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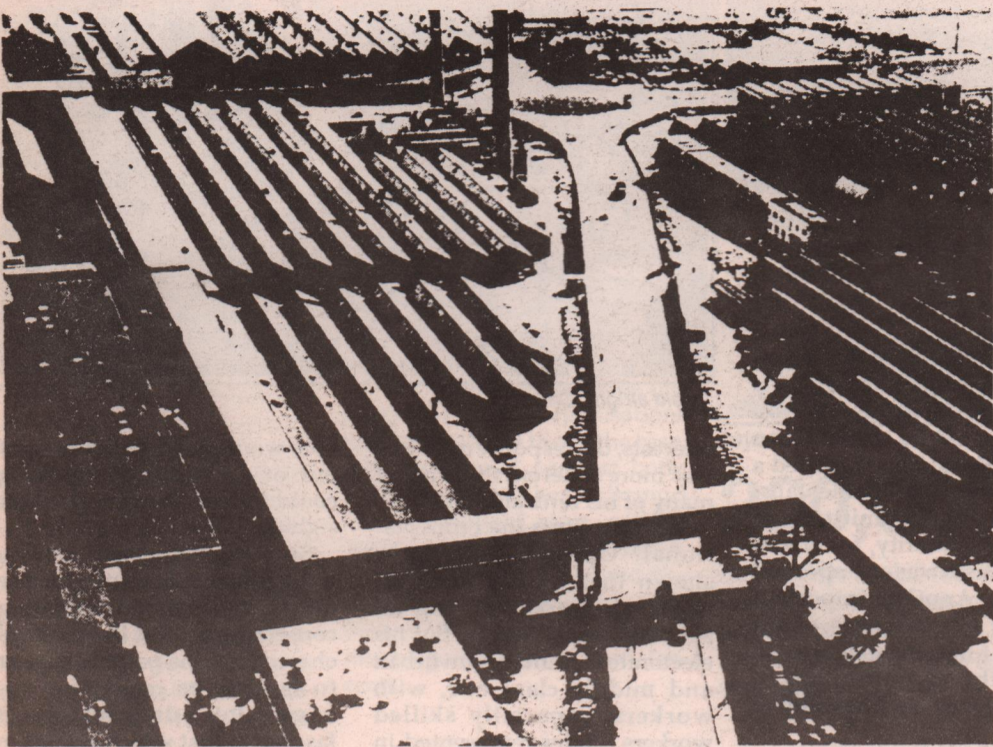
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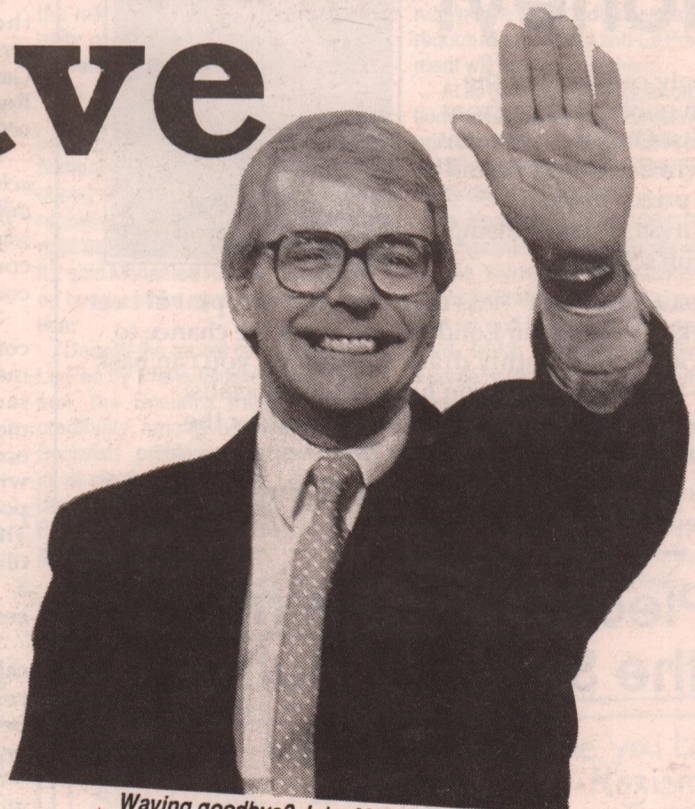
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socialist OUTLOOK



Where have all the workers gone?



Waving goodbye? John Major

Photo: John Harris

HALF of the former British Leyland Cowley car complex is to be demolished next year. A site that once employed up to 10,000 unionised staff will be turned into a 'business park' of small units, a hotel and a giant Tesco's, employing a handful of low-paid, mainly part-time staff.

In the 1960s under left-wing leadership the Cowley Assembly Plant unions were nationally known pace-setters in the fight for pay and conditions.

Now, under the thumb of hardline right wingers, the TGWU has *opposed* any fight to defend the plant or the jobs being axed.

The story is depressingly familiar. Ten miles down the road the former MG car plant in Abingdon now houses part of the European grain mountain. In Cowley itself, the old Grove Cranes plant is now a B&Q.

The same is true all over the country. Productive industry has closed down to make way for a low-paid casualised service sector that is largely responsible for the fact that 46% of British

workers earn less than the EC's 'decency threshold' of £190 per week.

Thatcherism has seen mining communities devastated, steel towns gutted, docks and shipyards flattened and the engineering heartlands demolished to make way for carpet warehouses, DIY stores and shopping malls.

The latest slump shows yet again that the economy cannot survive on the service sector alone, and that once manufacturing jobs – and the pay and conditions won by workers – have been surrendered they will not return.

In place of John Major's rickety chipboard furniture economy, workers need a socialist plan of production. The industries that capitalism is so ready to dismantle for short-term gain, and the banks and service sector, should be *nationalised*, under workers' control and without compensation to prevent the whole country turning into a giant burger bar.

A start along this alternative road would be the ousting of the Tories coupled with a redoubled fight for socialist policies in the labour movement.

Who's afraid of Jean-Marie Le Pen?

By Paul Clarke

The news that the two rival leaders of French Toryism, Jaques Chirac and Valerie Giscard D'Estaing, are to make common cause in the upcoming French elections is no surprise. Their alliance is as much about fending off the challenge of the far right as making common cause against Mitterrand's Socialist Party.

Given its very high opinion poll scores, all the major political are running scared of Jean-Marie Le Pen's *Front National*.

Ever since the Le Pen got his electoral breakthrough at the 1984 European elections, the

issue of the precise political character of the FN has been hotly debated. Is it really a fascist party? Or is it simply a re-run of the 1950s 'Poujadist' movement, which rallied sections of the rural petty bourgeoisie against big capital and modernisation?

The Front National is not a 'new' party - it was founded in 1972. At its foundation it fused two different trends - an ultraright alliance of 'national conservatives' around Le Pen, with strong links to the Poujadist tradition, and the hard-core fascist street fighters who had been in organisations like *Occident* and *Order Nouveau*.

Key themes of Le Pen's movement were the virtues of the French people and opposition to relinquishing French colonies like Algeria. *Occident* and *Order Nouveau* stressed the dangers of 'Bolshevism' and the Jews.

The Front National has seen permanent internal struggles between these two currents. Anti-semitism was originally not a key theme of Le Pen's wing of the movement, despite Le Pen's personal outbursts about the Holocaust, of which he claims he has 'no knowledge'.

In the late 1970s the movement was strengthened by a third trend, the Union Solidariste led by the late Jean Pierre Stirbois. This included a strong Catholic fundamentalist current, the Committees of Christian Solidarity, for whom anti-semitism was an important question. Another important aspect of the influence of the Catholic fundamentalists is of course the championing of 'family values' and hostility to abortion.

At the beginning of the 1980s the movement was further strengthened by right-wing Gaullists, who were admirers of Reagan and Thatcher's brand of economic liberalism.

Le Pen's formidable political achievement has been to weld the different currents into a stable and sizeable organisation, around a common ideology and an uncontested leader.

The ideology of the FN is composed of three major elements - economic liberalism, racism and an authoritarian model of 'democracy'. On the economy the FN has broken with the old-style fascist corporate state, in favour of ultra-Thatcherite liberalism and hostility to the welfare state. This is a typical petty bourgeois economic doctrine.

Its political model is what it calls 'direct democracy', a direct relationship between the people and the president based on referenda. The FN denounces the 'political, trade union and bureaucratic oligarchies' which disrupt the sacred relationship between the people and the leader. This points strongly to the abolition of the National Assembly if the FN came to power, or at least a drastic curtailment of its powers in favour of presidential prerogatives.

Front National racism is primarily anti-immigrant, with a strong flavouring of anti-semitism. But the two sometimes clash, for example during the Gulf war. Le Pen, and his effective deputy Mme. Stirbois, took a strong anti-US and anti-Israel line. But this was contested by many rank-and-file members who wanted a strong anti-Arab line.

The FN line on the Gulf war was not just determined by its anti-Israel impulses but by its nationalism and strong hostility to the US. From the point of view of ultra-nationalism and defence of French capitalist



Atraid alright: Chirac

interests, the response of Le Pen was more coherent than that of many of his rank and file.

Who supports the Front National? Opinion polls have shown that Le Pen has won electoral support among all ages and social classes. But his electorate is primarily an urban and middle class one, with workers, especially skilled workers, under-represented in his electorate. But most of all the vote of the FN is unstable.

Many FN voters vote once for Le Pen, and then return to their traditional party or abstain. But most of all the FN vote is a protest vote. Only a third of voters who supported Le Pen in the last presidential elections said they were politically close to the FN itself. A large minority said they were politically 'of the left', former voters for the Communist Party or the Socialist Party.

The political conclusion about why the FN has won support is obvious from these facts. Except for the brief period after it came to power, the Socialist Party government has applied austerity policies for ten years. Millions of voters are disillusioned about the official left parties, but have no confidence on the old right wing Gaullist and centre parties. In the absence of a mass radical alternative, Le Pen's movement ends up the winner.

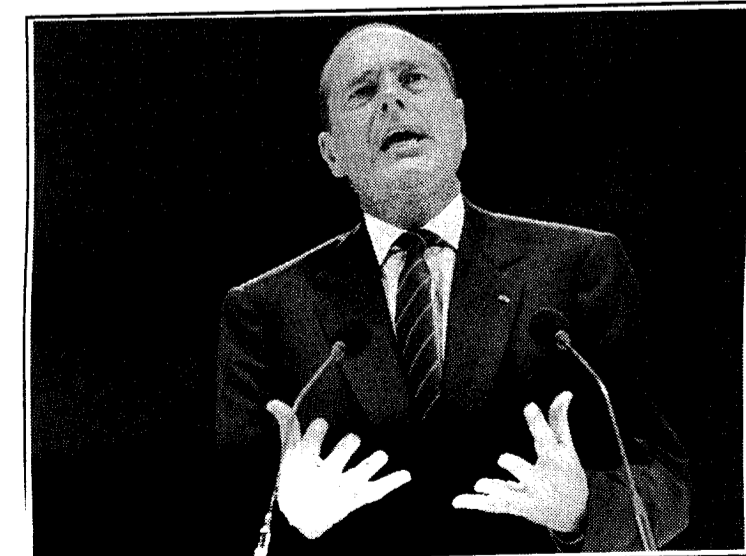
Mitterrand did a lot in the mid-1980s to boost Le Pen, by changing the electoral laws to benefit smaller parties. Mitterrand figured that a strong FN

vote would help keep the right out of government. Nothing could be more cynical or short sighted.

So is the FN fascist? Le Pen has created a bloc of genuine fascists and extreme right-wing conservatives. But the political character of the party is as near to fascism as makes no difference. It is a different form of fascism to that which existed in the 1930s, in particular it lacks the demagogic anti-capitalist populism characteristic of the Nazis and Mussolini's movement.

But Le Pen in power would mean mass deportation of immigrants, a fierce attack on democratic rights, and a furious assault on the workers organisations. The instability of Le Pen's electorate shows that he may have created a mass movement with a lot of support on the issue of immigration. But he is far from being on the verge of power.

One opinion poll result which bizarrely embodies this contradiction is that more than half of FN voters are against the party forming the government! The problem is that over time, especially if Le Pen gets a vote over 20 per cent in this year's elections, this could change. Fascism in France remains a dynamic and potent force. Anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigning is of course vital to combat it; but in the end only the creation of a viable socialist alternative to French capitalism's crisis will provide an answer.



Weaving a sizeable organisation: Le Pen

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Anti-racists – stop the mud slinging

By Patrick Baker

THE LAST few weeks have seen larger numbers mobilise against racism and fascism than since the late 1970s. But they have also seen open conflict break out between rival anti-racist and anti-fascist coalitions.

The conflict centres on the recent relaunch of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). The League has attracted an impressive list of political and media sponsors, but its relaunch has been attacked as a sectarian stunt by the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). Some black organisations have called for a boycott of the League, claiming that it is a front for the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

The ANL, which played an important role in the movement against the National Front in the 1970s, has retorted that it has no quarrel with the ARA, but wants to complement its work with an organisation specifically dedicated to fighting fascism.

The quarrel is damaging – the last thing needed by the fledgling anti-racist movement is an internal punch-up. The Guardian letters page is a bad enough place for washing dirty linen, but when it comes to public scuffles on demonstrations, things are getting ridiculous. But is there any substance to the allegations coming out?

Unfortunately, the answer is yes. Despite the important role played by the League in the late 1970s and the broad support it had, the real decisions were always taken by the SWP. And the League failed to take on one of the most important forms of racism faced by black people – state racism.

But this neither justifies the

split, and nor does it mean that the records on democracy of those running the Alliance are exactly spotless. A good few activists can remember the past antics of Ken Livingstone and his cronies.

The attitude of anti-racists to the conflict should be determined by two principles: for unity against racism and fascism; and for the maximum democratic control by activists on the ground.

For the moment it seems unlikely that the two organisations will unite. While this is the case, activists should support both, but demand that the public mud slinging should stop, as that helps no-one but the opposition.

And we should demand the maximum unity in action, with the aim of a single, united movement against racism and fascism.

Austrian fascists grow despite arrests

Joerg Haider, populist leader of the far right Freedom Party in Austria, has dismissed fears of the rise of neo-nazism as an 'artificial fuss'.

Not surprising, given that Haider is the figurehead of serious extreme right forces in Hitler's birthplace. But the ugly face of the nazi groups now appearing in Germany and eastern Europe was also brought out into the open with a clampdown



Asylum Bill demo

200,000 unite against racism

Anti-racists mobilised in their hundreds of thousands in France and Italy on January 25 in a massive protest against the far right and state racism.

More than 100,000 demonstrators filled the streets of Paris in the largest anti-racist protest seen in France for years. Thousands of youth, black and white, joined trade unionists from both of France's union federations, the CFDT and CGT.

The demonstration was marked by the militancy of its demands and the unity of a broad spectrum of labour movement and anti-racist organisations.

While the march clearly focused its protest on Jean Marie Le Pen's Front Nationale, demonstrators also accused the government of fomenting racism. 'The left is just doing what the right used to do. How can we vote for it?' said Mohamed Hocine, an Algerian on hunger strike against racist legislation.

Despite the recent outburst against Le Pen by Prime Minister Edith Cresson, the Socialist Party has little credibility among anti-racists. The Socialists' problems were underlined in an election defeat near Lille on the day of the demonstration. Le Pen's Front Nationale beat their candidate into third place.

The hundred thousand marchers answered the government's recent asylum bill with the demand for an

unconditional right to asylum and the right to vote for immigrants. Interior Minister Philippe Marchand, author of the racist bill, was not among the Socialist ministers seen on the demo.

SOS Racisme leader Harlem Desir warned the Socialist Party 'The manoeuvres of those who are trying to manipulate today's demonstration and reduce it to an empty anti-Le Pen statement will turn against them'.

At its final rally, anti-racist organisations announced the formation of a united coordination, the CUP, to combat the racist menace. The Socialist Party did not join them.

In Northern Italy another 100,000 marchers were on the streets of Milan on the same day, demanding equal rights for Italy's immigrant community and an end to the EC Schengen Accord, which enshrines the 'Fortress Europe' policy, excluding immigrants from the Euro-market.

Both set a good example for Britain's fragmented movement against racism. It is such united mobilisations, taking on both the far right and state racism, that provide the best counterweight to both the neo-nazis and the racist policies of the European Community.

on neo-nazis.

The sacrificial lamb was Gottfried Kuessel, a leading figure on central European fascist scene. Within a couple of weeks, Kuessel was linked to a substantial arms cache found near the Austrian border, in the Hungarian town of Gyoeer. Meanwhile, other neo-nazis were hauled in after fire bombing a refugee centre.

Enthusiasm

But there has to be some doubt as to whether this spate of arrests is the result of a new-found enthusiasm on the part of Austrian President Kurt Waldheim for harassing the rightists.

Waldheim's personal record, as well as his record in office, do not inspire much confidence. Kuessel's profile, including a well-publicised broadcast on American TV explaining the ease with which the Jewish community in Austria could be dealt with, made him an easy target.

Psychopaths

In addition, while the arrest of psychopaths such as Kuessel can only be welcomed by anti-racists, they do not begin to deal with the real problem. The racist Freedom Party has gained substantial votes in recent years and this is the real threat to Austria's immigrant and Jewish communities.

A substantial mobilisation of those communities, in tandem with the labour movement and other anti-racists, would deal a more serious blow to the rising tide of racism.

Move this resolution in your union branch

"The.....union notes the growth of fascism throughout Europe and across Britain. This is most notably demonstrated by the increase in racist attacks, whether against black people in Britain or against refugees and migrant workers in Europe.

This trend has been aided and abetted by racist anti-immigration legislation, such as the Asylum Bill. Particularly worrying have been the secret discussions in the Trevi Group about the restrictions on immigration as part of the Single European Act, and the creation of 'Fortress Europe'.

Fascists seek to divide working people and destroy their democratic rights and unity – in Nazi Germany the fascists systematically murdered trade unionists and set up their own scab organisations. We condemn their bogus attempts to gain respectability as a 'respectable' political organisation.

Our union has made advances in supporting the struggles and rights of oppressed groups. We recognise that fascists not only attack black people but also women, lesbians and gays and Jewish people.

This union, therefore, resolves:

- 1) To demand the repeal of all anti-immigration legislation
- 2) To demand an immediate stop to the closure of Europe's borders and the end of discrimination against immigrant and refugees
- 3) To support joint initiatives with local and national organisations of oppressed groups which oppose the fascist agenda
- 4) To publicly denounce fascist organisations such as the British National Party and the National Front and to work with local and national anti-fascist campaigns.
- 5) To affiliate to the Anti-Racist Alliance and the Anti-Nazi League
- 6) To call on the TUC and Labour Party to do likewise"



Last chance for Labour in Scotland?

By Gordon Eastwood

The post-election campaign began in earnest on January 17 with a special debate between the four main parties on the constitutional future of Scotland.

Although only 2,500 attended, predominantly nationalists, around 500,000 watched an hour-long TV summary. The Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) won the debate and Labour lost, while the Tories were battered but unbowed and the Liberals, as usual, pleasant but irrelevant.

I stress post-election campaign, because barring a total collapse of the Labour vote, the outcome of the Scottish election is certain. Ladbroke's are quoting odds for the number of Tory seats after the election - last week it was 14 to 1 for none, 5 to 2 (joint favourites) for 3 or 4 seats, and 66 to 1 for them retaining the present 9.

The Tory seats will be split between the other three parties, and very few are likely to change between Liberal, Labour and SNP. The SNP needs a swing of 20 per cent in Labour's most marginal two seats.

Superficially, this appears a low-key campaign, but it is likely to be the last ever in the current constitutional framework. Quite simply, a Scottish parliament of some sort will be set up within the life of the next Westminster government. This will alter the shape of British politics.

This election will determine the options and strategies open in the post-election period. In this situation, seats won is likely to be less important than votes and issues won.

The SNP and independence are the keys to the whole election. The Nationalists are cur-

rently polling 23 per cent against Labour's 45 and the Tories' 22. But in council by-elections they have scored 31 per cent of the vote.

Because of the distribution of seats, it is quite possible for the SNP to get 30 per cent of the poll, but no seats. However, the clear dynamic is that the Nationalists are taking Labour votes, while the Tories remain unchanged.

This reflects the shift in attitudes towards independence. While 85 per cent of Scots want constitutional change, this is only three per cent higher than at the last election. Basically, some Tories are changing their minds.

But within that, the proportion favouring independence as against devolution has increased from around 25 per cent to 40 per cent. When asked to choose between the status quo and independence, 55 per cent chose independence. Polls also show that about half of Labour voters favour independence; they are being targeted by the SNP.

It is no accident that Labour's main campaign poster is 'A Scottish Parliament - Now'. Nor do Scottish Labour leaders hide their dismay over the Walworth Road morons who put up 'Made in Britain' posters around Scotland - the SNP couldn't have afforded it.

Labour knows that there is a sea-change in opinion, and are raising the profile of their pro-Assembly stance. They are saying that only they can deliver a Scottish parliament.

That may be true for this election, but the Tories are beginning to publicly debate devolution, so it may not be for long. The 'Only Labour can deliver devolution' strategy attempts to marginalise independence as an option. But with increasing sup-

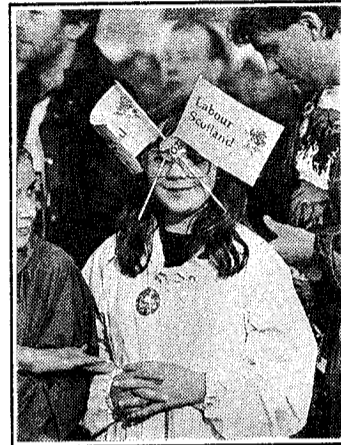


port for independence and increasing scepticism about the prospects of a Labour government, this can only partly stem the tide.

A further measure of the swing to the SNP is *The Sun's* conversion to nationalism. It recently devoted nine pages to promoting the SNP, including a front page call to 'Rise now and be a nation again!'

Clearly Murdoch has switched sides for commercial reasons, as part of an attack on the *Daily Record's* circulation, hoping that more readers will identify with them than the *Record's* Kinnockite line. Whether the SNP will directly gain from it is questionable, but it is their first endorsement from the established, albeit gutter, press.

They have targeted Labour's



social policy, fighting the election around 'Nationalise Ravensraig - Scrap Trident'. Their official slogan, 'Scotland free in '93', is not mentioned. Their leaders describe themselves as socialists, and the SNP as social democratic.

I would dispute this, but most trade unionists see them as an alternative with policies to Labour's left. Certainly few would see it as a betrayal of socialism to vote SNP.

Labour in Scotland is hamstrung by its national policies and London dominance reduces its flexibility. The major issue at Labour's conference will be party devolution, or how to transform themselves into a Scottish Labour party.

Although we support the return of a Labour government and by implication a Labour vote in Scotland, there is a widespread feeling that this is Labour's last chance - in future independence will be the only option. Many believe the last chance has already been missed.

US A Teamsters oust mobster leaders

By Paul Clarke

In a stunning turnaround the corrupt and mafia-ridden leadership of the massive US Teamsters union has been defeated in elections by a slate backed by Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

The reform slate was led by Ron Carey who won the Union President's position. The Carey slate won 188,883 votes, as against 129,538 and 71,227 for two slates led by top union bureaucrats; there was a 28 per cent turnout.

Bill Urman of Minneapolis, newly-elected vice-president said: 'The rank and file want honest people running this union, and all the things that go with that; better representation, more responsive leadership, and contracts which aren't sell-outs.'

Notorious

The Teamsters have been notorious since the war for being a corrupt, mafia-ridden union, delivering sweetheart deals to the bosses and organising scabbing operations.

Among the most notorious Teamster actions was the systematic scabbing on the 1970s strikes of Latino agricultural workers in California. The Teamsters provided scab

labour to keep the farms going, and assisted the police in brutalising immigrant workers on the picket lines.

Teamsters for a Democratic Union is a 15-year old caucus, whose monthly journal *Convoy Dispatch* is distributed to 60,000 workers.

The Carey slate did best in the South and West, where the TDU has strong local branches. More than 35 per cent of teamsters voted in the Southern Conference (region) and TDU won around 54 per cent of the vote. In Teamster branches in Knoxville, Nashville and Memphis the TDU-backed slate won by 2-1.

Landslide

A similar picture was repeated in the Western Conference, which the Carey slate sweeping California. In the north and east of the country the picture was more mixed, with many big branches linked to organised crime voting heavily against the reformers.

The reformers victory comes as a result of revulsion against both the mob links of the leadership and the large number of 'giveback' deals involving acceptance of wage cutting and loss of holidays.

No less than 171 full time officials each earned more than \$1m a year under the old regime, through holding multi-

ple posts. Carey has pledged to cut the president's salary by 22 per cent and to end multiple posts.

As a result of these things union membership has fallen from 2,215,000 to 1,450,000. Teamster bosses have been facing government lawsuits, and the election was in part forced by government investigations.

There should be no illusions that the victory of the TDU-backed slate will make the Teamsters into a left-wing or class struggle trade union. The vote to oust the old bosses was as much a vote to clean up the union as to pursue militant policies.

But the encouraging thing about the election victory was that it was led by a rank-and-file campaign and not by a group of dissident bureaucrats.

For the first time there is a woman, Diana Kilmury from British Columbia, on the executive. But the prospects for keeping the union out of the hands of the mobster bureaucrats in future depend on the ability of TDU to strengthen its rank-and-file organisation.

The new model Teamsters face tough challenges in the current US recession. However the possibility is there for the Teamster revolution to spill over into a resurgent fightback in a series of industrial unions.

Conference

Which way for socialists in the trade unions?

July 18-19

Manchester Polytechnic Students Union

Speakers include **Arthur Scargill**,
Tony Benn MP

Details: Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15

Can Labour's leaders fight and win?

THE TORY press has already launched its pre-election blitz against Labour, obediently repeating the Conservative Central Office briefings that Labour is the party of high taxes.

With the economy in endless recession, with unemployment rocketing, and after thirteen years of Tory government, Labour *ought* to be able to make an effective reply. Yet not only is Kinnock incapable of pulling ahead in the opinion polls, but Labour has been put on the defensive in the debate over taxes. Why?

'New realist' policies have caught Kinnock in a double bind. On the one hand Labour denounces income tax cuts on the grounds that money is needed for social welfare and investment; on the other Labour is rigorously avoiding all promises other than that of a national minimum wage. The refusal to make any promises or commitments gives Labour a tremendous credibility problem

Take the NHS. This is above all Labour's strong issue in terms of public perception. But will Labour devote real new resources to the NHS? From Robin Cook's pronouncements it is quite impossible to tell. Like everything else, apparently it all depends on 'growth'

All opinion polls have shown that there is a big majority in favour of more public welfare spending rather than further tax cuts. But most workers, hard pressed by inflation are understandably not too keen on higher national in-



urance payments for no known benefits.

To say that Labour lacks a crusading alternative, or an inspiring vision of the future, is the understatement of the year. The prospects for a new deal in Britain, according to Messrs Smith, Kinnock and Beckett, depend entirely on the promise that Labour government will deliver economic growth. But who, in their heart of hearts, really believes that?

Labour's electoral bind stems from the Kinnock leadership's obsessive search for right wing respectability. Under Kinnock there will be no peace dividend through defence spending cuts; complete obedience to the deflationary diktats of the European Monetary System;

no re-nationalisation of public utilities to ease the burden of escalating fuel, power and water bills; no promises of substantial investment in publicly-provided housing; and not a hint of major public investment in industry and the national infrastructure.

Extra taxes on the rich will be minimal. Anyone with the least intelligence is bound to ask whether Labour will actually makes things better.

Labour's only real strong point is that they are not the Tories. But without a clear alternative Labour's campaign is desperately vulnerable to the Tory accusation that they will put up taxes in return for very little.

Meanwhile Labour continues to abysmally fail to capitalise on Tory blunders. Where was the promise to keep Ravenscraig steel plant open? Gordon Brown pointedly refused to make such a promise because it is a 'business decision'. And to cap it all as the Tories hit new embarrassment on the Poll Tax, David Blunkett promises a ruthless campaign against defaulters!

And of course, ironically, in the face of an elaborately co-ordinated campaign jointly run by the Tory newspapers and Conservative central office, Labour has nothing to say about the structure of newspaper ownership and control.

In a year when the defeat of the Tories is vital, Labour is fighting with its hands tied behind its back. Alas, it is the Labour leadership which has tied them.

Tories turn back clock on community care

By Harry Sloan

CAUGHT in a tangled web of contradictory Thatcherite policies, John Major's government is rushing around attempting to neutralise potential electoral embarrassments.

This is the reason why Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine made his unexpected intervention, announcing plans to reverse the policy of community care for people with mental illness.

Heseltine is of course not in the least concerned about the plight of mental illness sufferers, who have been shamefully neglected by successive governments, with thousands cast adrift in the 1980s. He is alarmed by the aggravation suffered by growing numbers of well-heeled Tory voters who stumble over victims of 'community care' policies in the streets and shop doorways of London.

Two-faced

Heseltine's two-faced attitude is shared by the *Mail on Sunday*, which was the unlikely bearer of the front-page news of Heseltine's unexpected initiative, under the banner headline 'U-Turn on Homeless'. The negative results of the policy were blamed on 'Mrs Thatcher's years in office' - as if a completely new government were now in Downing Street.

In fact Heseltine himself was a prominent member of Thatcher's government, and the *Mail* its most servile apologist in the 1980s when the current policies were introduced. They consist in paying lip-service to community care while closing psychiatric beds and capping the spending of

health authorities and local councils to prevent them from providing actual care and support in the community.

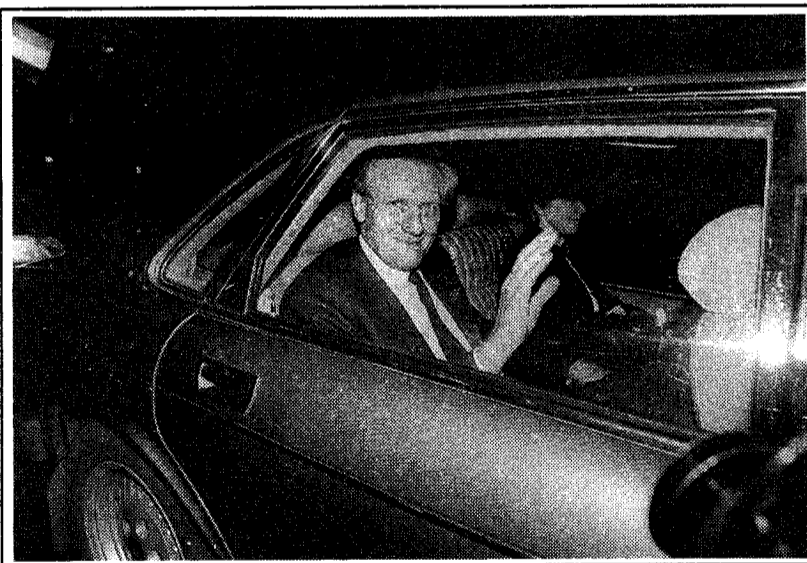
Heseltine himself is even now imposing even stricter spending curbs on local councils that have triggered a wave of brutal cuts in social services including the closure of homes for the elderly and facilities for mental illness sufferers.

The cosmetic character of the latest Tory initiative on community care is demonstrated by the fact that the pitiful increases in cash they are allocating to local councils are targeted solely at the most visibly embarrassing element - the homeless mentally ill - ignoring the vast majority of the country's 3.7 million severe sufferers, 99 percent of whom live in the community, few of them receiving any specialist help. Only 350,000 attend psychiatric out-patient departments.

A mere 60,000 are in-patients at any one time, and hospital psychiatric beds have been rapidly cut back from 89,000 in 1979 to just 50,000 in 1989. In London over half the mental illness beds in the big psychiatric hospitals have closed since 1984.

71 percent of the NHS £2 billion mental health budget is spent on hospital care of the 60,000 in-patients, while community-based services to another 25,000 costs just £200 million.

The Commons Social Services Committee argues that to provide satisfactory care in the community costs £2,752 per person per year. This would



Proposing to dump mentally ill back in bins: Heseltine

indicate that care for the 3.7 million severe sufferers would cost £8.3 billion - four times the total NHS spend on mental health.

The same committee argues that it is eight times more expensive to provide proper residential and day care to people discharged from psychiatric hospitals - £21,366 a year. No wonder the government is reluctant to face up the full costs of community care!

Pittance

In 1990-91 the government's new Mental Health Specific Grant added up to just £4.2 million across the whole of London - an average of only £130,000 per borough. Meanwhile local councils in the capital were offering fewer places in day centres in 1989 than they had in 1981, with council residential places for people with mental illness expanding unevenly at a rate of just 21

new places per year in Greater London.

Refusing to face these facts, Heseltine has begun uttering ominous threats to the homeless mentally ill:

"We are coming to the conclusion that we have a hard core of people who won't accept any of the offers [of accommodation]. ... We have all got to tackle this problem. All of us are affronted and feel a deep concern for the condition of these people"

The tacit threat is that those who will not voluntarily take up the Tories' 'offers' will be compulsorily dumped back into institutional care, to clear the streets in readiness for an election campaign. This is not the voice of enlightenment but a new blast of Victorian values, seeking to dump the 'loonies' back into the 'bins' that patients' pressure groups have been fighting to close down.



Instead the crying need is for a big injection of capital and revenue funding into health authorities and local councils to enable them to put in place a system of sheltered housing, work, day centres and trained community-based support for discharged patients and sufferers who have never been in hospital.

People with mental illness must be given the legal right to care and support, and the existing legislation which theoretically obliges health authorities and councils to provide services must be enforced, with resources for community care ring-fenced, and supervised by a minister for community care.

Such a commitment involves far greater resources than any Tory government will provide: to win it will also require a political fight under a future Labour government.



Photo: Andrew Ward

British students on the march in 1988

How Greek students won

PANOS VOVOS is a Graphic Arts student at Athens Technological Institute. Last year he was a leading activist in the wave of student demonstrations and occupations that swept Greece. London NUS invited Panos to Britain to speak at the National Student Activists' Conference on 22 January. *Socialist Outlook* spoke to him about the lessons of the Greek student action.

Socialist Outlook: What sparked off the student action last year?

Panos Vovos: The Socialist Party government introduced a new bill, the Multi-Bill, into parliament. It affected all parts of education. High school students were threatened by a separate bill which tried to impose new disciplinary procedures. So you had two movements – one of high school students, and one of further and higher education students.

You have to look at what the government was trying to do with education. It was trying to harmonise its policy in line with that of the EC. Following the economic dictat of the IMF and the EC, the Greek government is trying to cut back what it spends on education.

The restructuring of education is designed to provide low-level, over-specialised training to meet the workforce requirements of industry. They are trying to make education an organic part of production. Market forces will determine which schools and courses stay open.

SO: Were the politics of these changes understood

by those students taking action?

PV: It depends on what you mean by 'political'. Compared with the occupations here, it was more political. But, compared with ten years ago in Greece, it was less political.

Within the movement we had big discussions on what the government was doing and why, what they were going to do, and why we cannot wait for a new bill on education but must have an uprising. These discussions affected many people, but most supported the occupations on a gut level.

SO: How widespread was the student action?

PV: Around 80 per cent of further and higher education colleges were affected and about 2,500 high schools. It was the biggest movement since 1974 and the collapse of the dictatorship.

After the movement declined we realised there would be similar social explosions in the future. Such explosions do not automatically have any direction. It is important to seize the opportunity from these situations to give the movement a socialist orientation.



Photo: Sam Inman

SO: What did the occupations achieve?

PV: Both the Multi-Bill and the discipline bill were scrapped. But while the government will not try and bring back the latter, they are trying to reintroduce the Multi-Bill – this time in parts. One problem is that, on the ground, there are no significant improvements. During last year's actions, we did not push other demands to the forefront – in the interest of unity. If we had done this it would have been a political investment for the future.

You have to realise that the student unrest in Greece was born out of desperation. After the movement declined there was a degree of disappointment because people had expected much more to change.

SO: What advice would you have for students in Britain?

PV: We were lucky because the government made lots of mistakes – the Multi-Bill was a big mistake because it tried to

"In Greece we also have our own NUS. At first they were against the occupations, but as the action spread they changed to not saying anything at all."

deal with everything at once. The police also made the mistake of killing a teacher which brought out other teachers and the General Union of Workers onto the demonstrations.

This allowed us to build a huge movement very quickly. I don't think the British government will make these sort of mistakes, they seem more serious and pay more attention to their own interests.

Students must look at the facts of the situation in every college, to counter the misinformation from the government and from college managements. You also have to look at the class composition of students at different colleges – whether they are mostly bourgeois, mostly middle-class or mostly working class. And you have to look at student unions, aiming to build these and orientate them in the right direction.

Before the student actions, the government had attacked the right to strike, social security and civil rights. As there had been very little response to these attacks, we did

not expect the student occupation movement to be so big. We were surprised.

In Greece we also have our own NUS. At first they were against the occupations, but as the action spread they changed to not saying anything at all. Because they were opposed to the actions, we had to build our own committees of struggle on the ground. In every school and college these committees were elected by general meetings.

But even if the NUS had supported the occupations we would have had to build such committees. Each movement must be controlled by the activists within the movement. Nevertheless, things would have been much easier had the NUS supported us.

SO: Did the conduct of the Greek NUS weaken its support within the student movement?

PV: For many years now, the standing of NUS among students has got progressively worse. It has not lost support from students, but it has lost their respect. It is important to challenge the leadership of the official union, in elections and so on. But while it is very important to work within the official structures, you cannot afford to have any illusions in them. Where there is lack of movement in any organisation, the danger of bureaucracy will appear. We argue that we need the NUS, but we also need the self-organisation of students.

SO: If you could go through the experience again, would you attach more importance to building a left-wing within the movement?

PV: Yes. But the big problem we had in this respect was that the movement grew so rapidly. After the murder of the teacher, the movement grew in a matter of days. In four days we had three demonstrations. The first had 40,000 present, the second 100,000, and the third about 70,000.

Throughout these days there was a big rise in consciousness of the movement, but there was no time to develop the discussions. An excuse perhaps, but the time was crucial. It is obviously important to take political and ideological discussions into such movements – in action people are very open to new ideas. This is necessary so that a left-wing base can be built.

You cannot just shout slogans about student poverty. Within a capitalist framework, the changes in education are necessary for the functioning of the economy. Socialists have to work out an alternative framework – showing that economics and education are related.

You can fight and win on the issue of student poverty alone. Things may get better for a few years. But without solving the underlying crisis the problems experienced today will keep coming back.

THE MASS action of tens of millions of workers is the only force capable of really finishing off the old ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. In other words, a real popular, anti-bureaucratic revolution is needed.

The Soviet bureaucracy is too vast, has such strong social links, and can rely on so much inertia and routine, obstruction and sabotage, for it to be decisively weakened from above.

Mikhail Gorbachev did not want to unleash such a revolution, nor was he capable of doing so. His aim was to preserve the system and reform it, not to destroy it.

Gorbachev's attempt to radically reform the system was not primarily motivated by ideological reasons, but by the deeper and deeper crisis that the USSR slid into from the late 1970s. This was shown in a number of ways:

- The continual decline in economic growth, which had been lower than the USA's for a decade.

- The impossibility, in these conditions, of simultaneously maintaining economic modernisation, the arms race, a regular increase in the popular standard of living, and maintaining and increasing the bureaucracy's privileges.

- The defeat of the attempt to improve the quality of industrial production. That requires making a priority of quality rather than quantity, exact calculations of costs, glasnost in the economy, and more say for consumers. All of these are incompatible with bureaucratic dictatorship.

This had a number of consequences:

- A big social decline, with more than 60 million people in poverty, the deterioration of the health service and a big drop in life expectancy.

- The regime's loss of any political legitimacy, with the development of a broad opposition (oppressed nationalities, intellectuals, youth).

- A deep ideological and moral crisis in the bureaucracy, which went out of control.

Ill-conceived

Gorbachev's defeat was the defeat of economic perestroika. Ill-conceived from the start, changing direction frequently, combining increasingly contradictory aims, perestroika ended up by dismantling the old 'command economy' without substituting anything coherent for it. After one or two somersaults, economic decline followed stagnation.

For the Soviet people, this meant an accelerating decline in their standard of living. As a result, Gorbachev lost any popular base.

Gorbachev's foreign policy was based around stopping the arms race at any price and getting technological and financial aid from the West to stop the whole edifice from crumbling.

This translated into reactionary 'regional agreements', affecting both the Cuban and Central American revolutions and the South African and Arab liberation struggles.

But closing one's eyes to the positive changes that took place in the USSR under Gorbachev would be wrong. These changes can be summed up as glasnost – the massive expansion of democratic freedoms enjoyed by the masses.

They were certainly limited, partial democratic rights which were not constitutionally guaranteed. They were also combined with authoritarianism, which increased in Gorbachev's latter days.

But they were real rights: a larger number of parties, political groups, and independent workers' organisations developed. Uncensored publications appeared. Public demonstrations were allowed. Strikes multiplied. Elections were held which gave voters a choice between different candidates.



Not much in the marketplace for Russian workers

Photo: Jez Coulson/Insight

The irresistible decline of Mikhail Gorbachev



By
**ERNEST
MANDEL**

The putschists of August 1991 wanted to severely limit, if not suppress, these rights. They aimed specifically to withdraw the right to strike and suppress independent workers' organisations.

This is why they had to be opposed by any means available. And it's why the coup's defeat was welcome.

The workers of the ex-USSR now need to conduct a struggle on two fronts: to defend and extend democratic rights; and against privatisation. To abandon either of these would be to sacrifice the fundamental interests of the working class.

There is no chance of developing, or winning, the political revolution in the USSR without the working class regaining its organisational autonomy and class political independence. It is impossible to realise these aims without a long period of developing struggles and the emergence of a new vanguard.

Without real democratic freedoms, this would take much longer, be much

more difficult, and have much less chance of success.

Gorbachev was overthrown by a wing of the bureaucracy led by Boris Yeltsin, who represents a wing of the top nomenklatura. Due to his past and his training, Yeltsin is a

man of the apparatus. If one thing distinguishes him from Gorbachev, it is that he is less evasive, more authoritarian and so more dangerous for the masses.

By contrast with Gorbachev, who still vaguely supports socialism, Yeltsin openly supports the restoration of capitalism.

But when judging politicians, what they think is not enough. The most important thing is to look at what they do in practice and the social interests they represent.

From this standpoint, Yeltsin and his allies in the liquidation of the USSR in favour of the 'Confederation of Independent States' represent a fraction of the nomenklatura. This is quite distinct from the bourgeois forces as such (the nouveaux millionnaires), even if the two do intersect.

The classic case is that of the Presidents of Kazakhstan and the Ukraine, who with Yeltsin 'betrayed' Gorbachev

at the last minute (his words) to liquidate the USSR. Both have been regional leaders of the stalinist apparatus since Gorbachev's early days. Both rely on the 'local' KGB, which has hardly changed.

At the start of the putsch, both took an expectant, if not favourable, attitude to it. Both knowingly used the popular feeling of revolt against national oppression to convert themselves into 'nationalist leaders'.

And their cynicism was particularly highlighted by the fact that they did not hesitate to associate themselves with Yeltsin, a genuine Great Russian chauvinist – how long for is a different question.

The only conclusion is that there is still a three-cornered struggle. Fractions of the top nomenklatura, forces that are for the restoration of capitalism – bourgeois in the social sense – and the working masses are three distinct forces with their own interests.

A new putsch?

New putsches are possible. Yeltsin risks rapidly losing his popularity, given the anti-working class policies that he is implementing.

Behind him there is already the sinister figure of Vladimir Shirinovskiy, the Soviet Le Pen, who associates himself with the Tsar and Pinochet. He has the support of some of the army and is openly Great Russian, anti-semitic and racist. His popularity should not be underestimated.

All this adds up to a situation which is neither revolutionary nor pre-revolutionary. As a social force, the working class is infinitely stronger than its opponents, and infinitely stronger than in 1917 or 1927.

But, for Stalinism to be overthrown by a revolution, the working class has to act as an independent social force. This is not happening.

Stalinism discredited the very idea of communism, marxism and socialism. As a result the vacuum created by the deep ideological and moral crisis of Soviet society is not about to be filled by the working class.

The workers are acting, but around immediate, short term aims, in a fragmented way. Right wing forces have the political initiative, contrary to the hopes that one could have had up until 1980-81 (the first rise of Solidarnosc).

Does this mean that a restabilisation of the nomenklatura or a restoration of capitalism are more likely? It means nothing of the kind. They are just as improbable as a breakthrough for the political revolution.

Yeltsin's pro-bourgeois government has made a start on capitalist restoration. But there is an enormous distance between the beginning and the end.

For there to be a real restoration of capitalism, an extension of the market economy – which is much less widespread today than it was under the NEP – is not enough. The major means of production and exchange would also have to become commodities.

That means at least a thousand billion dollars, which is currently as impossible a sum in the West as in the USSR itself. The labour force would have to submit to the laws of the 'labour market'.

That means tens of millions of unemployed and a drop in the standard of living of 30 to 50 per cent. That would meet with strong resistance.

So the most likely outcome is a long period of decomposition and chaos. But there is a modest but real hope that during this period the Soviet working class will slowly reconquer its class independence.

The main task of the small socialist forces consists of linking up with this process to aid the workers in overcoming the obstacles.



Is Livingstone trying to split the hard left?

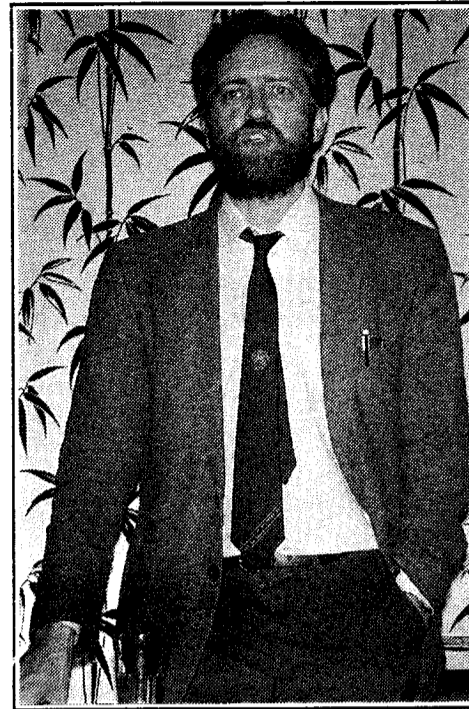


Photo: Graham Cookson

Under threat? Jeremy Corbyn MP



Holding hands with anyone but the

Soft Left plots Campaign G

By Paul Clarke

As we enter an election year, the landscape of the British left is changing. The prospect of a new government, combined with the decade-long shift to the right in the Labour Party, is causing many socialists to rethink their strategy. At the heart of these debates are the prospects for the socialist force with infinitely the most social weight – the Labour left.

Debates on the future of the left in parliament have been signalled by a series of articles in the soft Labour left *Tribune*. According to Paul Anderson (11 January) moves are afoot to reorganise the parliamentary left, to overcome the divide between the *Tribune* Group, and the Socialist Campaign Group.

It is no secret that Ken Livingstone is the champion of this project. Anderson quotes anonymous Labour MPs as saying that the *Tribune* group has be-

come inactive and too close to Kinnock, while the Campaign Group has dug itself into a 'purist' bunker. The solution is a realignment, which would be especially important if Labour came into government. But if Labour is defeated the new alignment could act as a springboard for a leadership challenge by Ken Livingstone.

The movers of this project would try to drag in the *Morning Star* to give it more weight in the labour movement.

There should be no illusions about what this would mean. Effectively it is a project to split off a section of the Campaign Group and create a new soft left in parliament. It is a project to recreate old-style *Tribune* group, which so spectacularly failed to mount effective opposition to the pro-capitalist policies of Wilson and Callaghan in the 1960s and '70s.

The Campaign Group may be small in terms of numbers, but its existence is a

vital factor in the maintenance of socialist opposition. Last year's Gulf war, and especially the role of Tony Benn and the late Eric Heffer in parliamentary debates, showed clearly the importance of the Campaign Group.

The realignment proposed for the parliamentary left involves a big policy shift, especially in relation to Europe. Ken Livingstone openly advocates that the Labour left drop its oppositional stance towards the capitalists' 'fortress Europe'.

If the project to create a new soft left was successful it would be the culmination of the defeats suffered by the class struggle left in the 1980s, in particular the defeat of the miners strike and the defeat of the rate capping struggle. These defeats swung a whole swathe of the 'Bennite' left to the right, especially in local government.

Far from being essential if Kinnock won the election, the decapitation of principled socialist opposition would be a disaster. Under Labour, the left needs to be organising a fight to repeal the trade union laws, drastically cut defence spending to rescue the NHS and other services, re-nationalise privatised industries and defend the rights of the oppressed.

'Tribunism' has never been able to deal with Labour in power; the pressure to sustain and support a Labour government against all opposition has always proved too great – as has the lure of office.

The crisis and semi-collapse of the Communist Party has spawned a series of new projects. Those most loyal to the ideas of *Marxism Today* are hardly part of the left at all. Others who retain a



Trigger to the split? Lesley Mahmood on the campaign trail in Walton

Photo: Paul Herrman

Guru overboard in Militant mutiny

By Dave Osler

MILITANT tendency has expelled its founder Ted Grant – the person it once extolled as 'the foremost figure of Trotskyism in Britain and internationally' – and 35 other supporters.

The move comes after a bitter 10 month dispute inside Militant which culminated in the candidacy of Lesley Mahmood in Walton and the recent launch of an open organisation counterposed to Labour in Scotland.

Ted Grant utterly opposed this so-called 'Scottish turn', which was nevertheless backed by a large majority of Militant supporters, including the paper's editor Peter Taaffe, and top anti-poll tax activist Tommy Sheridan.

Grant was apparently in the process of organising a *de facto* breakaway group with a rival publica-

tion and its own premises, staff and funds, an obvious breach of discipline. But his co-thinkers counterclaim they have been bureaucratically excluded from the tendency with no right of appeal.

Despite Militant's attempt to ridicule Grant's so-called 'mini-exodus', he is likely to be joined by a further 4-800 activists. The whole affair demonstrates the need for political mechanisms which can handle sharp differences inside socialist tendencies, proving once more that internal democracy is no mere bolt-on extra for the far left.

But the heart of the issue is how socialists in the Labour Party respond to Kinnock's drive to push the party ever-further rightward. Taaffe and his supporters correctly saw that the kind of tactics practised by Militant since its foundation were no longer practical.

Revolutionary socialists need a 'twin-track' approach, working both in-

side and outside the Labour Party. But this does not mean building mini-parties in opposition to it, such as Scottish Militant Labour.

Such energies could be far better spent developing the Socialist Movement, which has the potential to become a genuine and widely-supported united front based on class-struggler politics.

Yet, as ever, Militant refuses to participate in anything not under its own control.

Yet there is little mileage in the new Grant group sticking to its founder's dogmatic schemas. There is a real danger that such passivity will generate a reversal to the sterile politics which characterised Militant until the mid-1980s, which effectively dismissed feminism, lesbian and gay rights, and black issues as mere sideshows.

The crisis in Militant is an inevitable result of the twin evils of sectarianism

and passive propagandism. Both wings of the ex-Militant have a prolonged history of counterposing abstract propaganda for socialism to participation in real struggles; and an organisational sectarianism which treated union broad lefts and anti-poll tax campaigns as a private recruiting ground.

Militant's persistent refusal to build a united campaign against the witch hunt has rebounded on the entire Labour left in its fightback against Kinnockism.

The split will give both sides an opportunity to rethink the disastrous Militant heritage. But the evidence so far is that the split will create two dogmatic and sectarian groups, with the sole difference that one is mainly inside the Labour Party and one mainly outside.

Time for Labour



Photo: Andrew Ward

left: the Kinnock leadership

Group split

Loyalty to basic socialist ideals are trying to work out viable socialist projects. Among these former party secretary Dave Cook is running a sustained campaign for a new socialist party (see *Tribune* 11 January and *Socialist* 18 January). Cook's proposal is basically for a 'red-green' party.

Unless one thinks that the Labour Party is the historic instrument for socialism in Britain, a view disproved by 86 years of history, the ultimate need for a new socialist party can hardly be contested.

But the issue is whether declaring a new red-green party now is a viable project. Cook's advocacy of this project slides over the political basis on which such a party would be established.

To be worthwhile a new party needs a clear anti-capitalist programme and substantial support. The first is unclear and the second definitely lacking. A new 'party' which was smaller than the SWP or the Militant tendency, and well to their right politically, would be a dead duck at birth.

In the present inhospitable circumstances for socialists in the Labour Party, there is a strong temptation to give up what appears to be a pointless slog. This is reflected also in the project of the Peter Taffe-led *Militant* majority, who plan to evacuate the Labour Party and mount a widespread electoral challenge to Labour.

The argument for refusing this option does not rely on Labour Party loyalty, or the notion that everything outside the party is worthless. Indeed, there is a massive amount of work for socialists to do, in the trade unions, in the movements of the specially oppressed, and in mass campaigns like that against racism.

But the relationship of forces inside the labour movement, and in British society, is vitally affected by what happens inside the Labour Party. There is a constant interaction between the class struggle, the fight in the unions, and political struggle inside the party. Although its forces are much reduced, the Labour left remains pivotal in how the prospects for the left will unfold.

Crisis

In the future, it is not excluded that new defeats in the class struggle and perhaps even an election defeat for Labour, would shift the party even further to the right, difficult to imagine though that may be. If Labour lost the election, the credibility of the party as a

party of government could unleash a huge crisis. Attempts could be made to force out the whole of the left, or make socialist work in the Labour Party almost impossible. If this were successful it would be an immense defeat for the left. Even if socialists then regrouped in a new party, it would be a party born out of defeats.

The tactical tasks of socialists will be greatly affected by what happens in the general election. If Labour wins, then socialists must form a broad alliance, inside and outside the Labour Party, to campaign against Kinnock's capitalist policies, and for an alternative set of policies. The left's fight must not be based on mild 'left' suggestions for 'improvements' to Kinnockism, but for a complete break with its capitalist policies.

Re-nationalisation

Wide support could be built in the labour movement for a charter of demands that included re-nationalisation, nuclear disarmament and big defence spending cuts, the abolition of the trade union laws, withdrawal from Ireland, positive action for women and black people and constitutional reform.

The left could be strengthened in the Labour Party whether Kinnock wins the election or not. If Labour loses, then a swathe of opinion which has supported Kinnock as the only realistic electoral option could peel away to the soft left. But this would be a political recomposition on the basis of defeat, which could also shift the party leadership to the right.

If present opinion polls are right, a hung parliament is a real possibility. In that event, the demand that Labour forms a minority government with no formal or informal coalition with the Liberals will become central.

The worst-case scenario, a new Tory government, would make the task for socialists very difficult. Demoralisation in the labour movement could lead to a renewed rightward shift. Socialists

would have to prepare for harsh defensive struggles against the background of a worsening economic crisis.

Whatever the outcome of the election, two things remain constant. First is the need to create the broadest principled unity in the labour movement and movements of the oppressed; second is the need not to retreat on anti-capitalist demands in the name of 'realism', or to form combinations with the soft left.

Socialist Movement

Socialists have to find the organisational forms to co-ordinate their political response. Here the role of the Socialist Movement is crucial. The strength of the movement is that it unites socialists inside and outside the Labour Party around intransigent defence of socialism and anti-capitalist policies.

However the post-election situation will necessitate re-focusing the projects of the Socialist Movement and strengthening its organisational push.

Principled unity, a broad anti-capitalist front, must avoid premature and artificial divides over whether to work inside or outside the Labour Party. And critically the soft left attempts to stymie and marginalise the socialist left in the Labour Party must be defeated.

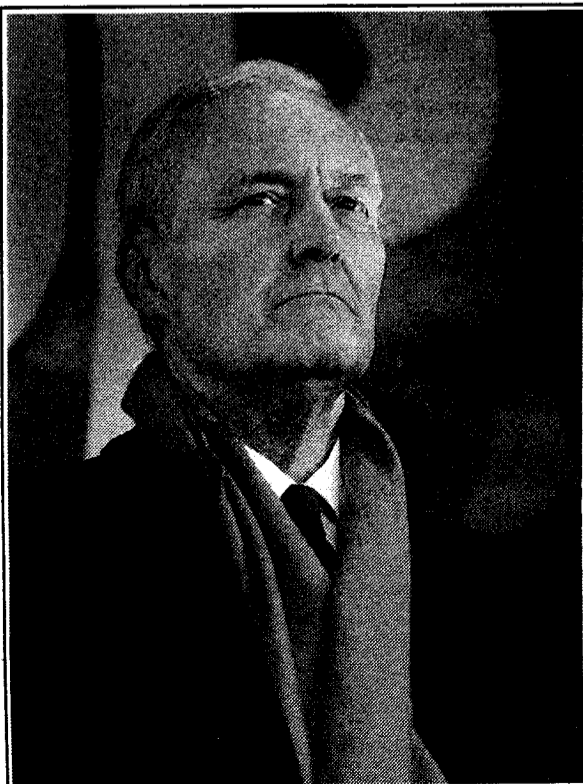


Photo: John Harris

Supporter of Socialist Movement: Tony Benn MP

Looking at the Left

The first of an occasional series which will look at what other socialist papers have to say

'THE CENTRE of the ANL is the SWP. In the middle of the AFA is the Socialist Action-Ken Livingstone-Morning Star axis who were responsible for the last atrocity on the left, the unbelievable madhouse called the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.'

Socialist Organiser

'ACCORDING to those who split however, Marxists must base themselves entirely on the "organised workers". Until these sections move into action in the trade unions and the Labour Party there is, in their view, little scope for activity by Marxists. Movements like the mass anti-poll tax campaign are dismissed as minor episodes.

Through clinging to old formulas and increasingly turning them into ossified dogmas, Ted Grant proved incapable of correctly analysing this new situation. Ted effectively claimed a right of political veto over the Editorial Board. Marxism cannot be developed in this way, either in theory or practice.'

Militant

'DAVID Mellor is a smug Tory git'

Socialist Worker

'THOSE WHO saw themselves as the protagonists of a single universal class [i.e. the working class - Ed] that could do all things needed to change the world had to face the fact that such an approach was now definitely dead.'

New Times, paper of the ex-CP Democratic Left

'JUST AS we say neither Washington nor Moscow but international socialism, so we say neither private nor state capital but workers power.'

Socialist Worker

'BUREAUCRATIC collectivism is a world-wide phenomenon.'

Laurens Otter in Socialist Organiser

'IN AUGUST 1990 the Iraqi regime occupied Kuwait. From the start intervention by US imperialism was very probable. There was no disagreement about opposing US invasion. However, Ted Grant immediately asserted the war would last from six months to (more likely) two years.'

Militant

'WITH THE BANNER of Marxism held high we will attract to our ranks the best fighters of a new generation to fight for the socialist transformation of society in Britain and throughout the world.'

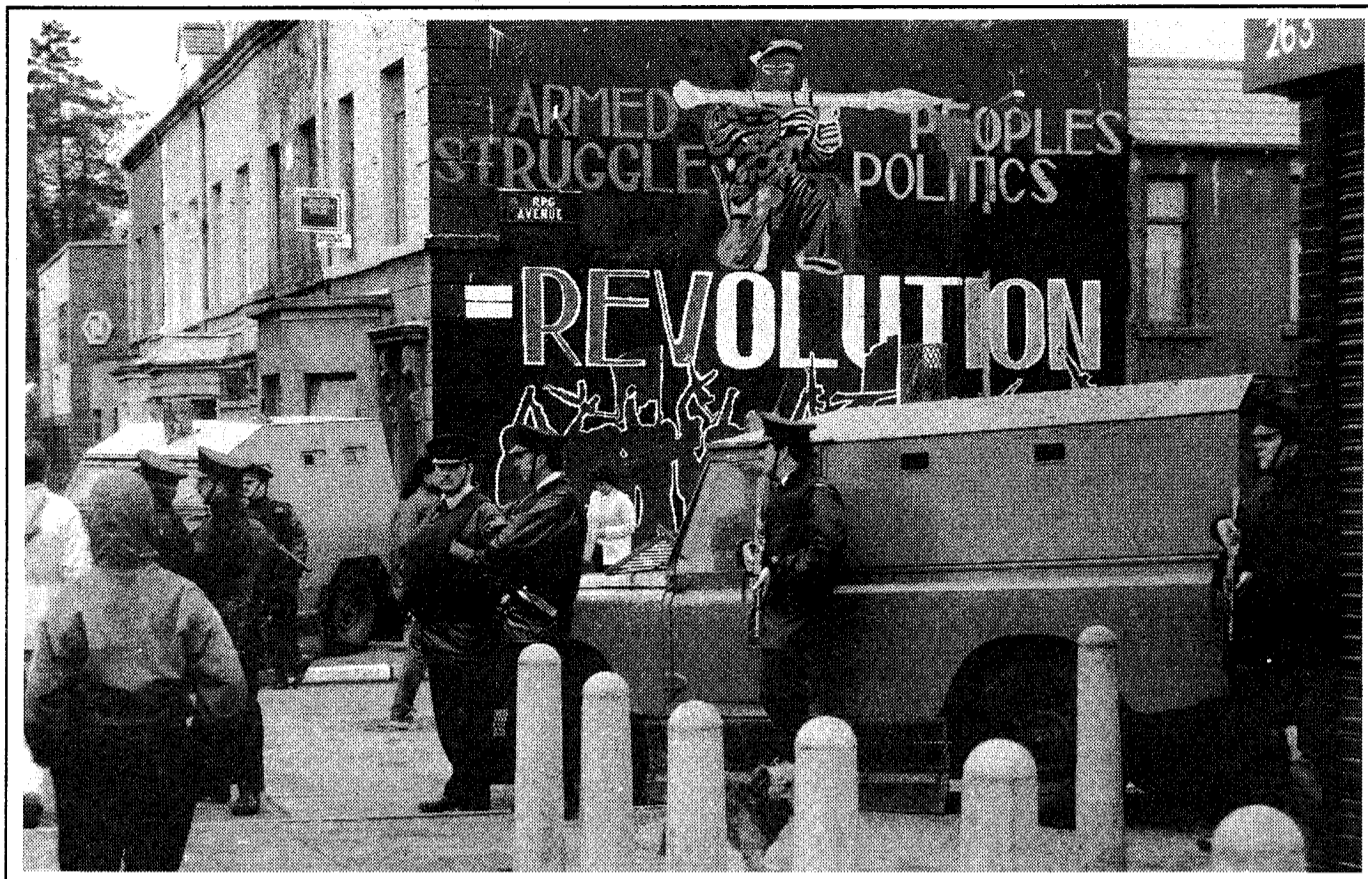
Militant

'LAST WEEK the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) and the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) fought each other on the letters pages of the Guardian.

Last Saturday they fought one another physically to get their own banner at the front of the London anti-asylum bill demonstration.

The SWP won the fight, allowing their national organiser, the very old Chris Brambery, to strut about at the front of the march with clenched fists and black gloves. This man has more than one problem.'

Socialist Organiser



Invisible comrades: Gays and lesbians in the struggle

This article by Long Kesh prisoner **BRENDÍ McCLENAGHAN** was first published in *An Glór Gafa*, the Republican POWs' magazine. We received it from Peoples' Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International, with a message from the author inviting comments and discussion.

GAY MEN and lesbian women have been involved in the struggle for national liberation and independence as long as any other section of our people.

You might claim that you have never known nor met a gay man or a lesbian woman but you have met one or more – today, last week, last year, 22 years ago – for they have been there in the struggle alongside you.

The reason you have not noticed them is that our society's culture in relation to sexuality, and to homosexuality in particular, compels gays and lesbians to conform, and their sexuality becomes invisible.

Women were once virtually invisible in the national struggle. In recent years, however, they have argued forcefully that women's liberation must be an integral part of the struggle.

In order that women's liberation be recognised and accepted as equal and valid, women comrades confronted their male counterparts with the contradictions of sexist words and actions.

While there is still a long way to go to overcome male chauvinism and sexism, women have succeeded in putting feminist issues on the anti-imperialist agenda.

It is now long past time to open debate among republicans on the issue of gays and lesbians, our oppression and its causes, and on our right to be visible equal partners.

I believe that national liberation by its very nature incorporates gay/lesbian liberation, and it is only through open debate leading to an understanding of the lesbian and gay experience that our equality can be made a reality.

Social and economic oppression is something the people in the whole of Ireland have suffered, and in the North the weight of British occupation is an added burden.

As lesbians and gays we are doubly oppressed, for we have had to endure further oppression within our families, local communities and within the Republican Movement because of our sexuality. This affects every part of our lives.

The state's laws deny equality in marriage, education, social welfare, employment, adoption, life insurance... the list is endless. The state denies gay and lesbian relationships the same recognition as heterosexual relationships.

While British law allows for consensual relationships between men over 21, in the 26 Counties gay men of any age are liable to imprisonment.

This is in spite of the fact that the Dublin government has accepted, in theory, the ruling by the European Court of Human Rights that present legislation is in breach of the rights of gay men.

Both the British and Irish states have appalling records in the area of lesbian and gay rights, especially when compared to other countries in Europe. The age of consent, for example, is 16 in Portugal, Switzerland and Holland.

The legal status of gay/lesbians reflects wider attitudes. All the Churches promote traditional stereotypical views in relation to contraception, abortion, sex education for young people and the rights of married women.

The Catholic Church in particular seeks to control our lives and our sexuality, and organisations such as Family Solidarity have views on

homosexuality range from the patronising and arrogant to the downright chilling:

'If homosexual acts are legalised, the likelihood is that this will be interpreted as a major reversal in social policy, and as recognition by society that for those who are so inclined, engaging in these unnatural, unhealthy acts is now to be seen as a right...'

[Legislative reform] would send shock waves through every part of society, the structure of marriage and the family would be interfered with, the rights of children and their parents violated, and the freedom and autonomy of religious institutions and schools would be seriously breached.' (Family Solidarity News, Spring 1991)

In short, the end of civilisation as we know it because of men loving men and women loving women! Such attitudes based on intolerance, misinformation and fear, serve only to demonise gays and lesbians in peoples' minds, evoking images of depraved men and women wreaking havoc throughout society.

While state oppression adversely affects the quality of life for gays/lesbians; but we also face oppression daily from family, comrades, neighbours and friends due to the irrational fear of and deep prejudice against homosexuality.

The most direct expressions of such homophobia are insults, derision and threatened or actual violence. Indirect expressions are sometimes harder to pin down but are nonetheless just as offensive: the pressures to 'be what you are but keep it secret and don't rock the boat.'

This is nothing short of moral blackmail as it is usually accompanied by comments like, 'What will the family think?', or, 'It will harm the Movement/struggle.' Thus gays/lesbians are forced into invisibility within both the community and the Republican Movement, and consequently within the struggle.

This is a situation which must be confronted not only by gays and lesbians but by all republicans. 'We declare that we desire our country to be ruled in accordance with the principles of liberty equality and justice for all.' states the 1919 Democratic Programme of Dáil Eireann.

Republicans who have always been to the fore on issues of justice and equality must recognise the oppression of gays/lesbians and identify with them and resolve the contradictions in their attitude and behaviour which add to that oppression.

Our participation in the national liberation struggle does not detract from it but reinforces a struggle that is indeed about the freedom and equality of all the oppressed.

No one should feel excluded. Gay men and lesbian women, especially within the Republican Movement, must begin the process of full integration and acceptance into the struggle by becoming more visible and making our voices heard.

The prejudices of others can be resolved only by confronting them and by exposing the oppression they cause, with the resultant fear, isolation and violence. This experience is not imaginary; they are a daily reality for gays and lesbians in the Bogside, Falls, Managhan, Dungannon, Ardoyne, Ballymun, Crossmaglen and every other town and village in Ireland.

The key to gay/lesbian liberation lies in the success of the national liberation struggle. The necessity of lesbian and gay participation is stressed by those involved in other wars of liberation. Simon Nkoli, a gay activist involved in the Delmas treason trial in South Africa in 1986, says:

'There are lots of gay activists involved in politics, but because of the pressure put upon the gay and lesbian community we are afraid to come out. "What will people think if they know I'm gay? I'd better fight against apartheid in a hidden way.'

The danger is that when South Africa is liberated, gay people will seem never to have taken part in liberating our people. What will we say if people ask, "What did you do to bring about a change in this country, where were you during the battle?"

We'd have to come back to them and say, "We were with you but we didn't want you to know we were there." That would be foolish.'

Gays and lesbians need to seek each other's strength and support, and of those around us who support our liberation. There is a need for gay/lesbian comrades to discuss together the issues that affect our lives and which retard participation in the struggle.

In isolation we stand alone and invisible, continuing to be oppressed not only by the state, but within our own communities. Through mutual reinforcement and support we can break down the isolation and discard the cloak of invisibility that has for too long made a misery of, and destroyed, the lives of gays and lesbians.

Together we can articulate the relevance of gay/lesbian liberation, confront the homophobia that faces us and attempt to resolve it through dialogue and discussion. This can only be based on logic and facts, not on the myths and mistruths deliberately fed to our people by those who seek to control every aspect of our lives: social, political, cultural, economic and sexual.

Everyone has a role to play in the struggle against oppression. Those who are themselves oppressed have an obligation not to contribute in any way to the oppression of others. To do otherwise is to deny the essence of the struggle for 'liberty, equality and justice for all.'

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Algeria Junta clamps down on Islamic Front

By Patrick Baker

ALGERIA has moved a step closer to open confrontation with the arrest of Abdul Kadir Hachani, leader of the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), and a mobilisation of troops and heavily armed riot police.

In a move aimed at decapitating the fundamentalist forces, Hachani was arrested on the grounds of calling for desertion from the army. The junta now running Algeria produced no evidence for the claim, asserting that it was based on a 'reliable source'.

The army-backed regime also attempted to close down the FIS' main political platform,

the four or five thousand mosques that their supporters control, with rings of troops and riot cops.

But despite widespread sympathy among women and pro-democracy forces for attempts to beat the fundamentalists, the moves are doomed to failure.

Consequences

The consequences of the clampdown are not yet clear; but democracy is one of the least likely. Since the overwhelming victory for the FIS in Algeria's recent elections, the government and army have not tried to mobilise any broad support for democracy.

Instead, they have pre-empted the fundamentalists' almost certain victory in the second round of elections by cancelling them and imposing an unconstitutional five-man junta.

In a two-faced declaration this was subsequently condemned by the National Liberation Front (FLN), though as the ruling party it was in fact behind the moves.

These moves were certain to strengthen support for the FIS among the population, many of whom voted for the fundamentalists as a protest against poverty and government cor-

ruption.

The latest moves against the FIS up the ante considerably. A wave of popular protest is likely and the FIS has called on its supporters in the army to ignore orders to fire on protesters.

Army

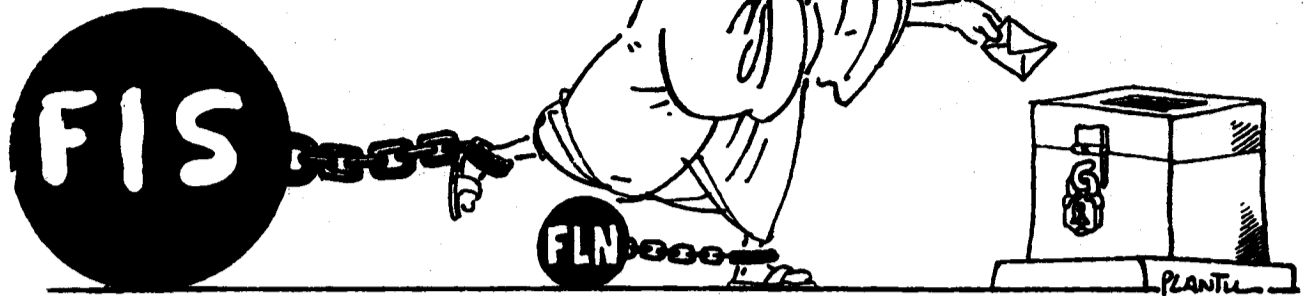
The junta may be able to use its control of the army to hold this down by force for a while, but this risks moving the crisis towards the kind of violent conflict that the regime has used before. It will do nothing to promote democracy.

The same applies to a similar clampdown threatened by the

neighbouring Tunisian authorities. But there is an alternative to both the FIS' reactionary policies and the conflict threatened by the junta.

Forces supporting democracy in Algeria command considerable support; and many women are none too keen on the prospect of Islamic law.

If they were to unite in a popular mobilisation in defence of democratic rights, this would be the best answer to both Islamic reaction and the corrupt bureaucracy that has controlled Algeria's government for many years.



Yugoslavia End of the road for gunpoint federation

As the first detachments of the UN peacekeeping force arrived, it looked as if the Yugoslav civil war was dying down. Probably 10,000 people have been killed.

Horrible evidence of fearful massacres of Croatian civilians has been discovered. And now the EC, led by Germany, has recognised Croatia and Serbia as independent states.

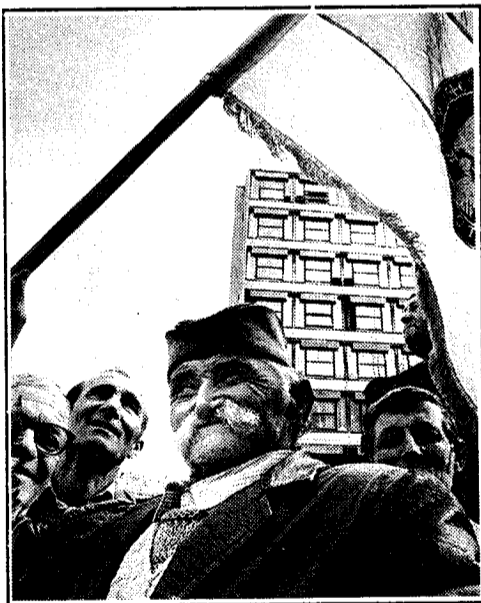
Why has this war been fought, and what is its outcome? It is likely that the independence of Croatia and Slovenia will stick, at least in the long run.

The Serbian leadership in Belgrade, and the generals of the Serbian-dominated federal army, in all likelihood never thought they could prevent it. The final prevention of the independence of these two republics was not their main aim.

The origin of the civil war was in the economic crisis of the old Yugoslav federal state. The political crisis which ensued led to the capture of the leadership of the Serbian Communists and republic by Slobodan Milosevic, promoting a degenerate Great Serb nationalism.

It was not Slovene or Croatian secessionism which killed the Yugoslav federation, but Milosevic's atavistic Serbian nationalism.

The first fruits of Milosevic's



rule was the violent repression in the late 1980s of the ethnically Albanian population in the Serbian province of Kosovo. He figured he could keep power in Serbia, and reinforce Serbian domination of the federation by using the nationalist card.

One of the real achievements of Yugoslavia was to provide a federal framework in which resources were redistributed to the poorer republics from the richer, and in which ethnic tensions were attenuated by political legality between republics, crystallised in the collective presidency.

Of course Yugoslavia had a bureaucratic neo-Stalinist regime. But it is Milosevic's historical crime that the degenerate faction of the Serbian bureaucracy he leads un-

leashed ethnic strife in Yugoslavia once again.

In the end ethnic rable-rousing rebounded on Milosevic. He effectively stirred up nationalism in the other republics; right-wing nationalism in Serbia led to reactionary nationalism in Croatia and Slovenia.

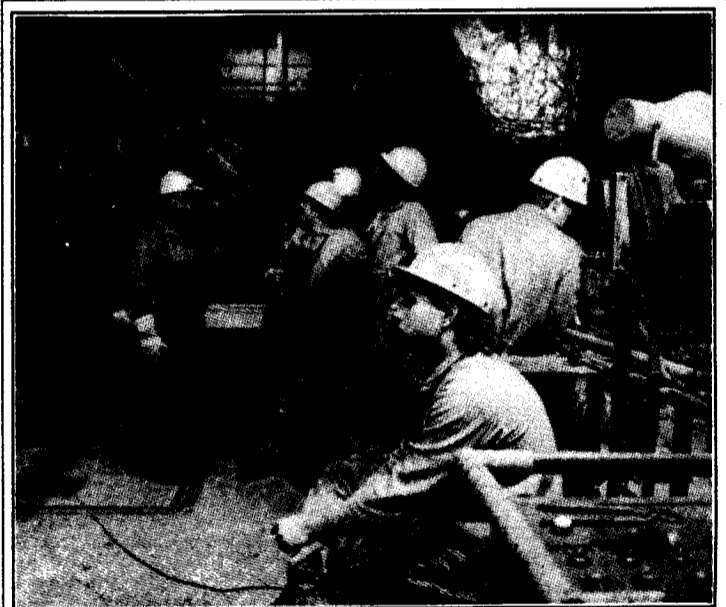
It is completely false to imagine that Serbia and the Yugoslav federal army are the force defending a socialised economy. Over time, all of Yugoslavia is headed towards capitalism.

Once the civil war started Milosevic and his forces sought to maximise the territory under their control, and especially to seize territory from Croatia.

The outcome now will almost certainly be an independent Croatia and Slovenia. Inside the rump Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, the scene is set for further ethnic conflict. Half a dozen small states in transition to capitalism could be the result.

Socialists who argued that all sides were equally to blame in this war made a mistake. Croatia has the right to self-determination, especially when attacked by Serbian forces.

As the USSR has shown, federation at gunpoint is an impossibility. Federation under a jackboot deserves to be rebelled against.



German steel strike vote

The giant IG-Metall union in Germany is balloting its 100,000 members who work in the steel industry for all-out industrial action over a pay claim. The ballot started last Sunday and the result will be known by next Friday.

The union has demanded a 10.5 per cent pay increase to compensate workers for higher taxes. The taxes were imposed to pay for German reunification. While it takes a 75 per cent majority to trigger a strike, union leaders are confident that this figure will be achieved.

The employers have offered a 6 per cent deal, and union leaders have let it be known that just one per cent over this would be enough to avert a strike. But the employers are reluctant, given the current profits squeeze.

Further trouble on the Ger-

man industrial front has been signalled by the announcement that engineering workers in IG-Metall have submitted a 9.5 per cent claim.

A further big wage claim has come from the OTV public service workers union, representing 300,000 workers, who said they were willing to strike over their 10 per cent claim. And the white collar HBV and DAG unions have broken off negotiations after being offered less than 5 per cent in response to a 10.5 per cent offer.

The steelworkers' claim is one of the last to be settled from last year. All the others are new claims. The wave of claims around 10 per cent, much higher than the inflation rate, represents the impact on living standards of German reunification, the costs of which have landed at the doorstep of ordinary tax payers.



PLO leader: Arafat

Fallout from the Gulf War

The second of two articles by
GEOFF RYAN

THE 'NEW World Order' was supposed to solve the 'problem' of the Palestinian people – thrown out of their homeland by the Zionist Israeli state.

True, there has been two conferences so far, in Madrid and Washington. But they have ended without agreement on a venue for the next round of talks, never mind a Palestinian homeland.

The US has been able to lean on Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to get him to the conference table but Shamir does not intend to make meaningful concessions. On the contrary, attacks have been stepped upon Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories.

Over 5,000 new houses are being built on the Israeli-occupied West Bank to house the massive influx of Jews from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Jews are being forced to go to Israel, though the vast majority do not wish to settle there.

Arabs have been thrown out of their houses in Jerusalem to allow Jews to move in, despite protests from Zionist mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kolleck.

Now 12 Palestinian activists are threatened with deportation. The US and Britain have protested more forcefully than usual and even voted to condemn Israel in the UN Security Council.

But no-one should expect them to show the same willingness to implement this resolution as they did with Resolution 660 (the 'legal' fig leaf for the Gulf war).

The intransigence of the Israeli government was shown when Shamir decided to put himself and not Foreign

Minister David Levy – at the head of the Madrid delegation. To back up their position they organised demonstrations in Spain and Israel against any concessions.

Shamir's intentions are clearly to drag talks out for as long as possible to allow the maximum colonisation of the occupied territories – though this – and Shamir's survival – could be threatened by the far right Moleket and Tehiya parties, who have now forced a vote of con-

"The US has actually made a profit of \$4-5 billion from 'bombing Iraq back into the Stone Age'. But even this sum pales into insignificance when compared to the money made by the American arms manufacturers"

fidence in the Knesset.

They objected to any discussion of 'Palestinian autonomy', though Shamir had no intention of proposing any such thing. Defence Minister Moshe Arens summed up their position as 'peace to Israel, but not at the costs of our right to this land.'

This may clash with immediate US interests, but they know that the Israeli state remains its only reliable ally in the region. The Zionists may serve Western interests but also have their own, sometimes conflicting, goals.

The Palestinian leadership – desperate to gain Washington's backing – have shown themselves, by contrast, willing to make more and more concessions. It is true that, in many ways, the Palestinian delegation at Madrid was ex-

tremely successful on the diplomatic front. But they still have nothing concrete to show for all their concessions.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Popular Front have rejected the current policies of the PLO leadership but have allied themselves with the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas organisation.

Their criticisms of Arafat are now made in the language of jihad, not the Palestinian national struggle, let alone the 'Marxist' terminology of the past.

Yet it is Hamas that has weakened the intifada by forcing women back into the home, by imposing Islamic morality in the areas where it is strong – particularly Gaza.

Women in Gaza are required to wear the veil and have been driven out of education. The average age of marriage for women has now been pushed down to 17 years.

If the big losers of the Gulf war were the people of Iraq and Yemen, the Kurds and the Palestinians who were the winners? Syrian President Hafez al-Assad has been 'rehabilitated' recently because of his support for the Gulf war.

Lockerbie

All the evidence linking Syria to the Lockerbie bombing is being ignored in favour of threats against Libya. Assad's military occupation of Lebanon has been accepted as the only way to bring 'stability' to that state.

But the US knows that Assad cannot be relied upon – he cannot distance himself too far from the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist feelings of the Syrian masses. Similar constraints act upon Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Both Syria and Egypt had large amounts of their external debts written off as a reward for services rendered. This has benefited the ruling classes but has had no effect on the living standards of the populations.

Abject poverty

In Egypt the mass of the population continues to live in abject poverty. Any open abandonment of the Palestinians would threaten both Assad and Mubarak.

The various regimes in the Gulf oil states have all benefited. Emir Jaber has his throne back. The governments of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait have gained access to US military aid. Even the Iranian regime has been granted a certain respectability.

However, Palestinians have been murdered or thrown out of Kuwait. The mass of the population in all these states are still denied even the most elementary democratic rights. In Saudi Arabia women are not even allowed to drive a car.

But the rewards for Assad, Jaber, and the Saudis are very small when we look at the real winners. The United States was able to wage its war and test out all its weapons of mass destruction without paying a cent.

Although the war supposedly cost the US \$60 billion they were able to recuperate this from other Western states – in particular Japan and Germany

– and the oil monarchies. The US has actually made a profit of \$4-5 billion from 'bombing Iraq back into the Stone Age'.

But even this sum pales into insignificance when compared to the money made by the US arms manufacturers, who have established a virtual monopoly. Saudi Arabia alone has contracts worth \$14 billion.

Thus the 'New World Order' has led to a massive new arms race, with vast profits for the US merchants of death.

Western firms have also made huge sums from the rebuilding of Kuwait. While the damage is nowhere near as severe as was claimed during the war – primarily vandalism and pillage – there have still been rich pickings.

Political muscle

Where they have been undercut by firms from the Third World they have used their political – and potential military – muscle. Their experience in Kuwait will, no doubt, ease their way into the even richer pickings to be had rebuilding Iraq, if Saddam is replaced by a more acceptable government.

The 'New World Order' has been paid for by the people of the Middle East and other Third World countries. Over 40 Third World countries have seen a huge decline in their economies. The initial rise in prices at the start of the war deprived some countries of 5% of their GNP at a stroke.

At a minimum the war caused a transfer of \$68 billion from the Third World to the West. The poorest countries have lost \$12 billion through transfer of investments, economic boycotts and oil price rises.

While Western governments have suppressed or understated the environmental effects of the war, Third World countries have suffered the consequences. This has affected not only the Gulf states but has resulted in black snow in India and Kashmir.

Even the faithful allies of the West – the reactionary oil monarchies – have had to pay a price. Apart from financing Washington's war they are now having to make new, very favourable contracts with the Western oil companies.

And if they get away with this, they will be in a stronger position to demand the denationalisation of the oil industries in the Arab states and Iran.

Despite the apparently decisive military victory for imperialism – and the huge profits made – the Gulf war has not resulted in any 'stability' for the region.

Oil war

A new oil war between Saudi Arabia – which has grabbed Kuwait's market share – and the Kuwaitis is likely, once they get production back to normal. Iraq, too, will be joining the fray, particularly since it has to pay much of its oil revenues to Kuwait in reparations.

The national problems of the Palestinians and Kurds have not been solved and in the eyes of the vast majority of the Arab nation the 'New World Order' remains the 'Old Western Order'.

All the old problems of poverty, starvation, displacement, lack of even the slightest democracy remain.

For the moment the main beneficiaries of this discontent have been the Islamic fundamentalists – particularly in Algeria and Palestine – but they also face problems, particularly those groups compromised by their previous reliance on the Saudi regime.

One year after the Gulf war the Middle East remains a region where massive, popular protests can rapidly spread, threatening imperialist domination.

Despite the undoubted strengthening of the USA in the region, its very presence will be the cause of further revolutionary struggles which will threaten the whole 'New World Order'.

It's a sign of the times we live in when *Spare Rib*, the monthly women's liberation magazine, publishes an article that argues for constraints on a woman's right to choose. Here LEONORA LLOYD takes up the argument in the article – that aborting fetuses with disabilities equals prejudice against the disabled.

No retreat on abortion rights!

SEPTEMBER'S *Spare Rib* printed an extract from 'Pride Against Prejudice: transforming attitudes to disability' by Jenny Morris.

Morris argues that there should be constraints upon the 'right to choose', which relies 'on the liberal humanist tradition within Europe and America'. In particular, she argues for restriction of choice on three grounds:

- the constraints on women's choice because of their assessment of the situation facing them if they have to care for a disabled baby.

- 'the individualist tradition...places responsibility solely on the individual. As a result social and collective responsibility are denied.'

- the rights of the fetus are denied and these begin with viability, which Morris puts at 24 weeks. After that point, she says, 'women have no absolute right to choose whether to have a disabled child or not.'

Underlying her arguments is the contention that allowing abortion of fetuses solely on the grounds that they have disabilities, is prejudice against the disabled.

Much of what Morris says, and the language she uses sounds exactly the same as the anti-abortionists. But, disregarding this, her arguments deserve to be considered.

First though, the problem needs to be put in perspective. Morris argues that abortions should not be allowed beyond 24 weeks. She omits to mention the second case for which it is still allowed – risk to the life or health of the woman.

Even if all abortions after 24 weeks were banned, it would have little effect on abortions done on the grounds of fetal ab-

normality. In 1989, the last year for which full figures are available, 4 out of the 23 post-24 week abortions were done on the grounds of fetal abnormality.

In 1990 there were 1,619 abortions on the grounds of fetal abnormality – slightly down from 1,679 in 1989. They included abortions done on a mixture of grounds. It could include taking into account the effect on existing children.

The mother might already have a child with the same disability whose care would be affected by the birth of another child.

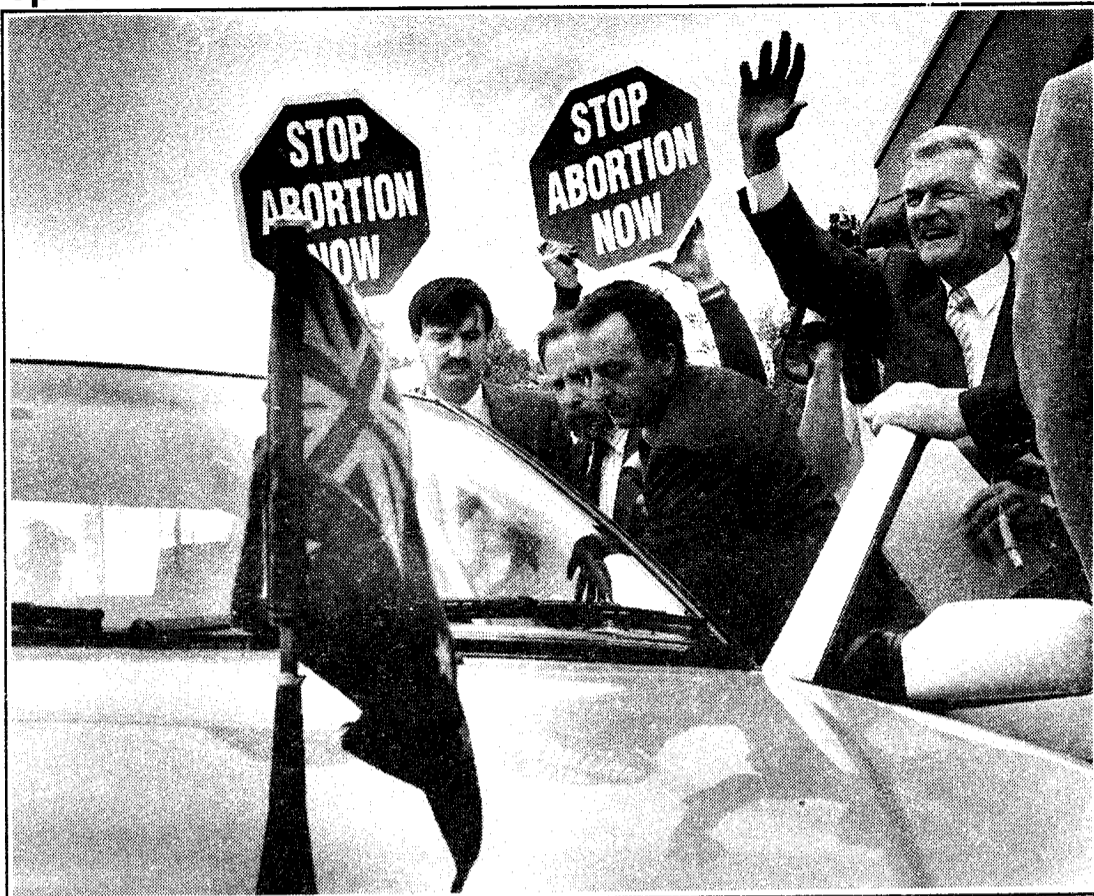
Previous pregnancy

It could be her own health – perhaps a previous pregnancy was ended by the stillbirth of a child with the same disability. Women having abortions on grounds of disability are more likely than average to have had previous pregnancies ending in 'live or stillborn children'.

Some abortions are done on the possibility that abnormality may exist. For example, the woman may contract rubella, or come into contact with someone else at the relevant time in her pregnancy (well before 24 weeks) or even get immunised before she realises that she is already pregnant.

She might then be advised to have an abortion as a precaution against having a baby that may have multiple disabilities, such as blindness, deafness and mental disabilities.

Other women know that they are carriers for disabilities which only affect their male children. Early tests to determine sex may result in aborting all male fetuses, but in fact only half will (on average) carry the disease, such as haemophilia. In



Australian anti-abortionists put former Labour PM Hawke in the hot seat

this particular case, a further test can determine which 50 percent, but for other genetic diseases this does not apply.

The number of babies born with disabilities seems to be dropping. In 1979, the rate per 10,000 births of babies born with such disabilities as anencephalus (no brain), spina bifida, Down's syndrome, cardiovascular malformations, and cleft palate was 210.4. By 1989, the rate was 180.3.

Nervous system

This reduction is not necessarily due just to abortion. Abortions on grounds of central nervous system malformations (CNS) (anencephalus, spina bifida, hydrocephalus) have been dropping since accurate records have been taken. The rate of Down's syndrome, on the other hand, has fluctuated.

In 1989, there were a total of 1,735 abortions on grounds of 'known or suspected fetal abnormality affecting management of mother'. Out of 12,462 babies born with disabilities in 1989, 200 were stillborn.

A number of conclusions could be drawn from these figures. Either screening for abnormalities is partial or inefficient, or a significant number of parents opt not to be screened, or do not take action on the results.

The fact that abortion is not responsible for all the decrease in CNS births is underlined by a similar decrease being reported in the Republic of Ireland, where there are no screening programmes, which makes it unlikely that women come to England specifically on this ground.

Hard facts

This is not designed to be either pro or anti abortion on grounds of fetal abnormality, but simply to provide some hard facts. If Ms Morris' thesis is to be taken at face value, then on current figures her proposal would prevent some 3-4 abortions a year now done on the ground of fetal abnormality.

Another area worthy of discussion is one often raised by anti-abortionists. They frequently claim that all the ills of society are due to (legalised) abortion, and one of these is the appalling way in which people with disabilities (whom they persist in calling 'handicapped') are treated.

There is no doubt that individuals do not and society does not treat people with disabilities as they deserve. But has the situation worsened since 1967, and if it has is it because of abortion?

The answer to these questions has to be NO. When I was a schoolchild in the 40s and 50s, children with disabilities did not go to mainstream schools at all and now very many do so. In fact, such children were seldom seen because they were kept behind closed curtains in their own homes.

Inadequate funding

We now have (woefully inadequate) recognition of and funding for carers. We have a growth in self organisation of people with disabilities. Disability is beginning to be discussed openly instead of being hidden.

Of course, things are a million miles away from perfect and in many respects (particularly in terms of financial support, employment and some aspects of medical care) things have recently got worse, but this is not due to abortion being legal, it is due to a government which is cutting everything worthwhile it can lay its hands on.

And international experience also gives the lie to this claim. I remember a few years ago hearing Mrs Margaret Winn, often quoted, along with her husband, by anti-abortionists as an authority on the bad physical effects of abortion.

She spoke about the advances made in Sweden on facilities for disabled people as being miles ahead of those in Britain – but not only do they have a more liberal law (abortion on demand up to 18 weeks, plus abortion after that on medical grounds, including disability) but they

have had legal abortion for much longer than we have.

Jenny Morris talks, quite rightly, about the constraints on women contemplating the birth of a baby with disabilities. But to a lesser degree many women have abortions of 'normal' fetuses on similar grounds – because they feel society cannot provide them and their baby with what they need.

Banned

On her arguments, so-called 'social abortions' should also be banned, as indeed anti-abortionists argue, at any point in the pregnancy.

I have not dealt with the concept of viability in this article, partly for reasons of space, and partly because we argued about this one endlessly during the campaigns against Alton and the proposed amendments last year.

This discussion needs to be had out in the pro-choice movement, if only to arm ourselves better for arguments with the anti-abortionists.

But it also deserves attention as a method for fostering links between the women's liberation movement and the movement for the liberation of people with disabilities.

**Join the
National
Abortion
Campaign**

**Fighting the battle
for choice**

Write to:

**The London Women's
Centre, Wesley House, 4
Wild Court, London WC2**

**Women for Socialism AGM
500 years of
resistance
anti-imperialism
and feminism**

**Saturday 29th February, 10.30-6pm
London Women's Centre
4 Wild Court, London WC2
(nearest tube Holborn)**

Armageddon days are here again

By Lois Lane

USUALLY YOU have to be a particularly repressed man not to acknowledge the importance of feelings.

Yet the left as a whole is spectacularly bad on the question. Think of the stereotyped image of a Good Marxist, and nine times out of ten the person will be lavishly endowed with an intellect, unsurpassed in objectivity.

Unlike the left, the evangelical wing of the protestant Christian religion claims to understand feelings. Like fundamentalists of all kinds, they are remarkably adept at manipulating the very real emotional despair and alienation that people experience today.

The so-called charismatic revival of evangelism started in the 1960s, along with a whole wave of interest in alternative ways of looking at religion and spirituality. During the 1980s evangelical christianity really boomed and those tamborines were heard being unashamedly bashed and shaken throughout the world. Hallelujah - JC will be back soon!

Drugs

But few socialists seem interested in matters of an ecclesiastical nature. After all, one of the whole points of marxism is its complete and total rejection of religion - the 'opium of the masses'. This is undoubtedly true on a philosophical level, but it would be a grave mistake to ignore the ideological power of evangelism.

I am not talking here of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, the Jesus Army and other assorted sects of especially nutty nutters. Your mainstream evangelists are far more serious and, more importantly, are

often overtly political in their aims.

Consider the case of Brazil, a country that has been predominantly Catholic since the Portuguese conquest. With the decline of the influence of liberation theology in the last couple of years and in the absence of a strong ideological alternative, protestant evangelism has overtaken Catholicism as the religion of poor and rich alike.

One none-too-surprising aspect of this is to lend ideological strength to the 'American Dream' model for Brazil's future, fostered by President Collor. Many of Collor's advisors are evangelists, trained by latter-day missionaries imported direct from the US.

Clout

But evangelism is not just something important for the semi-colonial world. In the country of its birth, the US, the political and economic clout of evangelism is amply demonstrated by the vociferous Pro-Life lobby. While they still have not conquered public opinion in the US, their influence has pushed abortion into illegality in a successive string of states recently.

In Britain, many would think that evangelism is far too loud, arrogant and excessive for the rather reserved tastes of the populace. But think again.

Readers may like to be informed that the largest demonstration in London since the Trafalgar Square anti-Poll Tax one in 1990, was *not* the biggest demo against the Gulf War, but a 'March for Jesus' last September that attracted over 200,000.

Promising to 'take the world by storm for Jesus', the marchers are part of a growing movement in Britain militantly

committed to saving as many souls as they can - before the skies roll back in apocalyptic fashion and JC descends, in shining glory, to restore the rule of heaven on earth.

Many evangelists devoutly believe that we have now entered the last days of earthly rule, prophesied in the Book of Revelations. The final historic battle between Good and Evil is about to come.

Is it so hard to see why people are attracted to evangelism? Faced with the enormous horrors produced by a capitalist world in crisis, evangelism offers security, peace and eternal salvation for those that are 'saved'.

The process of being 'saved' itself, is not a passive one. The individual has to actively 'welcome Jesus into their life'.

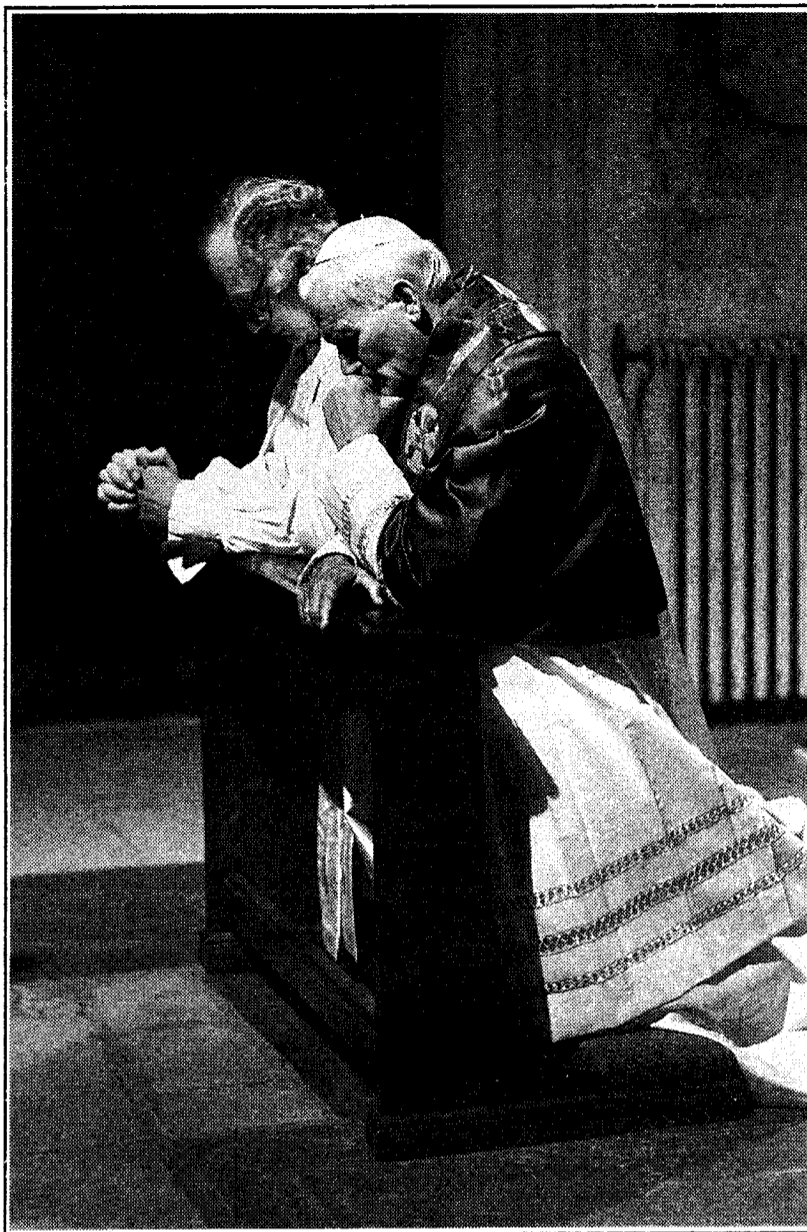
Adversity

Being 'born again' absolves a person of all the things they feel guilty about. It is a process of spiritual empowerment, made all the more attractive if you feel completely helpless in the face of adversity.

Perhaps it is this that explains why evangelical christianity is particularly good at ensnaring women and black people, even more so if they are young.

Guilt is a powerful emotion. When the emotion is transformed into faith, it changes content but not its form. Oppressed people are often made to feel guilty about their oppression.

Evangelists manipulate this by declaring that they 'hate the sin, but love the sinner'. Anyone who has come into con-



Spot the charismatic priest

tact with militant Christian Unions while at college will have heard this one before - applied to women who have had abortions, lesbians and gay men, masturbation, and sex before marriage.

The 1990s has been declared the 'Decade of Evangelism'. The Evangelical Alliance has around a million members in Britain, recruited mainly from the Church of England and Baptist church.

The new Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, is a committed evangelist. The movement is certainly growing again, feeding on rising chaos and confusion.

Without providing a strong ideological alternative, that

does indeed take up the 'personal is political' debates brought out by the women's liberation movement, the left will not be in a position to effectively challenge evangelism and other millenarist ideologies.

There are nevertheless demands that can be campaigned around - separation of church and state, no state funding for any religious education, repeal of the blasphemy laws and so on.

Apart from campaigners around abortion and lesbian and gay rights, the only group that takes the threat of evangelical christianity seriously is *Women Against Fundamentalism*. Revolutionary marxists should start to take it seriously too.

Greening our urban future

Reviving the City

By Dr. Tim Elkin and Duncan McLaren with Mayer Hillman
Published by Friends of the Earth, £12.95

Reviewed by Eileen Gersh

MOST OF us live in cities, and most of us find our environment far from ideal. What's your pet peeve? Housing? Getting to and from work? Finding a place to park? A place for the kids to play? The chances are that you can look it up in this book, find a dis-

cussion of the problem with some relevant statistics, and get some suggestions as to how it might be alleviated.

Although the book is not an easy read it is a fine reference book, packed with information and documentation to support the arguments. What the authors are interested in is 'sustainable development'. By this they mean meeting our present needs without diminishing the ability of future generations to continue to satisfy their needs.

So, are the authors really talking about making the city more liveable for us now?

In an interesting discussion of 'sustainability' and 'liveability', they argue that

sustainability requires the observance of two main principles - 'futuraity' and 'environmental assessment'. By futurity they mean insuring that the needs of future generations are provided for.

This cannot be done without a knowledge of numerous environmental parameters - the available supplies of material resources; their rate of renewal; what limits must be put on their current use to prevent their depletion and deterioration of the environment; and so on.

As urban environments are already inefficient, wasteful and polluting, following the authors' recommendations would make the economy of cities more efficient. It would

also have a positive social effect, giving us an improved quality of life.

Elkin *et al* go beyond the principles of futurity and environment, and invoke in addition the principles of 'equity' and 'participation'. They argue that the city must be treated as a whole, and so planning is essential. Providing for future generations - inter-generational equity - requires long-term planning. Short-term planning only involves thinking about our own generation.

Applying current concepts of economic growth leads to increasing degradation of the environment and increasing the difference between rich and poor. But the authors insist that the pursuit of sus-

tainable development, as opposed to uncontrolled economic growth, can not only be compatible with the goal of equity, but actually requires meeting the needs of those least advantaged: 'to achieve development we must redistribute resources'.

On participation: 'in addition to sharing in the benefits of regeneration, the people of the area should be involved in the planning and decision-making about that regeneration'.

While the word 'socialism' is not mentioned once in this book, Elkin *et al*'s dismissal of current patterns of economic growth, and their commitment to the principles of equity and participation show that they are on our side.

Deadline for right wing merger ballot

'Better for you, Better for Britain' trumpeted Bill Jordan's propaganda machine. The CBI must have been licking their lips.

Jordan's campaign to get a 'yes' vote to create a new right-wing super union has been in top gear since the AEU executive backed merger with the EETPU in December. And he has no qualms, as ever, of using lies, distortion and downright blackmail to back up his case.

First he tried to make sure that any AEU officials opposing the move kept their mouths shut, with a threat that a 'no' vote would endanger their jobs. Then he came out with 'proof' that the vast majority of the membership supported the merger with the scab union

— a sample poll of 3,000, faithfully reported by The Times.

Apparently, 81 per cent had voted 'yes'. But a closer look at the figures indicates otherwise. In fact only one in four voted 'yes'; and less than half of them voted 'yes'. So just over 10 per cent of the total sample said 'yes' — so much for Bill's overwhelming majority.

There is everything still to fight for in the run-up to February's ballot. And the issues at stake are of vital importance for the whole trade union movement.

Jordan and Hammond's campaign risks creating a million-strong union covering the whole engineering industry, either outside the TUC, or threatening to split it. The creation of

a powerful bastion of yellow unionism, offering the bosses single-union deals at every turn, is a major threat to the labour movement.

Bill Jordan was not joking when he said that the merged union would be 'the largest by far in terms of single-union deals, the most attractive by far to inward investing companies'.

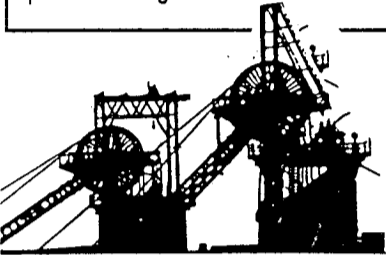
It is these companies' bank balan-



A thing of the past? AEU leader Jordan addresses mass meeting

ces that the merger will serve, not the interests of engineering workers. Bill Jordan's campaign of lies has not won yet. AEU activists need to use the next

few weeks to ensure that the 'no' votes win and fight for a united engineers' union inside the TUC.



British Coal wields the axe again

OVER ONE thousand mining jobs are to be cut in the Selby group of pits in North Yorkshire, it was announced last week.

The jobs will go at Whitmoor, Charlston, Kellingly, Prince of Wales and Kiveton pits. British Coal has refused to rule out the loss of another 2000 jobs in the Yorkshire area. The pits thought to be under threat include Hatfield, Markham Main and Bentley.

British Coal says the future of these pits depends on the demand for coal. Despite being mid-winter, stocks of coal at 45 million tonnes are higher than at any time since the start of the 1984-5 miners' strike.

The high stocks of coal are not surprising. They are not the product of planning by British Coal, but of the decision of the government to allow the electricity industry to buy cheap coal from South Africa, Australia, Poland and even China. Thatchers' project of grinding down the coal industry, by importing cheap-labour foreign coal is marching relentlessly on.



Battling on: Oxford's Pergamon strikers

NUJ hard line wins concessions

Journalists have stepped their fight against both the wave of derecognitions in the press and the victimisation of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) sufferers.

Workers at the Rotherham Advertiser, on strike against derecognition, were joined by more than 100 supporters from the NUJ journalists' union and the print workers' GPMU. The strikers, who have increased

their support by publishing 'The Real Advertiser', have suffered from the refusal of both the GPMU and the NUJ to sanction any secondary action.

So although the strikers are solid, the GPMU refuses to bring its members out in solidarity, despite majority support; and the NUJ has failed to give effective national backing.

Meanwhile, journalists at the Financial Times (FT) have increased pressure on management to withdraw threats against nine RSI sufferers. With the expiry of a 70 per cent strike vote, NUJ members forced concessions from the FT management when they produced an even more solid mandate for action, with more than 80% in favour.

Threats that effectively amounted to compulsory redundancy have now been withdrawn, and more money has been promised for workers taking voluntary redundancy. The climbdown follows a victory in the courts for RSI sufferers in the NCU, the British Telecom workers' union.

These victories are a big step forward; but they show that the only way to stop victimisation is through a solid union response.

Manchester GEC pickets hold firm for jobs

UNTIL they reinstate those that have been sacked we'll be on this gate. We've always fought redundancies! This sums up the militant response of GEC Alstom workers in Manchester to attempts to sack nearly one third of the workforce, on strike for over a month.

Despite hefty profits in 1991, GEC sacked 12 workers and have now threatened to sack a further 225 out of a workforce of around 700. The workers' answer was clear — five out of seven are on strike and maintaining a 24-hour picket. More are joining them each week.

The threatened sackings follow 12,000 others by GEC Alstom in the last two years, and an announcement last year that another 13,000 jobs were to go. This 'productivity' drive had a lot

to do with the company's 346 million profits up to September 1991.

The strike has united shopfloor and office workers from the engineers' union AEU, the general GMB union, and office workers' unions MSF and APEX. Most of those still working are non-union, and some are trainee managers.

Strikers are now going out to win support from other workers. GEC trade unionists in Crawford have started a 2 a week levy to support the action, while donations have come from plants all over Preston and Manchester. French GEC workers struck against sackings last year and may take action again.

Union branches and Labour Parties should take collections for the strikers and send delegations to the picket line.

Write to: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton, Manchester M34 1AF.

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socialist OUTLOOK

London-wide 24-
hour occupations
Tuesday 11 February

DEMONSTRATE!

NUS National March

Wednesday 12 February

Occupy every college!

THE CALL for London-wide 24-occupations comes from January's National Student Activists' Conference, organised by NUS London. The success of last term's occupation movement, and other actions like the rent strikes at Lancaster University and Paisley College, Scotland, shows the mood to fight student poverty clearly exists in colleges right across Britain.

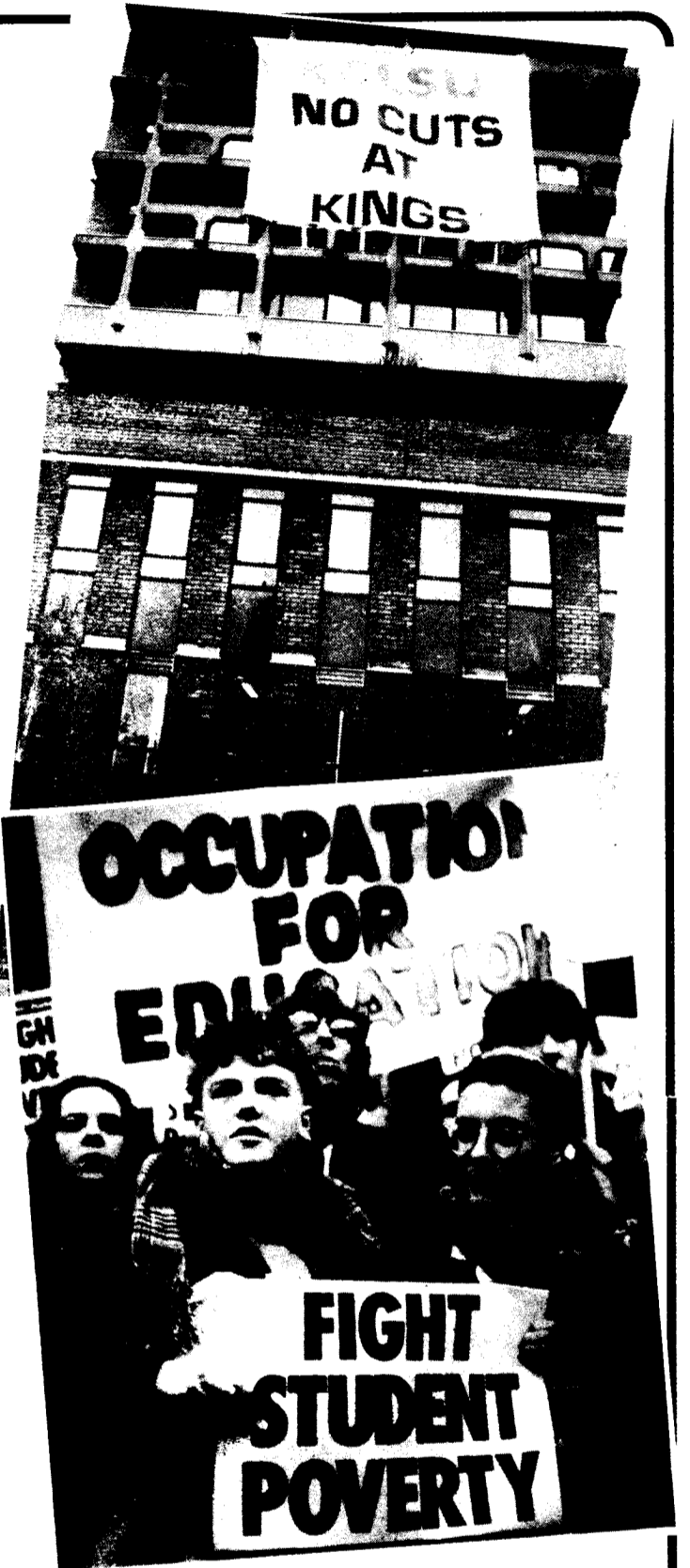
In calling for occupations on the eve of the NUS national demonstration against student poverty, activists hope that successful action will inspire other students on the march to go back to their colleges and build for further, indefinite action.

The 'Don't rock the boat - but wait for a Labour government' policy pursued by the NOLS leadership of NUS, has manifestly failed to stop students plunging into the depths of poverty. It has failed miserably to stop college overcrowding, underfunding, and soaring college rents. From the very beginning of this

cowardly policy, it was always doomed to fail.

Instead of organising an indefinite national occupation of all colleges - a sure way of stopping college managements and the Tories in their tracks - the NUS leadership is preoccupied with spending its scarce resources on birthday parties and a totally undemocratic emergency conference to push through still further undemocratic constitutional changes *a month before the regular Easter conference!* NUS is not even building for its own national demonstration.

Students should ensure that coaches are coming down to London for the February march. They should be building for future actions - including occupations - and they should do everything they can to build a fighting National Union of Students. Stand in your union elections to be a delegate to NUS conference.



Inside: Interview with Greek student leader