denounces as a 'pan-nationalist alliance', even if it does not extend quite as far as Rome, as Paisley alleges. Right on cue, Loyalist death-squads have begun to target SDLP members.

Europe

Hume must also be coming to realise that his 'Europe of the regions' solution, which he has been touting for the last four or five years, is past its sell-by-date, given Tory divisions over Europe.

But he is also smart enough to distance himself and the SDLP from the likely failure of Mayhew's latest initiative.

No side, the British, the Unionists, or the Nationalists, is capable of imposing their own solution but the stakes are very high.

Apart from demonstrating that there really is 'no British solution', the talks have been so heavily promoted in Britain that failure could lead to even more support for withdrawal than the 46 per cent who opted for it after Warrington.

COMMENT

FeedBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters on any topic. Letters over 400 words in length will be cut.

Confused on Bosnia

YOUR coverage of former Yugoslavia is extraordinarily off the point.

You say (SO 41) the 'the only just peace now is one in which all the republics and provinces of ex-Yugoslavia have the right to self-determination. But Bosnia also has the right to self-determination. And this presupposes that the Bosnians have the right to defend themselves.'

Self-determination is not the issue here. The project of the Serbian leadership is to invade Bosnia in order to link up with Serbian enclaves there, ethnically cleansing non-Serbs along a military corridor between Serbia and whatever Serbs live in Bosnia.

In Bosnia the issue is not one of self-determination either. It is the right of multi-ethnic, religiously pluralist communities to continue to exist free from the predations of nationalist warlords from whatever part of ex-Yugoslavia they come.

Arms for Bosnia sounds good, but basically it accepts that the different nationalist leaders have priority over the basic right of people to live in peace in there own diverse communities.

Ultimately, when the bloodbath stops people will have to carry on their own lives together whatever their nationality or religion – unless you are advocating ethnically pure and religiously separated statelets, as the Vance-Owen plan does.

Arms for Bosnia seems to amount to your whole strategy. You run a whole page arguing against humanitarian intervention but say precious little about how the conflict might be resolved. For socialists the basic starting point must be the right of people to life and limb.

Mike Phipps, London

Marxism and nationalism

THE debate on black nationalism raises a series of more general questions, but in his reply to Zbigniew Kowalewski, (SO 42) Phil Hearse tackles two principal isues.

Is nationalism compatible with marxism? And does the petty-bourgeois nationalism of an oppressed nation always play a progressive role? Phil is correct to answer both of these questions in the negative.

In the struggle for national liberation it is of course possible for petty-bourgeois nationalism to play a progressive revolutionary democratic role by championing a national alliance of the petty-bourgeois middle peasantry with the proletariat against imperialism and its national bourgeois stooges.

But the black petty-bourgeoisie in the USA is not pre-capitalist and is so tied to capitalism that it is not possible for black nationalism to play a progressive role in the American revolution.

The essence of Malcolm X's break with the Nation of Islam was precisely that he began to realise this and to break with black nationalism, turning instead towards proletarian internationalism.

Kowalewski's attempts to reconcile Marxism with nationalism and his suggestion that there is something intrinsically progressive in black nationalism are hallmarks of a petty-bourgeois nationalism cloaked in Marxist phraseology.

Petty bourgeois nationalist masqueraders give a separatist interpretation to the bourgeois democratic demand of the right of nations to self-determination. Instead of being understood as a democratic safeguard for all nations within a multi-national state, this demand is interpreted as the *necessity of separation*.

This appears to be premised on an abstract 'principle' of one nation, one state – which has nothing whatsoever to do with Marxism.

Phil's critical remarks are a welcome contribution .

Roy Rudditt NW London

Over 10,000 people a year – most of them black – are thrown into British jails and detention centres for the 'crime' of attempting to visit this country as visitors, students or asylum-seekers. They are

Britain's forgotten prisoners

By Kathy Lowe

OMASASE Lumumba survived imprisonment and torture in Zaire only to die in a British prison after claiming asylum. He was the 32 year-old nephew of Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of Zaire, assassinated by the CIA during the turmoil after independence.

Omasase was detained in London's Pentonville prison without being brought before a court, without any right to apply for bail and without any limit on his detention.

On 8 October 1991 he died after being 'restrained' by prisoner officers. His case is currently before the High Court – the subject of a campaign by his family, his solicitors and civil rights organisations.

Outcry

Because of the public outcry the case has produced, an increasing number of people have heard of Omasase Lumumba. Far less known however is the plight of many more prisoners who are currently being held without trial, as he was, under the 1971 Immigration Act.

Recent investigations* have shown how the use of detention by the UK authorities is producing a sharply increasing number of immigration prisoners – over 10,000 a year. They are held mainly in the two largest detention facilities at Harmondsworth, near London's Heathrow airport and at Haslar prison outside Portsmouth, but London prisons are also used to take the 'overspill'.

They are imprisoned for as long as 18 months. Some detainees may be people attempting to enter the UK as visitors, students or asylum seekers.

Others may include people who have been settled in the UK for several years but who are picked up and accused of having infringed their conditions of stay or of having entered the country illegally. Still others may be prisoners served with a deportation order on completing a sentence.

People detained under current immigration and asylum rules can be granted temporary admission or temporary release while making their case to remain in the country. Instead they are being imprisoned on a scale, and for period of time,

Picketing the Harmondsworth detention centre

clearly intended to deter them and others from attempting to stay in Britain.

Recent statistics testify to the racist use of detention powers. For example, among people held on arrival in the UK between 1988 and 1991, pending further examination or removal, those from Africa accounted for easily the largest percentage – 36 per cent in 1991. The next largest nationality groups detained in 1991 came from Asia (23 per cent), followed by the Americas, including Latin America and the Caribbean (13 per cent).

In 1992, the largest group of asylum seekers detained came from India, Zaire, Nigeria and Ghana. In may the same year, of those 42 asylum seekers who had been detained for more than 6 months, people from Africa accounted for over half.

The Manchester-based Campaign Against Double Punishment, fighting against the continued detention and threatened expulsion of prisoners who have served a sentence, has highlighted the fact that an overwhelming majority of them are also black.

Apart from being an ordeal in itself, the very fact of imprisonment inevitably adds to the difficulties detainees experience in obtaining assistance.

Their isolation, coupled with the problems of solicitors and community organisations obtaining information about their whereabouts and resources to support them adequately means they are in a very real sense Britain's 'forgotten prisoners'.

The consequences can be grim. In 1990 a man from Zaire hanged himself in Harmondsworth. Already this year there have been nine attempted suicides among the 70 foreign nationals currently held in Pentonville.

The government clearly intends to imprison more people while using the upcoming Asylum and Immigration Appeals law to speed up the 'processing' of asylum seekers and those charged with immigration offences. Of the 300 extra detention places already announced by the Secretary of State, at least 120 are to be created this year at Campsfield House, Kidlington, near Oxford.

Periodically there has been an upsurge of protest about detentions, notably during the highly publicised detention of Tamils in 1987 and during the large-scale detention of Kurds in 1989 when picketing and demonstrations were organised.

In general however protests have remained fragmented and localised, prompted by actions of the detainees themselves and backed by black community organisations and pressure groups near the detention centres.

Most recent among these were the six-day hunger strikes at the beginning of March this year at Haslar and Harmondsworth involving nearly all the total 200 detainees at the centres.

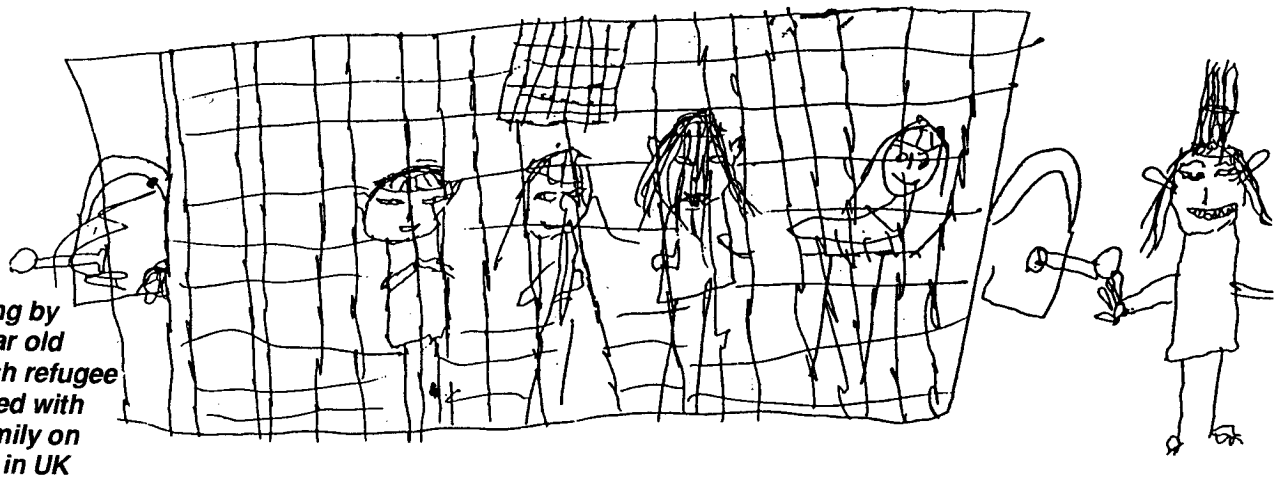
Charter

In June, to coincide with the end of the Lumumba hearing in the High Court, a Charter for detainees is to be launched by a broad group of voluntary agencies and community organisations led by Inquest and the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

If detainees are not to remain Britain's forgotten prisoners, a fight must be waged to defend them. The campaign for abolition of detention must be stepped up and broadened.

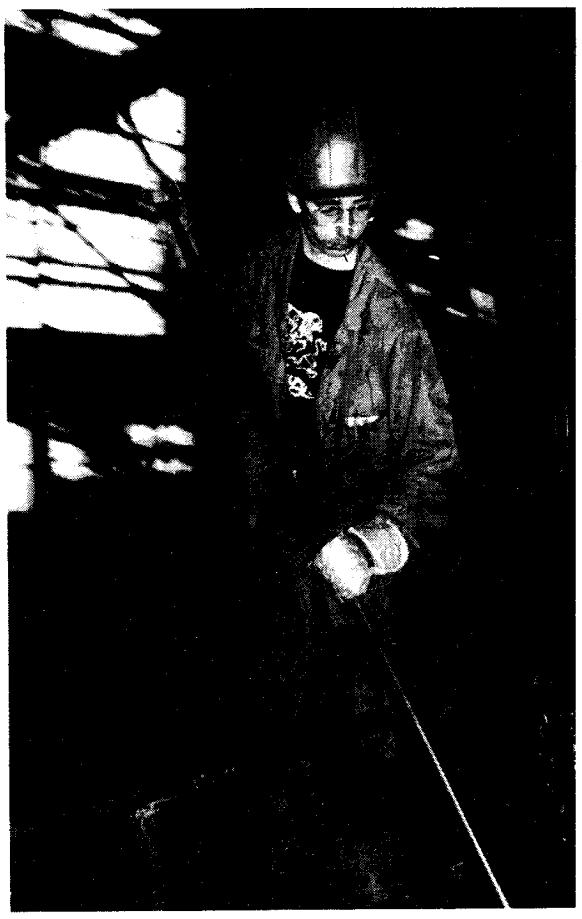
Such campaigning must now be placed upfront in all anti-racist action inside and alongside the labour movement.

**This article is based on* Britain's Forgotten Prisoners *by Kathy Lowe, published by the Detention Advice Service, 2 Prince of Wales Rd., London NW5 3LG, priced £2.50; and on* Detained Without Trial *by Mark Ashford, published by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, 115 Old St., London EC1V 9JR, priced £4.99.*



Drawing by a 7-year old Kurdish refugee detained with her family on arrival in UK

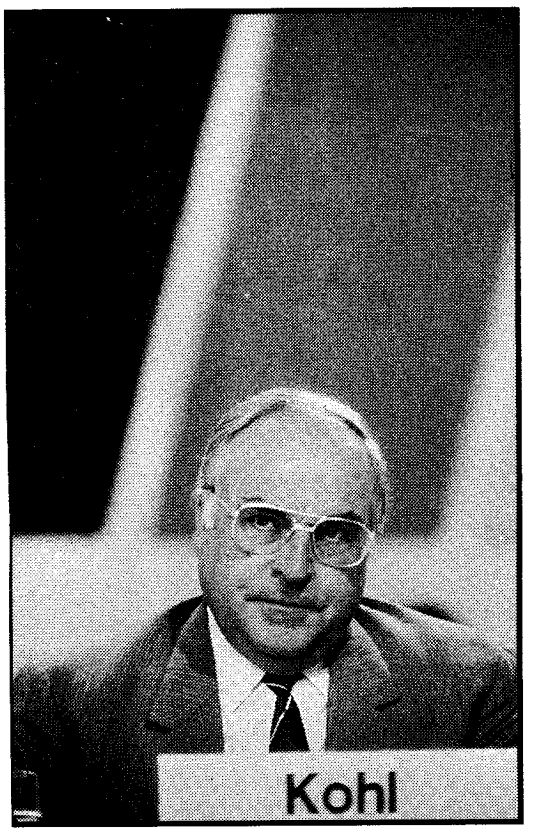
FIGHTING RACISM



WORLD NEWS

Partial victory for east German strikes

German workers unite in struggle



Architect of fiasco: German Chancellor Kohl

By Peter Thompson

GERMAN reunification was always going to be difficult.

In 1990, as Germany was going through its euphoric stage of unification, Socialist Outlook wrote:

'To imagine that unification will be a simple and smooth matter of incorporation, privatisation and marketisation resulting in one big happy capitalist German family is to fail to understand the nature of the crisis of the western economies. Such a view also fails to grasp the limits the crisis places on the whole project of 'recapitalisation' and the resistance which will inevitably come from the majority of the working class in the GDR.'

Less than two years later the ex-GDR has just been through a massive two-week strike organised by IG-Metall, the largest union in Europe, attempting to prevent employers reneging on a 1991 agreement to equalise east and west German wages by 1995.

The strike was almost one hundred per cent solid after ballots which delivered majorities of 85 and 97 per cent.

Despite the fact that on the surface it appears to have been a trade dispute between employers and workers in the engineering and steel sector, politically it represents a new mood of defiance and dissatisfaction in a working class which many on the left had written off because of it enthusiasm for German unification.

Equally encouraging is the fact that many thousands of workers in west Germany came out in solidarity with those in the east. This was a rebuff was the bosses' strategy of trying to create divisions between workers in the east and west.

The strike then represents not only the first major struggle of workers in the east, but the first example of all-German working class unity since the 1930s.

The strike has now ended with around 75 per cent accepting the compromise deal worked out by union leaders and employers. This gives an immediate 9 per cent wage rise and means the employers have until 1996 to equalise wages; but in return the union has agreed to accept higher redundancies in order to stabilise or even lower the overall wage costs to individual firms.

All in all this deal represents a partial victory, but is a very worrying development for the east German working class. They have indeed won a very substantial concession after a solid strike; yet many have accepted the deal only grudgingly. The employers have broken their promises before and there is nothing to stop them doing it again.

Increased redundancies represent the thin edge of a wedge which could be driven further and further into working class unity given the high levels of unemployment in the ex-GDR.

In 1990 Helmut Kohl won the support of East Germans by promising that unification would mean that no one would be worse off and most would be better off.

The political decision to go for a 1:1 exchange rate of east German for west German marks was prompted by the need to win the December 1990 election and not by any sane economic decision.

The result of that decision was twofold: first the aggregate level of demand in the German economy was massively and artificially inflated overnight. Most of the 200 billion marks which east German workers had in savings was spent on western consumer goods in an intense but short economic mini-boom in west Germany.

Home produced goods, though often better quality, were rejected in favour of the brightly packaged western goods.

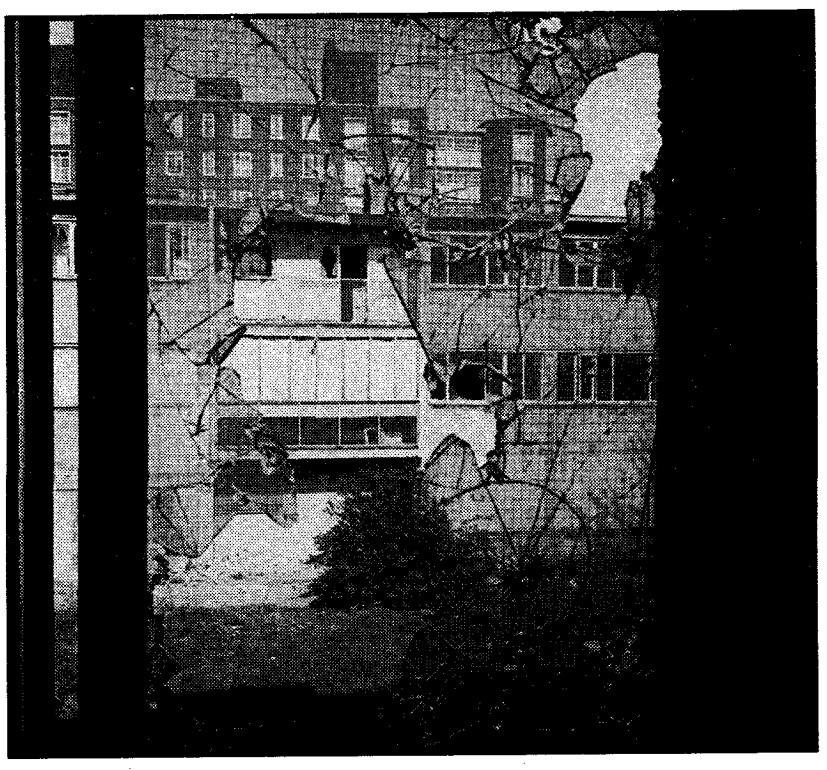
This means that more and more east German factories were closed, not because of some inherent inefficiency but because of political decisions taken in the west.

The introduction of the west German mark had a further effect in that the major export market for east German goods had traditionally been other east European countries. The countries could now no longer afford to buy good denominated in expensive German marks. The result: further bankruptcies.

The nett result was that the 1991/2 mini-boom rapidly went into reverse, especially in the east. The real total of the unemployed and those on short-time working in east Germany is now around 4 million out of a workforce of 10 million. To this must be added the 2 million already out of work in West Germany at the time of reunification, a figure which is rising rapidly.

Paying for all this has massively increased the German state budget. The national debt is estimated to be rising by about 200 billion Deutshmarks (DM) a year, and is expected to reach nearly 2 trillion DM by 1995, putting it well beyond the 60 percent of GDP limit for the EC Commission's requirements for economic union.

Most of this money is not going on productive investment but on servicing debt, financing unemployment and arms expenditure. The payment of interest alone on the state debt is already 40 billion DM per year and is expected to rise to 60 billion by 1995 contributing to a budget deficit in 1992 of 3.7 per cent and an expected level of over 4 per cent this year; well outside the 3 per cent limit agreed at Maastricht.



Collapsing public services and dwindling job opportunities add to the misery

Single mums face Tories' onslaught

Trapped in poverty; hassled by social security and the Child Support Act; squeezed out of work by the recession – as if life were not hard enough, single mothers are now handy scapegoats for the Tories' hypocritical 'moral crusade'. ELLEN MOORE looks at the plight of today's lone mother in Britain.

'CHILDCARE in this country is a joke.

'For a woman who has got very little resources unless you are lucky enough to get a government subsidised nursery, any private childcare is really expensive... that one factor stops a lot of women coming off social security and getting a job,' comments Grace a single mother.

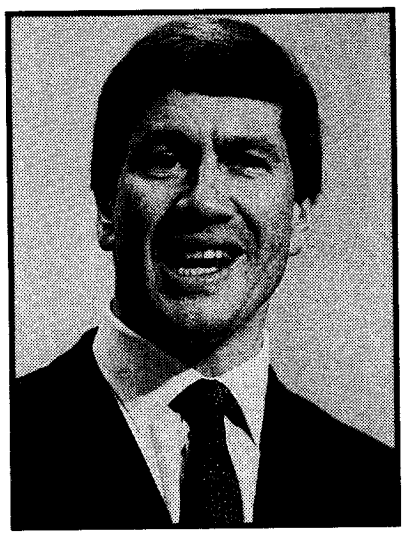
The UK has one of the worst records of provision for publicly funded childcare places in the EC. Only Luxembourg and Ireland have worse provision for under 2s and only Portugal less for 3 -4 year olds. Local government cuts mean that in many areas only children on the 'at risk' register have access to childcare places.

The social security system fails to protect women adequately from poverty because it does not recognise the complexity of most women's lives. In 1981 55 per cent of lone mothers were dependent on benefits by 1990 this had risen to 61 per cent.

Beveridge's social security scheme, devised in the 1940s, assumed a traditional family unit with a full-time male breadwinner and wives and mothers at home looking after the children.

The system has not kept pace with womens changing role or the changing structure of peoples lives. Many of the recent changes in the social security system have had a detrimental effect of women:

- Childcare costs cannot be set against earnings for income support (they could under supplementary benefit);
- The introduction of the social fund, on which many lone mothers rely, places an additional burden of responsibility on women;
- The freezing of child benefit for three years further increases poverty.



Looking to profit from Child Support Act: Treasury Secretary Portillo, seeking spending cuts

Means tested

The combined problems of coping with bringing up children on their own, and the difficulties of managing on a single wage, very often at low levels, mean that lone mothers find themselves forced to rely on means tested benefits for long periods. Many are trapped in a grinding poverty.

The ridiculously low benefit levels mean an exhausting hand to mouth existence – shopping day by day at expensive local shops, spending time searching second hand shops for the kids clothes and juggling the demands of fuel bill, rent and food.

'I just get the kids together and say, well... I'm afraid there'll be no dinner this week... I'm getting used to doing that now.'

That is how Jackie, a lone mother describes when she had to feed the family on sandwiches for a week to help pay a large electricity bill.

Women are more likely than men to have breaks in employment and to work part-time and earn low wages; so many fall below the threshold for making national insurance contributions. In 1992 3.25 million women fell into this category.

The Child Support Act (CSA) which came into force in April represents an additional attack on single mothers. Lone women on income support will be forced to help the state pursue absent parents in order to get maintenance, on pain of having their benefit cut.

The only exception in for those who convince the authorities that they would suffer 'harm or undue distress'.

Absent fathers' level of maintenance payments will be set by the state, with an ultimate penalty for non-payment of a six week prison sentence.

The CSA was portrayed as a campaigning measure to force negligent fathers to pay-up. It struck a popular chord amongst many who thought there were too many fathers neglecting their children and partners.

But it is an Act which furthers state intrusion into people's personal relationships, and will push many single mothers further into poverty and misery.

It is not always easy to prove that a course of action will provoke 'harm or undue distress'. Women may have many valid reasons for having no contact with the biological father of their children. It should be their choice.

For those on income support – unlike parents not on benefit, who can come to a voluntary agreement with the Child Support Agency – refusal to co-operate will result in a 20 per cent benefit cut for the first six months and a further ten per cent cut for the following year.

Even if a lone mother co-operates with the agency and maintenance is recovered, the whole amount will be deducted from her income support. She and the children gain nothing from the absent parent's payments, while the state pockets the difference.

The Tory attacks on benefit levels and the introduction of the Child Support Act, coupled with local government cuts, have pushed over one million lone mothers deeper into poverty.

Message

But the onslaught is not all material, the CSA is punitive and has an underlying message that to be a mother alone means you do not have the right to state benefits. The message from the state is that it is not acceptable to bring up children alone. Women are lone parents for many different and complex reasons and many women bring up children alone by choice.

Lone mothers are also scapegoated by the Tories and the media as responsible for declining 'moral' standards, increases in juvenile crime and the general moral panic in society.

Women should not be driven into poverty because they have a child; neither should their needs been seen as special and additional.

Good, publicly funded childcare, decent wages, good housing, higher benefit levels and the right to live without state intrusion into personal relationships are necessities for everyone.

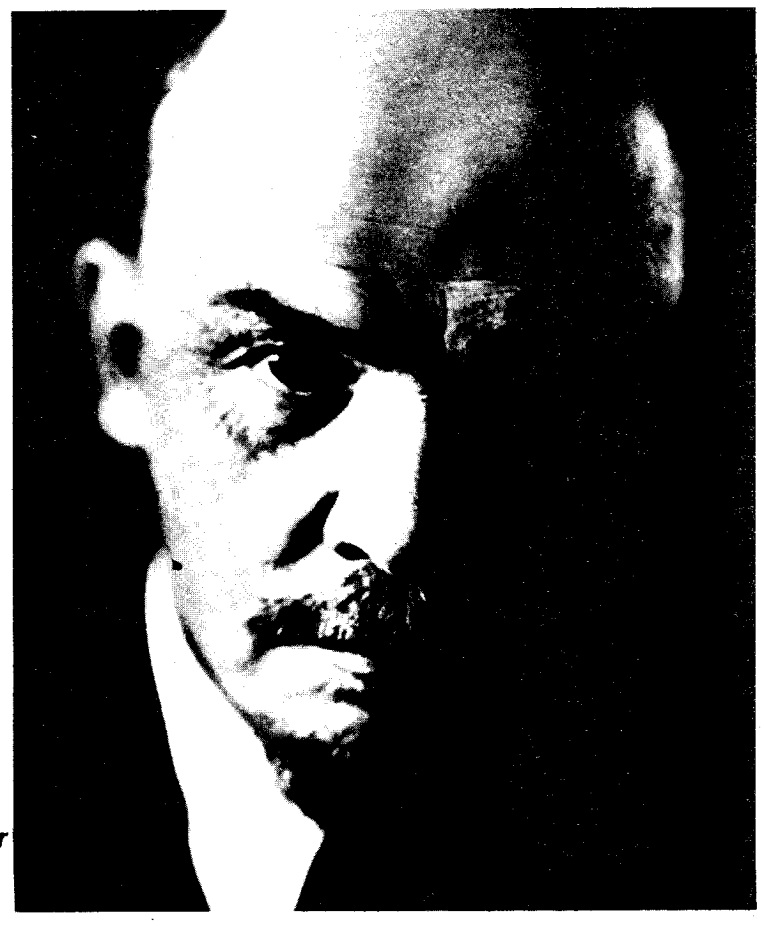
"Even if a lone mother co-operates with the Agency and maintenance is recovered, the whole amount will be deducted from her income support. She and the children gain nothing from the absent parent's payments, while the state pockets the difference"

FEATURE

MARXISM

Part One of a series on politics and the trade unions

Probing the roots of class collaboration



Lenin: fight for class politics

By Harry Sloan

The recent decision of the electricians' union (now amalgamated into the AEEU) to rejoin the TUC has put an end to discussion of a possible political split in the British trade union movement.

In fact the main body of the TUC has moved rightwards on many issues, while its almost total inactivity has won it the renewed confidence of the strike-breaking electricians' leaders.

The unchanged right wing politics of both wings of the AEEU leadership are plain for all to see. The union was the first to break ranks with the rest of the labour movement and hail the end of the recession, joining Norman Lamont and John Major in detecting minuscule 'green shoots' of recovery.

The eagerness with which the AEEU searched for and greeted this development should come as no surprise. Since long before the defeatist politics of 'new realism' were even a twinkle in Neil Kinnock's eye, right wing union officials have more or less explicitly tied their hopes of winning pay increases and other concessions to the fortunes of the employers.

Most of the apparently 'left' union leaders share the same basic view.

The logic is clear enough: if the aim is no more than to win reforms within capitalism, then capitalism must be helped to develop profitably, so that the employers can afford to be generous. Hence the age-old practice of class-collaboration.

All the 'new realists' have done is try to set the clock back 100 years – to the days before the British trade union and working class movement even aspired to socialism.

'Non-political' unions

Of course there is nothing inherently socialist about trade unionism. In the USA and many other countries large trade unions organise, mobilise and occasionally conduct sometimes very militant strikes while strenuously rejecting the slightest hint of socialist politics.

Even in Britain, where the link between most unions and the supposedly 'socialist' Labour Party has existed for almost 90 years, there are countless union activists who see no need to support Labour or embrace any socialist perspective.

Trade unions – especially in Britain, where they still organise 40 percent of the employed workforce – are not politically exclusive, but broad organisations reflecting the social reality of capitalism. As Marx and Engels pointed out in *The German Ideology*:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society is at the same time the ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."

In other words, as an oppressed class, the working class can only transcend the ideas and ideology of capitalism insofar as it wages a *conscious* fight for a coherent alternative.

This development was a long time even beginning in the British unions. Engels wrote as late as 1882 in a letter to Karl Kautsky:

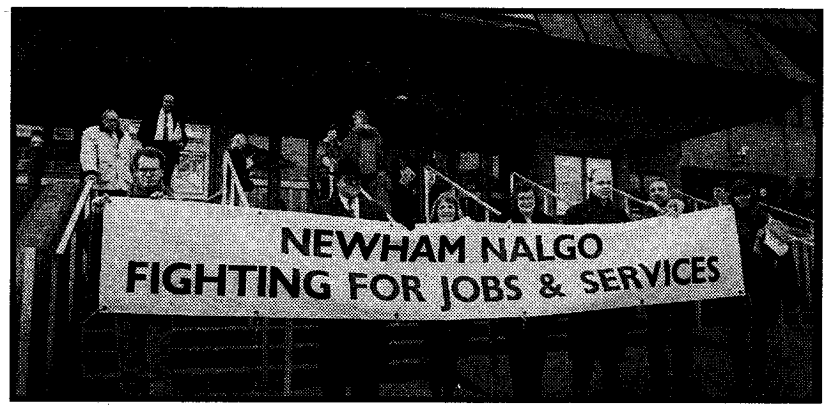
"...You ask me what the English workers think about the colonial policy. Well, exactly the same as they think about politics in general: the same as the bourgeois think. There is no workers' party here, you see, only Conservatives and Liberal- Radicals, and the workers gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."

Schools of war

This was not a contradiction to Engels' earlier description of the trade unions as "schools of war for the proletariat" or his observations on the militancy and courage of British trade union struggles in the late 1840s. Engels recognised that without a *political* development, trade unionism could not offer any real progress. As he wrote to Eduard Bernstein in 1879:

"...for many years past the English working class movement has confined itself within a narrow circle of strikes for higher wages and shorter hours. These strikes are an end in themselves and are not an expedient or a means of propaganda.

"In England one can speak of a genuine labour movement only in so far as strikes take place. But, whether they are won or lost, the strikes do not get the movement on a single step further."



Many union activists make no connection to politics

Breaking the circle

The challenge for socialists has always been to find ways of tapping the vein of militancy while challenging the stultifying culture of 'no politics in the unions' which has for so many decades tied workers to the politics and ideology of capitalism.

Lenin addressed the same problem in his key pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, in which he marked out a decisive break from the politics and methods of the reformists within the Second International.

While spontaneous, trade union struggle represents a healthy working class revolt against the rule of capital, it could never be sufficient to overturn that rule, he argues. Insisting that revolutionary socialist ideas had to be brought into the working class movement 'from without', Lenin labours the point:

"The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical and economic theories that were elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals."

Lenin is not arguing for a party based on intellectuals, but on the necessity to fight inside the trade unions and wider labour movement for socialist ideas which run counter to the 'spontaneous ideology of reformism. Nor is there any doubt that Lenin is including left wing, militant trade union struggle as well as right wing reformism when he argues that:

"...the *spontaneous* development of the working class movement leads to its becoming subordinated to bourgeois ideology, for the spontaneous working class movement is trade unionism and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie. Hence our task ... is to *combat spontaneity*, to *divert* the working class movement from this ... striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie."

In other words it is not sufficient to link up strikers or rank and file trade union militants on the level of trade union militancy: the fight must be waged for a *political* development.

The key issue has therefore always been how marxists should organise themselves in order to take this fight into the trade unions – fighting often against the stream for a line that runs counter to the mood and prejudices of the workers.

Engels had begun to address this problem much earlier when he insisted that the Second International should embrace the demand for the *legal* eight-hour day, requiring workers to go beyond simple trade union struggle at the workplace level and confront the problems posed by bourgeois state.

Revolutionary party

Lenin went much further than Marx and Engels in the building of a revolutionary party, which was also obliged from an early stage to differentiate itself politically from the reformist wing of Russian social democracy.

Lenin's advance was to recognise the importance of a regular *newspaper* as an organiser for the minority of marxist forces fighting in the much wider arena of the trade unions and other broad movements of the oppressed.

But equally vital to Lenin's conception of a new way of working was to establish a framework of *discipline*, designed to ensure that all members of the Bolshevik Party threw their weight behind a common line in the political struggles that took place.

That way a minority could maximise its impact. From this stemmed the innovatory notion of *democratic centralism* as the means whereby individual members of the Bolshevik Party were obliged to follow discipline in publicly implementing the policies centrally decided, but given the democratic right to debate and challenge these policies inside the Bolshevik Party itself.

Lenin consistently opposed any attempt to turn this method into a rigid, dogmatic or sectarian stance towards the working class. Though he led the fight from April 1917 for the Bolsheviks to change their name to the Communist Party and for the formation of a new Communist International, he was also quick to oppose the sectarian deviations of the 'Left Wing Communists', who mistook Lenin's approach, and tried to substitute propaganda for patient agitational work amongst broad layers of the working class.

● **Continued next issue**

No big buyers in new east European market

By Dave Osler

JOHN MAJOR paraded his internationalist credentials for all to see when he addressed the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's annual meeting in London last month.

'We in western Europe have a clear and inescapable moral duty to demonstrate in practice our solidarity with those who lived under communism, who had the courage to overthrow it, and who are now paying the price of its political and economic deprivations,' the assembled functionaries gathered within the EBRD's now-infamous marbled corridors were enjoined.

Luxury offices

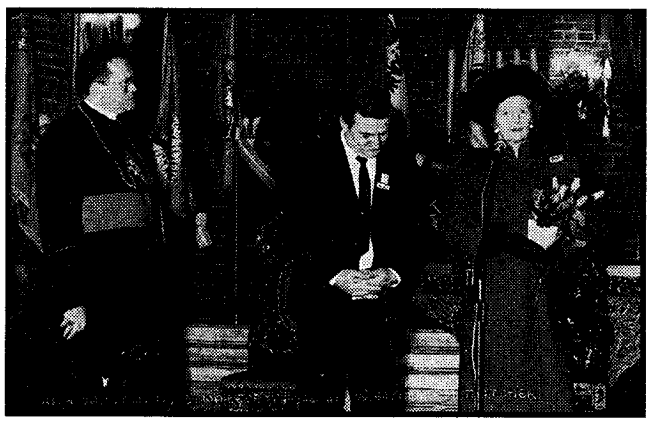
Helping eastern Europe is, of course, precisely what EBRD was set up to do. But in its two-year existence, it has so far spent £201.5 million on its own running costs, including £55.5 million on constructing the luxury offices in the City of London which have earned it the soubriquet of 'the Glistening Bank'.

This is more than double the £101 million it has managed to put out to those it is supposedly assisting.

Sitting in Major's audience was a man who has made the transition from being a top banking official under the old order to being a top banking official within the new one. Presumably, he even joined in the applause for Major's denunciation of the very system in which he once gladly played a prominent part.

But later on in the proceedings, Viktor Geraschenko, chair of Russia's central bank, stood up and branded the money his country had so far received from EBRD as 'paltry'. His point was certainly valid; the sum in question is just £4.97 million.

Let us consider another example of the west's boundless generosity to Geraschenko's country. Remember all the press hype accompanying the $900 million food aid package Bill Clinton, the US president,



Walesa's prayers and grovelling have failed

promised to his Russian counterpart Boris Yeltsin at their summit meeting in Vancouver, also last month? Look at the small print.

The bulk of the package is made up of $700 in concessionary loans, from which Russia is supposed to buy American grain, paying above world market rates for both the grain itself and the freight charges.

The 'give-away' portion of the programme stalled after shipping speculators drove up the already-expensive rates for chartering US-flagged vessels, in the knowledge that it is a legal requirement for US ships to deliver 75 per cent of all food aid.

It now seems probable that none of the food which Clinton seemingly put on the plates of Russia's hungry will ever arrive, because America's businessmen demand not just profit but superprofit before the starving can be fed.

Capitalism has already sorted central and eastern Europe into sheep and goats. The Confederation of Independent States, the Baltic States, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and most of what eventually emerges from the ruins of the former Yugoslavia, have been written off by the world's bosses as not worth investing in for the foreseeable future.

There will be mineral exploitation joint ventures where a spectacular rate of return can be guaranteed, and plenty of privatisation scams and import/export deals of dubious propriety; so much kid's stuff.

The west's main concern will be to prevent those hailed elsewhere in Major's speech as 'heroic people' from getting past the barbed wire-fenced border posts of the post-Maastricht European Community. But there are no Communists left to blame for the new iron curtain.

'Fast track'

On the other hand, there is clearly a 'fast track' for integration into the world capitalist system. The former German Democratic Republic, as part of a united Germany, is in already in the EC, and Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic and Slovakia will eventually to be allowed to join.

Even in the these countries, infant capitalism's first footsteps have proved slow and faltering. Despite Poland's big bang attempt to introduce a free market virtually overnight, the state sector still accounts for around 60 per cent of industrial output. Inflation, though slowing, was 45 per cent last year, and unemployment has shot up from near zero to 14 per cent.

In Hungary, less than 20 per cent of state-owned industry has been transferred to private hands. Western companies such as General Electric and Electrolux have already cherry-picked most of the more attractive consumer goods companies.

Meanwhile, welfare programmes are under attack. Austerity measures were recently introduced to stop the country's budget deficit hitting a projected 13 per cent of national output.

Czechoslovakia has seen investment from top German industrial groups such as Volkswagen, Mercedes Benz, Siemens and Krupp. But the 'velvet divorce' between the would-be free market Czech Republic and the more interventionist Slovak Republic will inevitably undermine the remaining customs union and common currency.

Footing the bill

Everywhere, it is local labour, rather than imported capital, that is footing the bill for the transition to the free market. According to *The Privatisation Process in Central Europe*, a recently published academic study, last-available statistics show that real wages have fallen from a January 1990 baseline of 100 to 95.9 in Poland, 92.5 in Hungary and just 76.2 in Czechoslovakia.

Two weeks before the EBRD met, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) published its annual economic survey.

The report reveals that bilateral and multilateral financing for eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union totalled just $40,000 million in 1992. That's roughly £25,000 million, or to put it another way, about the same as Britain's annual military expenditure. Little of this money was in grant form; about half was accounted for by debt rescheduling.

By contrast, the German government pumped $96,000 million into its new eastern states last year, a sum which has only scratched the surface of the massive social problems there.

Commentators now speak freely of the east as 'Germany's Mezzogiorno', a reference to Italy's impoverished south which to this day requires massive subsidies from the industrialised north.

Investment

Direct investment in eastern Europe has been limited too. The 1992 total of $3000 million was well up from the 1990 figure of £600m.

But it represented just 1.5 per cent of world investment flow, and even then, 90 per cent of this money went to Hungary and the Czech republic.

Meanwhile, Russia's net material product fell by 19 per cent last year, and 29 per cent of the population is officially classed as living below minimum subsistence levels. In the Baltic states, output was down anywhere between 28 and 44 per cent.

The only hope for real change lies with working class struggle in the transitional countries. That's why the current IG Metall strike in east Germany has the potential to become rather more than a wages dispute.

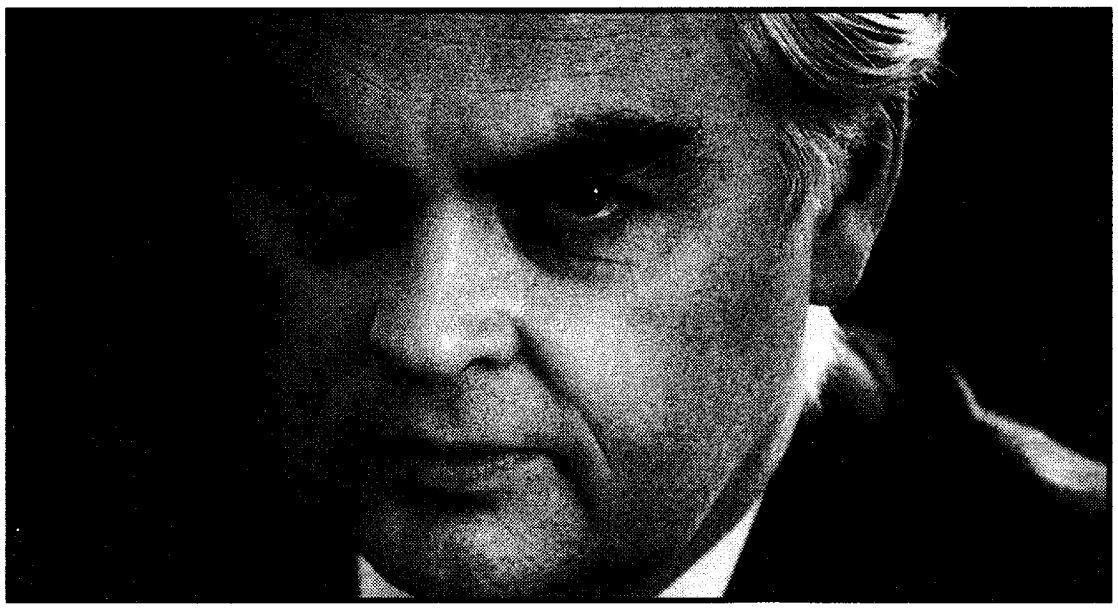
The labour movements of the west should be organising practical solidarity with the east, of a rather different kind from that envisaged by Major. The far left should also ensure that fledgling revolutionary socialist currents, such as NRL, Polish section of the Fourth International, get all the assistance we can provide.

ECE concludes: 'When debt servicing and other income payments are set in the balance against capital inflows, there was a net outflow from most of the east European countries in 1992.'

Or to put in plain English, imperialism has already started bleeding them in much the same way as it does Africa. What price clear and inescapable moral duties now, Mr Major?

It now seems probable that none of the food which Clinton seemingly put on the plates of Russia's hungry will ever arrive, because America's businessmen demand not just profit but superprofit before the starving can be fed.

WORLD NEWS



Norman was also an employee at the secretive bank

FEATURE

Fingers In the TILL

A regular look at the world of business, compiled by INSIDER DEALER

Keeping mum

MY MATES at NM Rothschild have made a pretty penny out of privatisation.

The well-known merchant bankers (and that's not rhyming slang) have acted as underwriter or adviser on most major sell-offs of the last decade: British Telecom, British Gas, British Airways, British Airports Authority, British Petroleum, British Steel, British Coal and the regional water and electricity companies, to name just the biggies.

One of your Labour MP chappies cheekily asked how much all this work had cost the taxpayer. John Major quite rightly told him: 'The fees paid are a matter of commercial confidentiality'.

These undisclosed fees, incidentally, are paid out by the Treasury, where both the chancellor, Norman Lamont, and the economic secretary, Anthony Nelson, are former employees of a well-known merchant bank. No prizes for guessing which one.

Airline crash

Britain's privatisation programme is a beacon of hope to the peoples of Eastern Europe as they struggle to throw off the long dark night of communist totalitarianism, and all that jazz. Unfortunately, it seems that the Czech national airline CSA, privatised only last year, is already close to liquidation.

This will be a blow to two western interest, who each hold a 20 per cent stake. One is the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, headed by M. Jacques Attali; the other is Air France, headed by M. Bernard Attali. The two men deny that the fact they are twin brothers had any influence on the deal.

The price is right

I CAN HARDLY be expected to applaud the formation of Transparency International, which describes itself as 'an international coalition against corruption in international business transactions'.

But the group has released an interesting survey of contract kickbacks worldwide, which reveals that backhanders are particulary rife in deals involving aircraft, ships, military supplies, telecommunications, industrial and agro-industrial projects, dams, bridges, airports, hospitals, oil, cement and fertiliser.

It seems that 5 per cent of $200,000 will ensure a helpful attitude from officials below top rank, whereas it takes the same cut of $2 million to win the support of a permanent secretary.

At $20m you get to deal with ministers, while a cut from $200 million 'justifies the serious interest of the head of state'. Fortunately, as the Rothschild example shows, we are that bit more subtle in this country.

Expert tuition

MEANWHILE, Master of Business Administration degree students at the University of Buenos Aires are being offered courses on corruption and how to combat it.

Lecturers will include the city's mayor; his predecessor has just been charged with fraudulent administration.

There have been 19 major corruption scandals since the present administration took office three years ago, resulting in the sacking of 20 senior aides and ministers. Funnily enough, none of the investigations have ended in a trial.

Franz's raquet pays off

INSIDER dealing is not an offence in Germany. This is just as well for Franz Steinkuhler, leader of that country's most powerful trade union, IG Metall.

The man is union rep on the supervisory of board of Daimler, the motor manufacturers, and even plays tennis with the chief executive.

By what he insists is a stroke of luck, Steinkuhler bought £400,000 worth of shares in Daimler's holding company shortly before the board offered to exchange them for full company shares. Their value shot up 20 per cent overnight. Now there's a thing.

Incidentally, Steinkuhler also sits on the boards of both Volkswagen and Thyssen. His salary is £110,000 a year, twice what Alan Jinkinson of NALGO gets as Britain's best-paid general secretary.

Blowing the gaff

THE FOLLOWING really was published in the *Financial Times* letters to the editor slot: 'Sir, My late father campaigned for insider trading to be made compulsory, believing it to be the only way an ignorant investor could be protected from his own stupidity.'

Thank you, Nigel Johnson-Hill of Liphook, Hampshire. Your dad spoke for us all.

WHERE WE STAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. *Socialist Outlook* is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

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

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

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

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

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

YES, I agree with much of what I have seen in Socialist Outlook, and want to know more about readers' groups in my area.

Name . . . . . .

Address . . . . . .

Phone . . . . . .

Send to: *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

What's HAPPENING

May

Wednesday 26

NO NAZIS in Hounslow-weekly meeting details 081 572 8656

Thursday 27

THE STRUGGLE for Human Rights and Democracy in Punjab 7.00 Conway hall red Lion Square WC1

ILFORD: Protest the racist murder of Fiaz Mirza 7.30 Little Ilford Youth Centre Rectory Road

Friday 28

BENEFIT in aid of Burnsalls strike fund 8pm The Union Club 723 Pershore Road Birmingham

Saturday 29

REINSTATE Sacked Cleaners! demonstration Spillers Birkenhead

June

Wednesday 2

WOMEN the Family and the Child Support Act *Socialist Outlook* public forum with Marian Brain and Sam Inman 7.30pm The Union Club 723 Pershore Road Birmingham

Friday 4

MINERS support benefit 8pm on The Union Club 723 Pershore Road Birmingham

Saturday 5

OPEN Britain's borders to Bosnian Refugees national demonstration details 071 252 5122

JAMES CONNOLLY march and rally 2pm King Stables Road off Lothian Road Edinburgh

Sunday 6

RED AID for Bosnia launch conference London details 071 252 5122

Monday 7

BRENT Socialist Campaign Group 7.30 Trades and Labour Hall 375 High Road NW10

Saturday 12

ARA/TUC demonstration against racist murders 11.30am Norbury Park Croydon

Saturday 12-Sunday 13

ASSEMBLY of the European Left Paris transport leaves London noon Travel, accommodation and entry £50/£40 details from European Assembly, PO Pox 1109, London N4 2UU

Saturday 19

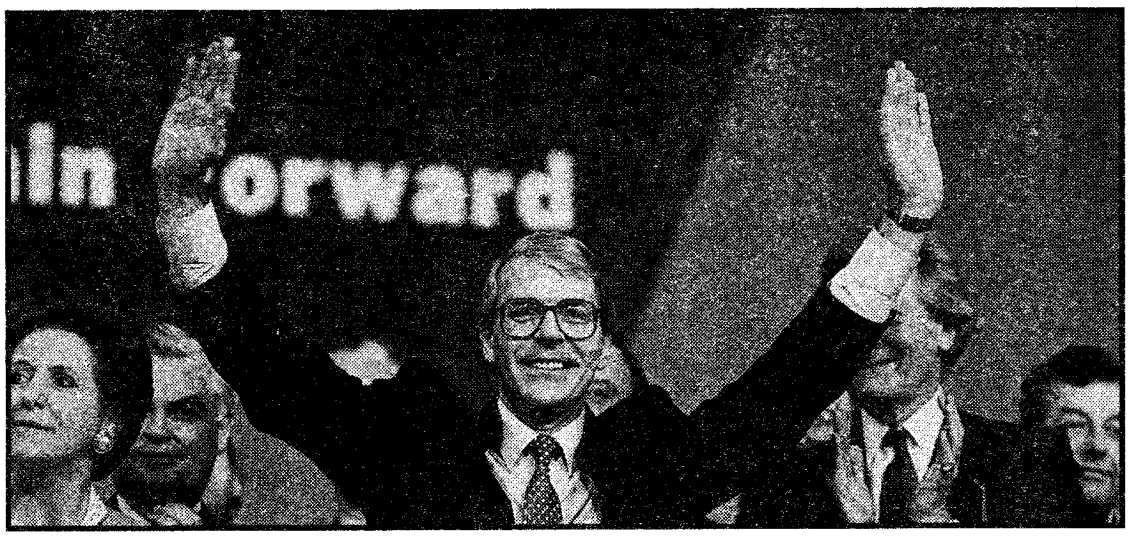
LESBIAN and Gay Pride demonstration, London

Tuesday 22

US BLACK activist Kwame M. A. Somburu speaks 7.30 Lambeth Town Hall Assembly Room Acre Lane Brixton

Wednesday 23

US BLACK activist Kwame M. A. Somburu speaks 7.30 Afro-Caribbean Centre 339 Dudley Road Birmingham



Saturday 26

POLICIES for Health conference 10.30am-4,30pm Camden Town Hall NW1 tickets £15/£5 from Socialist Health Association, 16 Charles Square, London N1 6HP

FOR YOUR DIARY... contact *Socialist Outlook* about these events:

3 July

FIGHTING New Management Techniques Day School Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC! Holborn tube

July 24-31

INTERNATIONAL Youth Camp southern Sweden

August 28-September 3

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK summer school North Wales

To advertise your event in the next issue details should reach us by Friday June 4 - address them to *What's Happening*, P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Major's chickens come home

THAT NICE Mr Major is certainly getting nasty as the full scope of the economic crisis created by the Tories becomes apparent.

Norman Lamont's £50 billion budget deficit represents eight percent of GNP. The Maastricht Treaty – just endorsed by the Commons – forbids borrowing more than 3 percent.

The interest alone on a £50 billion debt is £5 billion a year. By 1995-6 Britain's total interest bill will be £26 billion a year – almost as much as the current NHS budget!

Lower inflation means that today's crisis is worse than that faced by Harold Wilson's Labour government in 1976, when the IMF was called in, and savage cuts imposed.

The whole deficit could be redressed by a 6p increase in income tax: but that would mean the rich would have to pay something – and that is not Tory policy!

Solidarity day for Burnsalls strike

By Bob Smith

The Burnsalls strikers are calling a solidarity day to celebrate their twelve months on the picket line. They welcome delegations from the labour movement and community groups to Downing street. Yes - number ten - on Tuesday June 15 between 4 and 6.30pm.

Many workers have been inspired by the low paid, grossly exploited workers, mainly from the black community. Even a minimal successes here would lead to similar explosions in sweatshops around the Birmingham area.

Pressure must be placed on Burnsalls' suppliers and customers to encourage them to object to the use of their chemicals or components at a factory where staff get less than £2.50 an hour in appalling conditions without adequate protective clothing, forced overtime, 65 hour 7 day week and the workers being subjected to gross physical and mental abuse and intimidation.

The support given by the strikers' union, the GMB, does not extend to organising mass pickets. While these and other actions are now illegal under the Tory anti-union laws, they are needed to win the strike.

● Birmingham Support Group 021 551 2258

● London Support Group 071 713 7907 or 071 916 1646. Transport available to solidarity day.

BOOKshelf

Socialist Outlook Publications

● THE BOSSES' OFFENSIVE — anti-union laws and the new management techniques £1.50

● SOCIALISM AFTER STALINISM £1.00

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● MAASTRICHT: The crisis of European Integration £1.50

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● WHO KILLED MALCOLM X? £1.25

● THE COMING BLACK REBELLION AND THE LEGACY OF MALCOLM X £1.50

All the above: add 50p post and packing

● Also available: *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism* £11.50 (inc p&p)

Cheques should be made out to *Socialist Outlook*. Send to: *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

The 3rd Socialist Outlook

SUMMER SCHOOL

NORTH WALES

Sat August 28 - Fri September 3

TAKE A STEP back from the class struggle, world capitalist crisis, the collapse of Stalinism, meetings, pickets and demonstrations. Enjoy six days of education and debate close to scenic Snowdonia.

THEMES: Women's Liberation, Europe, Ireland, Nationalism and Culture.

ACCOMMODATION is in single rooms and breakfast and lunch are provided.

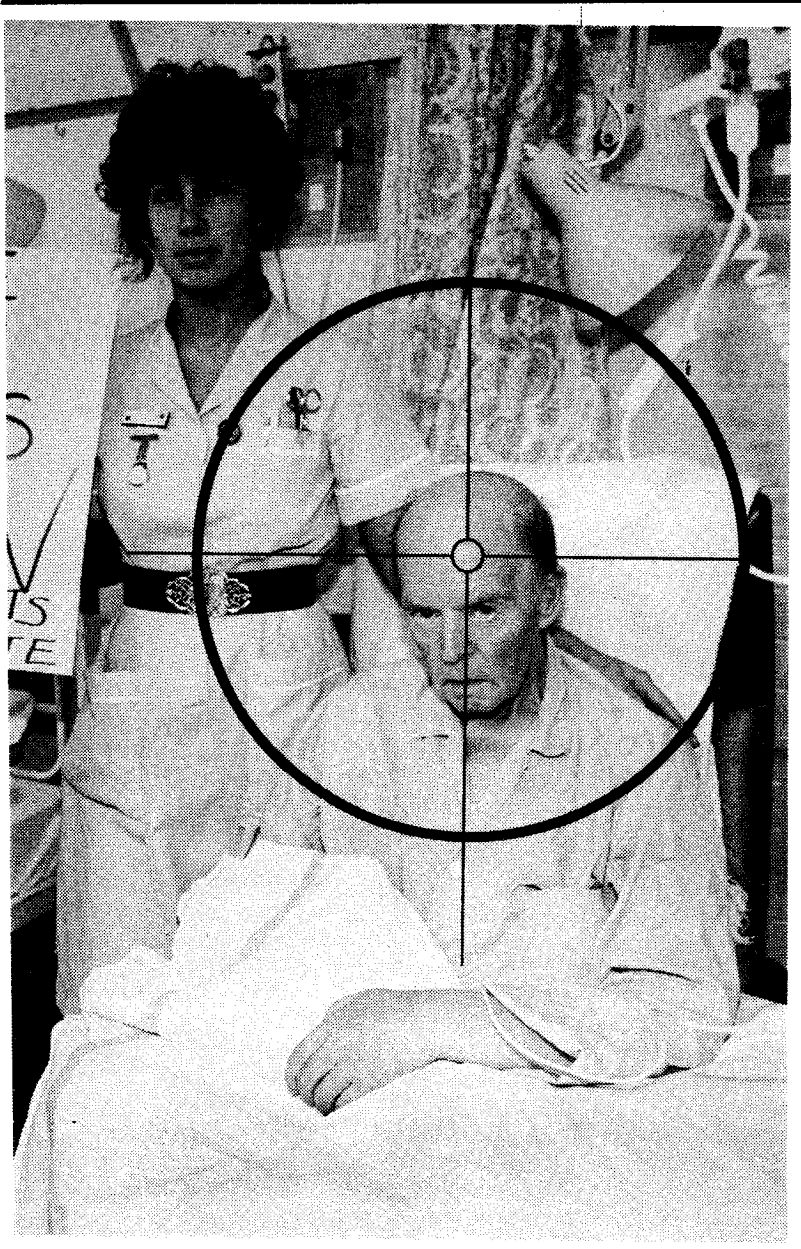
COST £95 waged / £35 unwaged

Further details from: *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

WHAT'S ON

Socialist OUTLOOK

Tories target elderly



JOHN MAJOR'S desperate Tory gang are 'targeting' the elderly, children and the low-waged.

They want to screw billions from them to bail out the bankrupt British economy which Norman Lamont has run into the ground, while the wealthy escape scot-free.

Thatcherite Treasury Secretary Michael Portillo spelled it out – but other leading Tories have also admitted that the government is looking at ways of cutting the cost of the welfare state.

One proposal floated early on is to force millions of pensioners and low-paid parents to fork out £4.25 per item for prescriptions, which elderly people and children now get free.

But if the Tories can't force this one past a barrage of complaints from their own back-benchers, they have other nasty schemes in mind.

- The state pension could be scrapped, or subjected to means-testing.
- Child benefit – already reduced – could be means-tested.
- Students – already forced to take mammoth loans, could be forced to pay their own fees for college courses.
- NHS patients could be charged for use of hospital beds, for meals, or for visiting their GP.

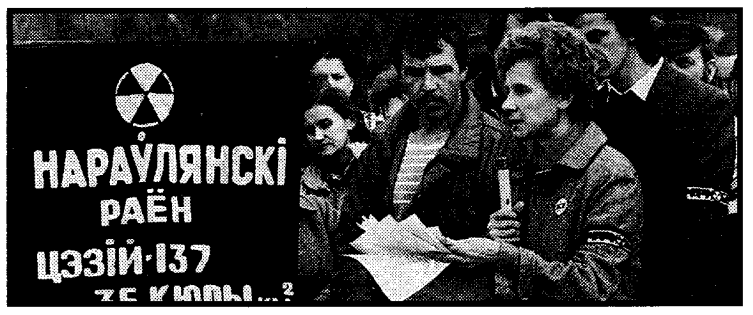
John Major convinces nobody with his claim that the 'most vulnerable' would be protected: even the Tory press concedes that only those on state benefit and already well below the poverty line would remain exempt from the new charges.

The heaviest blows would again be felt by pensioners, who have already been clobbered by Lamont's imposition of VAT on heating bills, and by Tory 'community care' legislation that imposes charges for the care of the frail elderly.

Up to 7.5 million pensioners would be hit by an end to free prescriptions. Almost half of all prescriptions are issued for elderly people.

Labour's opposition to the Tory offensive is hampered by the Party's own review into the 'targeting' of benefits, and its refusal to challenge the cruel logic of capitalism.

The fact is that decent state pensions, free healthcare and free education are concessions that this crisis-ridden system is increasingly unwilling to make. Only socialist economic policies can defend the poorest against the Tory onslaught.



Chernobyl victims fighting for proper support

Siberia's Chernobyl

THE TICKING time bomb of Russia's nuclear industry exploded on April 6 near Tomsk, a Siberian city of 500,000.

Initial reaction from Georgy Kaurov, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Ministry described the detonation of the tank of uranium waste as the 'single worst accident since the Chernobyl catastrophe'.

The government announced the allocation of $3 million for the cleanup operation.

While the Tomsk explosion made world headlines, nuclear accidents in Russia have become routine. More than 200 such 'incidents' including those where radiation was released, were reported in 1992.

Alarming Chernobyl style reactors remain in use – 25 of Russia's 57 nuclear power plants are categorised 'very dangerous' by international experts.

At the Vancouver summit, US President Clinton pledged $25 million towards improved safety.

Some $700 million was promised by the G7 countries but disputes between the capitalist powers over disbursement of funds and management of the cleanup have blocked virtually any payment.

Estimates for cleaning up the former Soviet Union, ravaged by rampant nuclear contamination and industrial pollution, go as high as $1.5 trillion.

■ Russia's economic disaster – see article page 13

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