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# Socialist OUTLOOK

theory + practice  
Pull-out SUPPLEMENT

ASIAN WAR ON THE  
HORIZON - pp7-10

SOUTH AFRICA: MASS STRIKES END  
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50p ■ September 10 1994 ■

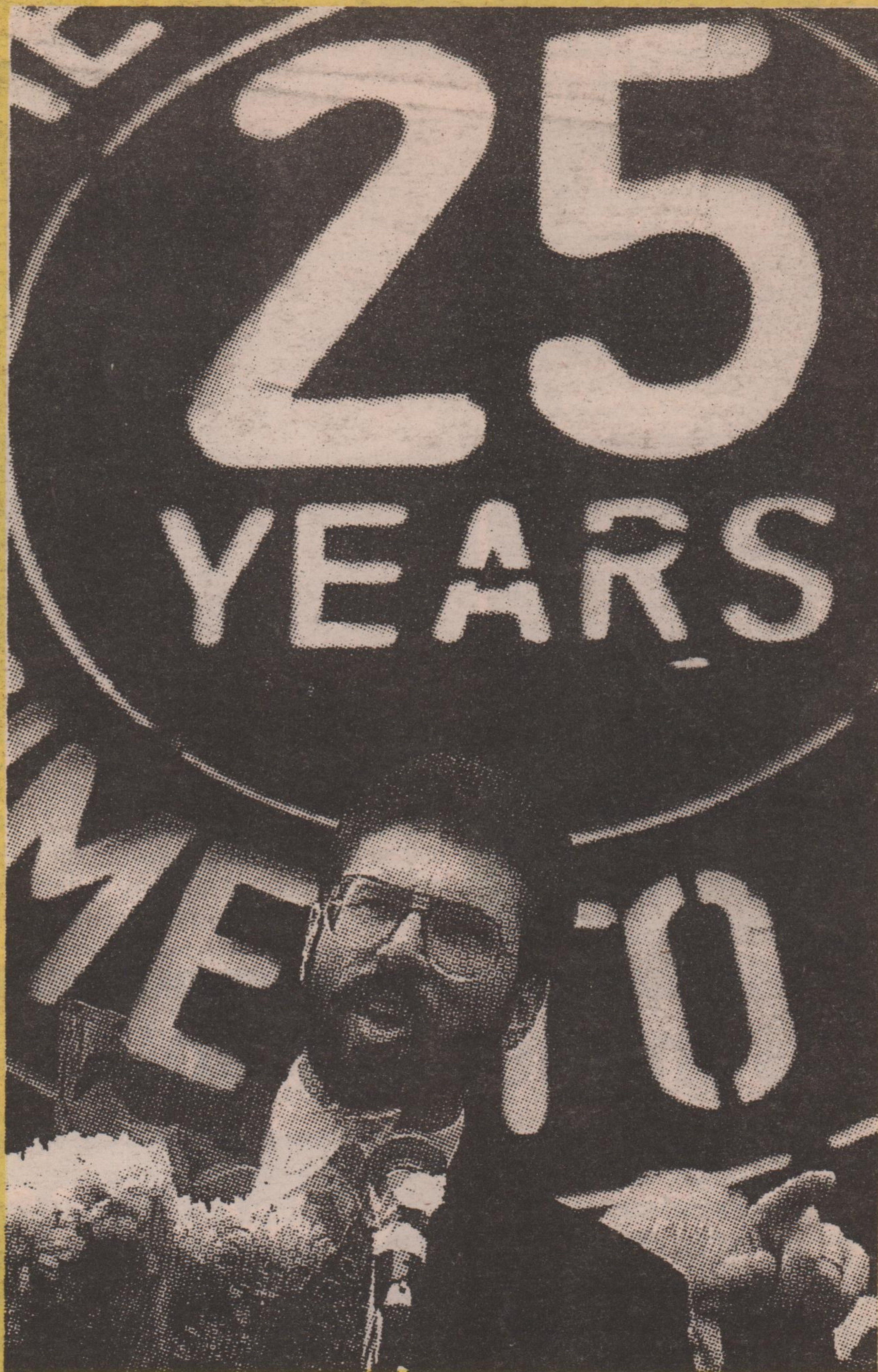
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## The real road to peace in Ireland

# TROOPS

# OUT NOW

# Free all political prisoners!



MOORE—KATZ/SABA FOR TIME

ANALYSIS:  
Inside, pages 2-3

## Blair keeps the white flag flying

ONE THING remains constant after a week in which Irish politics have been transformed by the IRA cease-fire: the loading of the Labour leadership to British imperialism continues unabated after two decades of bipartisan support for repression.

The Party that sent the troops into Ireland in 1969 now not only refuses to call for their withdrawal, but is now too scared even to support the lifting of the exclusion order against Gerry Adams.

No sooner had Tony Benn correctly invited Adams to address a fringe meeting at next month's party conference in Blackpool, than the entire Walworth Road machinery was cranked up to distance Tony Blair from the initiative and frantically deny that the republican leader would be allowed into the conference.

### Refusal

While Blair is happy enough to hob-nob with bankers and business chiefs, he is refusing point blank to meet with or talk to Gerry Adams, despite a growing acceptance by even the right wing press that the broadcasting ban on Sinn Fein should soon be lifted.

To hear Adams in his own words, it appears Blair would prefer to wait until he can listen to him on the radio.

It is unlikely Gerry Adams will miss much in failing to meet Mr Blair. Labour has no independent policy to offer. It seems they are quite happy for all talks and decisions on Ireland to be dealt with by the Tories on their behalf.

# A total change in Irish politics

By Liam Mac Uaid

NEITHER broken nor victorious, the IRA has ended its armed struggle. In the organisation's statement announcing its decision to end hostilities it says it is "determined that the injustices which created the conflict will be removed".

Yet the fundamental injustice which British imperialism has inflicted on the country - partition - is not even mentioned.

The Republican supporters, celebrating what they have convinced themselves is a victory, are eventually bound to wonder what precisely the triumph consists of.

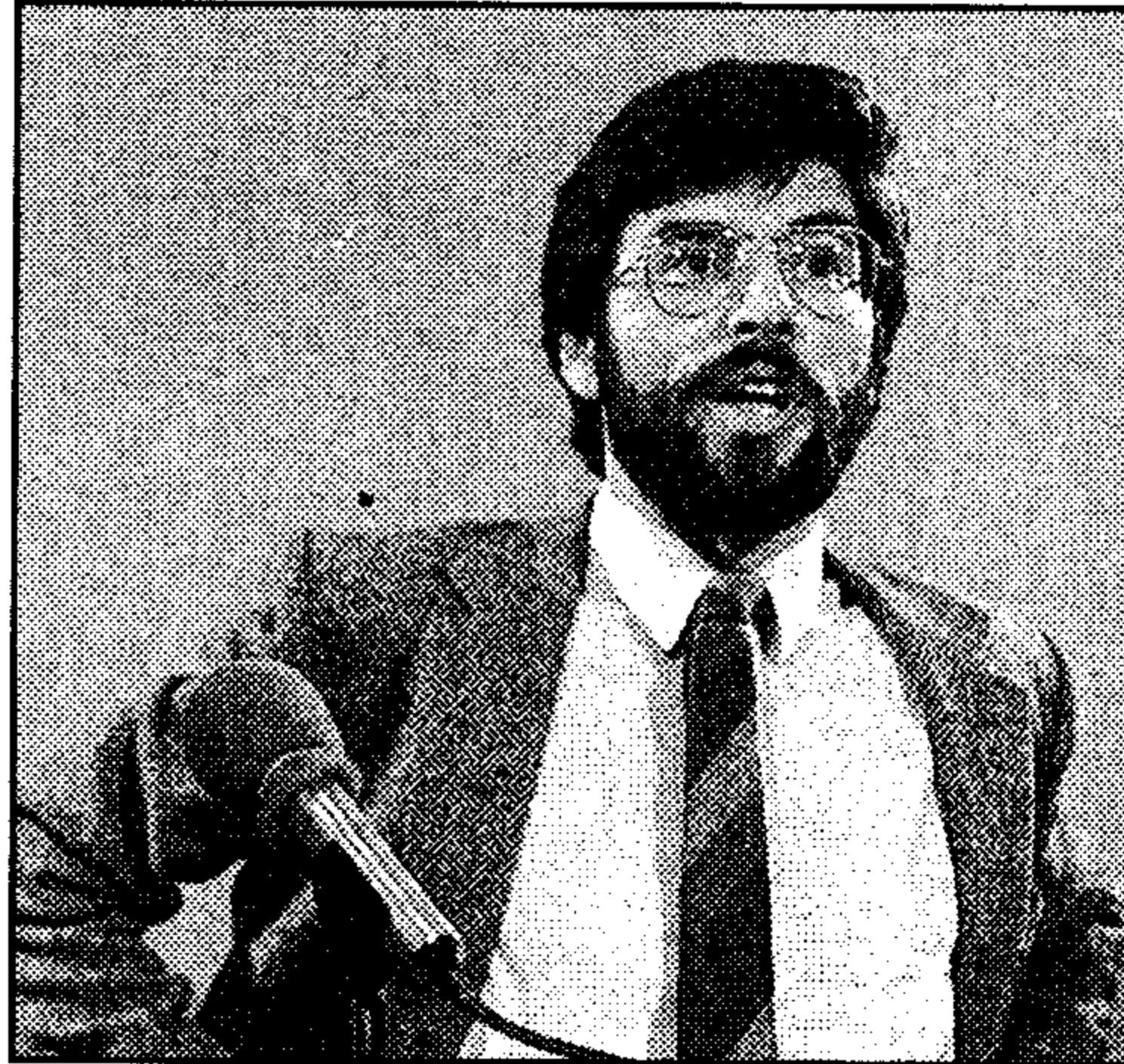
### Clinton

The case argued by Gerry Adams is that an alliance of the SDLP, the Dublin government, Sinn Fein and American opinion (especially that friend of self-determination Bill Clinton) will, in some ill-defined way, influence the British government.

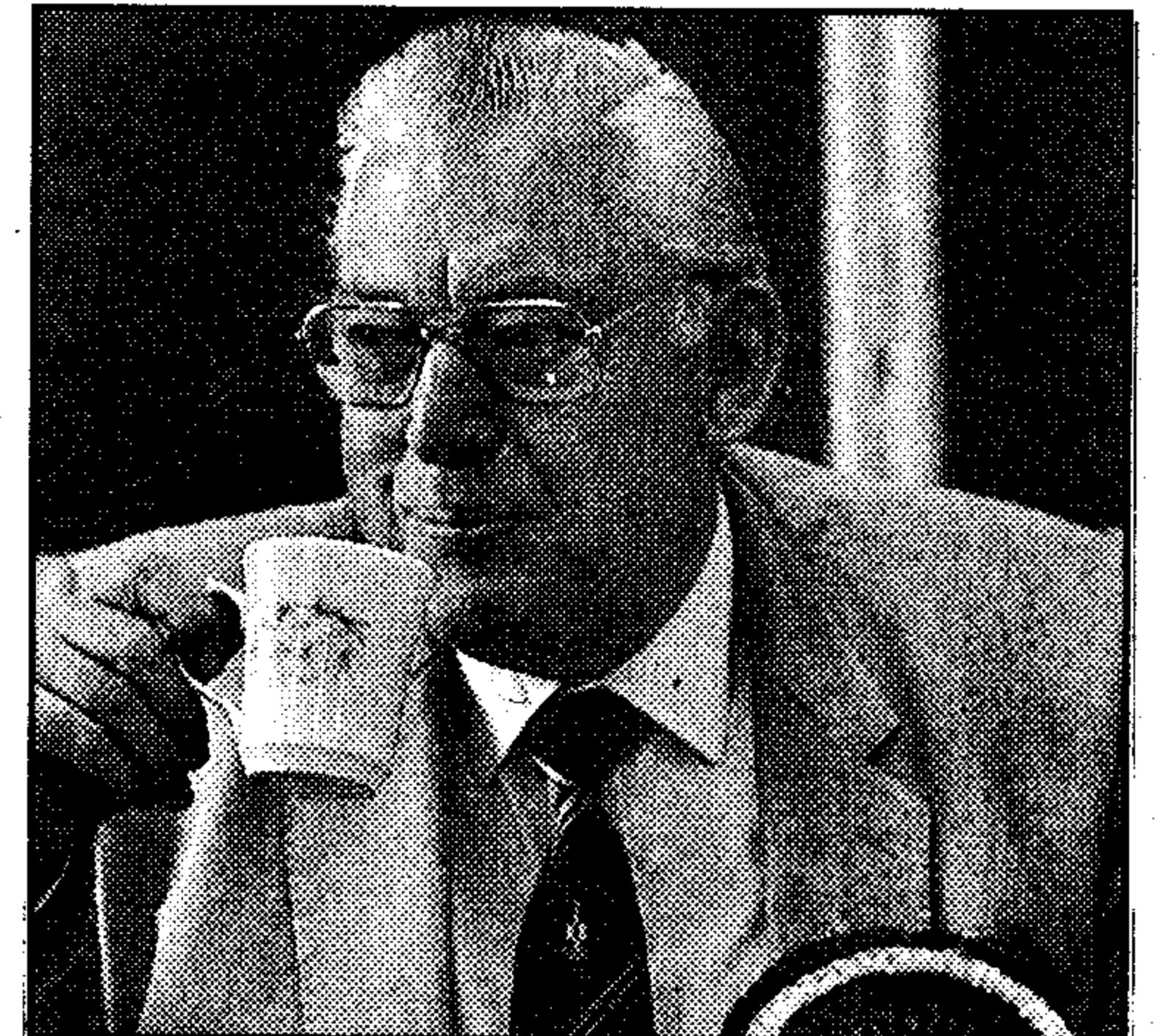
Then the British government, reeling from a vicious campaign for unity by the Irish ruling class will begin to persuade the Loyalist population of the merits of a 32-county republic.

The fact that no significant section of the Irish ruling class has taken a serious step towards achieving self-determination for 70 years is a detail not thought worthy of consideration.

This is the sort of blindness which afflicts those who see the road to freedom through deals with the representatives of imperialism and local capital.



Adams



Paisley

There is no doubt the Republicans want a permanent end to the armed struggle. So the question of what to do next arises. They have made no secret of their desire to have direct meetings with the British and Irish governments and to be integrated into what Major and Reynolds refer to as "the democratic process".

By having their photographs taken with prime ministers Sinn Fein leaders can become, apparently, serious politicians.

But the experience of the party's electoral campaigns in the 26 counties shows that they are not seen as having a relevant political programme by more than 1.5 per cent of the population.

### Election swings

Recent elections have seen gains for Labour and the Greens, as youth and workers express their frustration with the poverty and unemployment administered by the same politicians whom Sinn Fein is so keen to impress.

A similar development is possible in the North. John Hume is the reformist who will be seen to deliver jobs with EC

and American money.

If you want a reformist you might as well vote for one with good connections, rather than one with just good intentions. And without the armed struggle, Republicanism is simply reformism.

Loyalist murder gangs have used the IRA's campaign a pretext to indiscriminately kill Catholics since 1971. Logic suggests that the ending of the IRA's campaign ends the rationale for the Loyalist campaign. But paranoia, bigotry and pure hatred have always been more important to the Loyalists than logic.

Hence the UFF have responded to the ceasefire by threats of civil war and Ian Paisley has gone on the radio and TV to agree with them.

Since at least 1912 the dominant theme in Loyalist rhetoric has been the fear of betrayal by London.

Rather than draw the straightforward conclusions that you can never trust an imperialist, Loyalism has responded with pogroms, sectarian murders and childlike demands for reassurance. Since they don't know anything else, we can expect an outbreak of

murders by the UFF and UVF as they attempt to provoke a Republican backlash.

While Paisley is predicting war it is noticeable that James Molyneux of the Official Unionists is taking a much calmer line.

### Deals

The Official Unionists even concede the possibility of dealing with Sinn Fein. They believe Hume, Reynolds and Major when they say that the Loyalists will not be coerced into a united Ireland, and allowed to retain their veto.

The divide opening up between the Paisleyite Neanderthals and the Official Unionists is crucial for the British who will need to retain Loyalist support for the project of gradually integrating Republicanism into constitutional politics.

The IRA's armed struggle was sometimes heroic and inspiring, on occasions sectarian, sometimes reckless and foolish. It was never by itself an adequate means of defeating British imperialism, and it never set itself the task of overthrowing Irish capitalism. Socialists have no reason to mourn its passing.

IRELAND UNFREE

## Summer school boosts Bob Smith fund

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK's highly successful summer school on racism and fascism, held in Aberystwyth on August 24-9 and attended by 100 people, raised more than £400 for the Bob Smith memorial fund drive, pushing it well over the £3000 mark.

This included £150 raised by Leeds supporters from a 46-length

October 22: we invite you to join us for dinner!

sponsored swim staged during the School (one length for each year of Bob's life).

Bob Smith was a passionate Socialist Outlook supporter and a champion of the struggles

against racism and imperialism in Ireland. He died at a tragically early age earlier this year.

To commemorate his life and work Socialist Outlook is raising a £7000 fund. This will be

used to produce a book of writings on the fight against racism and fascism in Bob's memory, and for improvements to the Socialist Outlook offices and equipment.

A key event in the fund

campaign will be a MEMORIAL DINNER on October 22, where the new book will be launched. As well as a three-course meal, the evening will include entertainments and speeches from leading labour movement and anti-racist activists.

Admission is by ticket only, price £12 waged and £7 unwaged from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

'Peace process' leads Sinn Fein into cul de sac

# Wrong road for united Ireland

THE CALCULATIONS by the Irish Republican movement in declaring a ceasefire are clear. They believe that Britain has no "selfish" interest in staying in northern Ireland, that a "broad" nationalist front including the SDLP and Fianna Fail has been established, and for these and demographic reasons Irish unity is inevitable.

In other words, the Brits want out and, with a Catholic majority in the Six Counties in sight within a couple of decades, the forces of Irish nationalism are irreversibly stronger than a declining Loyalism - which is a spent historical force.

There is much in this analysis which is questionable. First, Britain may have no narrow economic interest for staying in northern Ireland, but it has immense political interests there, and it has huge economic interests in Ireland as a whole, and thus an interest in political "stability" in the north.

There is no way in which Britain can allow itself to be seen to be defeated by the forces of Irish Republicanism - any more than Mrs Thatcher could allow Britain to be defeated by General Galtieri over the Malvinas Islands.

The idea therefore that Britain could rapidly allow a united Ireland is wishful thinking. Of course, there is no reason in theory why Britain could not accept a united capitalist Ireland at some future point - but there are immense political obstacles to that for the foreseeable future. The main one is the social and political force represented by Loyalism, and its reserves of support inside the British ruling class and the Tory party.

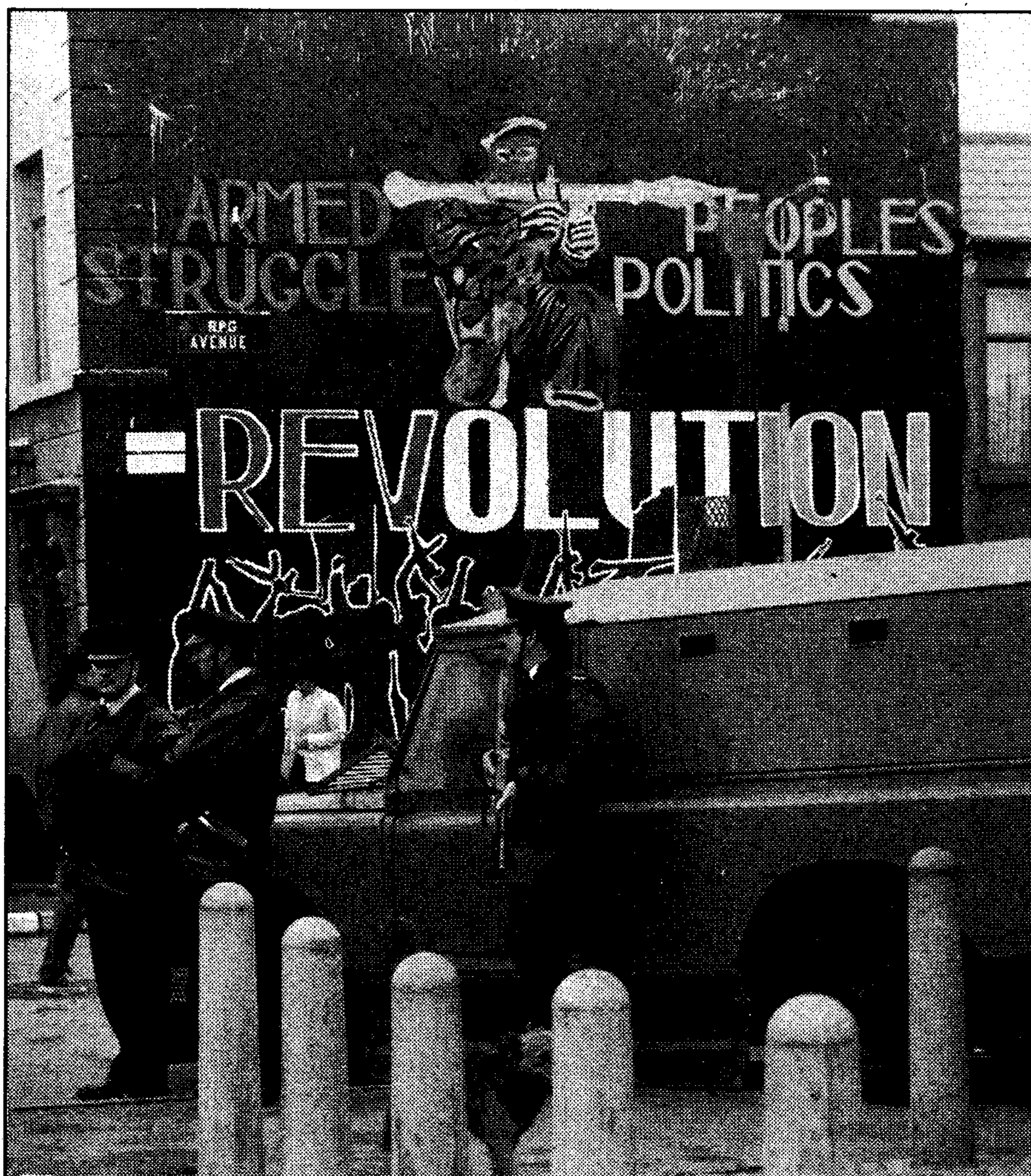
## Ascendancy

The basis of Loyalism has always consisted in two things - the union with Britain and the Protestant ascendancy. Much has been made recently of the fact that in many ways Protestant and Catholic workers share the same conditions. But a recent survey, published only two weeks ago, showed that discrimination against Catholics is still widespread.

Although in an economic recession its form may be modified, the Protestant ascendancy is intact, and this demonstrates the continued oppression of Catholic workers on a national basis.

Loyalism retains the political support of the overwhelming majority of Protestants, including Protestant workers. The idea that they can be "persuaded" into a united Ireland by the British government, as Sinn Fein appears to think, is ridiculous.

For the Tory government there is no need to do any persuading of the Loyalists. All the Downing Street declaration does is promise to accept a united Ireland - if the people of the north and the Irish republic both separately want it. This is, in fact, no change in the British position - Ted Heath was saying the same thing when he was Prime Minister twenty



Armed struggle? People's politics? Revolution? Where are they now?

years ago.

But this brings us to the crux of the matter, the central contradiction of the "peace process". The Republican movement has always demanded self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. It is this position which has been modified by the apparent acceptance of the "constitutional" road to Irish unity.

While Sinn Fein demands that Britain plays the role of "persuader" of the Loyalists, in fact it has accepted, for an indefinite period, the Loyalist veto on unification.

**All the Downing Street declaration does is promise to accept a united Ireland - if the people of the north and the Irish republic both separately want it. This is, in fact, no change in the British position - Ted Heath was saying the same thing when he was Prime Minister twenty years ago.**

*Far from being a factor to persuade the Loyalists to accept unification, their constitutional veto gives them the indefinite mechanism to hang onto the ascendancy and the union with Britain.*

This immediately poses the question of how exactly socialists see the allegiance of the Protestants to the Orange state being broken, and that in turn raises the whole issue of the strategy for Irish national liberation.

Most Protestant workers don't want to go into a united capitalist Ireland, and that view is not entirely irrational. What benefits can the Protestant workers be expected to see in going into a reactionary clerical state? In fact there are none.

That's why for socialists the Irish national question has always been linked to the social question - the view that the road to Irish national unity and the road to socialism are inseparable. Socialists argue for a 32-county workers republic - the slogan of the socialist leader of the 1916 rebellion, James Connolly.

Breaking sections of the Protestant workers from Loyalism cannot be done on a purely nationalist basis, and certainly not on the basis of building an alliance with the architects of the 26-county clerical state against them. It can only be done on the basis of linking the question of class struggle and class demands with national demands against discrimination and against the artificial border.

Insofar as the leaders of today's Sinn Fein accept the slogan of a 32-county workers republic, they see it within a "stages" perspective - first national unity, then the fight for socialism. This was made explicit by Gerry Adams when he declared that when the national question had been solved, Sinn Fein members would dissolve into other political parties, depending on their overall political viewpoint.

The fight for a 32-county workers republic is not just a matter of addressing the Protestant workers. It is also a question for the vanguard of the national struggle in the Six Counties itself.

From the civil rights struggle of the 1960s onwards, the politically most advanced fighters from the Catholic ghettos have always understood that the aim of their struggle was a workers' republic, not simple integration into the Dublin regime.

A socialist assessment of the IRA ceasefire must therefore adopt a critical stance to the whole Republican strategy of capitalist unity, and a broad "nationalist" front with the reactionary forces of Fianna Fail and the SDLP, that it assumes. In return for integrating themselves into the pro-capitalist pan-nationalist front, the Republicans have given up the armed struggle and handed a considerable victory to imperialism.

Socialists of course should not defend the "old" strategy of "the Armalite and the ballot box". That strategy in fact meant relegating the masses to a role of passive voting for Sinn Fein, and being passive applauders of the military exploits of the IRA.

## Self-defence

But despite the limitations of that strategy, armed self-defence remains crucial when the Catholic ghettos are faced with Loyalist death squads and British state forces.

Republican strategy had reached an impasse, and was long overdue for a major rethink. That rethink has gone in the wrong direction - towards pro-capitalist, pan-nationalist unity, and not towards redefining the national struggle in terms of an overall socialist strategy, which would have as its objective the long-term building of maximum unity with Protestant workers and with workers in the south.

The net result will not be any rapid resolution of the national question, but solely the demobilising of the national struggle.

The linchpin of imperialist strategy remains the Loyalist veto. British socialists should demand that the veto goes, that British troops are withdrawn and that nationalist prisoners of war are released if the national struggle in the Six

# TUC embarks on Mission Impossible



Leaning towards collaboration: TUC chief John Monks

By Wally Simmons

AS THE TUC opens in Blackpool, it has been announced that John Monks, TUC general secretary, is to speak at a fringe meeting at this year's Conservative Party conference. That says everything about the "new thinking" at the TUC.

This year's Congress seems destined to be becalmed. The only potential threat to the tranquillity of the graveyard comes from the NUM, which at the time of writing has refused to remit a resolution calling for the abolition of all Tory trade union laws.

The centrepiece of the Blackpool gathering is the TUC's "relaunch", presented in a 164-page document "Campaigning for Change".

This expensive process, carried out through a long series of seminars and documents, "facilitated" by a firm of management consultants, spent hours and hours coming up with a definition of the TUC's "mission".

This is it: "The new TUC's mission is to become 'a high profile organisation which campaigns successfully for trade union values and aims, assists trade unions to increase membership and effectiveness, cuts out wasteful rivalry and promotes trade union solidarity'." So now you know.

How much in management consultants' fees it cost to come up with this piece of flummery has not been revealed. It contains important untruths. For example, the TUC set itself, as one of its key targets since it



Pickets challenge the presence of Tory and CBI platform speakers at TUC Full Employment conference

reinvented itself as the "new" TUC, to "hold a high level conference on full employment". It had a special working group on that, with a host of general council members in attendance.

This conference, held on June 5, was that notorious occasion when Tory employment minister David Hunt and CBI director general Howard Davies were given a platform. It was "high profile" only in attracting the hostility of tens of thousands of trade unionists.

An insight into TUC thinking is given by the section on industrial disputes in the "Campaigning for Change" document.

## Strike two

The TUC "supported" precisely two industrial disputes in the last year - the NUJ/BECTU dispute with the BBC and the railworkers' dispute.

That's it. This section is two paragraphs in 164 pages!

Further clues to the "new"

TUC thinking are given in the Congress document entitled "human resource management". Human resource management is the bosses' term for the new management techniques.

The TUC comes to the conclusion that they're not all good, and must be further studied! But remember: Britain has to build a "world class workplace": the theorists of the new management techniques couldn't have put it better.

In fact the "new" TUC itself is the product of the application of the new management techniques to its own structures - mission statements, task groups, compulsory redundancies, the lot.

The bizarre thing about the "new" TUC antics is that John Monks' attempt to theorise the organisation as a low key research and back-up centre for the trade union bureaucracy, rather than an organisation which actually fights to organise and co-ordinate workers

struggle, comes amidst growing evidence of the resilience and popularity of the unions.

For example, the abolition of the check-off system of dues collection has not resulted in the expected collapse of union membership. Most unions are reporting an 80-90 per cent sign-up rate; USDAW has actually increased its membership by 20 per cent through having to go out and talk to people, rather than relying on the check-off.

As the RMT is locked in a crucial battle with Railtrack, one which could have enormous implications for the continued existence of unions on the railway, you would have thought that this was the moment for the TUC to take the offensive.

But all such thoughts are a million miles away from the becalmed, seminar-ridden world of the "new" TUC. And anyway, the management consultants would have advised against it.

## Throw out council pay cut!

By Fred Leplat  
(Islington UNISON)

PAY TALKS for the 1.5 million local authority white collar and manual workers broke down in July, with the employers offering a two year deal of 1.7 per cent this year plus £75, and 1.4 per cent next year from July '95.

All the unions have rejected this offer. With inflation running at 2.5 per cent, average earnings rising by 3.5 per cent (not to mention 4.7 per cent for MPs!), and with taxes rising, the employers' offer is a kick in the teeth. It means a pay cut this year, followed by a pay cut next year!

UNISON is urging members to reject the offer, through a branch consultation which ends on September 21.

Branches should call for a national conference of local government workers in pursuit of a flat rate claim for all council workers.

Now is the time to join with other workers, in particular RMT members, for action in defence of pay.

TRADE UNION NEWS

# UNISON's leaders attack activists

By Tom Snell

STEWARDS and branch officers in Liverpool and Sefton UNISON branches are to be disciplined by the national leadership for organising industrial action in defence of their members. In both cases action was unofficial and therefore "illegal".

In Liverpool stewards at the Fairfield Day Centre organised industrial action against management racism over a year ago.

The local authority and the Commission for Racial Equality

later acknowledged the problem, and indeed the council did not seek to have the action repudiated by UNISON nationally, nor did they seek a court injunction.

Yet four UNISON stewards have now been charged by the national leadership with "participating in and/or supporting unlawful industrial action". One of them faces 17 other charges, including "making false allegations of racism" and "prostituting the issue of racism for his own ends".

The Liverpool branch secretary, Judy Cotter, who opposed the stewards and their action, also faces disciplinary action.

Since the industrial action took place, UNISON general secretary Alan Jkinson has refused to allow Liverpool branch to hold its AGM and elect stewards and officers.

In June he proposed the AGM should go ahead, but the national executive voted him down.

The hearing against the four has now been postponed to October.

UNISON's leadership is also taking disciplinary action against Martin Murphy and Nigel Flanagan, chair and secretary of Sefton UNISON, for organising unofficial industrial action against a council attempt to pri-

vatise a large number of its services.

The action forced the council to back down, but the council Labour group, the biggest in a hung council, decided to take the union to court.

Murphy and Flanagan were fined £1250 each and UNISON nationally £5000 for not having dissociated itself "forcibly enough" from the action. These relatively small fines were the result of mass demonstrations outside the court, which brought together 6000 workers from many different unions.

Despite the effectiveness of the Sefton strike action in

thwarting privatisation and defending members jobs, the UNISON leadership are now putting the boot in against their own activists.

**UNISON activists should support the "Fightback" conference called by Sefton branch on SATURDAY 17 September, 11am-4pm, Crosby Civic Centre, Waterloo, Merseyside, and lobby the UNISON NEC on Saturday September 24, which will receive a report on Sefton.**

# Passing round the cap for Britain

By Terry Smith

NEWS that Oxfam intends to embark on a programme of poverty relief in Britain underlines the extent to which the Tories have already devastated the welfare state.

The charity, best-known for its moving appeals to tackle starvation in the 'Third World', points to the vast and widening gulf between the wealthiest ten percent of the British population, whose incomes have risen an average of 62 percent since 1979, and the poorest ten percent, who are a massive 17 percent worse off.

Eleven million people now live below a poverty line defined as half the average income, compared with just three million in 1977.

## Pensioners

The biggest single group in poverty is old-age pensioners, whose basic state pension has been cut in half in comparison with average earnings.

But the other key factor is the massive level of unemployment; dole payments have also been slashed back to less than half their 1979 value, while ever greater numbers of jobless workers find themselves denied payments.

## Scrapped

There is worse to come, following Kenneth Clarke's decision in the last budget to scrap unemployment benefit and instead launch a new, restrictive 'Jobseekers Allowance', which will pay for only six months in-

stead of twelve.

Social security has also been brutally squeezed, with the axing of special needs payments and their replacement with loans from a cash-limited Social Fund, and now the scrapping of invalidity benefits, to be replaced by even more limited new benefits.

## Crackdown

The misery of the millions forced to claim these benefits will be intensified by the vicious tactics of Social Security chief Peter Lilley and Employment Secretary Michael Portillo, who have mounted a combined offensive against benefit fraud.

The latest figures already show a sharp increase in prosecutions of claimants and cheap-skate employers seeking to exploit the social security system, but behind the scenes there has been a big increase in the harassment of innocent claimants. Meanwhile an estimated £2 billion a year remains unclaimed by people entitled to benefits.

Vicious new restrictions on council provision of accommodation to the homeless are also in the pipeline following a government announcement in July.

## 12 month limit

Only temporary accommodation will be available, for a maximum of 12 months, and the onus will be placed on the applicant to prove that he or she became homeless unintentionally.

As the numbers caught up in the Tory onslaught continues to rise, the need for a broad-based, high-profile campaign to defend the welfare state grows in importance.



Education and student grants are among the services and benefits under attack as the Tories crack down on the welfare state

# New Network fights to defend welfare state

By Harry Sloan

LAST December a high-level alliance of trade union and Labour leaders held a conference chaired by Ken Livingstone and supported by the *Morning Star*: it proclaimed itself the 'Defend the Welfare State Campaign'.

Prominent sponsors included three of Britain's biggest unions, UNISON, GMB and TGWU, and speeches from the proceedings, notably from Bryan Gould and GMB leader John Edmonds were given television coverage.

The conference was portrayed in the media as a means of firing a warning shot across the bows of John Smith's Labour leadership, pressing for a more rigorous defence of the welfare state at a time when that appeared to be under attack within the Party.

Since then, the speeches

have been published in booklet form, but no further initiatives have been announced. Labour Parties and union branches wishing to get involved in an ongoing campaign have been offered no way in.

Despite its potential to reach deep into the labour movement the campaign went into hibernation, and appears to have lost all momentum.

But Tory attacks on the welfare state have continued to escalate:

- A new crackdown on 'fraud' is bringing misery to millions of social security, invalidity benefit and housing benefit claimants, as the Tories prepare to slash unemployment benefits to just six months.

- The new NHS internal market is forcing a new round of cuts and closures on health authorities and Trusts, while tens of thousands of elderly patients each year are now being compelled to sell their homes to pay means-tested charges for privatised 'community care' services.

- Hundreds of thousands of students face an immediate plunge into poverty with the start of a new academic year, as the Tory policy of replacing grants with loans forces up the level of personal debt to record levels, and triggers the first spate of court cases to compel graduates to repay past loans.

## Rank and file

With these problems in view, a new initiative, the Welfare State Network, has been launched, aimed at linking rank and file activists and local campaigners fighting to defend welfare services and benefits.

It is jointly launched by the Socialist Campaign Group Sup-

porters Network and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, and is urging union branches, CLPs and local campaigning bodies to affiliate and play an active role.

An initial Planning Meeting is being held on Sunday September 18 (12-4.00pm) at London's Conway Hall.

Speakers invited include MPs Tony Benn and Alan Simpson, UNISON health activist Caroline Bedale, Bakers' Union leader Joe Marino, a student nurse from Guy's Hospital, Alan Pottage of the RMT Executive and John Lister from London Health Emergency campaign.

As the organisers point out:

"There are hundreds of active and hard-working campaigns fighting to protect particular services, to resist new attacks on rights and benefits, and defend local hospitals. We need rank and file co-ordination to make sure we are not isolated - but also to give us the strength to win.

"We will campaign to defend and extend public provision so that health care; housing; education; and a minimum income are available to all, by right. We will defend and fight to improve universal benefits like child benefit, the basic state pension, unemployment benefit and others, against erosion of their value and against replacement by means-tested hand-outs."

The Network is pledged to support and seek to work with all other campaigns already active in this field, including the Defend the Welfare State Campaign. Beyond that, the agenda for action remains to be written on September 18. **Make sure your organisation or campaign is represented!**

## Welfare State Network

Rank and file coordination to save the Welfare State

**Initial Planning Meeting**

**SUNDAY September 18**

**12.00-4.00pm**

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square

(Holborn Tube)

Everybody welcome

**Supported by Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network and Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee**

Invited speakers include ● TONY BENN, ● ALAN SIMPSON MP, ● CAROLINE BEDALE (UNISON Health Activist Network), ● JOE MARINO (General Secretary, Bakers Union)

HOME NEWS

# Mass strike wave ends Mandela's brief 'honeymoon'

FOLLOWING South Africa's historic first democratic elections, and in the midst of the euphoria and hopes it has generated, few trade unionists would have believed they would again see police opening fire on strikers with rubber bullets and tear gas, vicious dogs savaging pickets, and workers in their hundreds being bundled into police trucks.

But little over two months into the "new" South Africa, such scenes have been repeated throughout the country as police brutally weighed in on the side of the owners of the Pick 'n Pay supermarket chain against workers demanding a living wage.

**NORM DIXON** reports on the news the western media has chosen not to print.

**JOHANNESBURG** — The Pick 'n Pay struggle was one of a series of pay strikes which have opened up as workers attempt to bust racist wage differentials.

Members of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) overwhelmingly voted to strike in July in support of a wage increase for all workers at Pick 'n Pay's 350 shops nationwide.

Management offered an increase of R175 (£35) per month which would result in a minimum monthly wage of a paltry R1650 (£330).

The strike eventually ended in a compromise much closer to the company's offer than the union's demand. The role of the police and courts in repressing the strike was crucial in this outcome.

SACCAWU members at about 100 Pick 'n Pay supermarkets went on strike on July 12. Hundreds of workers picketed stores. Management admitted that

COSATU picket in Jo'burg



half their stores were "adversely affected" by the actions that day.

Later that night, management sought and was granted a court order that prevented SACCAWU members from picketing within 500 metres from a Pick 'n Pay store.

On July 13, the rest of SACCAWU's 15,000 members at Pick 'n Pay walked out. Most SACCAWU picketers were unaware of the court order as they peacefully gathered outside supermarkets to prevent scabs taking their jobs and dissuade shoppers from spending their money in Pick 'n Pay outlets.

At stores around the country, police moved rapidly to enforce the anti-picketing order on behalf of Pick 'n Pay. At the Norwood store, in Johannesburg, the notorious Internal Security Unit riot police used tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse strikers.

Seven picketers were bitten by police dogs. Similar actions occurred in the PWV, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu/Natal. By the end of the day over 800 workers had been arrested. Similar scenes were repeated on July 14. Hundreds of workers were again arrested.

At least 60 were injured by rubber bullets and dog bites. Police also prevented workers from marching on Pick 'n Pay's head office near Johannesburg.

COSATU president Sam Shilowa joined the 3000 workers. He told the strikers that their struggle was legitimate and that it was their right to strike for a living wage. He condemned the conduct of the police. He called on the ANC ministers of police in the regional

and national governments "to come out and explain what is their position with regard to police entering into the industrial arena."

Barely a day passed in the last few weeks that the songs and the sound of dancing feet of striking workers has not resounded through the streets of the Johannesburg and other major centres. Researchers say that in July strikes amounted to 233,000 work days, compared to 63,000 in July last year. The big guns of South Africa's working class movement, the metalworkers and mineworkers, have already joined the fray.

### Militant mood

The militant mood among workers was clear on a bitterly cold Johannesburg morning on July 25 outside COSATU's Braamfontein offices. Thousands gathered for a protest march to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and the infamous John Vorster Square police headquarters.

The march, organised by COSATU's PWV region, brought together all those workers in the region engaged in strike action. The crowd listened attentively as representatives from each union or workplace outlined their situation and called for solidarity between those engaged in action.

Workers murmured their understanding as each speaker explained the details, shouted their outrage as the excesses of management were revealed, and laughed loudly as the bosses' stupidities were derided.

The biggest, and most vocal, contin-

gent were the Pick 'n Pay workers. They were joined by hundreds of workers from Checkers/Shoprite, Gallo Records and a number of other workplaces. The racism of management featured in many of the smaller disputes.

Workers remain incensed at the behaviour of the police in the first week of the Pick 'n Pay strike.

A young Pick 'n Pay worker told the crowd that three workers remained in hospital. "They have been bitten by dogs and one lady has been shot. They said it was a rubber bullet but it was not a rubber bullet. Some of our comrades who were arrested are still in jail. Please stay away from Pick 'n Pay. Don't buy at Pick 'n Pay. Don't buy at Checkers/Shoprite. We need your support."

COSATU assistant general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi addressed the workers before moving off. He rejected claims that workers should not fight for the rights because it would undermine "investor confidence".

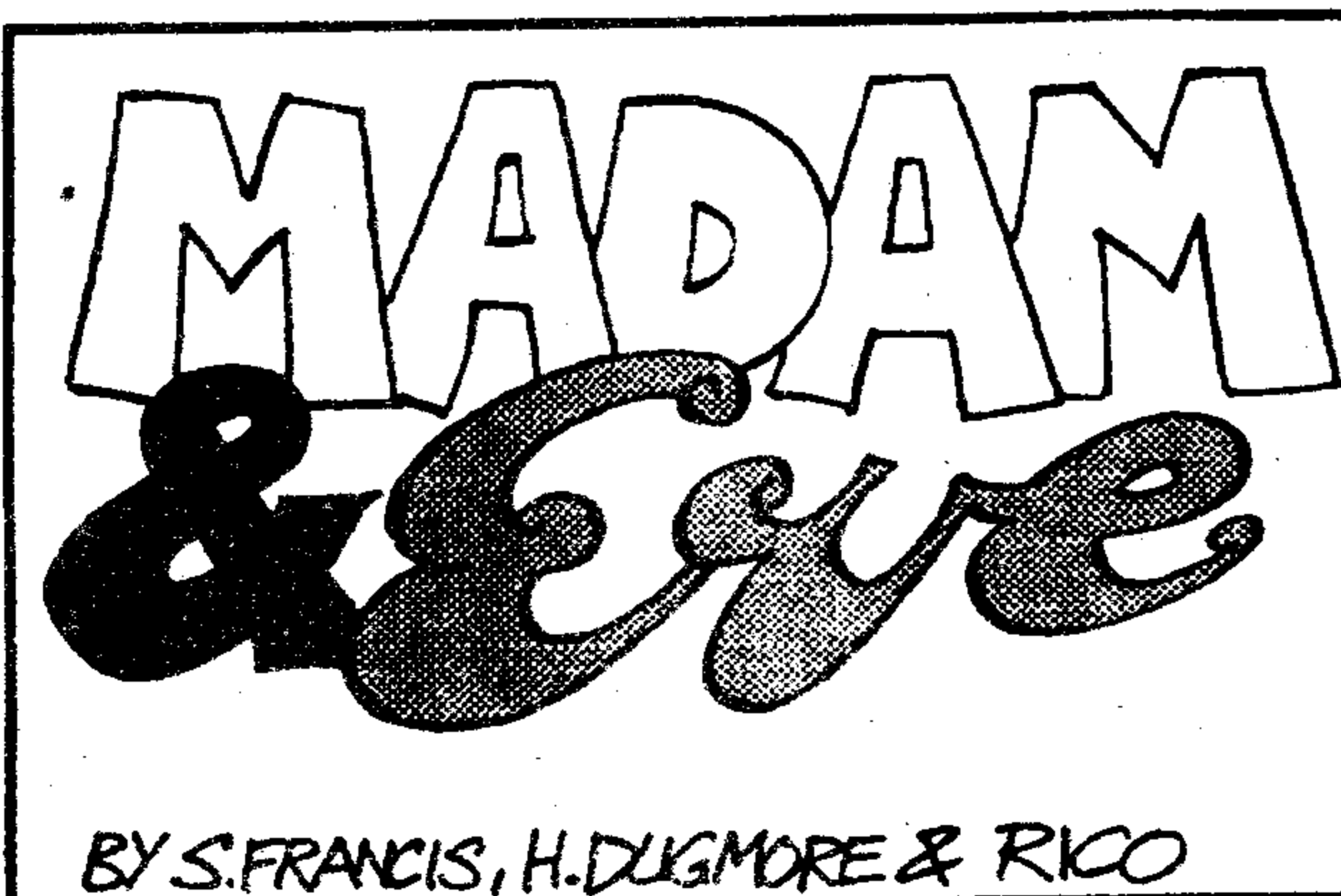
Vavi said workers were demanding a living wage, democratisation of the workplace, and an effective say over how companies are run. "We are not going to accept an argument that says that in order to have investor confidence, in order to create more jobs for our people, workers should tighten their belts, should accept poverty wages, accept racism from the bosses."

The Pick 'n Pay dispute was among the most significant of a wave of workers' struggles taking place throughout South Africa. Also highly significant was a strike by the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA); industrial action is also threatened by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

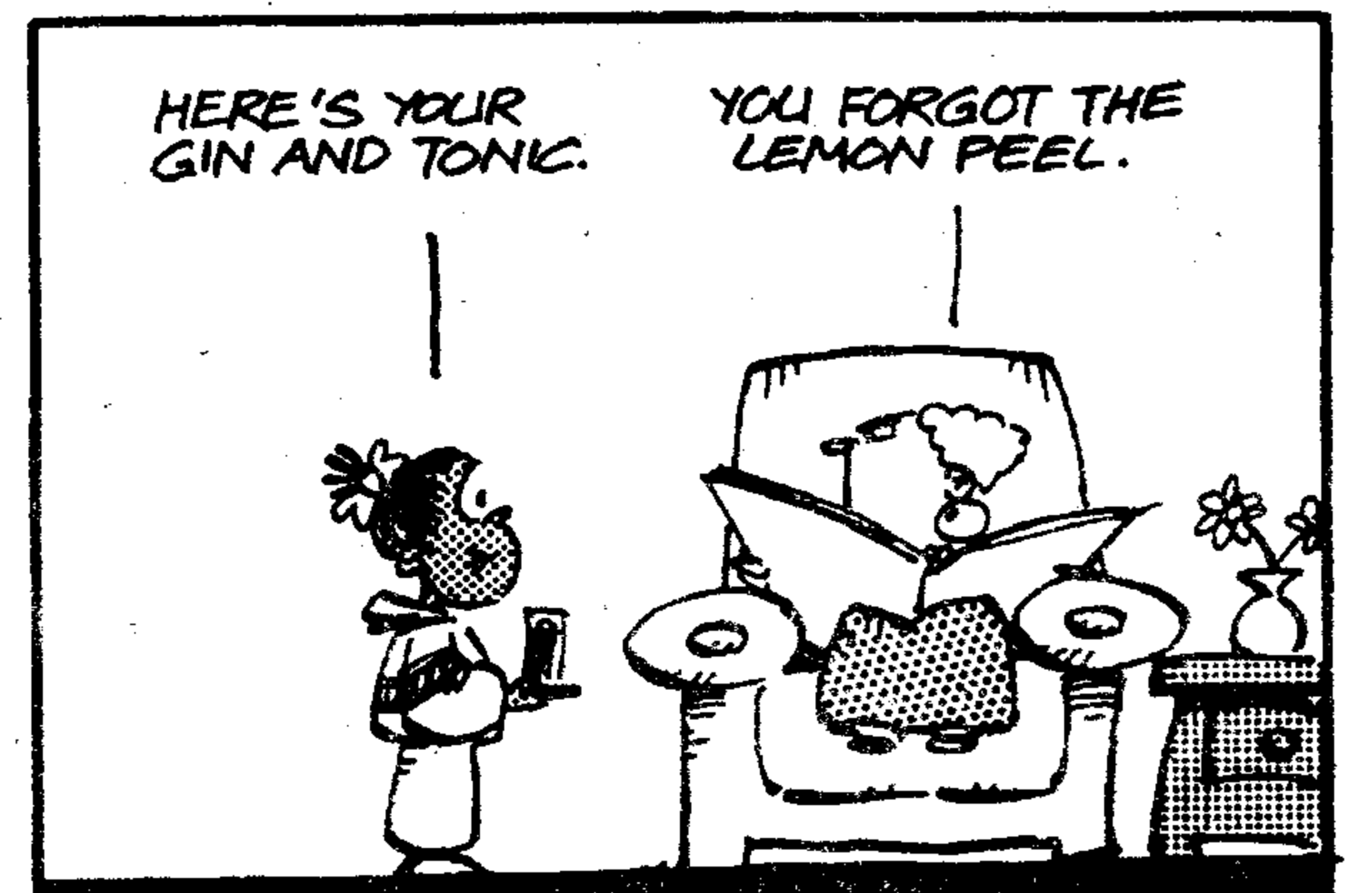
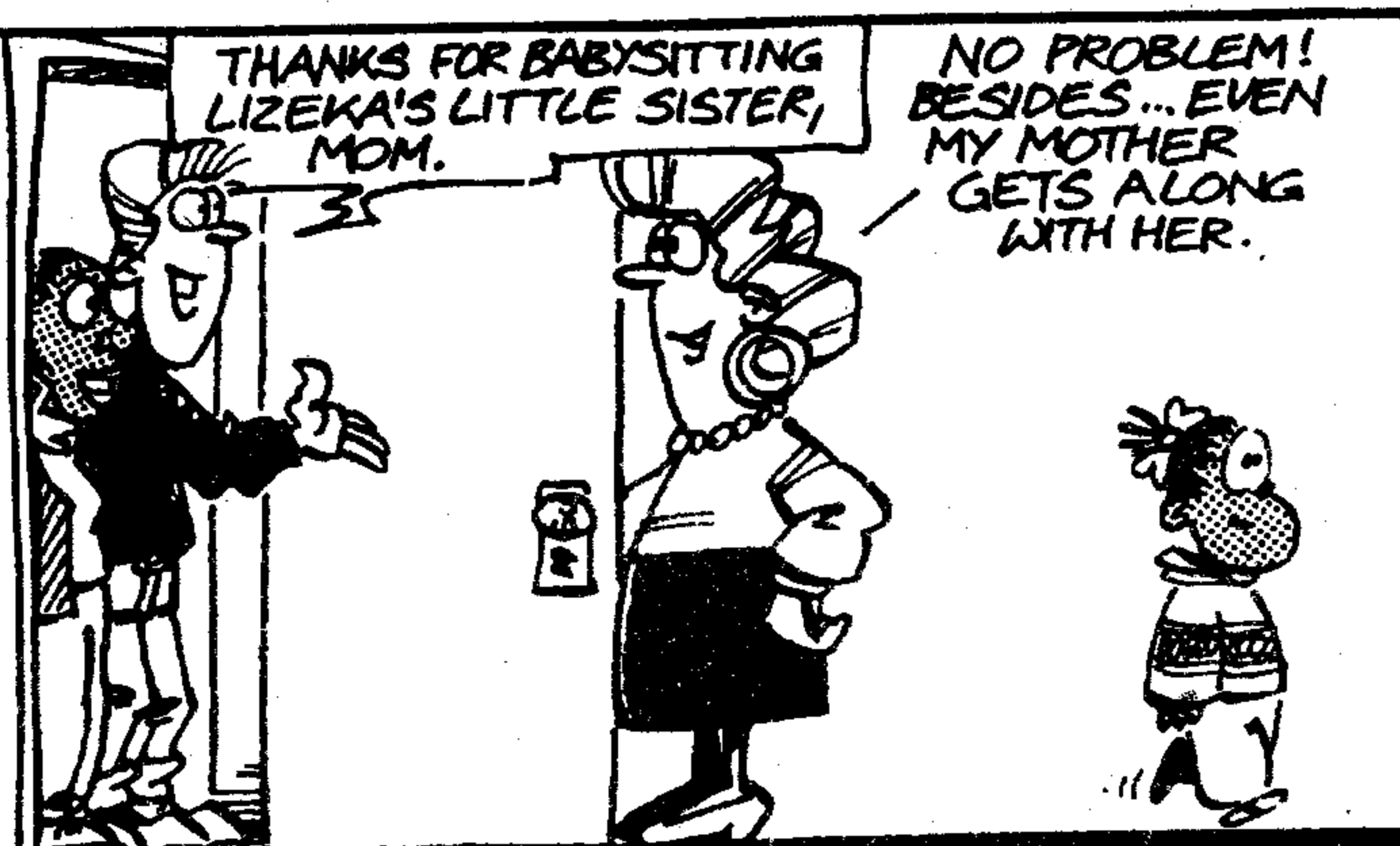
NUMSA's 26,000 members in the car industry took strike action in support of a 15 per cent wage claim. NUMSA is also demanding a 12 per cent increase in the steel and engineering sector which employs 280,000. Ten thousand metalworkers marched through Johannesburg on July 21.

The 385,000 NUM members are also considering strike action to win a 12 per cent rise. Negotiations collapsed on July 21. The Chamber of Mines has offered 8.5 per cent for gold miners, and 8.5-9 per cent for coal miners. Anglo American has offered 7 per cent. Talks with De Beers also collapsed on July 21 when

CENTRE STAGE



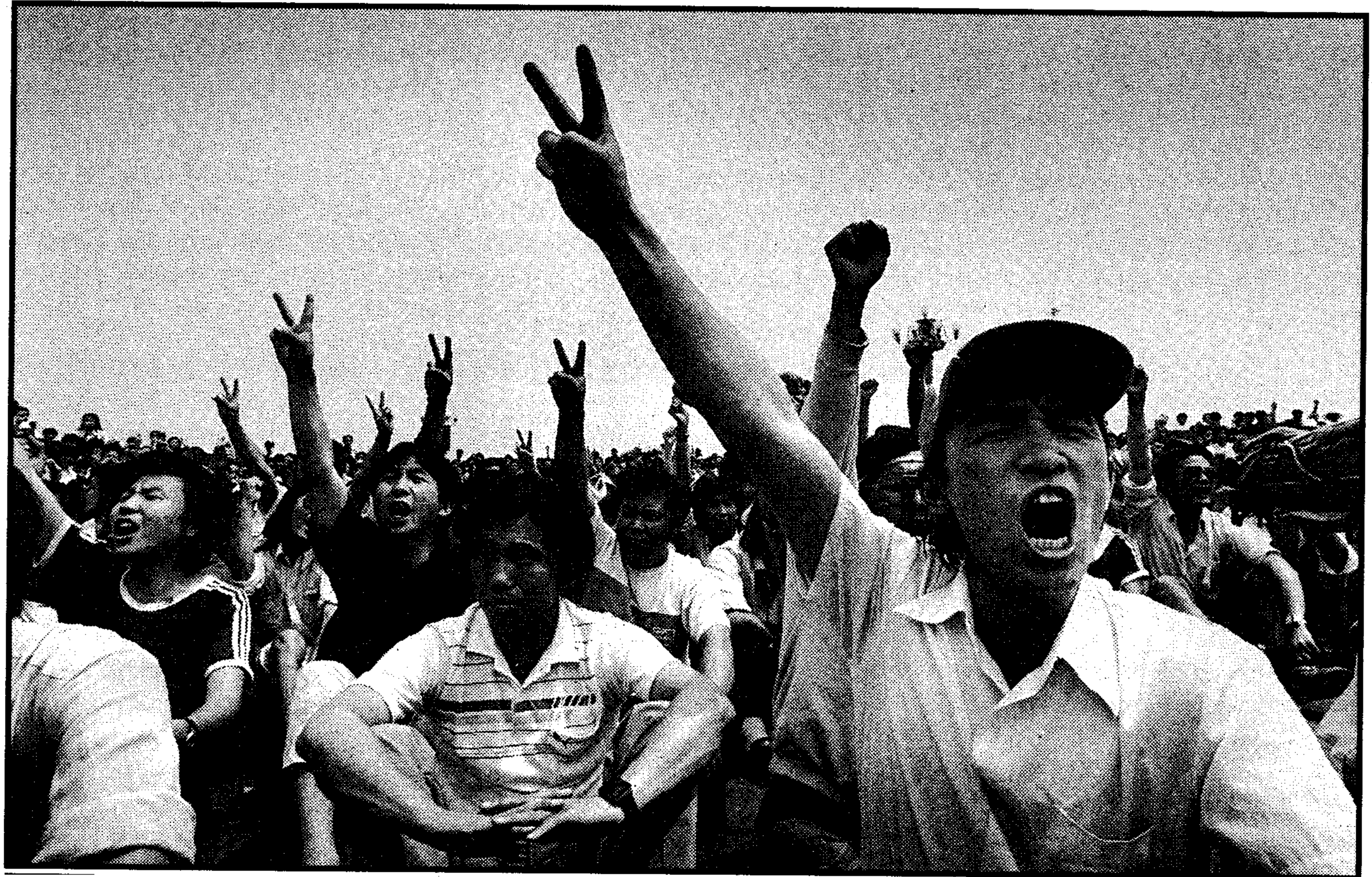
BY S. FRANCIS, H. DUGMORE & RICO



# theory+practice

## Asian War on the Horizon?

**When the Soviet Union collapsed, the expected "New World Order" was to be that of a "peaceful" world policed by an all-dominant United States. Now it is clear that the world is more dangerous and less peaceful than when the Soviet Union existed. Conflicts between the major imperialist states are deepening, and Germany and Japan in particular are reinforcing their military capacity. Here PAUL WALKER argues that in the new battles for economic and political dominance, Asia will be a crucial theatre, and that the next major war between capitalist states could be there.**



Just before the outbreak of the First World War, German social democrat leader Karl Kautsky argued that the major imperialist powers would abandon war and collaborate to run the world. He argued: "From a purely economic point of view it is therefore not out of the question that capitalism will enter a new phase: the translation of cartelisation onto a global plane, a phase of *ultra-imperialism*."

"This phase, we will of course, have to combat just as energetically as imperialism; but its dangers lie in quite a different direction, not in an arms race and a threat to peace."

For the next thirty years global warfare was to be the norm rather than the exception as inter-imperialist rivalry grew, colonial repression intensified and national liberation struggles from Mexico to Kenya to China spread throughout the globe.

It is little wonder that Lenin described the theory of ultra-imperialism as a "stupid little fable".

What Kautsky and others did not understand was that war is at the heart of the world capitalist system — it is organic to it and not an aberration.

The constant search for new markets, the need to export capital to offset the declining rate of profit, the need to protect sea-ways and geographic spaces which are crucial for free trade and the movement of goods — all of these bring different capitalist states into competition with one another.

It is this competition which leads to war in the imperialist era.

Economic competition between imperialist states normally takes form of *negotiation*, for example over trade as in the GATT Uruguay Round.

But in the long run if one nation or trading bloc has been unable to win the argument through it being the dominant power, nation states carry on politics by another means — war. This is the history of the 20th century which has witnessed two global inter-imperialist conflicts.

The logic of the market economy is such that a new world inter-imperialist war is on the agenda in an historic sense. This does not mean it is inevitable — a turn in tide of class struggle in the favour of the oppressed could reverse such a development — but that the tendency is in that direction.

As Trotsky noted: "Capitalism produces... equilibrium, disrupts it, restores it anew... In the sphere of inter-state relations the disruption of equilibrium means war...".

The victory of the market over the political suicide that was Stalinism has opened up a new era of inter-imperialist competition, disruption and war.

There will be a new bout of imperialist competition to attempt to create a new international division of labour — one that will reflect the real balance of economic power between different imperialist centres. *The last decade of the twentieth century will probably be viewed in retrospect as one which witnessed the opening battles of World War Three.*

Such a global conflict will be pre-figured by struggles for both regional power and inter-imperialist interventions into spheres of influence. In this context, the Gulf War, the US invasion of Somalia, the break up of Yugoslavia and the growing instability of the Ukraine take on a new meaning.

In the era of imperialism, even a quest for regional zones of influence presupposes a readiness to fight on a world scale for a resolution of these differences.

It is the Far East which will probably witness the first struggle for power at a regional level which could be the precursor of a new world war.

The end of the Cold War threw the economic, political and military alliances in the Far East into the melting pot. The regional

power balance established as a product of the Chinese Communist Party's seizure of power in 1949 has held in check any tendency toward generalised war in the region between the capitalist powers for four decades. This situation was a reflection of the world balance of power.

The presence of United States military forces across the Far East created a framework within which national ruling classes could deal with insurgent groups, and within which regional capitalist rivalries could be managed. At the same time the United States was prepared to send in as many troops as it took to contain the growing threat of communist insurgency.

In this period the United States never achieved global ascendancy — it was merely the strongest representative of the capitalist market in retreat. The victory of the NLF insurgents in Vietnam signalled to the world ruling classes that "containment" was not working and what was required was a counter-offensive to destroy the heartlands of the post-capitalist planned economies.

Now however the Cold War security framework of the Far East is in the process of falling apart. The stakes over the next decade are for the domination of the Far East.

The focus of international attention has recently been on North Korea and its supposed drive to develop a nuclear bomb. As usual, there was more heat

than light produced by the supposed "crisis". The core issue was not whether North Korea had a bomb (even different departments of the US government, State and Defense, could not agree on that) but the implications of such a development for Japan, China and the United States.

The key question was who was able to provide leadership in the region.

The Cold War nuclear umbrella ("we are protecting you but you are under our dominance") provided by the United States to its Cold War allies, and hence regional power status, are under question. It was, therefore, crucial for the United States to prove that it was still the main power-broker to prevent the Japanese ruling class getting nuclear weapons.

Yet the outcome of the "crisis" was that China, the Philippines and Japan all utilised their growing influence to ensure that the US-proposed trade embargo against North Korea did not go ahead.

This was a further signal to the Asia-Pacific nations that a wind of change was sweeping through the region. All of the major regional powers recognise this; a race for local domination is unfolding as a precursor of a struggle for global power.

The starting gun for this race was sounded when the United States withdrew its forces from the Subic and Clark Naval Bases in the Philippines in late 1991.

In the September issue of *International Viewpoint*

### Far right in Europe

The rats break for cover: François Vercammen: special features on the right in Italy, Germany, Belgium, France. Plus: Mexican elections; democracy in Nigeria; Livio Maitan on China; Catherine Samary on Bosnia, Haiti; India and more. £2 including postage from *Outlook International*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.





of Japanese and foreign vessels being boarded or shot at by Chinese vessels.

China's own concerns are redoubled by the wave of anti-Chinese feeling that has appeared in the past half decade across South East Asia. The government inspired anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia earlier this year were indicative of a general mood in the region.

As a result of migration in the 19th century there are now more than 22 million ethnic Chinese spread through out South East Asia. This layer of ethnic Chinese now play a major role in South East Asian finance and industry. Such is their influence that they invest three times as much in China than the United States and Japan put together.

The tensions in the South China Sea are reflected in numerous territorial disputes across the Far East. The unresolved nature of these disputes, particularly that over the oil, gas and other mineral reserves in the Spratly Archipelago and a lack of a regional security framework have been other factors, in addition to the decline in US power, that explain the militarisation of the region over the past five years.

Taiwan has bought 150 US F-16 fighters to the value of \$6 billion and has acquired 60 Mirage aircraft from France at the cost of \$4 billion; it is also upgrading its navy. Thailand has purchased an aircraft carrier from Spain, six frigates from China and 18 F-16s from the United States.

The Philippines has spent the last two years carrying out a major refit of its air and sea forces. Add to this the purchase by Indonesia of 35 ex-East German warships (half of the GDR navy) and the decision by the Vietnamese government to increase military spending by \$505m in 1995 and the situation begins to look ominous.

To get some kind of perspective on this it is enough to note that

the Far East is now a bigger arms market than the Middle East.

The disintegration of the regional security arrangements in addition to nature of the militarisation taking hold, all nations are buying weapons to fight external wars of the future rather than the counter-insurgency wars of the past, make for a potent cocktail.

Chinese manoeuvres in the South China Sea are clearly an example of this. Even more to the point is the decision by Malaysia to appoint Datuk Harun as the Armed Forces HQ Commander - the first time a naval commander has been appointed to this position in Malaysian history - at a time when Malaysia is in dispute with the Philippines over oil exploration of Palawan Island.

Add to these features the numerous land disputes that riddle the region and the struggle for resources in the South China Sea and it seems that a struggle for regional dominance through war will be the probable outcome in the Far East.

It is the South China Sea and the resources therein that is already proving to be a source of serious tension. Not only is this area a trade route vital to Japan but it is also the home of the main territorial disputes in the Far East which might lead to war.

Most important of these is the Spratlys — a far flung archipelago of more than 90 islands that

straddle key shipping lanes and which has enormous oil reserves in territorial waters and whose sovereignty is claimed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei. Of these only Brunei does not have troops in the Spratly Archipelago.

The dispute over the archipelago has been rumbling on for more than six years since the Chinese and Vietnamese navies fought a battle in the region.

The new aspect of regional instability and the remilitarisation of the region has given this dispute a qualitatively different meaning. The Chinese have claimed the whole region as being under its sovereignty. One look at the map shows that this extraordinary demand is a clear provocation to all other regional powers with a claim.

In spite of this Vietnam and the Philippines have been engaged in preliminary searches of the area which they claim are in their sovereignty. In June this year, in action which Beijing described as a serious escalation, the Vietnam-

ese gave a contract to Mobil Oil to explore in the Patag Kawak and GSEC areas.

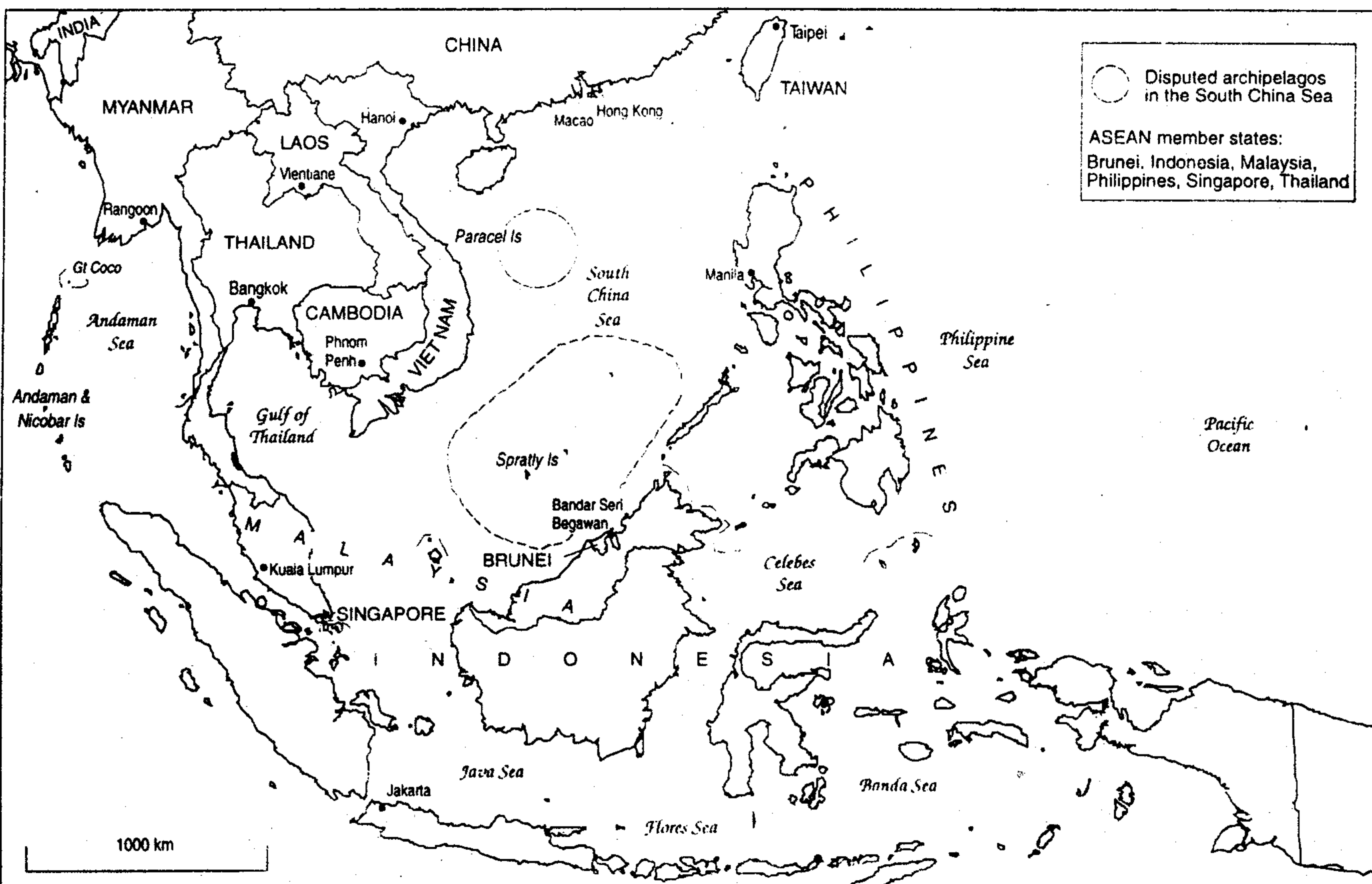
The Filipino company Alcan Petroleum (APP) is also rushing to put its fingers in the pie and has begun to carry out what was supposed to be secret data gathering about reserves of Palawan Island. This was uncovered by a serious blunder on the part of Eduardo Hernandez, head of APP, who announced the contract to carry out the work with the US company Valco Energy to a press conference. A blunder because Philippines president Fidel Ramos had publicly argued for joint US-Filipino exploration.

What the Filipino government is really thinking is underlined by Hernandez's comment that they "want to be there before the cake has been baked". Such a perspective is strengthened by Fidel Ramos' recent assertion that the refit of the Filipino Navy is based on his determination to defend Filipino claims to territory in the South China Sea. Malaysia has also claimed rights to explore in this region.

At the same time, China and Taiwan have agreed to give Chevron a contract to jointly exploit areas of the Spratly and Paracel Islands and have promised Chevron military protection. Early in 1994, according to Petroleum Intelligence Weekly, China acquired a Canadian drilling ship to explore the Blue Dragon Offshore Field which is next to the Crestone Field which is being surveyed on behalf of China by Crestone oil company of the United States.

The Chinese government has recently purchased 34 SU-27 long range aircraft from Russians and has expanded an airstrip and constructed covered hangars on Woody Island in the Paracels, which will allow the Chinese airforce to refuel for future military operations in the Spratlys.

It is only a matter of time before a strength decides what the mind boggling number of multi-national Far east Asian and Pacific forums have been unable to negotiate — who controls the South China Sea.



For almost half a century the continued extension of the planned economy across the globe proved to be a straightjacket that prevented inter-imperialist rivalry maturing and resulting in war.

This tendency of monopoly capitalism to produce war was offset by the need to prevent the extension of the Bolshevik revolution and its post-capitalist Stalinist deformation from spreading across the globe.

The international ruling classes had clearly taken to heart Trotsky's notion that war is the engine of revolution.

There was, then, a certain amount of enforced honour amongst imperialist thieves. The United States was the most pow-

erful nation in the free-market world and the bi-polar world was established and maintained from 1945 until 1989.

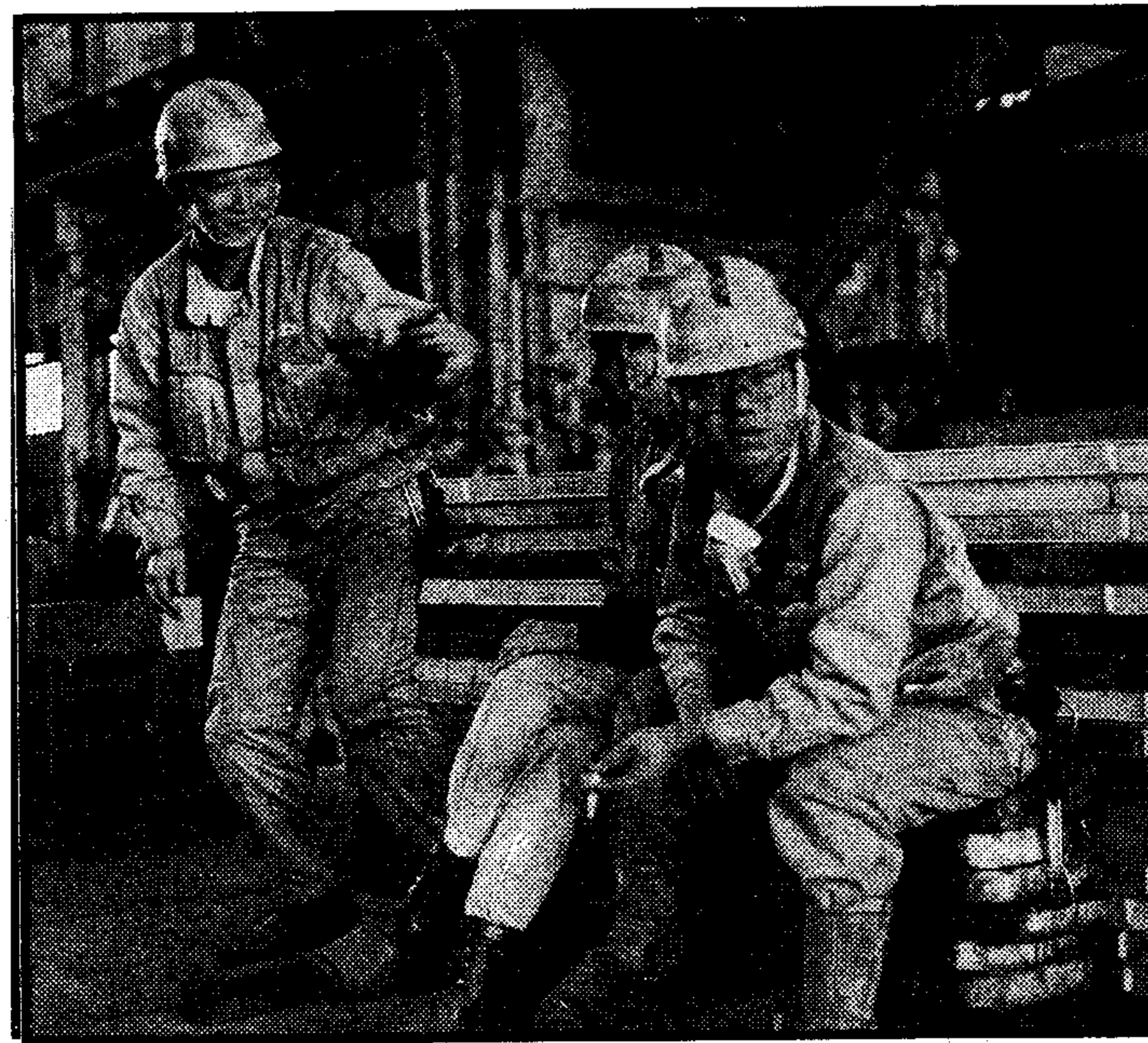
In 1945 the United States emerged as the most powerful nation on earth. In occupation and demilitarisation of its two most threatening rivals (Japan and Germany) and with a massive technological lead over the devastated USSR. Even at this time the United States was unable to prevent consummation of the Chinese Revolution and the loss of one quarter of the globe to economic planning and repression of the free-market.

The collapse in Eastern Europe has led some to suggest that the United States is now an unchal-

lenged super-power in a uni-polar world.

Alejandro Bendana, former General Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Sandinista government, has argued that we are now entering a period of US hegemony. Are we about to face a period of Pax Americana?

This proposal does not stand up to proper examination. With its main enemy shattered, the only superiority that the US has is that of military superiority. Yet this will only be a temporary phenomenon — because the central irony of post Second World War history is that the demilitarisation of Japanese and German foreign policy provided the basis on which US economic power would be challenged by them



once the destruction of 1917 had been achieved.

Such world military leadership only reinforced the unevenness

of economic development that is at the core of international capitalist development and which has put the US ruling class at a long run disadvantage.

In every single sector of the economy both Japan and western Europe have either surpassed, matched or superseded the United States. A few examples: 80 per cent of the semi-conductors used in the US military's high-tech weapons come from Japan and the Far East. In 1945 the United States' share of world manufacturing production was 50 per cent. It is now less than 30 per cent — it has also been surpassed by Japan as an exporter of manufactured goods.

This decline is even reflected in the ultimate symbol of US individualism — the motor car. In 1962 52 per cent of world car production was situated in the United States. By the mid 1980s to less than 22 per cent — that is in third place to Japan on 25 per cent and Europe on 34 per cent.

The attempt by Reaganism to both destroy the USSR and to maintain US dominance has left the US economy with a hangover that makes it the world's largest debtor nation, which can only continue to function on the basis of continued massive Japanese government purchases of US government bonds.

Such is the changing balance of forces that when Colombia Pictures makes another film glorifying the militarist adventurism of the US ruling class it can do so safe in the knowledge that completion will be guaranteed because it is now a subsidiary of cash rich Sony — a Japanese multinational.

Military superiority, without economic base on which to maintain it, can only be a passing phase; there is little to suggest that the US economy will be able to achieve any more than equality with Japan and Germany in the medium term.

The notion of Pax Americana in the post Cold War World is, therefore, mythical. The solidity of US global power will melt into the air of new inter-imperialist rivalry.

The incapacity of the US to enforce its will onto the situation in the former Yugoslavia is a current example of this lack of dominance. The Gulf War, however, provides the clearest example of the dilemma the US faces.

Trumpeted as the high point of US power the facts of the Gulf War point to a very different picture. Stomping on Grenada and getting rid of a protege in Panama were relatively simple operations that required only minimal political agreement and no military

support. The destruction of the Iraqi army was quite a different matter.

The US had five months in which to prepare its assault on Iraq. In Saudi Arabia there was a ready made landing site with no prospect of hostile fire during the logistical build-up; almost half of the ships used in this build up were not from the United States.

At the same time the German bourgeoisie were swallowing the former East Germany, Russia was still trapped in the mire of the CIS and the collapse of the Stalinist regime. Thatcher was being bundled out of office and Japan was incapable of participating in such a military adventure. As Henry Kissinger observed these were "circumstances unlikely to be repeated in the future".

The lack of US confidence was reflected in the use of massively overwhelming air and ground power which to overpower an army from a nation with a population 7 per cent the size of the US (16 million) and an economy less than 5 per cent of the United States. Iraq, with only Yasser Arafat as an ally faced not only the United States but an imperialist coalition.

It is not unlikely that at the back of the Defense Department's mind was the British humiliation at Suez in 1956 — surely the cause

celebre of a declining world power going down to defeat. The US response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was summed up by Ernest Mandel in advance in his book "The Meaning of the Second World War" when he noted that "the most violent and murderous causes of imperialist aggression are expressions of relative weakness rather than strength."

What are the results of the Gulf War? Iran is now re-armed and re-emerging as a dominant regional power in the Middle East whilst the US relapsed back into the Vietnam Syndrome at the first sign of a bloodstained north American GI being dragged through the streets of a village in Somalia.

So it is important to get US power into context. Iraq is not China and Somalia is not Japan. There will be no allied coalition to protect US interests in the Far East. If there was ever a period when the term "uni-polar" was appropriate then the United States did achieve the appearance of global hegemony for the 14 month period between the fall of the Wall and the bombing of Baghdad. That was the precise length of "Pax Americana" and the "New World Order".

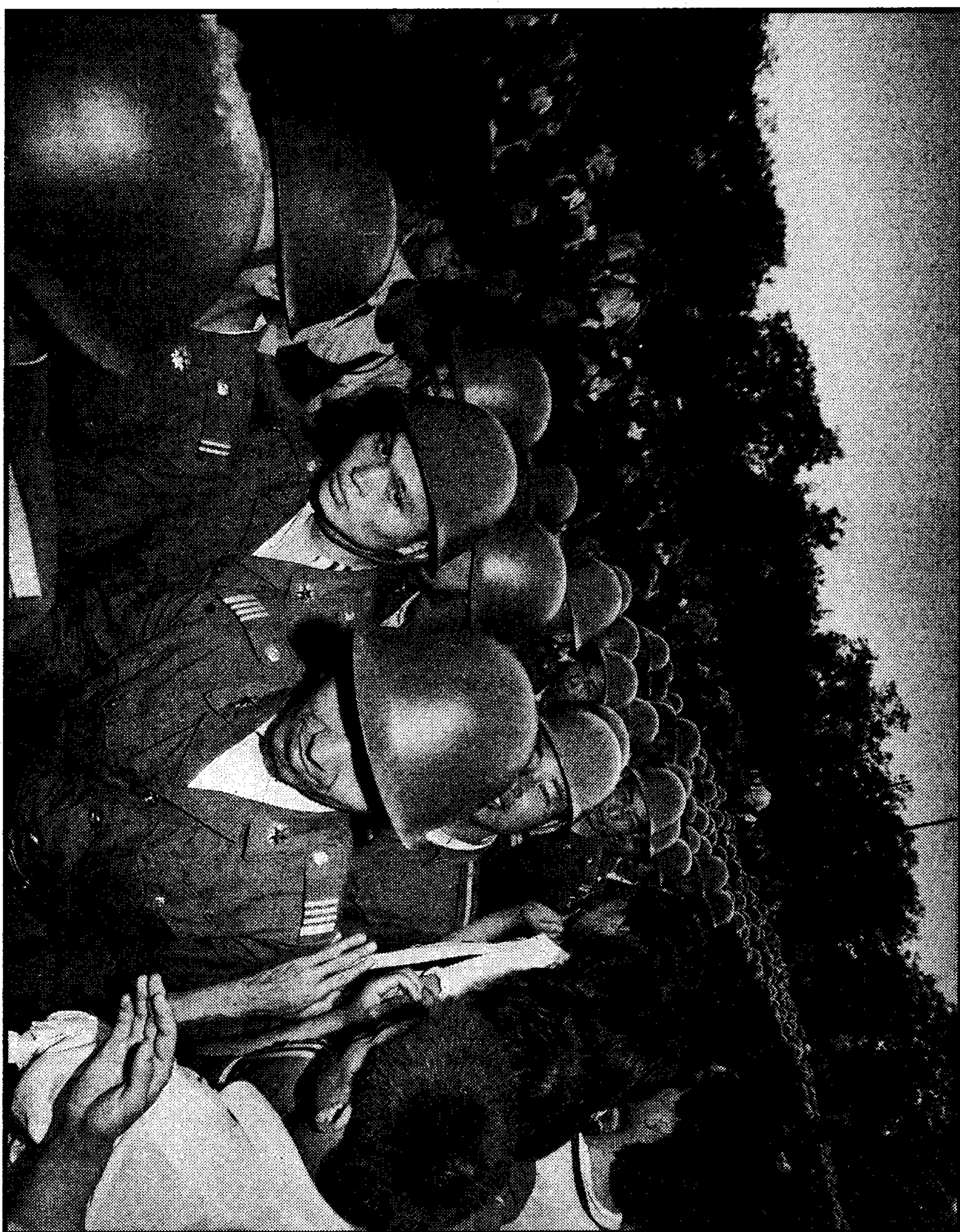
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**ASIAN WAR ON THE HORIZON?**

20p

Issue 7

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it offered just 8.5 per cent.

Other workers' struggles in recent weeks have included:

- 5000 workers at South Africa Breweries are soon to vote on whether to strike for a 11.5 per cent wage increase.

- 1000 court interpreters struck over discriminatory salary allowances. The strike paralysed South Africa's courts. Justice minister Dullah Omar expressed support for the workers and the interpreters sought the support of the South African Prisoners' Organisation for Human Rights. The strikers agreed to return to work on July 28 after Omar promised to meet their demands.

- Shunters in the PWV went on strike on July 21 and 22 for higher wages, severely disrupting the rail system.

- Musicians marched through Braamfontein on July 21 to recover outstanding royalties from record companies and to demand more airplay for local artists on radio and television.

- Thousands of striking building workers, members of the Construction and Allied Workers Union, held a protest in Cape Town on July 26 as part of a two week campaign for higher pay. Construction work in the city has been severely disrupted. Police and strikers clashed again on July 28. Workers armed themselves with clubs and pipes in response to the presence of heavily armed police.

- 30 striking woodstockers at the Cape Gas factory at Woodstock in the Eastern Cape were arrested on July 26 when they occupied the premises after chasing out scabs.

- Thousands of workers of the Post and Telecommunication Workers Association took to the streets of Johannesburg on July 27 to protest what they called Telkom's inability to address workers' grievances. They gathered outside Telkom's Joubert Park offices to hand over a memorandum to management.

Twenty thousand striking car assembly workers took to streets in different parts of the country in late July in support of demands for higher pay and the rapid elimination of race-based wage anomalies.

Disputes are brewing in the tyre industry, in the mines, in the steel and engineering industries, and in the Spar chain of supermarkets.

The car assembly workers, members of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), began a nationwide strike on August 1 for a 12 per cent wage rise and the elimination of apartheid-era wage differentials over the next three years.

The employers, grouped in the Automobile Manufacturers Employers' Organisation (AMEO), refused to increase their offer of 9 per cent and the ending of racist pay scales over four years. The motor industry, South Africa's second largest with an annual turnover of R40 billion, ground to a halt.

### Angry

NUMSA members were angered further when AMEO announced on August 9 that the 9 per cent offer would be calculated on the average wage of all assembly workers in the industry earn rather than across the board for all workers. This would result in rises of only 5 per cent in the largest plants. NUMSA organiser Gavin Hartford said that 48 per cent of car workers would



WHICH people shall govern the new South Africa? The working class or the old white bosses?

receive below 9 per cent if the employers formula was accepted.

Two thousand valued Mercedes Benz workers marched on the company's administration offices in East London on August 10. In Pretoria, the voices of 10,000 strikers at the nearby BMW, Nissan and Samcor plants resounded through the streets.

### Mass demonstration

On August 11, 7000 workers from the Volkswagen and Delta plants in Port Elizabeth marched through the city and converged on the Midland Chamber of Industries, where negotiations between the union and AMEO resumed on August 9.

On August 8, NUMSA declared a dispute with tyre manufacturers. Eight thousand workers in the Eastern Cape and the PWV are involved. A declara-

**"Thousands of striking building workers, members of the Construction and Allied Workers Union, held a protest in Cape Town on July 26 as part of a two week campaign for higher pay. Police and strikers clashed again on July 28. Workers armed themselves with clubs and pipes in response to the presence of heavily armed police"**

tion of a dispute is a legal requirement before workers are entitled to go on strike. NUMSA is demanding a 12 per cent wage increase and the elimination of racist pay scales over the next two years. Employers have offered 7.5-9 per cent and a three year time scale to close the wage gap.

In a separate dispute, 3000 SAC-CAWU members employed in the Spar chain of supermarkets are also to vote on whether to strike over wages and conditions.

Big business is holding its breath as two major disputes involving hundreds of thousands of workers remain in mediation. NUMSA and the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa (SEIFSA), whose members employ over 280,000 workers, are locked in talks. NUMSA is demanding a 12 per

cent rise and SEIFSA is offering 8 per cent.

Mediation continues between the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Chamber of Mines of two disputes. One centres on a 12 per cent wage claim for the NUM's 385,000 members, and the other over the chamber's backtracking on an agreement to provide basic education and training to mineworkers.

The police and courts have again entered the industrial arena. On August 9, 229 members of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union were arrested and charged with contempt of court at White River in the Eastern Transvaal. CWIU general secretary Muzi Buthelezi said the workers, from Sakro plastic bag company, were arrested for breaching a court order preventing picketing of the plant. Despite agreeing to police orders

to move one kilometre from the company's gate, police still moved in and arrested the workers.

The national strike by car assembly workers has no end in sight. The struggle has become a test of strength as the employers steadfastly refuse to offer more than a 10 per cent increase despite an expressed willingness by the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) to settle with a 10.5 per cent raise. The rejection of this offer led the union to revert to its 12 per cent demand.

NUMSA has vowed that the dispute will continue until its demands are met. The car assembly workers began a their strike on August 1 for a wage rise and the elimination of apartheid-era wage differentials over three years. The Automobile Manufacturers Employers' Or-

ganisation (AMEO) says it needs four years to end racist pay scales.

NUMSA's chief negotiator Gavin Hartford said that AMEO's hardline had nothing to do with affordability but was a "principled" stand. "Employers are trying to realign the power relationship within the industry and reassert control". This is underlined by the fact that the 0.5 per cent difference would cost employers R600,000 a year to meet while strike has cost employers around R1.5 billion in lost turnover.

In a blaze of publicity Mercedes Benz and the Delta Motor Corporation announced on August 15 that they were reopening their plants. It offered to pay workers who turned up to work the 10 per cent increase and pay them back pay for the period of the strike.

However, for three consecutive days neither factory was able to start its production line due to lack of workers. Both companies refused to disclose how many workers went to work but said they had been "gainfully employed". NUMSA spokesperson Roger Etkind charged that the handful were put to work sweeping floors.

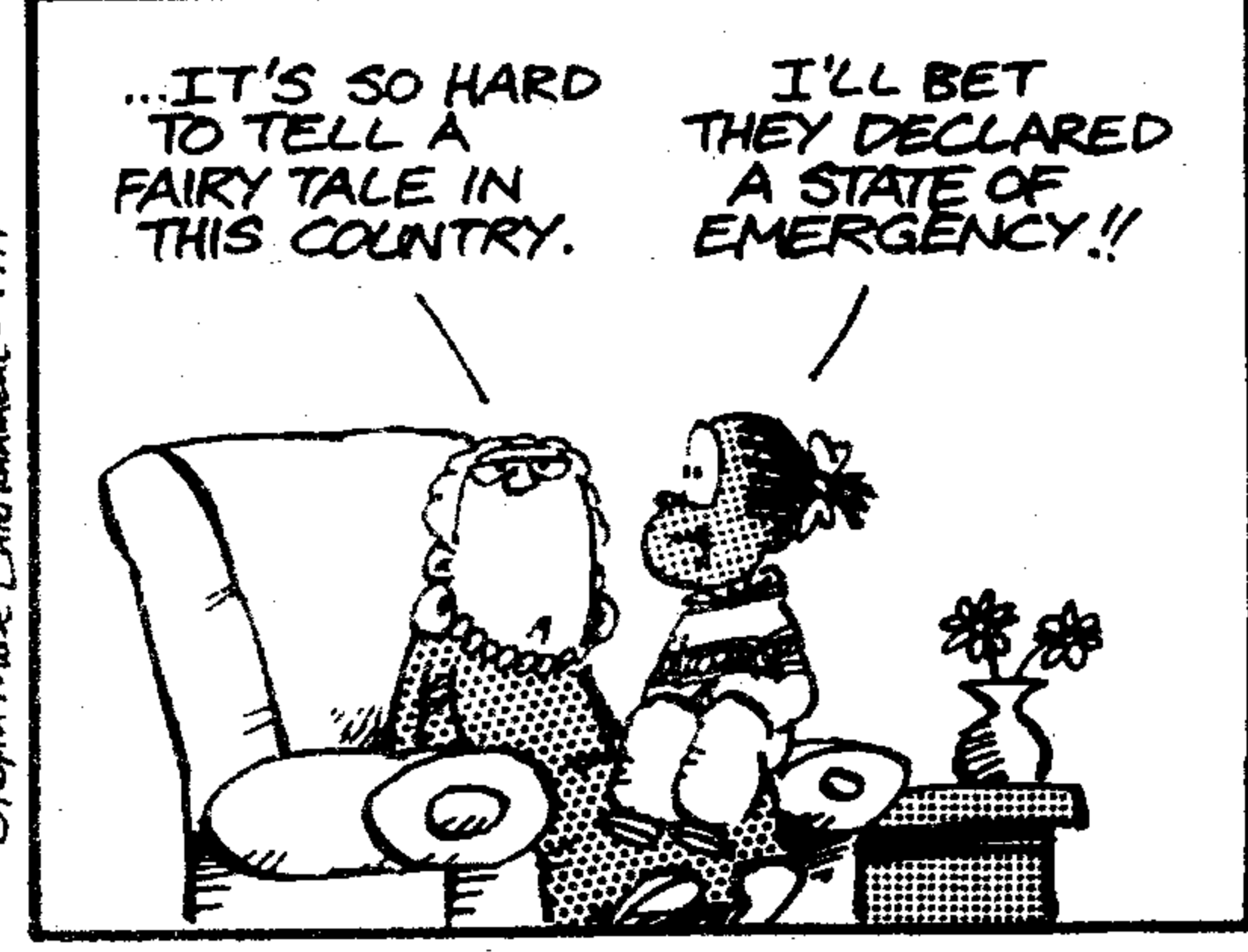
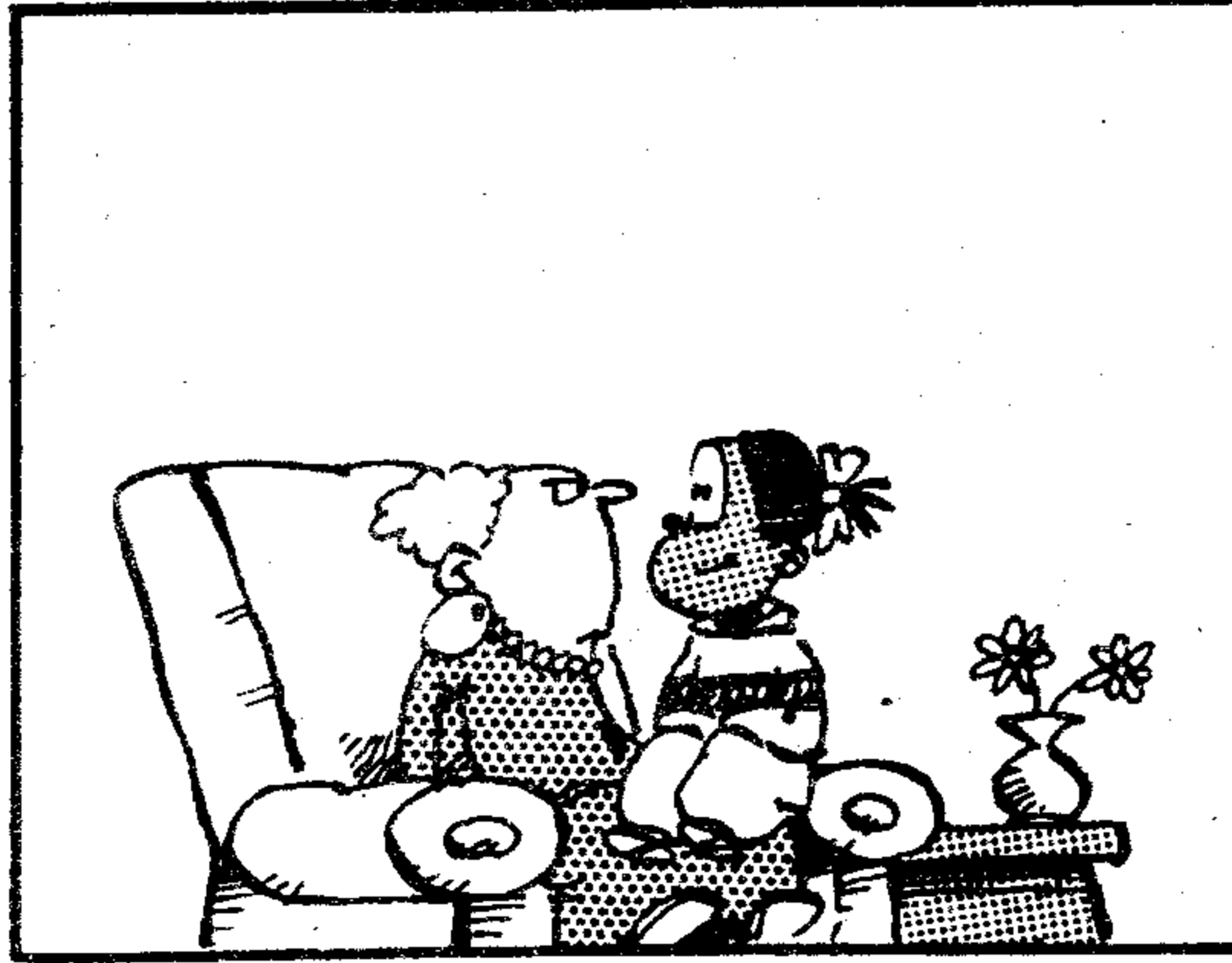
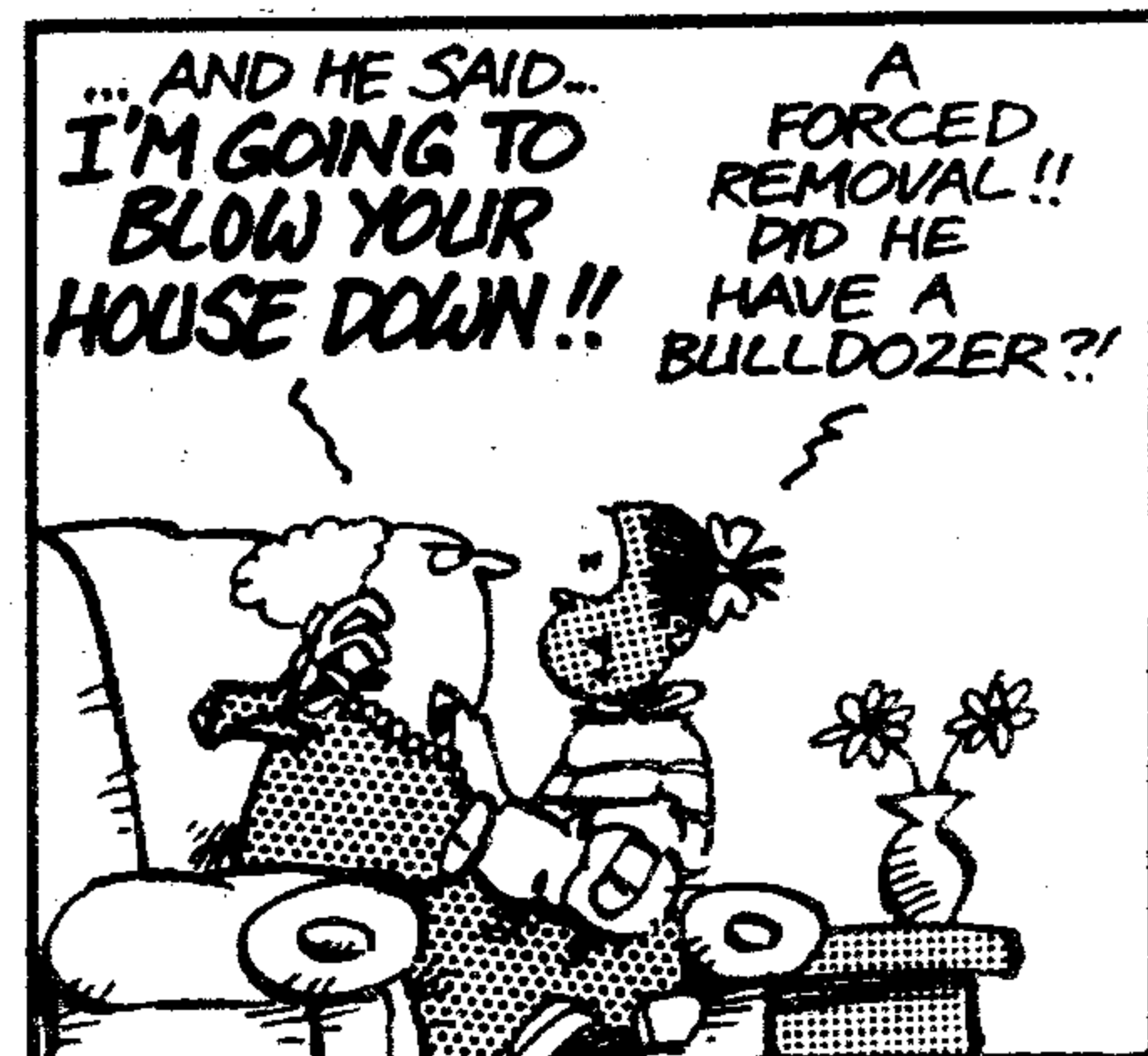
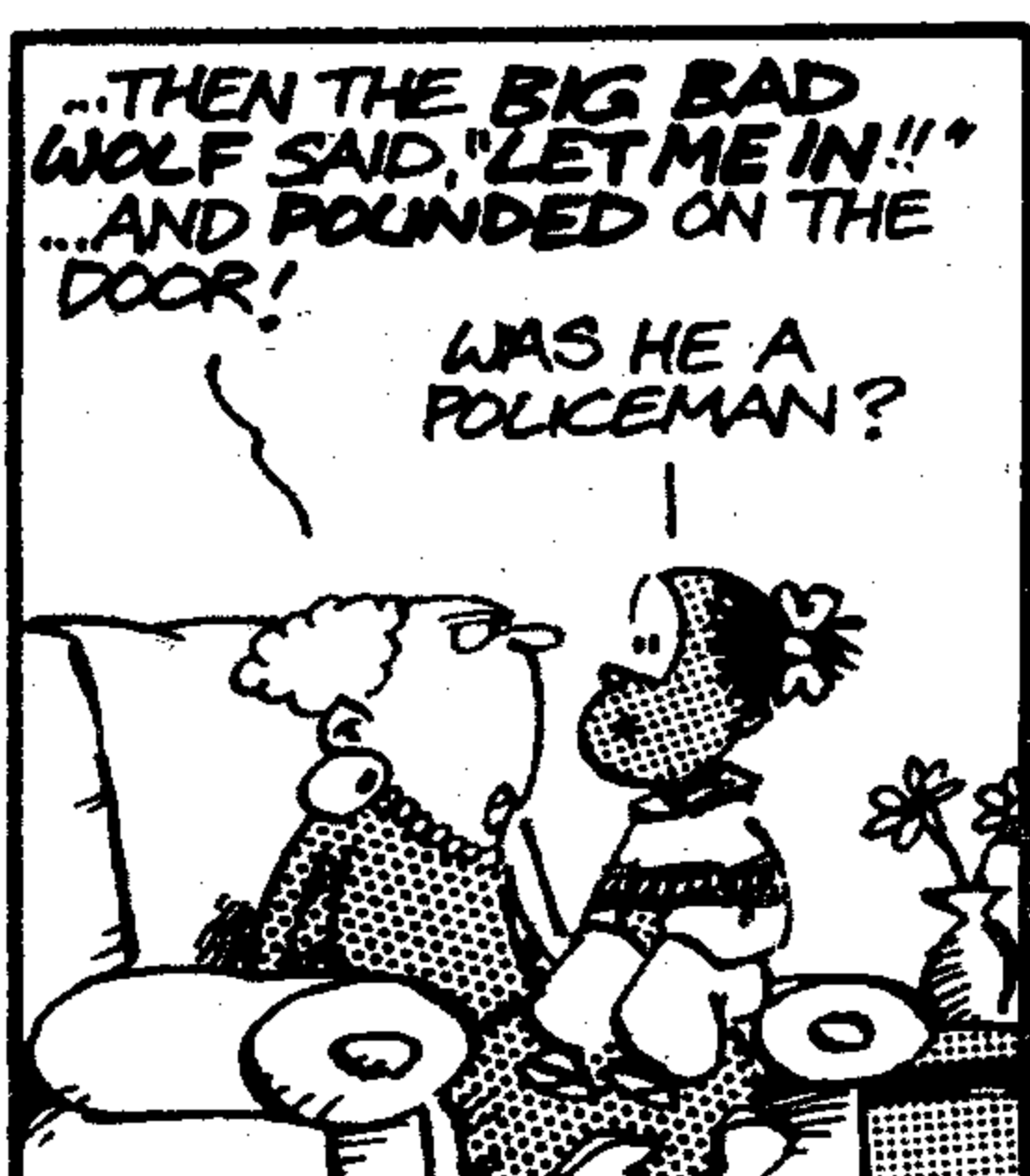
"Employers have misread the situation if they think they can divide us ... They forget that this strike is the result of a transparent and democratic process culminating in a ballot in which our members voted overwhelmingly to take this action," Etkind said.

### 9.5% deal

Meanwhile, metal and engineering industry employers and NUMSA reached an agreed to a settlement of 9.5 per cent. The agreement has defused a threatened strike by 280,000 workers. NUMSA had been demanded 12 per cent while employers were offering 8 per cent.

Talks continue between the National Union of Mineworkers, representing 385,000 miners, and the Chamber of Mines. The NUM has reduced its claim to 11 per cent from 12 per cent, while the Chamber has offered 9.5 per cent. The NUM said it will begin a strike ballot if talks fail.

CENTRE STAGE



By Paul Clarke

PRESS and TV coverage of the flight of thousands of Cuban "boat people" trying to reach the US has been monstrously one-sided. It is quite true, as all the media have been keen to point out, that they are economic refugees, fleeing hardship and deprivation.

But what is not said is that the Cuban economic crisis - the economy has declined by a staggering 40 per cent in five years - is due not just to the collapse of the USSR but crucially to the 35-year old US economic blockade.

Recently that blockade has been tightened to cover components manufactured by US subsidiaries abroad. What many people don't realise is that non-US firms trading with Cuba face massive penalties from the American government, effectively blocking their exports to the USA. So the US trade embargo prevents many firms internationally doing business with Cuba.

If the US is angry at the flood of boat people heading for Miami, this is a crisis which the US has created itself.

There is no doubt that those wanting to go are a small minority of the Cuban population. Many of them have Cuban-American relatives in Florida. Many of them have wanted to leave Cuba for a long time, but have been blocked by US immigration restrictions.

After the 'Mariel' exodus more than ten years ago, the United States promised to take 20,000 Cuban immigrants each year. But in fact only a small fraction of this number have been allowed in each year. So there is a build-up of thousands of Cubans disaffected with the regime, with relatives in the US, and who want to leave.

#### Exporting malcontents

For Fidel Castro and the Cuban government the crisis is a pressure and an embarrassment for the United States, not for them. They are not unhappy to see malcontents go; and it is the United States which is under pressure, having to deal with thousands of refugees heading for its borders.

The US has effectively repudiated its promise of US citizenship for those fleeing Cuba. Its solution to the problem - a detention camp for 40,000 people set up in its Guantanamo base in Cuba - is transparently inhumane.

As a result of the crisis the US has had to get involved in negotiations with Cuba and it is being pressurised to make concessions in return for the Cuban authorities restricting the flow of boat people.

That there are thousands of people in Cuba discontented with the regime should come as no surprise. The combination of the fall of the Soviet Union and the economic blockade have devastated the economy. Basic gains of the 1959 Cuban revolution are being undermined.

For example, Cuba for a long time has had one of the best health services in the world - certainly the best in the third world - with more doctors per head of the population than Britain.

But now there is a shortage of even basic drugs. For example, inhalers for asthma sufferers are virtually unobtainable.

#### Rations cut

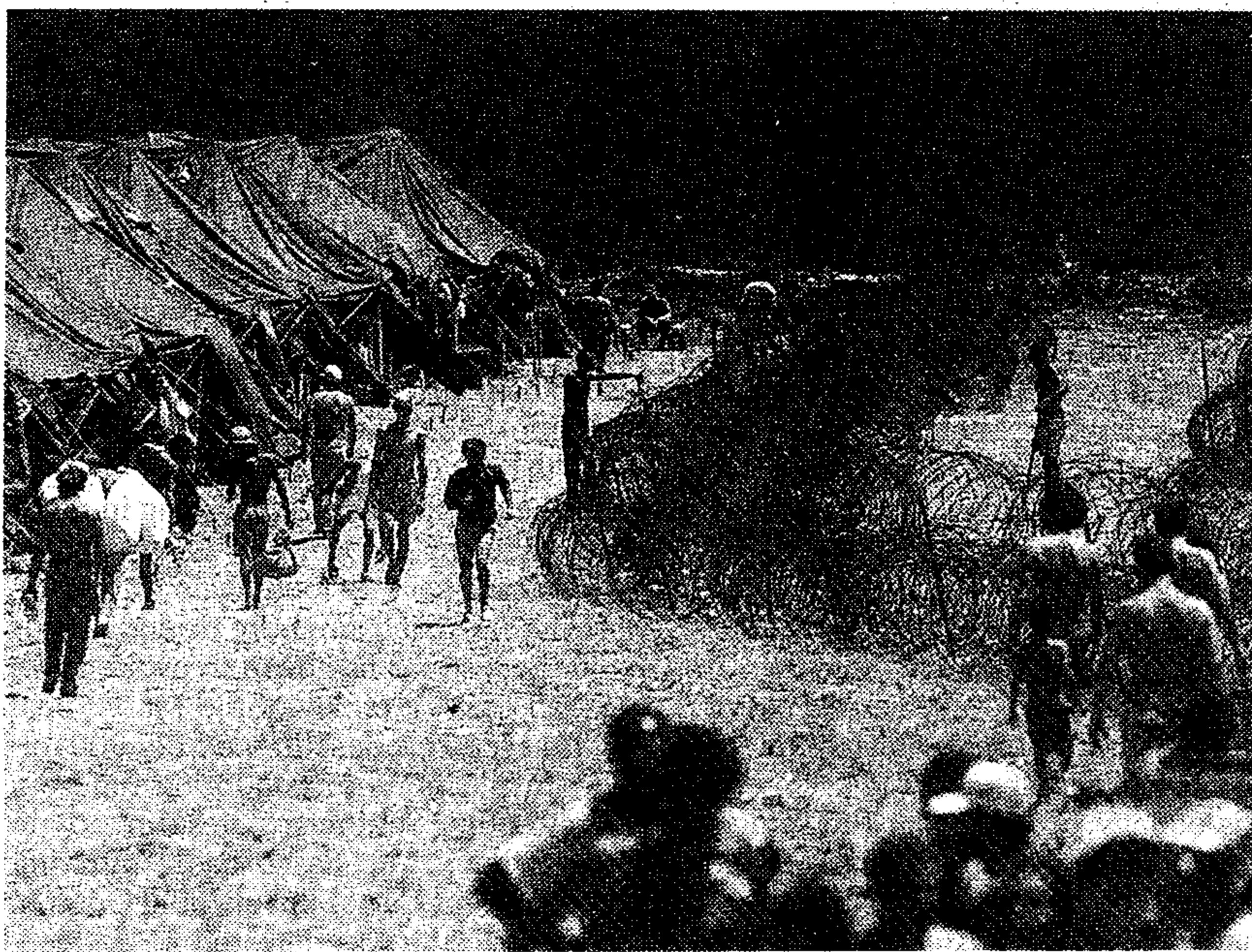
Food rations have been drastically cut and the transport system is collapsing - to be replaced by thousands of Chinese bicycles and even the reappearance, in rural areas, of the horse and cart as a common form of transport.

Ploughs drawn by cattle or horses have reappeared in the fields, as tractors become unusable because of a lack of

# Why Castro is winning battle over boat people



Thousands of disaffected Cubans have been taking to the boats - but most have got no further than the dismal camp in the Guantanamo base (below)



spare parts.

Meanwhile the United States has stepped up its radio and TV broadcasts to Cuba and tightened its blockade, hoping for the regime to collapse.

Two weeks ago the UN general assembly voted 87 votes to 3 to condemn the blockade of Cuba, and even French president Mitterrand has spoken out against it, saying that 'Cuba presents no threat to world peace'.

The response of the Cuban regime to the crisis has been to permit a considerable 'marketisation' of the economy, with the reappearance of small and medium-size businesses for the first time since the 1960s. It has also considerably

expanded the tourist trade to bring in foreign currency.

These moves have had many negative effects. Starting with the tourist industry, but now becoming generalised, has been the creation of a 'dual economy', with every citizen able to buy more food and other goods if they have dollars to do it.

This has undoubtedly increased inequality and deepened social tensions. Who has dollars? Those in the tourist industry, those with families in Florida, and some in higher party or state positions who are able to purchase dollars.

This trend will be partially stemmed by the US decision to stop dollar remit-

tances from relatives in the US, but this move could be temporary, and in any case this is just one aspect of the dollar economy.

For poorer, non-skilled workers with no access to the tourist industry and no connections in the local or national party and state apparatus, access to dollars is difficult.

The dual economy therefore strengthens bureaucracy and the trend towards the emergence of a privileged middle class.

The Castro leadership has not however combined marketisation with a democratic opening. And while Cuba is much more free than China, or the old Soviet Union, any significant movement of opposition is likely to be repressed.

Most serious observers agree that the majority of Cubans remain loyal to the revolution, even if they are critical of the regime. However there is a significant age differential in this loyalty. No one under the age of about 40 remembers the revolution, and almost no one under 50 will have participated in it.

The memory of Batista's old corrupt capitalist regime, when Cuba was a playground for American millionaires and the vast majority lived in abject poverty, is now very remote. The long-term loyalty of those who don't remember the revolution, in a situation of growing poverty and little democracy, must be in question.

For the moment the boat people crisis has put the US on the defensive. However there are big dangers in the situation.

The huge invasion force aimed at Haiti, which includes British ships, could easily be turned into a force for enforcing a total blockade of Cuba - or worse.

Whatever our criticisms of the regime, now is the time for socialists to demand an end to the imperialist blockade and step up our defence of the Cuban revolution.

## And thanks for all the bread...

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid has been running constant convoys to the beleaguered people of Bosnia, and especially to the multi-ethnic town of Tuzla. The convoys have concentrated on food, and have built a programme for providing bread to thousands of people.

This year, 11 convoys with more than 170 tons of food have made it through the blockade to Tuzla, where the miners trade union has distributed it to families in need.

Now the Government District of Tuzla has awarded a silver diploma to International Workers Aid to say "thanks" for all the aid which has been provided.

# Press hysteria over Camden killing

By Tom Snell

Press hysteria marked the response to the August 13 killing of Richard Everitt, a 15-year old white youth from the Somerstown district of Camden.

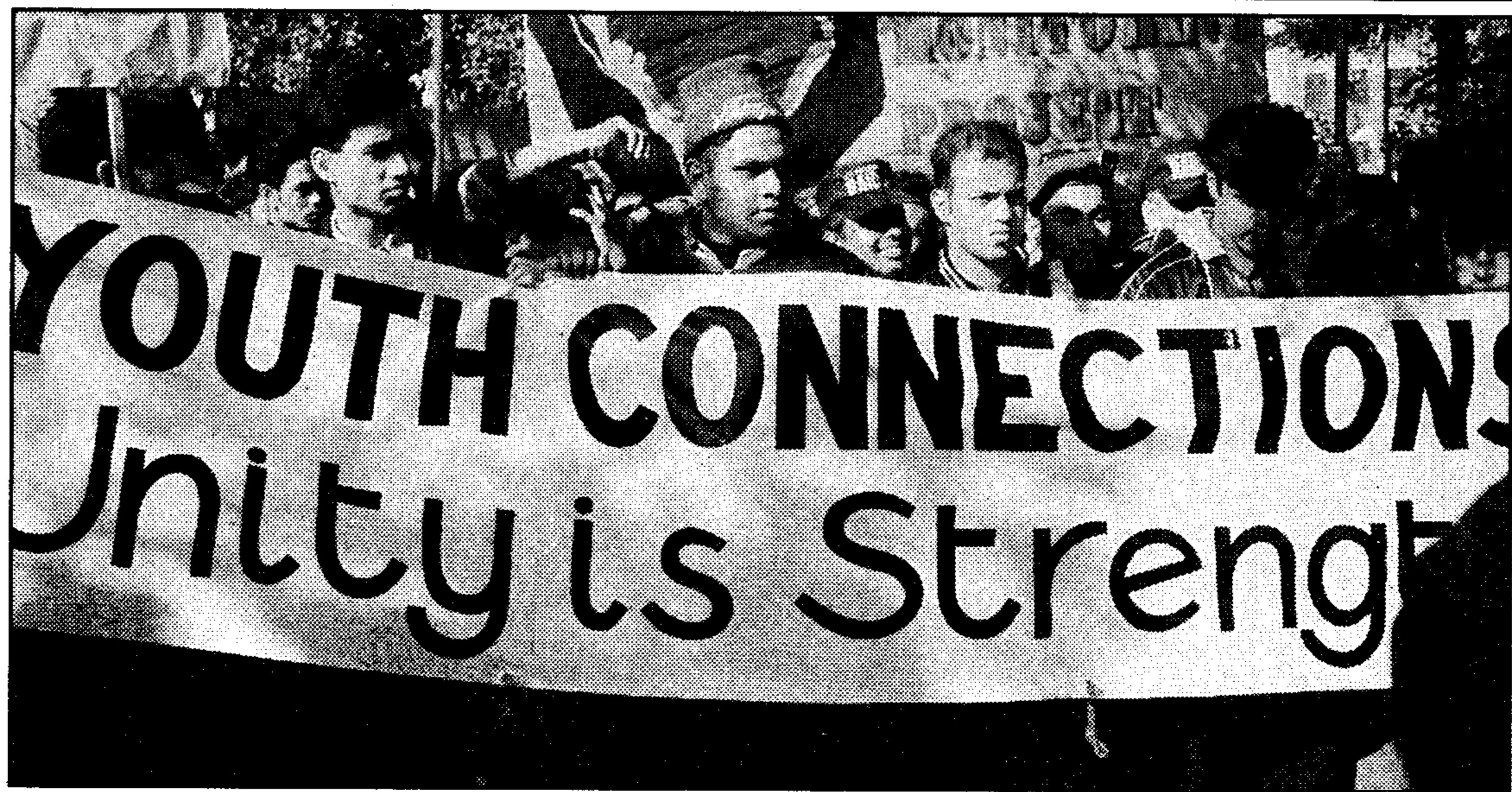
The area has a largely white working class population, living in an area to the north of Kings Cross and Euston. Everitt was allegedly knifed by a group of Asian youths.

The hysteria about Everitt's killing was out of all propor-

tion to the news coverage of attacks of black and Asian families, which has particularly affected nearby Drummond Street, site of many Asian restaurants.

Dozens of floral tributes have appeared behind St. Pancras Station where Everitt was killed, one of them from the British National Party.

In 1992 a battle took place in Drummond Street after a gang of armed white youths went on a rampage of racist assaults. After Asian youths cornered the white gang, and one white youth was stabbed, all police charges against the



East London: Youth Connections has shown the value of self-defence by the black communities

whites were dropped, while four Asians were charged with affray.

Insofar as there is conflict between Asian and white youths in the area, it is because of this history of racist assaults, and attacks on Asian shops and restaurants.

While the press have exag-

gerated racial conflict in the area out of all proportion, there is without doubt a core of racist white families in the district.

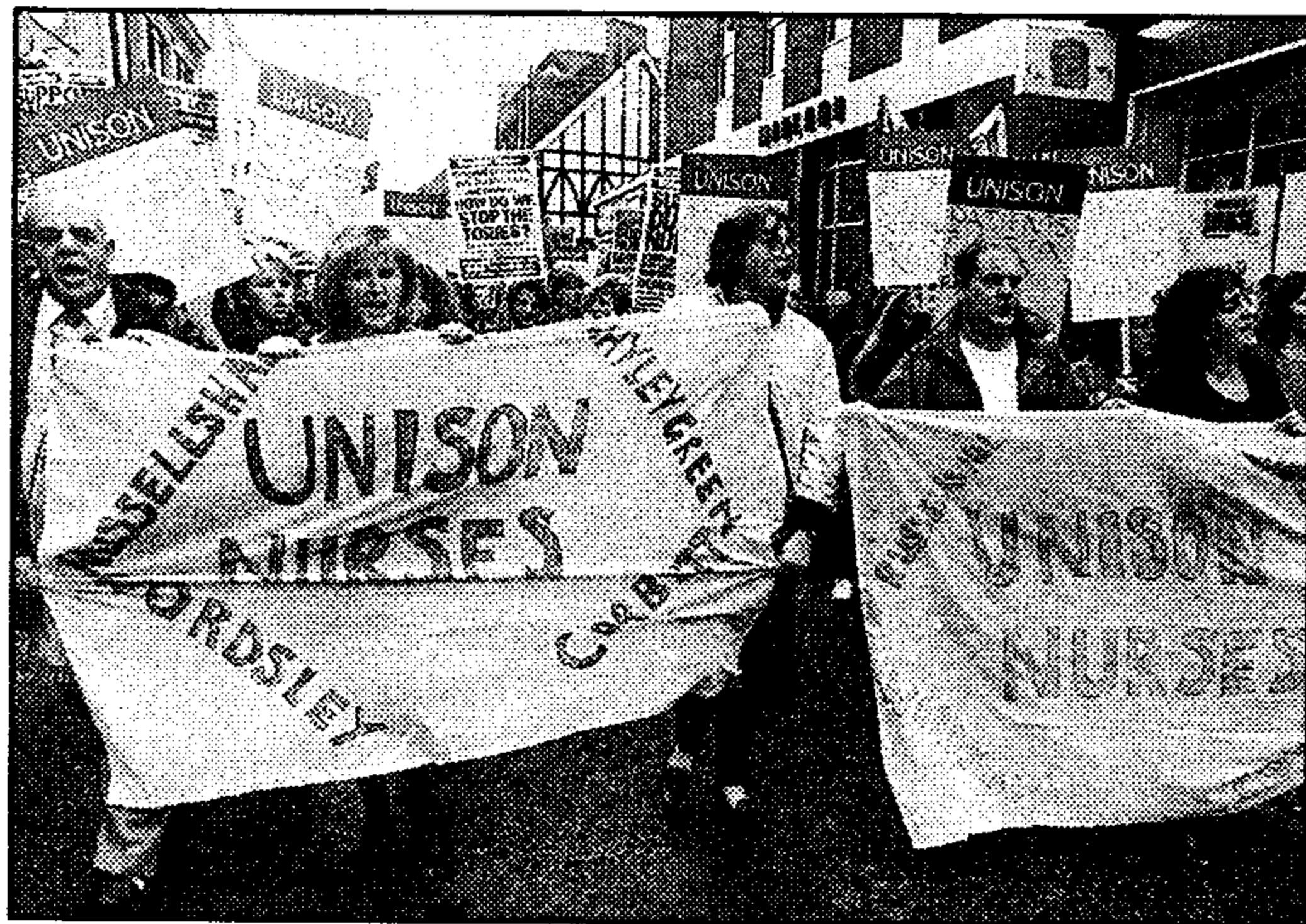
The racism in Somerstown, and on other poor white council estates, reflects a common pattern which was evident in Tower Hamlets when BNP

councillor Beackon was elected.

High unemployment and a lack of decent housing make sections of poor whites vulnerable to racist arguments that immigrant workers are taking "our" council houses and jobs.

## No to NHS pay offer!

UNISON is calling on its 200,000 health members not covered by pay review bodies to throw out a 2.4% pay offer, which is lower than the settlement for nursing staff. A no vote would be followed by a ballot on industrial action.



# Fascists attempt East End comeback

THREE months after Derek Beackon, the only BNP councillor in Britain, was booted out from his Millwall seat, the BNP are attempting to make a comeback in the neighbouring ward of Shadwell. Ironically Cable Street, site of the famous anti-Mosley battle in 1936, runs through the ward.

The council by-election, caused by the death of a Labour councillor, takes place on September 15.

The BNP have little record of activity in the ward and little proven support. However, Shadwell shares many of the same social problems as the neighbouring Isle of Dogs where Beackon was elected. Shadwell borders on the Canary Wharf complex, with its affluent offices and luxury homes, but its population is poor with 25 per cent unemployment. Despite chronic housing problems there are 700 empty homes, 100 of them "second" homes for City busi-

ness people.

Forty-seven per cent of the population are from ethnic minorities, the majority of them Bangladeshis, but because of the age profile of the immigrant population only 30 per cent of the voters are immigrants. This is therefore classic territory for the BNP to try to make a comeback by peddling racist answers to the poverty of the borough.

### Terror group

The BNP campaign has been hit by rumours of a *rapprochement* between the BNP leadership and the psychopathic thugs of the Combat 18 Nazi terror group - rumours not denied by the BNP hierarchy, which refers to Combat 18 as "a legitimate part of the nationalist movement".

The Tower Hamlets Labour council, which won back power from the Liberal Democrats in May, shows little signs of responding to the needs of working people in the borough, starting off its period in office by sacking 100 teachers.

# British Telecom workers demand strike action

By a BT worker

IN THE HIGHEST ever turnout in a trade union postal ballot - 82 per cent - NCU BT engineers working on the local network have voted to reject a management plan for drastically changed working hours by 19000 votes to 3000, a majority of 85 per cent.

BT engineers currently work a variety of attendance patterns between Monday and Friday, 6am-7.30pm, usually incorporating a weekday off every 2-3 weeks. Evening and weekend overtime working is voluntary.

BT wants to change these working patterns, so that working until 10pm and Saturday and Sunday working becomes part of normal working hours.

Managers would be able to vary the rostered working time by one hour to take account of the needs of the work.

The last two NCU conferences have clearly rejected attempts to introduce slave labour working systems. The vote to reject the BT proposals was achieved despite the open support for BT by NCU general secretary Tony Young, who refers to the proposals as "the agreement".

### Wavering

A wavering national executive initially made no recommendation on the BT plan, and this was only overturned when BT management personally interviewed every staff member to try to influence the vote. It contributed to the massive "no" vote from the branches.

BT say they will implement the plan in early October and have threatened to suspend anyone who refuses to work the new hours.

With such massive opposition, and given clear leadership, BT's plans can easily be defeated. The stakes are high: the

working life of every engineer is at stake.

BT are very vulnerable to industrial action. They are drastically understaffed and unable to cope with the existing work.

Industrial action would be very bad publicity, especially as their market position is under threat from Mercury and the cable companies.

There is a groundswell of support in the NCU branches for industrial action.

A determined campaign can stop BT's plans.

**ARAFest**  
**Sunday**  
**Sept 11**  
**12 noon-6pm**

**Victoria Park, London E3**  
**nearest tube: Mile End**  
 Called by Anti Racist Alliance, supported by Tower Hamlets council  
 BANDS include GALLIANO, General Levy, CHINA BLACK, Danny Red, FUN DA MENTAL, Misty Oldland, DARKMAN

# Defending Trotskyism

Revolutionary Marxism and Social Reality in the 20th Century, by Ernest Mandel, Humanities Press, £15.

Reviewed by Steve Lloyd

The republication in an accessible form of a number of key essays by Ernest Mandel is very welcome.

Mandel is a key figure in the post-1945 Trotskyist movement, not just from the viewpoint of the practical role he has played in the leadership of the Fourth International, but also from the viewpoint of deepening the Marxist analysis of 20th century socio-economic reality.

To a broader public Mandel is known as a "Marxist economist". But he has written widely on virtually every aspect of 20th century history and politics.

The essays republished here resume and deepen classical Marxist theory on a series of key questions - notably the Leninist theory of organisation,



Ernest Mandel: a central leader of today's Fourth International

the revolutionary International and permanent revolution.

Also included are penetrating essays on Rosa Luxemburg and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

Mandel's essay on *The Leninist Theory of Organisation*, published in pamphlet form many times, has been of value to thousands of revolutionary activists. It represents a real deepening of Lenin's theory, explaining the complex interac-

tion of the revolutionary nucleus, the advanced workers and the broader ranks of the working class.

## Permanent revolution

A large part of the far left internationally will proclaim itself "Leninist". Much more controversial are the theory of permanent revolution and the fight to build the Fourth International.

The theory of permanent revolution is a key instrument

for understanding the dynamics of revolution in the "third world".

The current developments in South Africa once again demonstrate the impossibility of meeting the basic needs and demands of the masses when the revolution is kept within the bounds of capitalist "democracy".

Every national revolutionary organisation which passes a certain threshold in size and weight is confronted with the question of how to organise internationally.

There are two approaches which have failed this task of international co-ordination of the revolutionary currents. The first is the attempt to cobble together diverse trends without any programmatic definition - which inevitably leads to short-term splits and disintegration.

The second is the attempt to organise around one large national "boss" organisation - which is what the Lambertists in France and the SWP in Britain have attempted. Mandel in this volume explains in detail the fundamental principles for constructing a revolutionary International.

Readers who are new to Trotskyist politics and have not read these essays are strongly urged to get hold of this book.

A plenary in your front room!

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK's fourth residential summer school, held in Aberystwyth, was the biggest yet.

100 supporters - many attending for the first time - took part in over 40 workshops and plenary sessions analysing fascism and racism over the four days up to August Bank Holiday.

Other themes included women's liberation, and a successful series of classes on Basic Marxism which attracted many of the newer supporters who attended the school.

## Highlights

Among the highlights in discussion was a stimulating workshop by veteran Trotskyist Charlie van Gelderen on the work of his friend CLR James.

Social activities included parties for women, youth and blues fans, and an impromptu cabaret featuring folk singer-songwriter Pauline Bradley. Many found time to explore Aberystwyth, its seafront and surrounding countryside.

For those who missed out, a VIDEO, including the main plenary introductions, is available, price £8.00 including postage - proceeds to the Bob Smith Fund.

Write to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

# A disillusioned Trotskyist

Harry Ratner - Reluctant revolutionary (Socialist Platform £5.95) Reviewed by Charlie van Gelderen

HARRY RATNER subtitled his autobiography *Reluctant Revolutionary* - but there was nothing reluctant about his activities during his nearly thirty years in the Trotskyist movement in Britain and France.

Whether working clandestinely with the French Trotskyists at the start of the Second World War, propaganda work in the armed forces, active militant in the trade union movement during the late 1940s and 1950s -

there was nothing reluctant in the energies with which he threw himself into the movement.

It was not reluctance which got him re-elected, year after year, as a shop steward in the AEU or in the leading role he played in the strikes and protests against redundancies in the textile machinery industry. Harry Ratner was one of the most successful leading Trotskyist militants in the industrial field.

## Feverish

It was precisely this record of almost feverish activities, in the trade unions, in the Labour Party, in France and Britain which was to lead to his eventual disillusionment.

As he sums it up in his postscript:

"In terms of its own perspectives and of the tasks it set itself the Trotskyist movement is no nearer achieving

its goals in 1993 than it was at its inception.

"Despite all their valiant efforts and occasional successes, all the Trotskyist groups have remained marginal to events. This is true not only of Britain but worldwide.

"Nowhere, except for short periods in Argentina, Bolivia and Ceylon, and perhaps Indochina, have Trotskyist parties come anywhere near becoming a significant force in the working class movement."

His experiences in the Trotskyist movement - the endless splits and factionalism, only fed his growing pessimism about the prospects for the revolutionary movement as a whole.

None of the attempts to explain away the failures of the movement - the treachery of social democracy, the Stalinist misleaders of the working

class, the weakness and fragmentation of the revolutionary forces or other 'secondary' factors, give satisfactory answers.

He asks "why have the social democrats and Stalinists, despite their repeated 'betrayal' and 'exposures' - correctly foretold by the Trotskyists - still been able to maintain the support of larger masses of workers than have the Trotskyists, despite their 'correct' policies?"

## Not revolutionary

He comes to the conclusion that, whether we like it or not, the working class is not as revolutionary as the Marxists have posited.

Despite the 'revolutionary situations' in post liberation Italy and France, France 1968, Portugal in the 1970s and other sharp situations, reformist policies have found a deeper echo within the work-

ing class - the mass of the working class have remained attached to reformism and impervious to revolutionary ideology.

They want higher wages, better housing, good education for their children today, not socialism tomorrow.

Whether one agrees with the author's view or not, this is an important book.

Here, as Peter Fryer writes in his introduction, with 'roughness, pimples and everything', is a true picture of what it was like to be an active Trotskyist in the years between 1936 and 1960.

If, one day, the Trotskyist movement plays a more significant role in the labour movement than it has hitherto, the 'reluctant' activities of Harry Ratner and others who have travelled the same path, will have significantly contributed to that.

# What's HAPPENING

## SEPTEMBER

### Weds 7

**WHAT'S happening in Cuba? reportback from Cuba Solidarity Campaign brigade. 7.30pm Old White Horse, 261 Brixton Rd SW9**

### Thurs 8

**BEYOND the Famished Road: new policies for common security Public meeting with Alan Simpson MP Janet Bloomfield (CND) and Bruce Kent (Pax Christi) 1.00pm (refreshments 12.30) Jubilee Room House of Commons SW1 details: 0602 582506**

### Sat 10

**LIBERATION! committee meeting 11am London**

**ON THE ROAD** to Parkside photo exhibition in support of women's pit camp appeal 10am-4pm Working Class Movement Library, The Crescent, Salford.

### Sun 11

**ARAFest anti-racist festival with Galliano, Fun^da^mental, General Levy and China Black. 12 noon to 6pm Victoria Park, London E3 Liberation! and Socialist Outlook sellers meet 12 noon at Mile End tube**

**SUMMER PICNIC** and games 12 noon Kensington Gardens by Peter Pan statue (Lancaster Gate tube) with West London *Socialist Outlook* £5/£3/children free includes food

**POLITICS OF SPORT** day conference 10.30am-5pm University of London Union WC1 for details fax: Labour Briefing on 081 985 6785

### Sat 17

**SMTUC Steering Committee INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid Steering Committee.**

### Sun 18

**WELFARE State Network** initial planning meeting 12 noon-4pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1

### Sat 24/Sun 25

**COVENTRY Conference: towards a working class politics 10am-4pm Barras Green Social Club Coventry Street CV2 cost £4/£1 details 051 260 9273**

### Sun 25

**LABOUR Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights NC**

## OCTOBER

### Sunday 16

**WORLD day of action against McDonald's and National Free Speech day details 071 837 7557**

### Sat 22

**BOB SMITH Memorial Fund book launch and dinner 7.30 South Camden Community School entrance by advance ticket purchase only. Send £12 (£7 students/UB40) to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by 15 October.**

### Small Ads

20p per word (minimum ten words) semi display £3.00 per column centimetre. Special offer three issues for the price of two. Larger ads by negotiation. All copy should reach here by first post Friday and must be accompanied by full payment and phone number (for verification).

**'FASCISM AND MARXISM BETWEEN THE WARS' resource pack used at last month's Socialist Outlook Summer School. includes fascist programmes and articles by Gramsci, Mussolini and Trotsky. Send £1 cheque/PO payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.**

**HOUSESHARE** large room in spacious three-bedroom

house London N4 all amenities £67 pw tel: 081 292 7079.

**FOLK music cassette by songwriter Pauline Bradley. Send £5 cheque payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.**

**ACTIVISTS from the '70s & '80s.** Are you wondering what to do with your old files of political leaflets, magazines and books? *Socialist Outlook* needs your historical material for its archive and your unwanted books and magazines for the education of a new generation of political activists. Please contact Outlook sellers in your city, or write to us at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

**BOSNA! A film by Bernard-Henri Levy on at the ICA, The Mall, SW1Y until Friday 9 September at 16.30, 18.45 and 21.00 hrs. £6.50/£5 members.**

**HEAR Ernest Mandel speak!** tape available - Mandel on fascism - send £6.00 cheque/PO payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Coming soon - 'Malcolm X speaks', 'Mandel on the Popular Front'.

# Stop Railtrack union-busters!

(from back page)

The tasks of such groups are clear - raising finance to pay strike pay, joining picket lines and raising public awareness of the issues behind the dispute.

In the current climate this has not proved hard. For instance, the RMT Southern District has already organised tours of dozens of union branches with RMT speakers, a number of public meetings and meetings for railworkers and mass leafleting at mainline stations.

Nearly £5,000 has been raised in two months, pickets organised at a number of major signal boxes, and this week saw a successful march through Brighton.

The RMT left, through the Campaign for a Fighting

Democratic Union, has organised a rally at the Trade Union Congress, and forced Knapp to organise an official TUC rally as well. The Congress must act as the springboard for activity across the country, to culminate in a TUC organised national march.

### Broadened

The dispute must be broadened to involve other railworkers and RMT members. Other disputes must be brought to a boil. The imposition by LUL of a 2 per cent pay award opened up one such possibility. Even if LUL management now retreat this dispute must be taken forward.

Directly flowing from the

signal workers' strike the issue of health and safety on strike days needs to be taken up. Despite many near misses and dangerous incidents railworkers have been told by the RMT and ASLEF that they can only stop work if in imminent danger. This is not good enough.

We need to see a campaign to win action to halt work on strike days, led from the top. Drivers, guards and other railworkers with trackside duties are clearly frustrated that they

are being told to work.

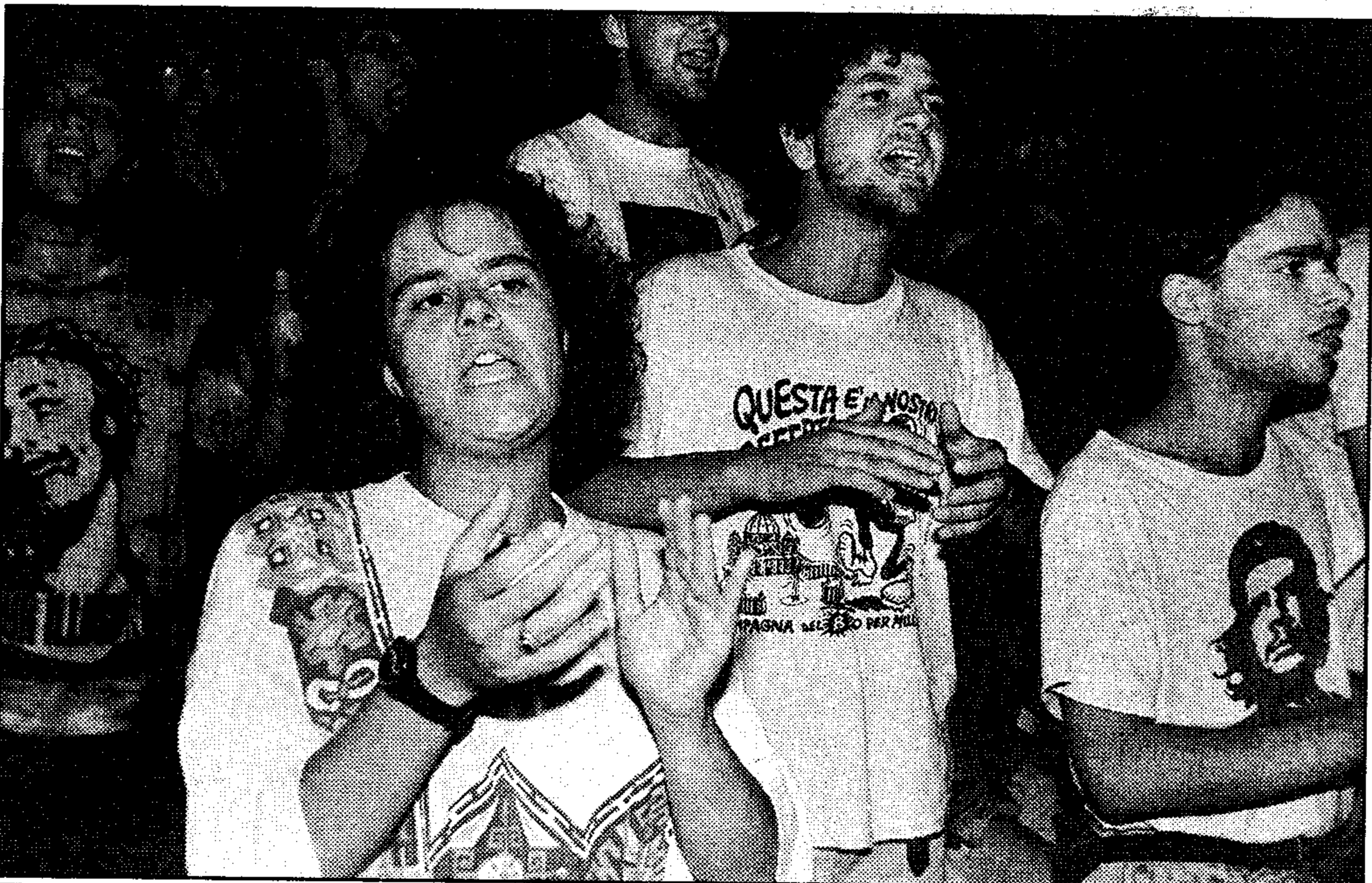
So far there have been only isolated incidents of individuals refusing to work but if encouraged and defended broader action is possible.

Refusing to work on grounds of safety is legally defensible. The union should be prepared to take the risk of calling on all its members to take such action. We need a campaign in the depots to coordinate that now.

We have to make it clear what we will do if Railtrack

tries to sack strikers. RMT policy is to defy the law, as a last resort, if necessary. The union will be supporting the NUM on this basis at the TUC.

The threat of mass sackings is precisely the sort of situation where such action would be necessary - we should be preparing the groundwork now to call on all RMT members to act in defence of anyone sacked, irrespective of the legal position.



Over 1,100 people attended the largest-ever Fourth International Youth Camp, held at Poppi in Italy recently. The British delegation at the camp, three time larger than last years' delegation, organised well-attended workshops on neo-liberalism and the 'third world' debt. A full photo report will be in the eight page 'Liberation!' supplement printed with our next issue.

HOME NEWS

### RMT Southern District Council London Rally

## Solidarity with the signal workers

Tuesday Sept 13 7.30pm  
University of London Union,  
Malet Street, WC1

Jimmy Knapp, Jeremy Corbyn, John Tilley (RMT EC - Chair of Strike Committee), plus rank and file signal workers and LUL workers with up to date views from the grass roots.

# Socialist OUTLOOK

# STOP THE RAILTRACK UNION-BUSTERS!



Sticking to strategy of short strikes: Jimmy Knapp

**By a railworker  
(anonymous in the  
face of BR  
gagging rules)**

WITH NO major cracks appearing in the ranks of the striking signal workers, and with Railtrack management now claiming a 50% service on strike days, both sides in the dispute have dug in for warfare.

Railtrack is working on plans for their next big push – the introduction of personal contracts and the sacking of those who remain on strike. The RMT must now start to plan their response.

If the signal workers are to win two things are key – maintaining the morale of signal workers, in particular by showing them they have the support of the wider labour movement, and broadening the dispute to include other railworkers and RMT members.

With the change of transport minister the Tories have abandoned their supposed “neutral” stance, and it is clear that a Cabinet sub-committee of senior ministers have been meeting from Day 1 of the strike to instruct Railtrack on how to conduct the dispute.

Aside from the need to be seen to uphold the public sector wage freeze, they want to smash the RMT, and signal workers in particular, as a precondition for successful privatisation of the railway industry.

The Labour Party leadership however has yet to abandon their “neutral” stance. While talking of “defending the right to strike”, official spokespersons remain reluctant to be seen endorsing the strikers’ actions.

The suggestion by Frank Dobson that the RMT accept binding arbitration is an outrage. Trade unions must keep their right to be independent and to fight to win.

Such is the anger of RMT members at Labour’s attitude that the executive has raised the question of whether to continue to fund its sponsored MPs.

Each week Railtrack has tried a new stunt to break the strike. Despite claims of a “drift back to work” and of increased services the strikers have held firm.

Railtrack incompetence and government mistakes have combined to keep the strikers angry and united.

The announcement of the pay increase for MPs and rewards for scabs of trips



Normal services will NOT be resumed ...

through the Channel Tunnel did the trick this week; when Railtrack leaked their plans for sacking strikers, rather than encourage a return to work it just fuelled strikers’ determination.

## Way out

It is clear that middle management are exasperated and are looking for a way out. Informal, semi-secret meetings with local signal worker representatives have been taking place around the country.

But rather than encourage strike breaking the meetings have only shown to managers that the workforce is united.

In some areas the strikers want to see escalation of action, elsewhere they want to maintain the present pattern of one and two day strikes, but all agree that there can be no going back before Railtrack put forward a meaningful offer of money upfront to pay for past productivity.

In two weeks signal workers will be meeting at their Grades Conference. It will be the first time that the rank and file have had a chance to discuss the way forward at a national level. The RMT and the broader labour movement have to send a message to the

conference - “you can win, and we will do all to help make your victory possible”.

Support groups have now been set up in many areas. The RMT is currently trying to draw up a list across the country and is encouraging its branches to help set up new groups.

But in many areas the RMT has, even now, not made any moves. What we need to see is broad groups based on the local RMT and local labour movement.

**Continued inside,  
page 15**