

# Socialist OUTLOOK

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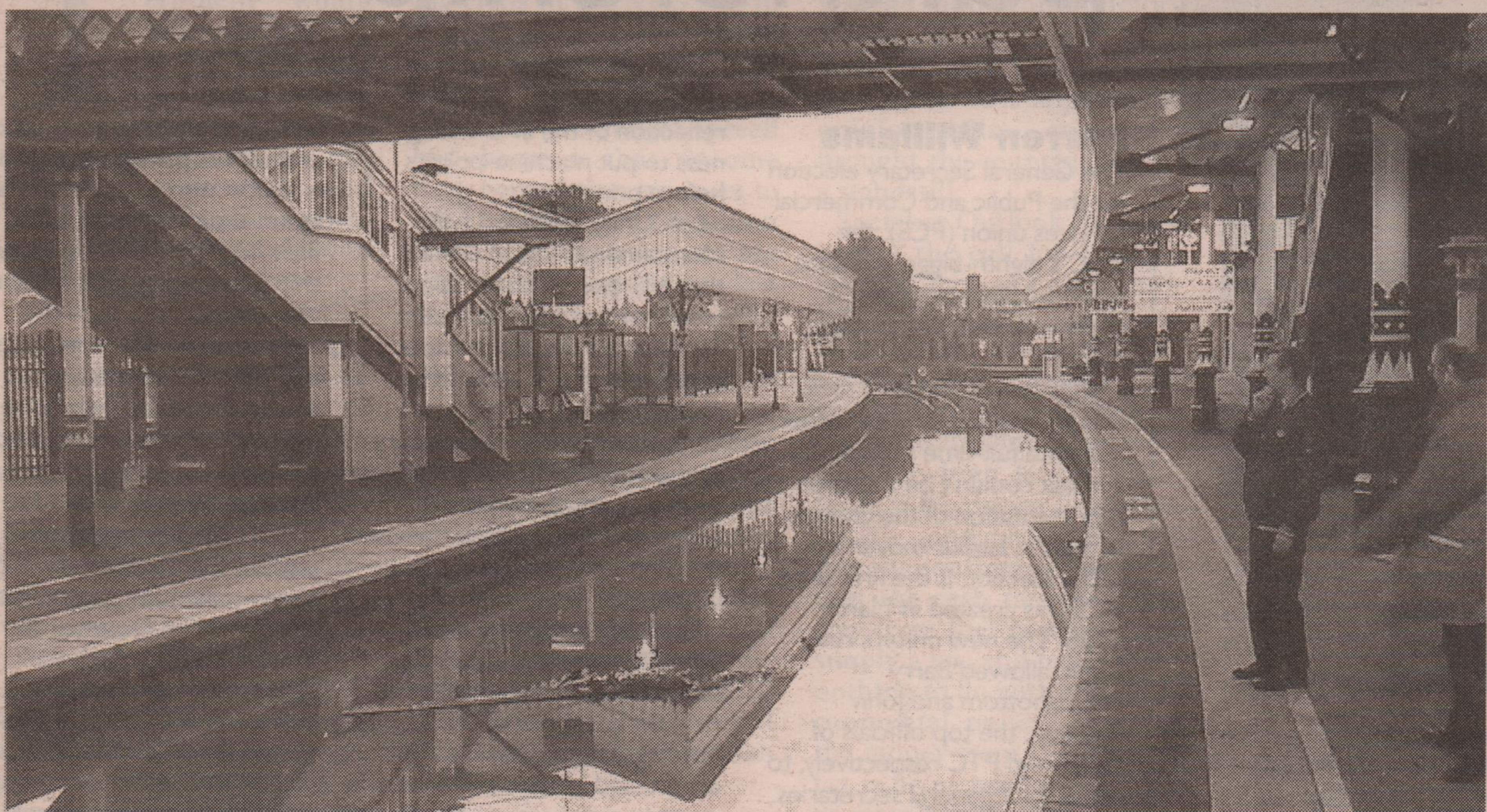
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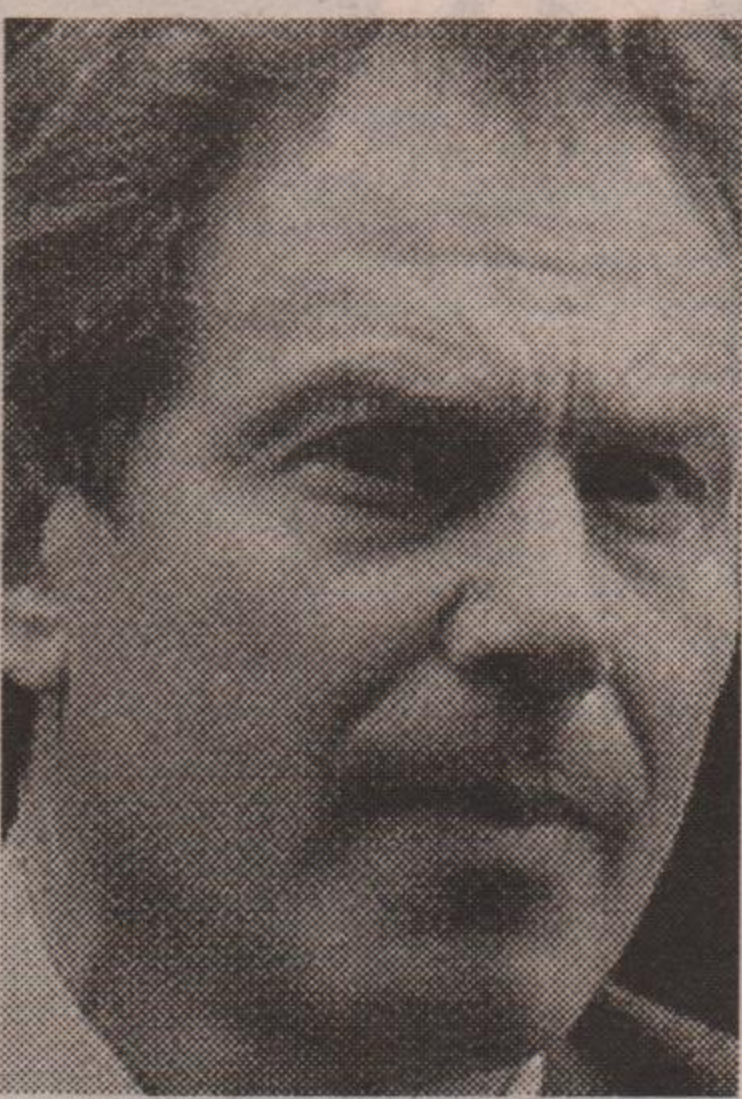


Russia, 10-11



## Ministers flounder, Labour stranded by Blair's policies

# OUT OF THEIR DEPTH!

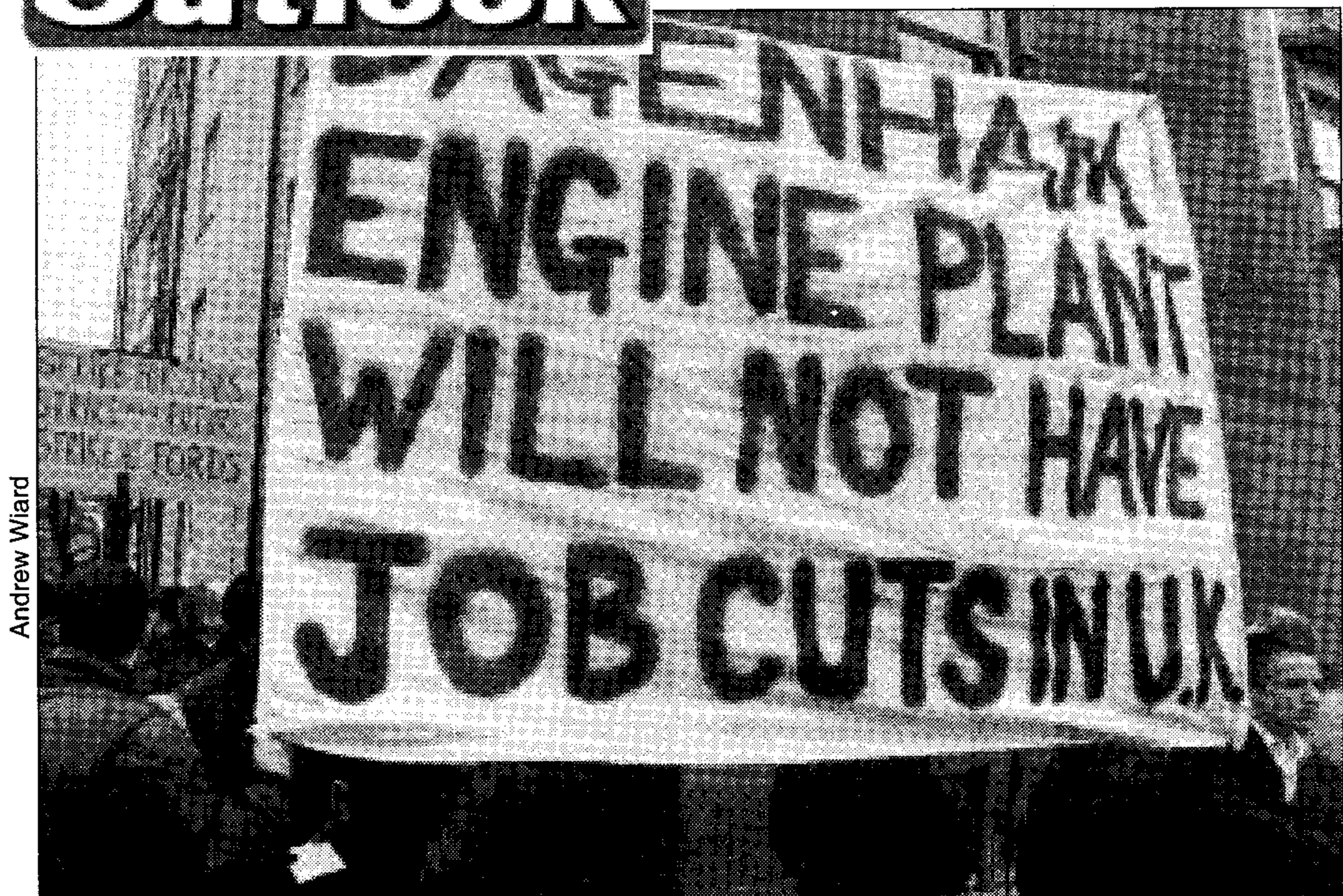


Floods, protests and a collapsing rail network have shown the weaknesses of Tony Blair's apparently all-conquering team.

They have shown that they don't sound so big or so clever once the Tory press

and sections of "Middle England" turn against them. We follow the crisis:

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Andrew Ward

A firm line in 1997: now Ford workers must again give a lead in defending jobs

# Ford workers can lead fight to save jobs

## A BMW worker

CAR WORKERS all over Britain are facing an offensive. Key to this is Fords Dagenham, where car production is due to be ended. The company has refused to back down from closure, all they are offering is a few extra engine production jobs.

In the face of this onslaught, the official union position is to call a mass meeting on the November 15, and issue strike ballot papers the same day.

But what is their strategy for action, and which workers will they involve?

If they only intend to have one day strikes, then this would obviously be a completely inadequate response to the scale of the attack. Their model is already produced in Germany, and it would be quite easy to produce extra there.

If they also intend to involve engine plant workers at Dagenham, then the problem is that engines are also produced at Bridgend, and at Valencia in Spain. These losses would not be so easy to cover, and this shows it is important to involve the whole site.

Dagenham must not be left to fight in isolation.

The announcement that Dagenham was no longer going to share the production of the new Fiesta with Cologne should have led to the calling of a meeting of representatives from all Fords European plants, especially as the package involved Valencia losing jobs to Dagenham.

Instead Woodley demanded that those that buy the cars should produce them, which considering the British motor industry produces about as many cars overall as it buys, seems even more ridiculous than it would otherwise be.

Then he argued that Dagenham produce the new Volvo, and not Ghent in Belgium. Did he discuss this

with any of the European representatives? Are slogans like this likely to build international support?

At the same time all Fords' plants in the UK are in some way another under threat. So rather than just talking, all the unions should hold ballots at all these component plants. This would have a major effect on European-wide production.

Jaguar workers have just rejected a 2 year deal negotiated by Woodley: is there any chance of a link up here, as Jaguar is owned by Ford?

Ford have also recently bought Land Rover, where there is tremendous anger over the banking hours scheme. The recent wage deal there would have been thrown out if Woodley had not been able to manoeuvre successfully.

Determined to prevent a strike that could connect up with Dagenham, he negotiated a 3 month suspension of the scheme for banking hours, at the same time as settling the pay review.

Dagenham workers must not allow the company to pick their time to stop car production: they should vote for action in the union ballot, but they should also demand the involvement of the other UK plants, and call for meetings of European Ford workers.

Individual shop stewards and other representatives of Ford workers should meet wherever possible to discuss such a policy, but this will only be effective if an all-out strike, or preferably an occupation, takes place at Dagenham.

Meanwhile, like the Land Rover workers, the remaining workers from the Rover debacle earlier in the year are paying for the splitting up of the company.

At Longbridge the unions have negotiated an agreement that is about to be put to the workforce which represents a massive attack on conditions. The working week would increase from 35

hours to 37, with a one third cut in break time.

Sick pay would be reduced from 100% to 75%, and there would be an average loss of 5% in shift allowances. For all this they would get a 6.5% increase in basic pay. The workers will lose far more than they gain, and the company has given notice that it wants further discussions on the banking hours scheme (to their advantage, obviously) and on a performance related pay scheme.

Meanwhile Cowley is now a BMW plant, gearing up to produce the new Mini.

Here BMW has proposed the most draconian changes of all. Negotiations have yet to take place, but company proposals involve a return to the 37 hour week and a huge increase in banking hours, up to 300 each way.

This will involve workers working a 46 hour week whenever management want, for 37 hours pay. The company only has to give 2 days notice of changes in the working week.

They propose even more drastic reductions in shift allowances than at Longbridge, with Saturday becoming part of the normal week, total flexibility, and a performance related pay scheme. They also want a reduction in overtime pay, although it is hard to see any being worked with the banking hours system.

Car workers are being driven to fight each other: even Nissan has just introduced a new shift system in Sunderland.

The Ford workers could lead the way to unity for better working conditions. If the companies cannot provide car workers with conditions that give a decent lifestyle then they should be nationalised.

It is clear that the longer shifts are increasing the overproduction of cars so car workers should unite and help to develop a plan for alternative useful production.

# PCS leadership battle: socialism versus social partnership

## Darren Williams

The General Secretary election for the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), the TUC's eighth-biggest affiliate, with 260,000 members, is underway with two contestants.

With one candidate a rank-and-file militant, and the other a Blairite full-time official, the contest couldn't be a clearer representation of the choices facing the labour movement.

The election is the first since PCS was created in March 1998. The new union's rule-book, allowed Barry Reamsbottom and John Sheldon, the top officials of CPSA and PTC respectively, to act as joint general secretaries. Neither was obliged to stand for re-election, since each was within five years of retirement. Two years of working with the autocratic Reamsbottom, however, convinced Sheldon's 'Membership First' group that he shouldn't be allowed to run the union single-handed after their own leader's retirement this year. Consequently, they worked with the left against Reamsbottom's Moderates, to bring the election forward three years.

Reamsbottom launched a legal challenge to this, while simultaneously gearing up for an election battle with Membership First's Hugh Lanning. Assistant General Secretary Lanning is as much a part of the bureaucracy as his opponent. His faction governed PCS in coalition with the Moderates until they fell out this year - and both groups were equally committed to 'social partnership'.

Despite this, Lanning managed to secure the endorsement of the 'official' left within the union. The backing of the Stalinist-led ex-PTC Unity group was no surprise, but a more significant blow was the decision of Left Unity, a broad grouping of most of the authentic left, to do likewise. Left Unity argued that they didn't want to split the anti-Reamsbottom vote. Lanning was supportable, he said, because, despite his politics, he would work with other factions and would not seek to override democratic decisions, as Reamsbottom has done.

The crucial factor in this Left Unity decision, agreed by a narrow margin, was undoubtedly the position of the Socialist Party (SP), the biggest left organisation in PCS. Having run CPSA, through the Broad Left, intermittently during the 1980s, the SP (then Militant) was able to appoint a number of its members as full-time officials. It seems that their preference for working with Lanning rather than Reamsbottom was a key consideration - a sad

reflection of the SP's willingness to put machine-politics before principles.

Left Unity colluded with Membership First to ensure that fifty branch nominations would be required to secure inclusion on the ballot-paper - in order to exclude an independent. Despite this, Mark Serwotka, currently secretary of the Sheffield Benefits Agency branch, came forward with the support of the Socialist Caucus, the SWP and various independents.

Ironically, Serwotka easily won fifty nominations while Reamsbottom did not. He has now dropped out of the election, agreed to drop his legal action, and to take early retirement in eighteen months, in exchange for being allowed to remain in post until then (albeit handing over key duties to his successor).

Had Serwotka not stood, Lanning would have been elected unopposed. Yet, despite the fact that they would have allowed a Blairite to take over without a fight, Left Unity continue to criticise Serwotka, saying that the absence of a contest would have allowed them to press for a new election. Quite how they think they would have achieved this is a mystery. Nevertheless, the Left Unity officers have now, at least, half-heartedly thrown their weight behind Serwotka.

The contest is an unequal one. Lanning has the entire machinery of the union at his disposal and probably the majority of the NEC. The Moderates are almost certain to put aside their animosity towards Lanning to unite against Serwotka. Probably most branch activists will support Serwotka, but they will need to work hard to get the vote out.

The stakes are high. Lanning represents the legacy of the past twenty years: the capitulation of union leaderships to a Government offensive. The workforce was reduced by 250,000 between 1979 and 1997, through cuts and privatisation. National collective bargaining was abolished and a pay freeze and performance-related pay introduced. Yet 'new realist' officials refused to mobilise the membership; and silenced critics by undermining democracy.

The situation has become even worse since New Labour's election. Tory policies of breaking up and commercialising the civil service have continued. A further 20,000 jobs had been lost within two years of the election - more than 8,000 to the private sector. And the union leadership's attitude has become even more craven. Under the Tories, officials at least paid lip

service to opposition, but now criticism of government policy is almost non-existent, as they assert their unanimity with Blair on the need for partnership between employers and workers.

Mark Serwotka represents a real political alternative. An activist for twenty years, he is a militant socialist who has led strikes in every branch he has been in. He has pledged to lead a campaign against low pay, for the abolition of PRP, for a new minimum wage of least the European Decency and for all members to reach their grade maximum within five years. He will fight privatisation, oppose 'partnership' and ensure that members facing attack by management are given full support and representation, including legal representation at Employment Tribunals. Moreover, he will refuse the £70,000 pa General Secretary salary, and accept a wage linked to that of PCS's low-paid members.

If Serwotka were to win, it would represent perhaps the biggest defeat for New Labour and social partnership in the trade union movement so far. It is vital that activists work to deliver this result.

## What's ON Nov 14

Protest at Leader of Hackney Labour Group's surgery over cuts, 7pm, Hawkersley Court Community Centre, Albion Road, London N16

## Nov 15

Student demo: Grants not Fees 11.30 Malet St

## Nov 23

Public meeting with Serbian trade unionist Dragomir Olujić, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, 7.00pm

## Nov 30

Birmingham Socialist Outlook Palestine forum

## Dec 2-3

European Marches conference - Paris

## Dec 6-7

Nice demonstrations

## Dec 9

● Socialist Campaign Group Network conference, Kingsway Princetown, Sidmouth St, London 10.30-5pm

● UNISON CFDU National Conference, ULU, Malet St, 10.30 am Details from Glen Kelly, 37 Linale House, N1 7QH

# Has Gordon bailed out Blair?



*HACKNEY council has been forced to back down on some of its planned cuts after two weeks of nursery occupations. But councillors on November 6 still voted through a £4.5m cuts package, sheltering behind the protection of lines of police. Council trade unions are balloting for strike action and community protestors are gearing up for the next round of battles.*

Andrew Ward

**T**ony Blair's government would have hoped by early November to be basking in the glory of Gordon Brown's budget hand-outs to the NHS and education, and preparing the way for a push-over win at a general election next spring.

Instead, through a combination of bad policies and rotten luck, they wound up stranded in a rising tide of public frustration and hostility, waiting for Gordon Brown's pre-Budget statement as a lifeline to haul them back to popular support.

It appears that his well-leaked proposals for a £5 a week increase for single pensioners and £8 for a couple may have defused the anger that had been stoked up in the pensioners' movement; but only after serious political damage has been done.

The concessions on fuel taxes – offering substantial reductions on the rarest type of unleaded petrol, available in only one tenth of filling stations – and on excise duty for lorries (with exemption for tractors to pacify the farmers!) are said to be worth the equivalent of a 4p per gallon cut in the duty on petrol. It seems that this might be enough to cut the base of support from the fuel price protests.

But Brown has been digging Labour out of a hole he dug in the first place. The government is reaping the whirlwind of its own dismal and pathetic record since Blair swept to power on a tide of anti-Tory sentiment, promising change.

**M**uch of the optimism and goodwill which buoyed up Labour's poll ratings after May 1997 appears now to have evaporated: but so, too, have the claimed public relations skills of the Millbank team.

Accustomed as they are to getting everything their own way, ministers and Millbank spinners alike seem quite unable to recognise how unpopular key policies are – both with Labour's core voters, and with their chosen base of support, conservative Daily Mail-reading elements in "middle England". Nor do they appear able to cope with the increasingly hostile onslaught on New Labour from the once friendly tabloid and broadsheet press.

For those eager to see the back of Thatcherism, the changes have been few and far between. Brown insisted on sticking to Tory spending limits for Labour's first three

years – triggering a mounting crisis in the NHS and in education – and refused point blank to tax the wealthy or big business.

Brown's pre-budget speech has boasted that income from corporation tax is set to fall by a massive £2.5 billion since his concessions to big and medium businesses last March. And the financial press has delighted at his decision to continue not to tax the oil companies on their North Sea oil earnings, even as they pocket astronomical profits (Shell alone creaming off £2m per hour on the latest figures).

Instead of taxing those most able to pay, New Labour bumped up indirect taxes, including the so called "fuel price escalator". But they also went further than the Tories.

**R**ather than tax all those on higher earnings – which would obviously include high paid graduates – they came up with a new, grossly unfair tax: on the parents of potential graduates, who start paying fees on a family income of just £17,000. Not only has Labour imposed university tuition fees, they have also abolished what remained of the student grant, already savaged by Tory cuts.

Labour's failure to fund local government has brought a constant round of cuts, culminating in the "meltdown" in Hackney, where New Labour councillors are joining forces with the Tories to axe key services in one of Britain's poorest boroughs.

To make matters worse, Labour has shown no willingness to invest in or develop a serious public transport system, resulting in a growing daily sense of chaos as big cities flounder in ever longer queues of traffic.

None of this need have happened: all of these problems flow directly from New Labour's conservative policies, and all created a backdrop to an autumn of misery for ministers – and millions of people.

We would accept that it was rotten luck to find the electorate's spirits depressed by a miserable summer. But then came the sharp rise in oil prices, boosting the profits of Blair's pals in the oil companies – and an unprecedented nationwide campaign on fuel prices.

This brought together an unlikely alliance of lorry drivers and farmers, acting with the connivance of the oil company bosses. Such was the level of disillusion

with Blair's team that this strange and contradictory line-up, demanding a cut in duty on petrol and diesel, won up to 90% approval in opinion polls – even as it brought the country close to a standstill.

Socialist Outlook has supported the call for a cut in taxes on fuel, and other indirect taxes which disproportionately hit those on lower incomes, while leaving the wealthy largely untouched.

Gordon Brown's response – that the high level of fuel taxes is necessary to sustain health and education – merely confirmed our view that the cash raised in this way from fuel is purely and simply a tax, and has little or nothing to do with any environmental policy. None of the money from this "green" tax is being used to improve or extend public transport.

It got worse: the stand-off at the Brighton conference over Labour's broken pledges to the pensioners underlined the general let-down of Labour's core supporters, and the extent to which Labour's Millbank-controlled constituency activists are now out of touch with public opinion.

Brown's response was to add a new claim: that high fuel taxes are necessary if pensioners are to get an increase next year.

**O**f course nobody could have predicted that some of the worst autumn weather for decades would inundate towns and cities across the country, compounding the dislocation of the rail network, and bringing whole areas to a soggy halt.

But why was the rail network already on its knees? The train crash near Hatfield that killed four people and injured dozens more, and led to an immediate panic shutdown of track for long-overdue safety checks and repairs, was a predictable – and predicted – result of the dire level of maintenance on the privatised railways.

True, New Labour weren't the ones who carved up and flogged off the railways, creating such a dog's dinner of a network. But as the call for renationalisation has grown from all sides, and even some Tories have been forced to admit how they bungled the privatisation, Labour ministers have done nothing to resolve the problems.

Instead they have attempted to use the feeble stick of "regulation", coupled with the lavish carrot of growing subsidies to the various profit-hungry train operators and other rail com-

panies. The result has been a real disaster: a third-rate service, and two major train wrecks in the last year, while gleeful shareholders and directors pocket even more cash.

The failure to renationalise the rail industry is not just a result of Labour's traditional timidity in the face of big business, with whose bosses Blair, Brown and co seek to build a "partnership". It flows from New Labour's eager acceptance of the neo-liberal, Thatcherite view that the private sector is superior – in "efficiency" and in quality – to the public sector.

That's why – even as the privatised rail industry's contempt for passenger safety was so mercilessly exposed – Labour ministers have been pressing relentlessly ahead with even more privatisation, seeking to flog off the Air Traffic Control system and part privatise the London tube network.

The scandalous neglect of the rail infrastructure has been met by Labour's ... increased subsidies and grants to Railtrack!

In the same way, Labour's answer to the historic under-resourcing of the NHS has been to turn to the private sector. Private consortia are building new hospitals, and will lease them to the NHS for decades of guaranteed profit under the "Private Finance Initiative". The NHS Plan looks forward to PFI projects totalling an estimated £7.6 billion, siphoning vast amounts from the public purse into private firms.

**H**ealth Secretary Alan Milburn has outraged hard-pressed NHS nursing and medical staff by announcing a "concordat" with private medical firms, under which private hospital beds would be used to treat

NHS waiting list patients when there are not sufficient NHS beds available. The fact that this will simply drain off more staff trained by the NHS and more money required for NHS Trusts does not appear to have occurred to New Labour's blinkered "modernisers".

These deliberate moves towards privatisation and bolstering the desperately unpopular private medical industry come after years in which Labour's cash squeeze has taken a heavy toll on NHS Trusts. Ministers are now concerned that they may not be able to spend all of the extra money they have been allocated this year in Brown's budget, because of problems recruiting and retaining qualified staff on miserable wages.

This is why we are already being softened up to expect that – despite the extra cash available – any bad weather or flu outbreak is likely to bring yet another NHS winter crisis, in the immediate run-up to the planned election date.

Labour's prostration before big business is also typified by the publication of the recent whitewash inquiry into the BSE epidemic, which has done so much to wreck the fortunes of Britain's smaller farmers.

**T**he inquiry conspicuously failed to point the finger of blame at the deregulation of the agricultural feed industry, which seized on the opening created by the Thatcher government, and – in naked pursuit of profit – began systematically feeding ground up cows' brains and spinal cord to cattle. Not one feed company has paid a penny piece in compensation for the billions in losses they have inflicted on the industry and the taxpayer. Letting these firms get

away with their actions is symptomatic of the New Labour view that the profits of these so-called "social partners" are sacrosanct, while the jobs and living standards of working people must take second place.

42 months of New Labour rule have done the unthinkable: they have cheesed off Labour's core support, but given new credibility to the Tories, and to a whole range of right wing and anti-social pressure groups – from the Countryside (pro-hunting) Alliance, to the racists and fascists cashing on the paranoia created by ministers over immigration and asylum.

**H**aving decided to turn a deaf ear to any public protest or alternative approach, Blair must now depend upon the response to Brown's pre-budget statement – and the pathetic disarray of Hague's increasingly extremist Tory Party – to decide whether or not he can risk an election next Spring, or whether he should wait for a better moment.

For the left in the labour movement and those campaigning to reverse the policies of a government which most of the time seems neither to hear nor see the anger of its natural core supporters, the message is clear: the pressure must be stepped up. Brown has clearly made some concessions under pressure from pensioners and from the fuel protests: let's see more campaigning, more action, more confrontations in the run-up to the election.

The building of a strong working class and progressive opposition to New Labour's neo-liberalism is the best way to prevent legitimate grievances and frustration being annexed by the Tories and the far right.

Top Eurocrat leads neo-liberal challenge at Nice summit

**Red  
Alert!**

**Susan George**

EUROPEAN UNION  
Commissioner Pascal Lamy and the transnational corporations close to the Commission have good reason to believe that the Inter-Governmental

Conference [IGC] to be held in Nice 7-8 December will modify Article 133 of the Amsterdam Treaty. If this happens, the struggle against corporate-led globalisation will receive a serious setback.

Although treaty revisions may sound technical and boring, the implications are of the utmost gravity:

Article 133 covers the relations between the Commission and member countries with regard to international trade.

Trade, according to the Treaty, is an area of "mixed competence" between the Commission and the 15 member states, at least in the crucial fields of services, intellectual property and investment.

This means that national parliaments have to approve Agreements concerning these subjects and member country governments can veto them.

A 1994 judgment of the European Court guarantees mixed competence in these three areas [services, intellectual property, investment] whereas industrial goods are governed by the "qualified majority voting" system which gives broad powers to the Commission.

The French government which until recently opposed any changes is now proposing to modify Article 133.

Since July, Commissioner Lamy has undertaken a campaign to obtain broad powers and qualified majority voting for services [including health, education, audio-visual, transport, environment and all public services]; intellectual property [including Genetically Manipulated Organisms] and

investments [along the lines of the failed MAJ].

In September, he announced to a French Parliamentary Commission that "only France and Spain remained to be convinced" of the need to change in Article 133 to give the Commission far greater power.

We have now learned that the French government is espousing the "socialist" Commissioner Lamy's cause.

The preparatory texts for the IGC, under the French Presidency, no longer even suggest that Article 133 should be left as it is; that member states should retain the veto and national parliaments the power to ratify future trade agreements.

The texts now circulating propose three "options", each of which would significantly extend the powers of the Commission, and dramatically reduce democratic space and citizen involvement.

The differences between the "options" France is now proposing concern mainly points of detail.

Option A has two variants: the first places only services and intellectual property under qualified majority voting; the second adds investment. This doesn't matter greatly, since the services agreement in the framework of the World Trade Organisation [GATS] protects the investments of foreign service suppliers anyway.

Option B proposes that

member states can change Article 133 by qualified majority voting, in order to include the three presently excluded areas of services, intellectual property and investment.

Here is a question for legal specialists: since the European Court says that Article 133 does not apply to these three areas, and that any decision concerning them has to be unanimous, how can this decision be changed by qualified majority voting?

This sounds suspiciously like a conjuror's trick.

Option C consists in a Protocol of 8 articles and 19 paragraphs in all which would apply only to negotiations within the WTO, which is, of course, by far the most important forum for trade negotiations. In this case the Commission would have far greater powers than today—not just over the three areas of services, intellectual property and investment but over all the Agreements overseen by WTO – more than two dozen all told.

The Commission's negotiating mandate would be set by qualified majority voting, and the Commission would represent all member states in the Dispute Resolution Body.

Commissioner Lamy wants trade liberalisation across the board; what he is asking for can be compared to the fast-track powers which the US Congress refused for



President Clinton.

If any of these changes to Article 133 – whether Option A, B or CC – are accepted, the door will be open to neo-liberal doctrine and corporate demands with which both the Commission and Lamy agree wholeheartedly.

The structures of European government will become even more opaque, centralised and anti-democratic.

There is still time to stop the revision of Article 133. Our governments must not be allowed to hand over their

sovereignty in this area, however desirable it might be to have qualified majority voting in other areas, for example social policy, where a single government like the UK can block policies which would be advantageous to citizens.

The gains of the past 100 years at least, including our social rights, our public services, health-care and education systems, are all at risk. We must mobilise against any changes to Article 133 and prevent France from capitulating in Nice.

**Gearing up the  
ATTAC for Nice**

One of the key organisations building for the demonstration in Nice on December 6 called by the ETUC is ATTAC (Association for a Tobin Tax to Assist the Citizen). Together with the Euromarch network, ATTAC is also calling further action for the opening of the European summit itself on December 7. On October 21 representatives from ATTAC from a dozen European countries met in Paris to discuss plans for these activities PETE COOPER reports:

The meeting discussed the state of the anti-neoliberal globalisation movement after Prague. While international financial institutions and European governments are accelerating their drive towards free market policies, the resistance demonstrated in Birmingham, Seattle, and Prague has begun to create cracks in the previously monolithic edifice of global capitalism.

But divergences of aims and methods amongst the anti-neoliberal movement, made

the trade unionists-to-turtles unity achieved in Seattle exceptional. The trade union movement was for example essentially absent from Prague, reflecting the European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) failure to coherently or consistently oppose the neo-liberal drift, (comparing unfavourably with even the US AFL-CIO trade union confederation).

**North/South divide**

There are also North South divides, reflected in the divergences between Jubilee 2000's acceptance of the G7's "conditionality" for Third World debt cancellation, against Jubilee South's opposition to it, and between the radical Reclaim the Streets layer and NGOs such as Friends of the Earth who denounced the "violence" of S26 in advance. The risk of losing our local roots to "globe trotting" to the next summit was also highlighted.

None of this takes away from the major successes the movement has had both in the numbers it has brought into activity and way it has highlighted so many of the ravages wrought by globalisation among far broader layers than have made it to the protests. Perhaps the best way to sum up the current strength of the movement is that it is strong enough to have been able to prevent or hold back some new assaults, but it

has not so far had the ability to impose its own agenda.

In looking particularly at what was at stake at the Nice Summit, the discussion focused first on the Charter of Basic Rights, our criticisms, and our alternatives to it. There was general agreement that the Charter adds no new rights to those "enjoyed" at national level.

They are primarily individual rights already enshrined in the European Convention of Human Rights to which all EU governments are already signatories, and which has recently been incorporated into English and Welsh law.

The social and economic rights constitute a regression by comparison with the constitutions of several EU states (which guarantee the right to work, housing, social security and to strike); the United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man (sic), and the European Social Charter.

The ETUC on the other hand is supporting the Charter of Basic Rights, simply demanding the addition of the right to strike at the European level. The delegate from Denmark explained that this support implied support for the EU, meant that the Danish Trade Union movement is not mobilising for Nice.

Others advocated an alterna-

tive European Charter of Social Rights drawn up by the European Marches.

The idea of "best practice" was invoked, i.e. the best individual, social and economic rights of any country in Europe should be adopted by all. It was agreed to oppose the Charter as the best basis for unity.

The other main issue raised was the proposed amendment to Clause 133 of the Treaty of Rome, which threatens to extend complete trade liberalisation to services, intellectual



Many places: one theme. Protesters at the G8 summit in Okinawa earlier this year

property rights, and investment. This should be used to make clear to people that what is at stake here is far broader than the crucial, but limited issue of trade union rights being focused on by most of the official unions.

The task between now and December 6 is to convince those who were part of or inspired by Seattle and Prague that the same issues are at

stake here too. Then on December 6 itself, we will try to convince as many as possible of the 70,000 the ETUC expects to mobilise as possible that the official agenda will not be sufficient to protect our rights - as trade unionists, users of public services or indeed as people living on a planet increasingly under threat from environmental degradation.

**WSF's Brazil conference**

The World Social Forum will take place in Porto Alegre, Brazil on January 25-30 2001 at the same time as the World Economic Forum is held in Davos, Switzerland. The World Economic Forum has been one of the key think-tanks behind the drive to neo-liberal globalisation.

The World Social Forum, backed by the independent trade unions, the MST (the movement of landless peasants in Brazil) and radical NGO's will give opponents of this trajectory the opportunity to map our alternatives.

As Noam Chomsky recently wrote: "The World Social Forum offers opportunities of unparalleled importance to bring together popular forces from many and varied constituencies from the richer and poor countries alike, to develop constructive alternatives that will defend the overwhelming majority of the world's population from the attack on fundamental human rights, and to move on to break down illegitimate power concentrations and extend the domains of justice and freedom."

Registration will close at the end of November. For more information about the World Social Forum, see:

www.worldsocialforum.org or  
www.forumsocialmundial.org.br

# Bring back free education: scrap student fees!

Jack Johnson

The introduction of student fees and loans, a major step to privatisation of education, is presented by Labour ministers as an egalitarian measure, designed to produce more money for education, levied from those who will get better jobs in the future.

But it is obvious to everybody – except a well paid labour minister, or somebody hoping to become one – that if you charge fees at the point of education, then the people who will have greatest problems paying them are the poorest working class families.

These are also the people who will feel most reticent to get into huge debt through the loan system, since they come from a position where debt is seen as a trap.

But Labour ministers claim in reply that their new system is means tested: only a third of students pay the full fees, another third pay a proportion, and a third pay nothing.

However the government don't means test the student, but their parents, who in most cases pay the fees, making a nonsense of the argument that this is a tax on high earning graduates.

At 18 years you are old enough to vote, fight wars, or work for low wages: but if you are a student you are seen only as an appendage to your parents.

And what a means test it is! Payment towards fees starts if the parents' joint incomes



are over £17,000. The only exemption from these earnings, before tax, used to be mortgage-interest. This year the government has even dropped this exemption.

So who are the third of students who don't pay fees? The one-third of the population who go to university are heavily dominated by the middle and upper classes: only 25 per cent are from blue-collar families. How many middle-class families earn less than £17,000? Even most blue-collar families earn more than this.

Parents whose joint income is over £33,000 (only just above the government's figures for average earnings per person!) pay the whole fee.

Yet ministers claim only one third pay the full fee.

The sums don't add up.

One sixth of students went to public school: clearly all these come from wealthy families, and must pay the full fee.

So can it be true that only one-sixth of the families whose sons or daughters went to state schools had a combined income of more than £33,000?

The figures are becoming ever even less believable: the government claims that when the threshold for payment is raised next year to joint earnings of £20,000, half the people will pay nothing.

Either the government is lying, or tens of thousands of well-off families have found a way around the system.

Baroness Blackstone, the

government's education spokesperson in the House of Lords, said in a letter to the *Guardian* that "generous loans" [sic!] were available to students.

## Gobbled up

In fact the loans available are £3,800 in each of the first two years, and £3,300 in the third. In many areas this would all be gobbled up by students' rent.

Most landlords make students pay for 10 or 11 months. So how would the Baroness like to live on a few hundred pounds a year?

This has to cover food, clothes, travel (with train fares soaring, and with the cheapest housing usually requiring a bus ride to college), books, entertainment,

and everything else.

It is clearly impossible to live on this.

So poorer students have to go to work. All have to work during the holidays, not so they can travel around the world, but to have money for term-time. Most also have to do paid work during term-time itself.

How can you study and work?

What this government wants to do, following on Tory policy, is to reduce the idea of education to a financial issue: it is seen as no more than preparing to better yourself financially.

Families that have made financial sacrifices are seen as more likely to pressure their sons or daughters to get well-paid jobs.

The students themselves will be lumbered on graduation with debt which from the end of this term will be in the region of £20,000 each (£10,000 student loans, along with debts to banks and other lenders). None of this debt is interest free: interest is charged straight away, at inflation rate.

So graduates are forced to look for jobs on a salary high enough to pay this

back – as well as put a roof over their heads. As business gets more control of the education system through donations and sponsored research at universities, so graduates are being produced whose sole aim is to earn more money.

Any question of developing themselves culturally, or helping develop society is seen as a side issue.

But ministers know that many students will not be able to get well paid jobs. That's why they have lowered the threshold for starting to repay loans to £10,000 from £15,000.

This threshold is worked out a weekly basis – so if in any week you earn more than 1/52 of £10,000, you immedi-

ately start repaying your student loan.

Are £10,000-earnings high? Could Blunkett and his colleagues live on this?

Under the old system, student grants were paid on a means tested basis, so the richest families did not get them: and there were no fees.

The Tories turned part of these grants into loans, but it was the Labour Party that finished the job, driving the final decisive nails into the coffin of free higher education.

What is the solution?

All education should be free. If the ministers are really worried that there are too many high earning graduates, then they could easily put the higher rates of tax back on for the top earners – the progressive tax system that the Tories scrapped.

This would pay many times over for free education, and negate the need for any business finances in the education system.

The only reason students are paying fees and only getting loans, is so that the rich can continue to pocket the Tory tax cuts.

Some students are still fighting fees and loans and are fighting to keep financial interests out of education.

In the forefront are those refusing to pay fees, (there are at least 50 of these in Oxford) these should be supported with demonstrations all over the country.

The national demonstration called by the NUS on November 15 should be supported. Wherever possible demonstrations should be turned into occupations.

There should be calls on the trade unions for support, since working-class students are the most affected.

Student bodies should cooperate with Trades Councils, asking local union branches to seek support throughout the union structures.

David Blunkett and other Labour ministers must be told that their policy is not working, and cannot work. They must act urgently to change it before they wreck the lives of thousands more young people.

## No tears as Woodhead jumps ship

Gill Lee, President Lewisham Teachers' association (personal capacity)

Chris Woodhead who made his name under the Tories, was kept on by Blair to continue a policy of bullying teachers into, ostensibly, 'raising standards'.

The result of the Tory Policies Labour continued, and the macho management style enshrined in Ofsted is increasingly bearing its own malformed fruit: a growing teacher shortage which has already resulted in schools on 4-day weeks and will inevitably end with thousands of pupils failing to get the exam results they need.

There are over two thousand teaching vacancies

across the country, a thousand in London alone. Morale among teachers is at an all time low, and the working through of performance related pay and performance management will make things even worse. By the year 2006 half of teachers will be over 50.

Labour has increasingly resorted to desperate measures to recruit: training salaries of £6,000, an extra £4,000 for studying a 'shortage' subject and from next September £5,000 for 'fast track' trainees.

But recruitment figures are still around 2,000 under target – a shortage of crisis dimensions looms. Woodhead will soon be able to regale Labour for 'falling standards' from the safety of his leader column in *The Telegraph*, omitting of

course to mention that the demoralisation, stress and fear of failure that has driven many teachers out of the job, were once his favoured tools of coercion:

"An element of threat is not necessarily a bad thing. I personally respond to threats. The education system has been immune to any kind of threat for too long" he said in September 1994.

Blair needed Woodhead to help implement and police policies teachers would have previously seen as unimaginable coming from a Labour Government. Labour awarded him a 34% salary increase when teachers got a pittance. They used the threat of an Ofsted failure to drive home the attack on mixed ability teaching and the implementation of the

literacy hour.

Ofsted's labelling of schools as successes or failures has increased the polarisation of education and the breakdown of the comprehensive system. But some of Labour's policies had come into conflict with Woodhead's even more right-wing ideas.

On performance related pay for example, Woodhead believed money should be given directly to schools to pay teachers what they wished, rather than implemented through the bureaucratic, centralised scheme favoured by Labour.

He wanted to see LEA's completely dismantled. He refused to be interviewed by the Commission for Racial Equality about the impact of educational policies on the achievement of Black pupils.

He argued that affairs between teachers and sixth formers could be an 'educative' experience at the same time as Labour was making them illegal.

Concern was also expressed by some key Labour figures about the unregulated system of contracted Ofsted inspections: a concern which may come to a head over the judicial review being sought by Crown Woods School in Greenwich over its April Ofsted failure which resulted in the school being placed in special measures.

But will anything really change with Woodhead's departure? His immediate successor Mike Tomlinson previously told journalists he didn't give a 'monkey's toss' about teachers.

But Blair will surely use

Woodhead's resignation to reshape Ofsted's image and put in his own new-Labour strategist.

Even though his sons go to a selective school where the effects of a crisis in teacher recruitment will be cushioned, he cannot be unaware of the growing danger to Labour's cry of 'education, education, education'.

Teachers' trade unions should take this opportunity and mobilise their members to demand the abolition of performance related pay, increased education funding, against the proscriptive National Curriculum policed by Ofsted and for decent pay for all teachers.

Only then will the crisis beginning to hit education be truly averted.

# Socialists must say no to Leeds purge of SWP

**Alan Thornett, (for  
International  
Socialist Group)**

The development of the Socialist Alliances in England since the Coventry conference, which agreed to launch a major campaign for the forthcoming General Election campaign, has been impressive.

In most major cities where the Socialist Alliance has not previously existed, well attended launch rallies have been held, while in places where there was previous organisation activists are getting down to deciding constituencies and candidates for the challenge.

Within this very positive move forward, however, there have been some problems particularly with the attitude of the Socialist Party (SP) which has sought to put its own sectarian interests before that of the Alliances as a whole.

In addition there has been a major problem within the Leeds Left Alliance, a formation which developed in parallel to the first round of Socialist Alliances, and was created by a group of people mainly expelled from Leeds North East CLP by Blairite witch-hunters.

## Witch hunt

Now they are conducting their own witch hunt against the SWP in a tone reminiscent of the late Woodrow Wyatt, and his notorious anti-communist rantings in his *Sunday Mirror* column.

It all started with a proposal by the executive to reduce members of the SWP from full membership to 'associate' membership, thus explicitly denying them the right to vote in meetings or to hold elected office in the LLA.

This was 'justified' on the basis that the SWP supposedly packed the Socialist Alliance conference in Coventry and so pushed through an over-centralised structure against the will of the majority of the rest.

This outrageous proposal was never put to a vote at full meeting; instead a postal ballot was held. Neil Kinnock should be proud of them.

The witch hunting tone of both the Executive resolu-

tion and an accompanying letter from the executive combined with the sheer volume of misinformation and downright lies involved ensured that they would win the vote.

The SWP were allowed to make a statement which went out with the ballot paper, but this could easily be dismissed on the basis of "they would say that wouldn't they?" Others whose defence of the SWP would have been much more effective were not allowed a statement.

## Rigged ballot

Even the questions on ballot paper were rigged. Voters were not asked to vote for or against the Executive proposals, but to vote for or against 'the decision of the executive of the LLA to safeguard the group against takeover by the SWP'.

The idea that SWP packed the Coventry conference flies in the face of both simple arithmetic and a half rational assessment of its decisions.

In fact the biggest single delegation was the Socialist Party, with about 150 present. Of the rest, the SWP had about 120, there were about 50 from other far left groups. The remaining 100 were either from other campaigns or individual activists.

This make up was demonstrated by the fact that no single organisation could win anything without support. The SWP lost some resolutions it saw as crucial; the SP won some it believed vital.

This most obvious example was on the controversial issue of the make-up of the election committee, where the SWP and SP had different positions, and that of the SP was agreed.

Further the structure adopted was not highly centralised, but a decentralised, flexible one specifically designed to accommodate groups like the LLA which might want to keep their own name or run a distinctive campaign, but as a part of the Alliances.

Of course it is a matter of political judgement what is centralised and what is not. Everything is relative, as they say. Certainly the Socialist



*Nellist: hasn't joined stand against Leeds witch-hunt*

Party who are opposed to the Alliances being a politically cohesive initiative with any real form of national direction have criticised Coventry along these same lines. They want the loosest possible arrangement in order to stand their own candidates irrespective of the wishes of others in a locality.

For the International Socialist Group on the other hand, the way to build the most effective alternative to Blairism and get the best result in the election is to build the broadest possible unity. For us the decisions of the Coventry conference are the minimum necessary for a serious and coherent General Election challenge.

## Found out

In Leeds itself the SWP have never packed a meeting of the LLA. It would have been counter-productive for them to have done so. The only meeting in which they ever had a majority was after the Executive had adopted its resolution, and the SWP had found out about it - although not from the EC itself.

By relying on a report of a meeting that most members of the LLA were not at, the Executive were able to whip up fear and paranoia.

The Executive won the ballot to exclude the SWP by 38 votes to 34. This was not surprising given the extreme bias in the 'information' made available. But the whole exercise had dealt a heavy blow to the cause of left unity in Leeds.

So what are the politics behind this bureaucratic manoeuvre using the methods of the right?

There seems to be knee-jerk resentment that the SWP have come into the Alliances late and are encroaching on 'our patch'. There is a complete inability



*Socialist unity worked in London in May: why not try it in Leeds?*

precisely been, and are, an alliance between revolutionary and non revolutionary (reformist) organisations and individuals. This is the strength of the alliances, a broad alliance of the left building an alternative to Blairism.

Any attempt to drive revolutionaries out of the Alliances would be disastrous. This was the first of Arthur Scargill's many mistakes in attempting to build the SLP. It became an irrelevant rump and the Socialist Alliances would go that way as well.

Of course the revolutionary organisations have a responsibility as well a responsibility not to seek to impose their own revolutionary perspectives onto the Socialist Alliances in an arbitrary way. But that has not happened, either nationally or within Leeds.

All this raises the question of the role of the Socialist Party in the events in Leeds, particularly since it has a member on the Executive of the LLA, and the letters and statements from the Executive repeatedly stress that all its decisions were unanimous.

## Notable omission

It is also significant that a statement adopted by the Executive of the Socialist Alliances nationally, strongly objecting to the moves against the SWP was signed by all the officers except Dave Nellist.

The current edition of the *Socialist* (November 3) is mealy mouthed about the developments in Leeds, to say the least.

Whilst it says that the decision of the ballot was unfortunate, and that the measures involved were opposed by SP members, it goes on to politically justify the ballot and the result.

It argues that the result highlights the mistrust that exists over the methods and motives of the SWP and a fear of the alliance being swamped.

It goes on to attack the SWP for (allegedly) not being prepared to accept a voting restriction in order to avoid the action which has been taken.

If the role of the SP in the decisions of the Executive of

the LLA to move against the SWP remains unclear, the actions of the SP in the period since the ballot leave little room for misunderstanding.

## Candidate

Since the ballot result was announced and the SWP excluded, the LLA has met once - and that was to adopt a General Election candidate.

The SP member of the LLA Executive, Dave Jones, was adopted as the candidate - and will now stand for the LLA in the general election. This shows the SP is in practice going along with the exclusion of the SWP and will not do much to try to reverse it.

There has been a move from within the LLA to challenge all this, but it does not include the SP. It is a letter signed by Garth Frankland, an important individual activist and long standing Labour councillor in Leeds, and Mike Fenwick from the AWL.

It pledges to "continue to seek to challenge the current ban on the SWP in the interests of democracy and the future".

The Socialist Party are playing a dangerous game in taking an ambivalent attitude to the witch hunt in Leeds. This could threaten the unity of the Alliances nationally.

It is also unfortunately only the worst example of the Socialist Party's attitude in a number of localities. However it should be stressed, it is by no means the case in all Alliances where SP members are working.

In many areas there is a good working relationship between all the organisations involved including the SP and the SWP.

It is these latter experiences which need to be built on, as the significant turn out for meetings remind us once again that we have the best opportunity for a long time to build a real alternative to New Labour's Tory policies, on the streets, in our workplaces and at the ballot box. Don't let sectarianism throw away this opportunity.

The unexpected death of Donald Dewar has provided an opportunity for the Scottish Labour leadership to reshuffle its personnel, review its policies and repackage itself before the General Election. GORDON MORGAN reports.

# Dewar's death heralds hints of leftward swing

Donald Dewar's funeral was the nearest to a state funeral seen in Scotland. Held in the Cathedral, broadcast live on TV, with a procession through the streets lined with people, it even featured Tony and Gordon giving the oration, and Charlie Windsor in attendance.

People openly spoke with affection for the irascible, rude, right wing Labourite. Donald after all was seen to have delivered the Scottish Parliament against significant internal Labour foot dragging. For that he deserves his place in history.

## Incompetent administration

Donald the man will be remembered: Donald as First Minister in an incompetent administration will swiftly be forgotten.

It is difficult to believe how woefully inept the Scottish government has been over the last year. Virtually every initiative has been a presentational disaster, most have just been disasters which have been strongly opposed by all interest groups.

Despite many ministers publicly feuding and others being useless, no reshuffle took place. Donald's team remained unchanged. His death has given rise to an expectation of change.

## Leadership election

The rules for a succession of first Minister lay down that the Scottish Parliament must vote to appoint within 21 days. As Labour is the largest minority in the Parliament, and Donald was also leader of Labour in Scotland, an interim election had to take place within Scottish Labour, using hastily cobbled together rules.

No membership consultation took place, and an electoral college of 81 members was constructed from MSPs, trade unions and the Scottish Executive.

Henry McLeish (Donald's deputy) won this with a narrow majority over the only other candidate, finance minister Jack McConnell.

It emerged that with the exception of the Executive members of the Parliament, who solidly backed McLeish, most MSPs had backed McConnell. McLeish, with the backing of the Lib Democrats was dully elected First Minister.

This however, is only an interim position. Labour has to conduct a membership ballot before Christmas to elect its leader, who, if not McLeish could then become First Minister. It appears that the left will contest, with John McAllion probable as candidate for leader, and Cathy Jamieson standing as deputy.

Whilst McLeish will win the leadership battle, the vote for McAllion (if he stands) will give a true measure of the left's strength within Scottish Labour.

The fight for deputy is likely to be a women only contest with Susan Deacon, Wendy Alexander and Cathy Jamieson likely to be the contestants. Jack McConnell is not standing.

Newspaper reports suggest Cathy



No laughing matter: Dewar succeeded by equally glum McLeish

Jamieson could win, with McLeish rumoured to be giving tacit support.

Cathy spoke at the STUC anti Trident rally last weekend, and spoke of seeking more powers for the Scottish Parliament to limit the environmental and nuclear threat posed by trident on the Clyde.

She has been nominated by her Constituency for deputy and appears to have TGWU support. She deserves the vote of socialists in the Labour Party, as does John McAllion.

## New broom

Henry McLeish was quick to make changes to his ministers' portfolios, and has called for a general reappraisal of government policy. His rival McConnell has been moved from Finance to Education, where he inherits the disastrous cock-up over of exam results and the bungling SQA.

McConnell has sacked the SQA board and taken personal control. If there is a repeat of the exams fiasco in 2001 his career will be dented.

He also inherits policies designed to radically restructure the teaching profession and opposition from grass roots teachers (although not the EIS's discredited leadership).

Sam Galbraith was moved from Education but remains in the cabi-

net responsible for Environment – despite widespread demands for his scalp over the exam results. At Environment he takes over from Sarah Boyack who remains in the cabinet with a reduced role dealing with transport.

Sarah was backed by SERA and environmentalists on her appointment but has been widely criticised for inaction.

Wendy Alexander, who was Dewar's favourite as successor was moved from Communities (and Housing) to Enterprise and Tourism, taking over from McLeish. If she is not elected Deputy, this will be seen as a move down. It also may signal a change in housing policy.

Alexander was very vocal, indeed high handed, in her advocacy of Housing Stock Transfer, as was her deputy Frank McAveety. He has now been sacked. Her other deputy takes over as minister.

Meanwhile Margaret Curren, the Chair of the Housing committee which was critical of many aspects of the transfer proposals has been promoted to cabinet as deputy justice minister. The decks are clear for a policy change which would have wide implications, not least

for all council tenants in Scotland.

## Overtures to the Left

Henry McLeish is one of the least charismatic characters in the parliament. He has made few enemies, but no one knows his policies on anything. Unlike Dewar who was always of the right, McLeish appears to be a rank opportunist.

The left Labour revolt over the issue of Warrant Sales has drawn a response. McLeish has added Margaret Curren to the cabinet, and at least not opposed Cathy Jamieson for deputy. Further overtures are possible in the light of the leadership election.

Of course these changes have a material basis. Labour's poll rating had fallen behind the SNP; cooperation of the left across parties was growing; the Scottish Socialist Party was appealing to Labour MEPs to join, and John McAllion was talking of 'one last fight'.

As yet the overtures are at the level of patronage and posts. No significant policy changes have occurred. For some, unfortunately, such trinkets are enough.

## Denis Canavan

Denis Canavan was shamefully treated by Labour. Rejected

by a selection board comprising his political enemies, he was described by Dewar as "not good enough" for selection for the Scottish Parliament, despite being the choice of his constituency.

His decision to stand as an independent for Falkirk in the Scottish Parliament was widely applauded throughout the movement, and he was elected with over a 12,000

majority. He has always sat next to Tommy Sheridan of the SSP within the parliament.

He had attempted to be readmitted to Labour immediately after the election, but was blocked by Blair and Dewar. Parallels with the treatment of Ken Livingstone were obvious.

Over the last year Canavan has voted consistently with the SSP and there were some indications he was considering joining. He spoke of being lonely as an independent.

In September he spoke of resigning his Westminster seat and causing a by election in late November with a view to embarrass the government. The SSP journal speculated that if he endorsed the SSP it could win such an election.

The death of Dewar changed this. The antipathy of Dewar to Canavan cannot be exaggerated. Canavan spoke of Dewar running across the road narrowly avoiding traffic rather than speak to him. Dennis felt hurt by this.

With Dewar's death Labour has adopted a pragmatic approach, and in order to prevent a disastrous election result seems prepared to readmit Dennis to the Labour Party. Gordon Brown and McLeish have had talks.

What Dennis thinks he is doing is anyone's guess. Initial indications are that most voters in Falkirk voted for Dennis because he would act as an independent socialist: they are disappointed and won't vote for him again. Tommy Sheridan, enormously disappointed, said "We now have one fewer men of integrity in Scottish politics".

## Elections, the SNP and the Left

Elections are imminent for Dewar's seats to the Scottish Parliament and Westminster. Both seats are first past the post elections.

Labour has selected the chair of the Campaign for Socialism, Bill Butler, as candidate for Hollyrood triggering much press dismay at his left credentials. For once the left out-manoeuvred the establishment.

Both the SSP and the SNP will be contesting with the SSP looking for a double figure vote. Labour is almost certain to win.

The elections are being held on November 23 and this has given the SSP executive reason to call off a special one day conference on the constitution.

This special conference had been needlessly called by the executive to review the constitution in preparation for the possibility of the SWP joining the SSP. The next conference will now be the annual conference in February.

Somewhat overshadowed by the events in the Labour Party, the SNP has elected its new leadership and changed its ministerial team.

Most significant was the election of John Swinney as Leader and Roseanna Cunningham as Deputy. Roseanna identifies with the left of the SNP and is part of a new cross party left initiative. [see box]

## Left on line

- Scottish Left Review is a new electronic journal set up by figures on the left of Labour, SNP and unions to raise policy issues. Most prominent members of the board are Roseanna and John McAllion. The SSP is also on the editorial board.
- The journal is accessible free on the web, and hopefully will operate as a forum for development of more coherent left policies on a range of issues.
- With Labour opening a review and a more inclusive approach to policies, possibilities exist for winning a more left wing social agenda for Scotland.
- Delivering this will require more powers for the Scottish Parliament. With Donald's death, even this could be on the agenda. [www.scottishleftreview.com](http://www.scottishleftreview.com)

The dog that didn't bark

# Why won't Labour sort out the railways?

## A Railworker

*SOCIALIST Outlook* has chronicled the gradual collapse of the railways over the last five years. We warned before privatisation that safety would be compromised. In recent issues we have highlighted how bad things had become. And once again events have conspired to prove that we were right.

The tragic accident at Hatfield has caused the virtual collapse of the railway system. Rail workers and users cannot remember disruption for such an extended period at such a high level. Across the country emergency speed restrictions put in place to protect trains from the threat of broken rails have meant permanent and utter chaos for all services. The private owners of the rail network have shown they cannot be trusted with passengers lives - so why is the Labour government so silent - why has Blair's only response been to back Gerald Corbett, Railtrack's chief executive

and to offer Railtrack even more government subsidy?

Railtrack, responsible for rail maintenance, have tried to claim that the current problems are caused by new heavier freight traffic, unsuitable new passenger rolling stock, long term under-investment dating back to British Rail days - anything but their own mismanagement. It won't wash!

It is clear that the reason for the broken rail which caused the Hatfield crash is directly related to management decisions made by Railtrack - made for one reason: to save money to give away in shareholder dividends.

Firstly, Railtrack took the decision to cut back on rail replacement. Rails are now expected to last for sixty years - double what it was under BR and nearly three times longer than the European standard.

Secondly, Railtrack was not prepared to maintain the track itself - it delegated this to private contractors. But instead of putting in place

a rigorous chain of contract managers it decided that the contractors would have to manage themselves. Having signed up to an agreed contract price it was up to the contractor to inspect the track, find what needed repair and then do the work. An effective incentive was built it - to do less and less maintenance.

Thirdly, despite frequent health and safety breaches by these contractors (rail maintenance companies like Balfour Beatty are among the country's worst serial criminals when it comes to breaking safety law) Railtrack has boxed itself into a corner. It is so dependent on just a handful of multinational companies that it cannot afford to challenge their contracts - to do so would cause even greater chaos.

So on to Hatfield - Railtrack won't ask Balfour Beatty to examine the track too closely. If they do report any potential problem it won't listen. No order for remedial work will be issued. See no problem, hear no problem, do no repairs - four



On the wrong track: Labour's refusal to renationalise compounds the problem

lives lost!

And then a panic reaction. Hatfield is not unique. The self-same situation was being repeated nation-wide. Which is why it was possible to find, in the space of a few hours, potential hazards affecting every stretch of line in the country.

The only people happy with all this have been the train operating companies. Instead of taking the blame for an ever-decreasing level of service they have been able to palm off all the blame onto Railtrack.

The government response - to offer Railtrack another £5 billion to dig themselves out of their hole. Three years ago Prescott argued that Labour could not afford to renationalise the railways - the money was needed

for hospitals and schools. But instead they have presided over ever increasing subsidies, far outstripping the potential cost of renationalisation. Instead of "City money" being invested through Railtrack in a new modern railway, we have been pouring money into shareholders pockets while the railways collapse.

The train operating franchises are coming up for renewal - the government does not even need to spend any money buying the railways back. All it needs to do is give the franchises back to the British Railways Board. With them back in public hands it could force Railtrack's hand. But instead it is extending the franchises in private hands for another twenty years.

And at the same time in order to privatise London Underground it is in negotiation with the very maintenance companies responsible for the debacle on the main rail network.

The last thing the government wants is to renationalise the railways. It wants to press ahead with the privatisation of London Underground. So the last thing it wants is to have to admit that Railtrack, Balfour Beatty and all the other rail companies are putting lives in danger. Which is why Blair and Prescott have suddenly fallen silent. But it is also why we should be redoubling our efforts to ram home the message that become more and more obvious every day - that privatisation kills.

# New Labour takes on the fuel protesters

## Alan Thornett

As the fuel protesters' 60 day deadline approached, new Labour launched a two pronged attack on them. Many of the big business interests who previously supported them have also dumped these unlikely campaigners. As a result the protest is battered and divided and probably not capable of repeating effective action.

First Jack Straw's Task Force launched a series of attacks reminiscent of those mounted against major trade union actions in the past. The protest was infiltrated by MI5 agents, and the police, who played a low-key role last time, have made it clear that they will crack down hard in future.

Straw has gone for the jugular by warning hauliers and owner drivers that they could lose their operators' licences if their vehicles are involved in illegal action - and blockades and slow moving convoys could be

regarded as illegal. At the same time conflict on the blockades has been exaggerated (as it always is on picket lines) and stories of BNP involvement talked up.

One of the principal spokespersons for the Task Force is TGWU's Bill Morris who reflected the disgraceful TUC line of condemning the protests and urging police action against them.

This when support for the protests - carried out by crisis-ridden sections of the petty bourgeoisie with some perfectly justifiable demands - could have undermined the influence of the right-wing and the Tories on them.

Then came Gordon Brown's budget measures which make some concessions to hauliers, in the form of a reduction in the cost of vehicle licences, but none what-so-ever to small farmers - many of whom face an even deeper crisis.

There is an expansion of the lower band of vehicle tax which

is a step in the right direction and a reduction on low sulphur fuel - which is currently only available at one garage in 10.

Current crippling levels of fuel tax remain intact for the vast majority of low income people forced to run a car because there is no viable public transport. Brown's freeze on the current level of petrol tax may well not stop the price at the pumps going up if the oil companies decide to do this. And record profits recorded since the protests will not inhibit them in doing so.

Brown's refusal to reduce prices at the pumps does absolutely nothing for the bulk of the working class who supported the protests. This mass support was based on opposition to the current level of tax on petrol which hit the poorer sections of society hardest.

Although Brown packaged his measures with rhetoric about the environment, it will do nothing effective to stem the rise in greenhouse gas emis-

sions. Moreover he avoids any hint of taxing the rich - the only real way to either raise the money to protect the environment or make a meaningful reduction in fuel tax - as well as maintaining and increasing much needed investment health education and infrastructure.

The reductions in the cost of the road fund licence for hauliers does nothing to resolve the crisis of the industry. It makes no distinction between the big haulage companies and the small hauliers and owner drivers who are bearing the brunt of the crisis.

Many small operators became self-employed as the result of Thatcherite deregulation and outsourcing in the 1980s, and are now struggling for survival against the cut-throat competition which now exists in the haulage industry. They are squeezed by the drive for profit from the supermarkets, and other big companies they are contracted to, who are them-



selves linked into the global economy with its drive to constantly cut costs and maximise profit.

And they will find no solution because just as landowners would increase the rents of tenant farmers if they saw that they are getting extra help from the government the supermarkets and other major users of road haulage will drive ever harder bargains if they see them getting any financial help.

What is needed is a complete

restructuring of these sectors so that they are not in hock to big business.

This should include the nationalisation of the land of the big land owners and the nationalisation of big haulage companies.

At the same time there has to be a major shift in the tax system from indirect taxation including fuel tax and VAT to direct taxation, and a major shift of taxation towards the rich and big business.



# Unionist crisis - Sinn Fein feel the squeeze

John North

The mythology of the Good Friday agreement in Ireland presented a simple picture of the October meeting of the Ulster unionist council. According to the mythology, plucky moderate David Trimble would confront and face down his bigoted opponents inside the Unionist Party, moving forward with his nationalist and republican partners in government towards a new non-sectarian future.

Unfortunately David Trimble did not play by the script. As Socialist Democracy predicted prior to the meeting, he applied his favoured strategy when in a corner - to come charging out as the leader of the most bigoted and reactionary elements, advancing the main elements of their programme.

The corner was a little tighter than usual, so David had to go a little further than his partners in government had expected.

By banning Barbre de Bruin from a North-South health meeting he launched a direct attack on Sinn Fein and threatened the talking shops that the republicans hold out as proof that the Good Friday agreement contains democratic elements and would lead eventually to a united Ireland.

He also supported what was essentially a January deadline for an IRA hand over of weapons. Yet again he bent the good Friday agreement out of shape and precipitated another crisis.

We should however be clear about the nature of the crisis.

The threat to the agreement comes from right-wing reaction. That reaction is filled with rabid sectarian hatred, but its recent history is not one of uncompromising opposition to the agreement.

It has been held back by a growing realisation of the massive triumph for the right that the good Friday agreement represents and the tremendous gains that the restoration of the Stormont executive makes possible.

Nor is it likely that the crisis will provoke a left-wing backlash from the republicans. The republican leadership long ago demobilised its support and tied itself hand and foot to the Irish capitalists.

Neither Dublin nor the local SDLP are willing to contemplate the failure of a settlement, no matter what concessions have to be made.

As ever, the British remain in full control.

The official Unionist Party is split into three roughly equal groups. One group



Back to the old standard tactic: lobbying the British

cannot contemplate any Catholics in government and are willing to close down Stormont if this is what is required. A second group can stomach a minority SDLP presence but want Sinn Fein forced out.

A third group, led by Trimble, will accept Sinn Fein in government as long as it is clear that they have been defeated and publicly humiliated.

Trimble's current policy unites all of the groups, and, as he claims, makes their current differences mainly tactical.

Sinn Fein's reaction to all this has been depressingly familiar. Filled with indignation, they have rushed to the arms of the nationalist family.

They and their capitalist sponsors would defy Trimble and set up alternative structures. Dublin and the SDLP obligingly arrived, but the price of their attendance was that there be no political challenge to Trimble.

The meeting was downgraded to tea and sympathy with Sinn Fein. By November 3, Gerry Adams was able to announce that Sinn Fein would mount a legal challenge to the ban.

In other words, the Trimble ban was in place, and there was to be no real political response.

It might be better to say that the standard strategy of nationalist Ireland - lobbying the British - will be applied.

This will prove difficult given that Peter Mandelson, the British Secretary of

State, has expressed himself delighted with the outcome of the unionist meeting and has gone on to say that both

sides must now all give a little.

This is another familiar mechanism of the process

which always ends with it moving yet further to the right.

Given the constant duplic-

## Stop harassment of republicans!

SINN FEIN are facing a squeeze. Yet another crisis in the peace process means that more concessions will be required, and there is little left to concede except the humiliating hand over weapons.

In one of the most disturbing developments of the current peace process, evidence is growing of a new republican policy for dealing with their difficulties. Quite simply it is the intimidation and physical suppression of their political opponents.

This has two elements. The first is the killing of military rivals and was signalled by the murder of Real IRA member Joe O'Connor.

The other is the physical and political intimidation of their political opponents. This became evident in the aftermath of the O'Connor killing when his family called on members of the Republican Writers Group to investigate. The writers, Tommy Gorman and Tony McIntyre, indicated a belief that the Provisional IRA were responsible for O'Connor's death.

Since then the writers have been the target of an ongoing hate campaign. They have been denounced in the republican press and subject to physical intimidation in their local areas,

culminating in pickets designed to force them from their homes. Speaking from the United States, Gerry Adams denounced the two as fellow travellers of the Real IRA.

The level of threat should not be underestimated. There have been many opportunities to draw a line under the affair, but the Provisional leadership have persisted in the campaign, with an article by a former hunger striker in the current *An Phoblacht* directly attacking the writers.

There are also indications that Sinn Fein spokespersons are ending a policy of routinely

condemning acts of paramilitary force, something that would free the hands of the IRA in the event of further physical attacks.

We should also take into account the level of complicity by capitalist, state and media forces. The killing appeared to be invisible to Sinn Fein allies in Dublin, the SDLP and the Catholic Church.

The media and the state forces accepted without comment Provisional claims of a feud among republican dissidents as the cause of the O'Connor killing.

Protests by the writers and

ity that the good Friday agreement involves, what is not reported as often as important as what is. It's noticeable that in the background a new law was adopted compelling Sinn Fein ministers to fly the union Jack on designated public days.

This is much more important than mere symbolism. Sinn Fein told its supporters that the new executive was transitional to a united Ireland and that it would celebrate unionist and nationalist traditions, instead we find an unreconstructed British colony in which Sinn Fein serves in the government.

Looked at in this way we can put the crises of the peace process in context. The structures may be decrepit and unstable, but nowhere do they contain the threat to British rule implicit in the last 30 years of struggle.

their supporters have been ignored by the media.

There is a clear duty on socialists, civil libertarians and Human Rights activists to oppose this witchhunt. A new organisation - Democracy - a campaign for freedom of expression - has been set up. It aims to oppose the harassment and intimidation of political critics of the republicans and to affirm the right to freedom of political expression.

Activists should organise now to make clear to the republican leadership their absolute opposition to the current hate campaign.

## Democracy - A campaign for freedom of expression

We, the undersigned, wish to express our concern at the involvement of Sinn Fein in the physical intimidation and political suppression of political opponents.

The facts are these:

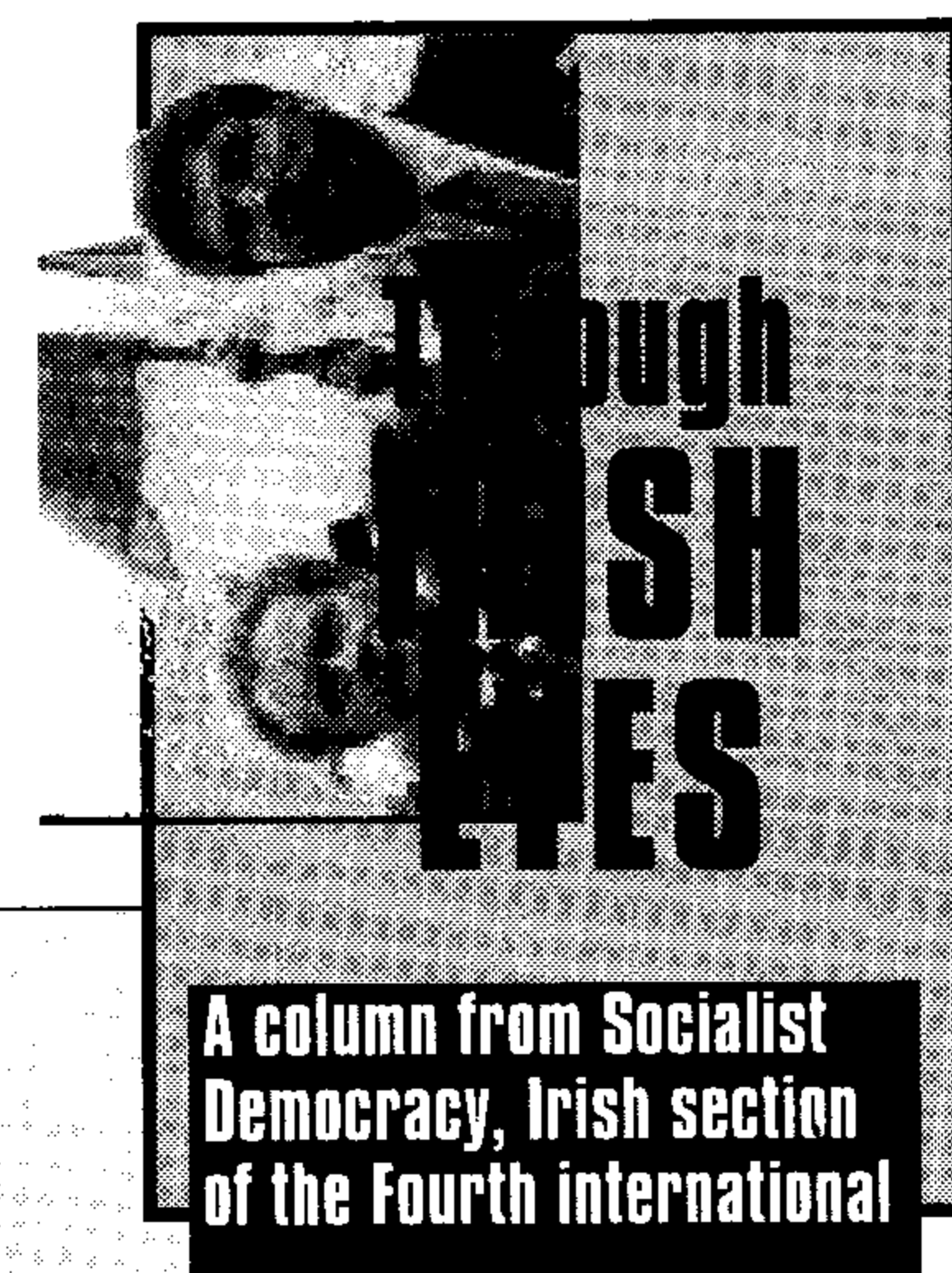
Following the killing of Joe O'Connor, a member of the Real IRA, on the 13th of October 2000, members of the Republican Writers Group were called in by the dead man's family. They investigated and issued a statement asserting that they believed that the Provisional IRA were responsible for the killing.

Since then the writers, Tony McIntyre and Tommy Gorman, have been subject to a trade of abuse in the republican press.

Their homes have been picketed and they have been physically intimidated.

In his statement in the American paper *The Irish Voice* on 25th October 2000, Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein said that the two writers were fellow travellers of the Real IRA. This was untrue and put them in considerable physical danger.

We call on the leadership of Sinn Fein to stop the harassment of these writers and underwrite the right to freedom of expression by their opponents.



A column from Socialist Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International

Behind Putin's sinister turn to Russian nationalism...



# "Reforms" aim to carve up the spoils of privatisation

Russian socialist **BORIS KAGARLITSKY** was in London for a conference in October, and spoke on the latest situation to **SHEILA MALONE** and **NICOLAS KAPRACOS**.

What do you think the Putin government represents?

In the previous period under Yeltsin, the main goal of the ruling elite was to privatise government property and divide it among themselves. In order to do this they needed, both ideologically and institutionally, a liberal permissive regime. But it was not just that they hid the real value of the enterprises which were privatised at about 1% of their real value.

It was also about denying the real value of the Soviet experience and the society which had existed – by saying everything which was built in the Soviet period, politically, materially and morally has no value; the real values are in the West, so we shouldn't care about losing everything we have in Russia.

Now the Russian post communist capitalism has reached a new stage – everything is already stolen and basically divided between the oligarchs. The main problem now is not stealing or taking something away from the people, but preserving this stolen property.

So the regime had to move from a liberal, westernised stage in its development to a conservative nationalist stage of development.

In the West some say there is a conflict between Putin and the oligarchs. But actually there is no conflict between Putin and the oligarchy as a collective, but only between Putin and individual oligarchs.

In the Russian oligarchy relations are very personal. So once the president was replaced, so were some oligarchs, because their economic power was very much a function of their political power.

So there is a struggle now of some people in the Putin administration, and by Putin himself to replace particular oligarchs. So for example, they now want Beresovsky to have less influence, and Guzinsky, head of the biggest media holding will be forced to resign.

At the same time, there are new people coming in, like the banker Vladimir Kogin, who is part of Putin's St Petersburg entourage. (Yeltsin was from Moscow). But the structures of the oligarchy will remain the same, just a change of names at the top. Their property structures will not be undermined, nothing will be confiscated, no power taken away from their institutions.

You need a real police state to protect the interests of the new elites, to protect their property and the hierarchies which emerged out of the previous stage. There will be increased daily policing of Russians; the

powers of the police over an average citizen will increase dramatically. At the same time, the capacity to resist the state or the employers legally will decrease.

Then you need nationalism and a sense of national unity. You have to establish certain rules and solidarities within society to keep it together. When you steal everything from the population so that 4% end up with more than 80% of the wealth, something is needed to pull the population together to prevent it rebelling.

Nationalism is sometimes presented demagogically as anti-Western. But in practice it's not. Although some Russian leaders make noises, on every important issue they do whatever pleases Washington.

But the real essence of Russian nationalism is their racist attitude towards national minorities. Because to consolidate nationalism you have to consolidate it against someone and something – mainly national minorities inside Russia.

Putin has made three things very clear:

● Firstly, not only will privatisations not be reversed but oligarchy capitalism will be perpetuated.

● Secondly, the new wave of liberal reform is going to start with the team of reformers around German Grev and Andrei Leonov, his closest advisors.

● Maybe the pensioners and some poor people are going to get a little more money, but the state subsidies are going to be taken away. Housing is going to be commercialised. The pension system is also going to be restructured to be based on individual insurance. Heating, gas and electricity will be completely marketised.

At the moment for example the state owns the biggest stake in the Russian electricity monopoly. They will sell off the most profitable bits of the company, mainly to foreigners, which will probably mean that electricity will be diverted to other countries.

Anatoly Chubais, head of the electricity company, a key person in the first wave of reforms has said, "There will be no electricity for those who don't want to pay, no heat for those who cannot pay." So if you cannot pay for fuel you will freeze or starve to death next winter.

So we have these 3 elements of legislation now passing through the Duma – the Administrative Code, the Tax Code and the Labour Code. This is a systematic political attack on working people.

Let's start with the Administrative Code which allows the police to do almost everything they want. So for example, you cannot walk on the streets without having a passport. This is an attack on guest workers and immigrant workers, but also limits the capacity to move around the country for Russian people as well, because you have to register with the local police. So you have to work where you live.

People won't stop moving to get jobs, but they will be turned into illegal immigrants inside their own country. This means that

they will not go on strike, nor fight against their employers, because if you have a quarrel with your employer, he just calls in the police who will immediately arrest you.

Secondly, the infamous new Tax Code, already in place, means that from January 1 there will be no progressive taxation in Russia, just a flat rate of 13% for everyone. Existing taxation hasn't been all that progressive – it has hit the middle class rather than the rich. Today a person on \$500 a month will pay 3 times more proportionately than the person on \$100. But the person on \$10,000 will pay the same as those on \$500.

So they claim the new rate will help the middle class. However, the middle class is usually paid in black cash anyway.

Actually what the changes do is to create enormous tax breaks of 17% for the rich. And even if these people reveal only a small percentage of their income to the state, nevertheless on this percentage the tax advantage is incredible. And at the same time business taxes are being lowered.

All this means poor people have to pay a bigger share of state taxes and income.

This anti-working class orientation of the legislation culminates in the new Labour Code. This de facto abolishes the 8 hour day and reintroduces a 12 hour day. So it's the first time in modern history that there is a retreat from the gains of 80 years ago.

And they make us feel happier because they say the introduction will be gradual. So if you're in a company that still has an 8 hour day, when your contract expires, the employers can introduce a 12 hour day.

In a country with high unemployment and weak unions and a lot of people working illegally, there is no way for people to resist legally, because you will be sacked. The Code gives employers almost total freedom to hire and fire.

It almost abolishes the presence of the unions at the shop floor level, but it doesn't touch the powers of the trade union bureaucracy at the top. Here everything stays as it used to be, because the trade union bureaucracy at the top is no danger for the elite: on the contrary they co-operate quite closely. The attack is basically on the grassroots, on the basic structures of the unions.

**How have the working class resisted especially as regards privatisation?**

The labour movement is in decline because it was badly defeated in 1993. In 1998 there was a sort of revival with the so called rail war, when people started blocking the railways. Then Primakov was elected – a left of centre government and people went back home, expecting him to deliver.



The situation did improve a bit. He managed to put pressure on the enterprises to minimise wage delays from an average of 4-6 months to 2-3 months.

Also under Primakov the price of oil rose to \$18-\$20 a barrel. He also forced the oil companies to bring more of their dollar income into Russia. This influx of money allowed the government to solve money problems simultaneously – to pay wages and keep fighting the war in Chechnya. So the Russian elite now felt strengthened, and didn't need him any more. This was one of the reasons why he was sacked in 1999.

But the labour movement had been demobilised because it expected him to deliver – and the demobilisation lasted long after he went. So the hopes invested in the labour movement by many on the left in 1998 proved to be wrong.

But now in the last months we see a new tide approaching. People are starting to organise at a grassroots level on a cross-sectional basis.

The new Labour Code is a very good challenge for the trade union movement. Then the development of alternative union Zashita as a new phenomenon. It is still very small, no more than 30,000 members. But it is growing quickly, tripling its size in the last 3 years.

Zashita has discovered a strategic role for itself in the movement, to be a vanguard union – not in the old Communist sense that you are the vanguard with the best ideology, but basically you begin the struggle, you engage in the battle on a very important issue, and you provoke the other unions, bigger and probably less radical to follow.

The government wanted to pass the Labour Code in the Spring, but have had to delay it at least twice, because of growing resistance. There been cases where people won particular strikes, and court cases, and the famous one where people won against McDonalds. People tried to unionise at McDonalds and everyone was sacked immediately. But then they went to court, and surprisingly they won against McDonalds.

This is important symbolically: people can point to these victories to show that the movement can achieve results. And finally December 1, the Day of Action against the Labour Code, will be an important challenge.

On December 7 the Duma will vote on the Code.

The alternative unions are organising all sorts of events including strikes, pickets, sit-ins, demonstrations. And it looks like a lot of people from the official unions will join in, including whole branches, although the official structures have not backed the event so far but instead pretend it does not exist. So it is very important in terms of showing the new, emerging unity from below.

I think some of the "liberal" press will give at least moral support to the action because there is such a clear attack on the most basic achievements of working people and the Code also undermines basic human rights.

**The war in Chechnya has been called "Putin's war". Can you talk about its origins, the reasons why it is continuing, and the likely outcome?**

**T**he casualties are much higher now even than in December 1999, during the storming of Grozny. The Russian army is in real trouble – their casualties are increasing while the Chechen losses are negligible.

Russian troops control the fortifications and checkpoints, but when they try to move a column with supplies on the roads they risk ambush. Then they retaliate, but not against guerrilla targets, but civilians. So now the villages wanted the guerrillas to come to their villages because it is safer. This also means people are joining the guerrillas.

Now in Chechnya it's much safer, especially for a male, to be a guerrilla than a civilian. You have a gun, and the military will treat you with some care, and there are people around you to protect you. So the guerrillas are increasing their power.

On the Russian side they are afraid the army will not survive the winter – they do not have enough clothes and ammunition; the roads are not safe, and the skies are not clear enough for aircraft.

Secondly, they are afraid of a massive Chechen uprising in the spring. Not because the guerrillas are popular, but because the Russian army is even less so.

The war was started in order to consolidate a nationalist ideology. Russia needed the war to consolidate against "the enemy", as "one fighting nation". It was very much linked to racism, a new understanding of the Russian state, i.e. not of all citizens, but of ethnic Russians, and religiously of Orthodox Russians. And one of the justifications for the war is the fight against Islam.

The war was also necessary to create the conditions for Putin to be elected, even through electoral fraud. There was massive electoral fraud reported in the Russian press but ignored by Western sources.

In that sense, the war was a double success for Putin, because a new state identity was established and Putin was elected. The nationalist hysteria was a success because many people sided with the government on a nationalist, racist basis.

This very much undermined the left. It also completely destroyed the nationalist opposition, because the government itself is nationalist.

The problem, however, is that the war is lost. So all the political aims were achieved, but the war militarily is a complete disaster. Now they don't need the war any more and they are seriously thinking how to end it.

The military too want to end it, even those who have made money, because their deals with the guerrillas are unstable and can be reversed if the balance of forces changes.

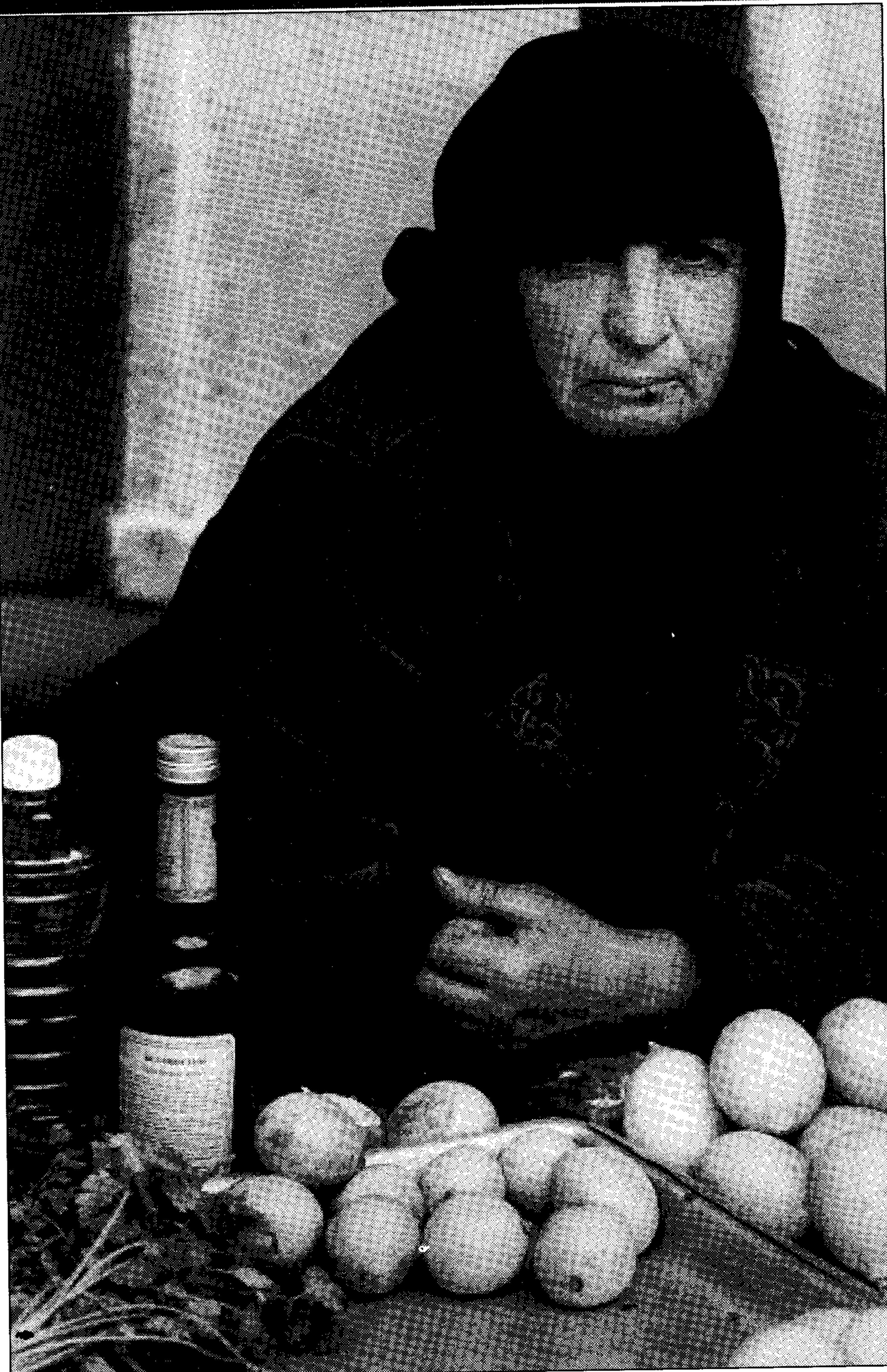
It is a very medieval situation, like the 30 Years War, when people fought each other and then made deals, but still kept fighting. The military now feel that they are getting weaker and there is strong pressure to end the war.

However, the government cannot stop the war without acknowledging one of two things. Either it must acknowledge military defeat or that the war had nothing to do with their officially proclaimed aims.

**Can they find a solution, as in the first war, by negotiation this time?**

**T**hey can, but this time negotiation will be seen as a defeat. They started this second war with the slogan that negotiations had failed, that we can't negotiate with the Chechens.

Then there is the question of what sort of



*There wasn't much to laugh about under Yeltsin: but Putin's reforms could cut off her heating, too*

settlement the Chechens would accept. Nothing less than the withdrawal of the troops and some kind of compensation will do, because Grozny was destroyed. But the Russian state is not really interested in serious compensation.

However, even if the Chechens are gaining militarily, it does not mean they have the recipe to win politically, because an independent Chechnya is a very dubious concept.

Firstly, there is a big question as to whether it is viable economically, socially and culturally. Secondly, it is not certain that this has the support of the majority of the population. It is one thing wanting the troops out, but another wanting a fully independent state. Chechen independence was not very strongly supported under the Dudayev republic, and even less under Maskhadov.

I think there is a dead end for both sides. On the one hand, the Russians cannot win the war but they cannot keep the Chechens under their control. On the other hand, the pro-independence forces do not have the political base in Chechnya itself to run their country if the troops are withdrawn.

I think they will be some kind of compromise with the Chechen warlords, who will run the Chechen republic but some kind of Russian protectorate status.

The problem is: what will be the political price? Half a million Russians have already gone through the Chechen war. These people will come home and will say, why did we fight there for two years, losing so many people and killing so many people? What was the purpose?

And they're told, well, we made a deal. So then there will be an enormous political bill presented to the Russian government, including from the military, where those who are not corrupt will challenge those who are.

**Might an Islamic regime be possible?**

**T**he Chechens are deeply divided between those who want some kind of Islamic regime and the rest. There are three divisions actually. The Wahabi Islamic faction wants a Saudi-style Islamic state with

which had public support and funding. Then under Maskhadov – who is a very good military man, but no politician, things started to retreat even further.

The Wahabis now moved in, complicating things even further because they were against both the secularists and the traditionalists. They gained influence because they were anti-elitist, anti-traditionalists.

So for example Balayev, who was a famous guerrilla leader who was originally more associated with a left wing approach, moved towards the Wahabis and finally joined them. He moved away from his original clear internationalist positions – for a multicultural, secular state and equal rights.

He had issued a famous statement saying we should do everything to prevent Russians leaving Chechnya, because they are also Chechen citizens and have the same right to this land. But in 1997 he moved to the Wahabi side.

This demonstrates the weakness of the left. The Wahabi was the only available ideological alternative to the struggles between the secular and the elites.

**Do women fight with the guerrillas?**

**Y**es, a lot. But more in the first war. In the second war, less, because it is much harder physically to survive, especially if you are in the core guerrilla contingent – not the fighting, but the winter and the hardships of daily life. The increasing influence of the Wahabis and the traditionalists also makes things more difficult for women.

Originally, Maskhadov clearly tried to gain a power base among women, presenting himself as someone who could defend their rights against Islamicisation. He was elected first and foremost with the votes of women.

To gain the votes, he used a specific oriental voting technology. Men were not allowed to enter the polling stations together with women. So women voted first, and only after the women had voted were the men allowed in.

This was not to do with Islamic discrimination against women: on the contrary, if women had gone to vote with their husband, brother etc, there would have been a moral pressure on them to vote the same way. But this way, they went separately and voted independently, deciding for themselves.

Maskhadov is a progressive nationalist, Maskhadov and Dudayev were very much within the Soviet tradition, former officers, generals. And they wanted to keep the same rules for women as they had under the Soviet period.

But now Maskhadov is facing the growing influence of both the Wahabis and the traditionalists. So to combat the Wahabis, the traditionalists will probably make some compromise with the secularists against the Wahabis. Because the secularists did less to undermine the clan structure than the Wahabis do.

But the Russian government is now trying to do a deal with the secularists. They see the Wahabis as the main danger. And if you want to achieve some stability, all 3 sides must be involved in the compromise in the long run. But the main victims of this compromise may be women. Because even as regards the secularists, women may be the issue on which it is easiest to make concessions.



*Chechen rebels celebrate on top of a captured Russian tank*

# US hands off Latin America!

*Resolution of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International on "Plan Colombia" (29.10.00)*

1. With the approval by the US Congress of the so-called Plan Colombia, the political, social and military conflict in Colombia could become one of the main scenarios of anti-imperialist confrontation in the Third World.

The US decision to finance and directly lead Plan Colombia is presented as an operation of struggle against drugs and the narcotics trade; yet 80% of the \$7.500 million for Plan Colombia has a counterinsurgent political objective.

This will be implemented through the destruction of the cultivations on which 400,000 peasant families depend for their survival. Destruction of cultivation and ecological-ethnic-cultural depredation, similar to the experience of "Operation Dignity" in Bolivia; an operation led by US "advisers" and soldiers and the USAID agency.

Plan Colombia means the most serious foreign aggression of recent times against a Latin American country, and confirms the desire of the imperialists to assure their hegemony over Latin America and the Caribbean.

It fits into the US vision, according to which the "Colombian disorder is becoming a regional danger", increasing the "insecurity of the hemisphere" and endangering the "national security" of the United States. The empire has resolved to turn Colombia – and the Andean region – into a new theatre of war.

2. The decree issued by the Clinton administration on August 23 which approved military "aid" of \$1,319 million to the government of President Pastrana, can only be read in one way: it is a declaration of war against the armed insurgency (FARC, ELN, EPL), and also against the trade union, peasant, popular and human rights movements, against the political parties of the left and, in the end, against all the democratic actors in Colombian society.

In the framework of a political, social and armed conflict that in recent years has led to 35,000, deaths, 1,000,000 "internally displaced" (a figure only exceeded by the Rwandan-Congolese drama) and 800,000 exiled, Plan Colombia, far from being an option for peace, is an instrument to strengthen the repressive capacity of the state, as well as of the criminal paramilitary organisations.

3. This escalation of the US interventionist strategy takes place in a Latin American landscape characterised by economic crisis, the growth of social resistance, and the loss of legitimacy of the "neoliberal model".

In some countries, moreover,

the governing elites face situations of ungovernability and crises of domination (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia).

The successive indigenous uprisings in Ecuador, popular and peasant uprisings in Bolivia, as well as the decomposition of the Fujimori regime [Peru] on the one hand, and the nationalist discourse of Chavez [Venezuela], on the others, have whipped up the tempests in the Andean region.

Simultaneously, we witness a growth of anti-neoliberal discontent and resistance in other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

US imperialism is therefore playing all its cards to achieve a "stabilisation".

Plan Colombia is intended to change decisively the relationship of forces in the Colombian internal conflict, if not to establish a control over the Amazon region and the oil wealth of the Orinoco, or reaffirm the military presence in the zone of the Panama Canal and the Caribbean.

4. The argument based on the "national security" for the United States is a manifestation of tutelage and the most complete and arrogant ignorance of any notion of national sovereignty which conflicts with US interests.

This policy submits the Latin American peoples and countries to the economic control and neo-colonial pillage of the international financial organisations and the multinational companies (payment of the foreign debt, unequal exchange, privatisation) and accelerates the path towards the creation of the American Free Trade Area (AFTA).

This seeks an "integration" subordinated to the US interests and which in many aspects, puts in question currently existing regional blocs, in particular Mercosur [the Latin American trading bloc, as distinct from the NAFTA, which includes the US, Canada and Mexico].

It also seeks to tighten discipline over the Latin American governments, and block any alternative project of democratic and sovereign development proposed by the left and the popular camp.

At the same time, Plan Colombia pursues a delimitation of areas of influence with the imperialisms of the European Union, competing for Latin American markets and the bioenergy and strategic wealth of the Amazon.

It assigns to the EU governments the role of "humanitarian" donors, above all to balance macroeconomic disequilibria, the payment of public and private debt, and the "collateral" social effects of the scorched earth policy.

5. Unlike other US interven-



*Troops on streets of Colombia: aiding US drive for dominance*

tionist operations, Plan Colombia uses military pressure to assure the application of the anti-popular denationalising adjustment plan that the Pastrana government and the IMF agreed in 1999.

This accord established the conditions to pursue counter-reforms which

- undermine free education and public health and solidarity-based systems of social security;
- deepen the flexibility of labour;
- the privatisation of state companies, roads and rivers;
- the sale of biodiversity;
- the private exploitation of energy resources;
- and the negation of the rights of the indigenous peoples.

This adjustment plan aggravates unemployment and poverty in a country where 50% of the population survive on less than two dollars a day, and where a small oligarchic minority (3%) owns 70% of the land.

These counter-reforms have an antidemocratic character – and can only be applied by the suppression of basic social rights and by violating elementary human rights. They have been contested by the social movements, through strikes, and by various mass demonstrations.

6. Before the latest grave developments, there had been growing opposition to the implementation of "Operacion Sur" in the Putumayo region (as a pilot for Plan Colombia).

The trade union, peasant, indigenous, neighbourhood, women, religious, organisations and movements, Amnesty International, and the Peace and Justice Service, as well as the political fronts and parties of Latin America (in particular those grouped in the Sao Paulo Forum), are beginning to mobilise against this US aggression and in solidarity with the Colombian people.

Many NGOs, solidarity groups in Europe, the US and Canada, together with personalities like Noam Chomsky, Eduardo Galeano, Jose Saramago, Dario Fo, and Danielle Mitterrand, among

others, have now signed a Manifesto for Peace and Human Rights in Colombia.

All these mobilisations and campaigns demand:

- full respect for national sovereignty and human rights;
- the dismantling of paramilitarism, the immediate end to state terrorism, and the ending of impunity for those guilty of innumerable massacres;
- the withdrawal of the 300 US military "advisors" and an end to any foreign intervention;
- and respect for the autonomy of the social, peasant and indigenous movements – including in the zones controlled by the armed insurgency – and the demand for "dialogue with social justice" as a condition for peace.

7. The sections and sympathising and fraternal organisations of the Fourth International participate in these movements and campaigns and in the battle against the media frenzy, which beneath the cloak of the "war against drugs" seeks to neutralise the actions of a great number of NGOs and social and democratic movements.

At the same time, we insist on the necessity of engaging in the development of a broad, plural and unitary campaign of solidarity with the popular and indigenous movements and organisations, not just in Colombia but also in Ecuador and Peru, which are directly targeted by the repressive strategy of Plan Colombia.

The forces of the Fourth International agree also on the necessity to emphasise the class nature of this war, and the legitimacy of insurrectional struggles which are in practice struggles of anticapitalist resistance against the local oligarchies and the expression of a concrete anti-imperialism.

In such conditions, the next World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, January 2001), is an opportunity for militants to incorporate the consequences of the Colombian and regional conflict into the discussions and debates against capitalist globalisation, and on the political and social projects for a radical transformation of society.

## South African NOTEBOOK

**Charlie van Gelderen**

### Fighting AIDS

There is growing resistance in South Africa against President Thabo Mbeki's policy on combating AIDS. The President is accused of aligning himself with a very small group of dissident scientists.

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has, unlawfully, imported a generic drug, Biozole, from Thailand to treat HIV/AIDS related diseases and distributed it to a network of doctors and pharmacists. TAC chairperson Zackie Achmat said it was part of its defiance campaign against "patient abuse and Aids profiteering by the multinational pharmaceutical companies".

Sitting in front of a poster of a bloody hand print that was headlined – "Drug companies have blood on their hands – one Aids death every ten minutes – affordable drugs now", Achmat said: "The choice is clear – the right to life and access to health care are non-negotiable. Profiteering at the expense of life, even when protected by law, is not a right."

Biozole is a generic equivalent to US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer's Fluconazole. Pfizer sold the drug for 80.24 Rand per 200 milligram to the private sector and R28.57 per capsule to the private sector. The Thai equivalent cost R1.78.

The import violated Pfizer's South African patent rights.

TAC will stop defying the unjust trade laws, once Pfizer has reduced the price to R4 per tablet.

### The battle for land

The National Land Committee (NLC) has warned of an impending race war unless South Africa's six million farm dwellers were protected from abuse at the hands of white farmers. Present farm laws have left farm workers and tenants at the mercy of white landowners.

White farmers are scared out of their wits by the threat of a repeat of the Zimbabwean scene. But, according to Andile Mngxitama, NLC land rights co-ordinator, here is already a war under way in the South African countryside. "At the moment it's a one-sided war waged by the landed against the landless. The sad truth is that the only significant land reform happening in South Africa is that black people are losing more land."

According to, Professor Shadrack Gutto, spokesperson for the Centre of Applied Legal Studies (CALs), a lot has been said

about land invasions in Zimbabwe, but nothing was said about the "powerful and often racist" white farmers who violate South African laws. "Serious criminal acts and gross violation of human rights are on the increase on farms."

The NLC and the CALs are to call on the government to expropriate land from absentee farmers as a short-term measure, to alleviate landlessness and implement a comprehensive land reform programme.

### Racism on the increase

There has been a marked increase in racist incidents in South Africa.

In Johannesburg police are investigating assault charges against three white men who allegedly beat a black teenager and forced him to eat his own excrement. The three men, army reservists, also forced the 17-year old youth to daub himself in his own excrement. They accosted him at night while he was hitchhiking near a black township.

The police say that they don't know yet if the incident was racially motivated. The victim just happens to be black, and the perpetrators white.

In another incident, a white construction boss dragged a black employee to his death behind a truck; and a black girl, accused of stealing from a white-owned shop was stripped and painted white from the waist up.

The fact that such cowardly acts of fascist barbarism have become commonplace in some parts of the Northern Province, demands that the government closely monitor race relations in those areas to avert a racial explosion.

President Mbeki has labelled racism as an evil experienced by blacks and committed by whites.

### Business closed by divine decree.

The 89 employees of Cathy Ann Fashions in Woodstock, near Cape Town, have found themselves jobless because their employer said he was closing the business "on God's orders".

Last week, factory boss, Kevin Atkins, walked into the factory with a bible under his arm and said: "God has told me to close the factory". God had told him to choose between religion and his factory. "I helped him (God) build this business."

After reading them a verse from the New Testament, Atkins told the workers the factory was closed. God really does work in mysterious ways!

# Milosevic out of office: now get NATO out of Kosova!

**THE DEFEAT of Slobodan Milosevic has been welcomed throughout the Balkans. Kostunica has been able to cobble together a government, including members of Milosevic's party. He has been able to remove some key figures of the previous regime from major posts. He also appears to have been able to ride out the factory occupations that forced the dismissal of some former Milosevic officials. However many issues remain unresolved, and many potential conflicts loom. GEOFF RYAN reports.**

**T**he Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has been rapidly admitted to the United Nations, at the urging of US envoy Richard Holbrooke. Yet the future of the Yugoslav state is by no means assured.

Relations between Serbia and Montenegro remain cool, with Montenegrin president Milo Djukanovic demanding a complete redefining of the relationship between the two countries. For the west, however, relations with Serbia (with a population of ten million) are of much greater importance than with six hundred thousand Montenegrins.

Holbrooke's pressure for immediate admission of Yugoslavia to UN membership was designed to head off Montenegrin demands for a separate seat in the UN. In the past Montenegrin leader Djukanovic was feted by western governments (who chose to forget his past support for Milosevic), and urged to pursue policies independent of Belgrade.

Now Milosevic has gone, the west has made it clear that all thoughts of Montenegrin independence must be abandoned and Djukanovic must subordinate himself to Kostunica.

Significantly there have been no demands from western governments for the withdrawal of the extra troops sent to Montenegro by Milosevic on the eve of the elections that led to his downfall. The cynicism of western governments is absolutely clear.

Holbrooke also managed to press-gang Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia into abandoning attempts to link Yugoslav admission to the UN to claims for a redistribution of the assets of the old state, which were taken over by the Milosevic regime after the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The four former Yugoslav republics want their share of the assets and property held by Yugoslavia in 1990, estimated at \$100 billion. Although Kostunica has taken a more conciliatory position than Milosevic, negotiations are likely to be drawn out and bitter.

**R**elations between Bosnia and Kostunica are also strained after the Yugoslav president attended a ceremony for the reburial of the virulently nationalist and anti-Communist poet Jovan Ducic, who died in the United States in 1943.

Kostunica attended the ceremony, held at Trebinje in the Republika Srpska, at the invitation of the Serb entity's deputy president Mirko Sarovic, a member of Radovan Karadzic's party the SDS (Serbian Democratic Party).

The timing of Kostunica's visit was significant. It came immediately after a week of attacks on Muslims by Serb students in Brcko, protesting against sharing school buildings with Muslim students.

Brcko was the scene of some of the worst ethnic cleansing by Serb militias in the early



*Kosovars press their case for independence, while nationalist Kostunica (inset) ponders his options*

stages of the Bosnian war. Although it was de facto part of Republika Srpska, the final status of the Brcko region was left out of the Dayton settlement.

In 1999 the international arbitration commission ruled that the region should become a neutral condominium, overlapping both the Muslim-Croat federation and Republika Srpska, a decision bitterly resented by Serb nationalists, especially the organisers of Kostunica's visit to Trebinje.

The visit also came only two weeks before elections in Bosnia, in which the SDS are expected to do well in Republika Srpska. At the very least his visit will be seen as tacit support for the SDS hard-liners.

**T**he major unresolved problem remains Kosova. Last weekend saw municipal elections. For most Kosovar Albanians the elections were not about municipal matters; they were a referendum on the status of Kosova.

The elections saw a big defeat for the two parties led by former KLA commanders, the PDK (Democratic Party of Kosova) of Hashim Thaci and the AAK (Alliance for the Future of Kosova) of Ramush Haradinaj.

The victory of Ibrahim Rugova's LDK (Democratic League of Kosova) does not, however, imply the defeat of Albanian nationalism or demands for Kosovan independence. Rugova may be more amenable to discussion and negotiation than the former KLA leaders but he is undoubtedly in favour of independence for Kosova. He did, after all, declare Kosova independent during the Milosevic years – a declaration totally ignored by every single western government.

Rugova's political come-back is certainly impressive. He was effectively side-lined at the end of the war by the leaders of the KLA. His party had lost large amounts of support, partly because it had failed to end Serbian rule, partly because during the war Rugova appeared on Serbian TV in discussions with Milosevic and partly because of its corruption.

Rugova's victory is even more impressive because although it has been presented as a 'victory for moderation' he was not the favoured candidate of the US, which backed Thaci. No doubt unconsciously, Thaci recognised his dependence on the US in a pre-election speech in Prishtina when he declared 'You can choose between the new political class who brought the most powerful allies [NATO] to Kosova, or the old political class [i.e. Rugova] which spent ten years making compromises with Milosevic'.

Thaci's defeat was primarily a reaction against the corruption surrounding sections of the old KLA leadership and the involvement of some of them with criminal gangs. It also expressed a belief among many Kosovars that Rugova would be more acceptable to Belgrade, as he has spoken out in support of the rights of Kosovan Serbs and therefore more likely to be able to negotiate independence.

**"The US, which has no demands for independence within its borders, is currently far less hostile to Kosovar independence than the European governments, several of which do."**

However, by backing 'the old political class' the majority of Kosovars have also called into question – in a very embryonic way certainly – not just 'the new political class' but also 'the most powerful allies' and their future role in Kosova.

US support for Thaci reflects differences between the US and European governments over Kosova's future status. The US is currently far less hostile to Kosovar independence than the Europeans. The US has no demands for independence within its borders, whereas several European governments do face such pressures.

**K**osovar independence would strengthen separatist demands in a number of countries. And Belgrade is of much greater importance to European governments than Prishtina. Hence European governments remain implacably opposed to independence.

Holbrooke, the main architect of US policy in the Balkans, no doubt also had one eye on the US elections. A Bush victory would possibly see the withdrawal of US troops from the Balkans and a reassessment of American international priorities. By encouraging Kosovar aspirations for independence and calling for early parliamentary elections Holbrooke may well have been trying to create conditions in which it is far more difficult for the US to withdraw.

By backing Thaci, the main KLA leader, he may also have been hoping to minimise the risk of conflict between NATO troops and Kosovars who feel betrayed, since Thaci is clearly tied to 'the most powerful allies'.

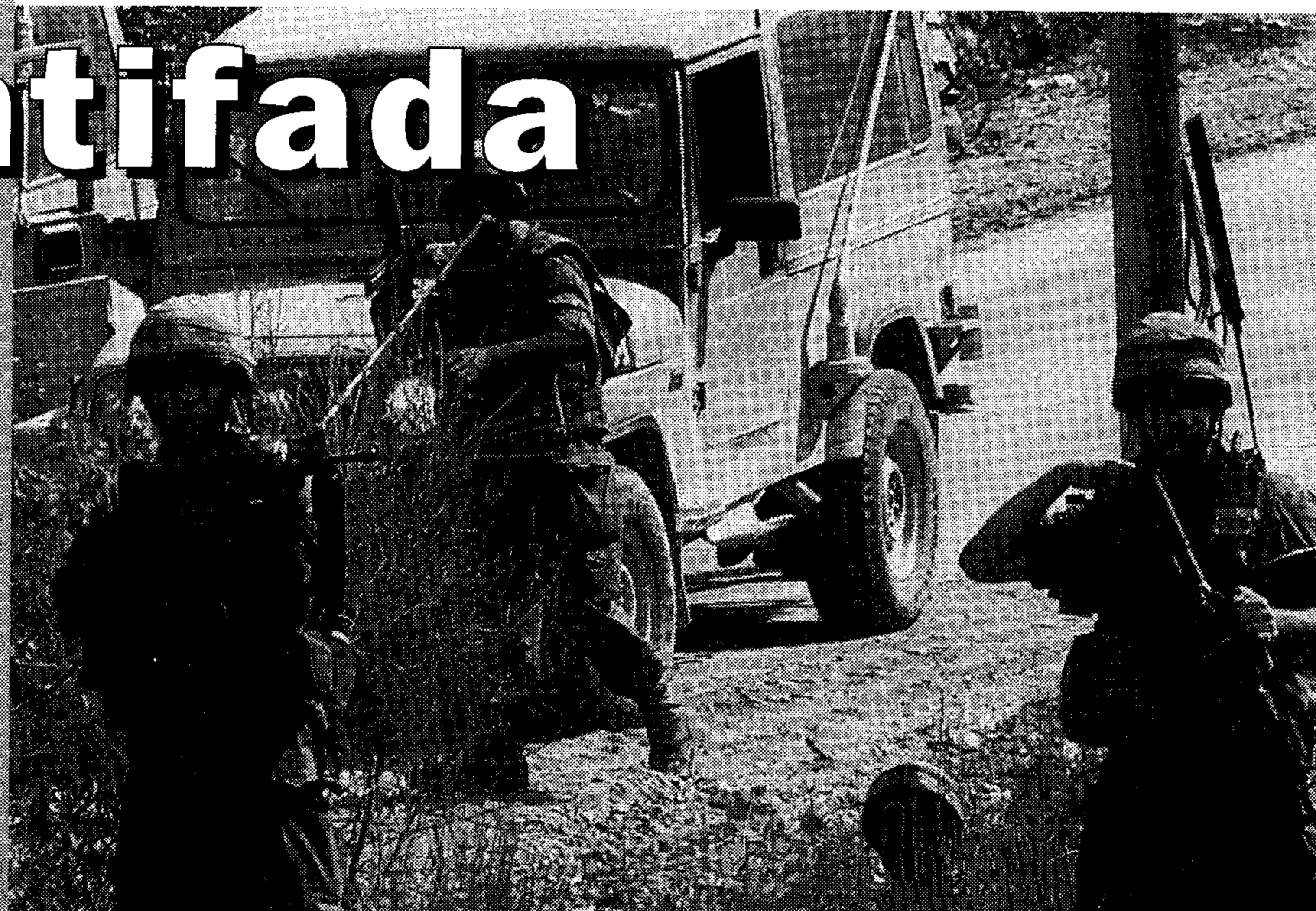
The overthrow of Milosevic makes such conflicts more, not less, likely. The overwhelming majority of Kosovar Albanians have made clear their refusal to be a part of Serbia, whoever is in government in Belgrade.

Their vote is a decisive rejection of UN Resolution 1244 which gives Yugoslavia sovereignty over Kosova. It is a decisive rejection of that part of the resolution that gives Yugoslav troops the right to return to Kosova, a policy already being advocated by both Kostunica and Zoran Djindjic.

*Socialist Outlook* continues to support the clearly expressed wish of the majority of Kosovars for independence. It is patently obvious that the only way they will remain part of Serbia is by repression and denying them the right to self-determination. It is also clear that the main role of NATO troops in the immediate future will be to deny the Kosovars the right to independence.

We call for the immediate recognition of an independent Kosova – and the withdrawal of NATO troops.

# The Al Aqsa Intifada Collapse of flawed Oslo 'peace' deal



**Tikva Honig-Parnass**

The Al Aqsa Intifada which brought the Oslo process officially to its end, revealed the colonialist assumptions on which it was based and the shaky arrangements that were supposed to sustain it.

The two main purposes of the Oslo Agreements were

- to ensure the political stability of the region so that it would be open to the capitalist globalisation process,
- and to promise the Israeli state the continuation of its control over the 1967 Occupied Territories, with the collaboration of the Palestinian Authority oppressing any opposition and thus satisfy the economic and security interests of Israel.

## Opposition Growing

The basic assumption behind the Oslo agreement was that Arafat would be able to fulfil the task of ensuring the security of Israel, without interference from democratic legal and political institutions, which would not exist in the regime he was to establish.

However, the layer of bureaucrats who were brought from Tunis and the corrupt economic and political system of which this layer is the main beneficiary, have caused rage and strong opposition – both within the democratic elite which emerged throughout the years of the “First Intifada”, and was marginalised by Arafat, and among political and military leaders who represented that elite at the time.

Moreover, such criticism prevails also within the Fatah militia that Arafat allowed to be established, the Tantheem, who more and more show a tendency towards political and operational independence from Arafat, while challenging the Oslo process, to which they themselves were partner. Indeed, as the journalist, Danny Rubenstein states, (Ha'aretz, 18 10 Arafat does not control the uprising which broke out spontaneously and has been largely led by the Tantheem.

Basically antedateable was the assumption that the strong police force, which the Oslo Agreements permitted Arafat to set up, would carry

out the exclusive mission of ensuring the security of Israelis – soldiers, settlers and civilians inside the Green Line.

The recent Intifada made it clear that the Palestinian police, including the Preventive Security forces, perceive their duty as the protectors of their people when they are attacked by Israeli soldiers.

Moreover, the assumption that it is possible to create a kind of South Lebanon Army, out of the conquered and oppressed Palestinian people, has been shaken, since many Palestinian police have shown strong identification with the militant demonstrations, and even joined them in attacking soldiers and settlers.

As opposed to expectations, it became clear that Arafat could not as yet sign a settlement which included relinquishing the Right to Return and sovereignty over East Jerusalem and the Al Aqsa compound.

Although at present there is no organised democratic opposition, there still exists in wide strata of the Palestinian people – here and in the Diaspora – a high level of politicisation and militant energy, which constitutes a serious threat to Arafat's leadership.

## Erasure of the Green line

The Israeli 'Left' that initiated the Oslo process has repeatedly stressed its importance in implementing the “separation between the two people”. (Let's 'separate in peace', call the leaders of Peace Now).

This slogan was reiterated like a mantra, despite the fact that both Labour and Likud governments had created a reality in which the settlements stretched to the outskirts of Palestinian towns and villages. These settlements were designed precisely to prevent separation and as such, leaving the idea of Palestinian “sovereignty” in their autonomous enclaves with no real meaning.

The assumption that it is possible to separate the state of Israel and the Occupied Territories of '67 through the Green Line has also been shown to be unrealistic. The ten days of the uprising of the Palestinian Arabs inside Israel revealed the malice and the stupidity of the slogan 'Two states for two peo-

ple', which had been adopted for years by the more 'radical' parts of the Israeli Left.

The bearers of this slogan who ignored the existence of Palestinian Arabs in Israel, and did not foresee the strengthening of their Palestinian national identity. And indeed as Israeli commentators of the Al Aqsa Intifada said: 'the Green Line has been blurred.'

However was not only because of the strong identification of Palestinians in Israel with the uprising of their people in the '67 Occupied Territories., as shown in their demonstrations. Israel itself erased the Green Line long before, when Israel perceived its Arab citizens as enemies, and used against them the same methods of oppression which it uses against its subjects in the Occupied Territories: shooting live and rubber bullets at demonstrations in protest against Israeli oppression, demolishing 'illegal' houses, and confis-



cating lands and then building settlements which reach the outskirts of the Arab communities from whom the land was taken, thus preventing any development in them.

Here we have before us one of the inherent contradictions in the policy which the Jewish-Zionist state exercises towards its Arab citizens. On one hand, it wishes to differentiate between the two parts of the Palestinian

people which were torn from each other in the 1948 war, and aims at separating them from each other.

However, on the other hand – in order to justify the existence of a Jewish state, Israel is compelled to repeat and underline the “security” reasons presumably preventing it from accepting Palestinian Arabs as equal citizens and from acknowledging them as a national minority.

## Strengthening of 1948 Palestinians' national identity

The Israeli 'Left' has assumed that the policies to dispossess the Palestinians inside Israel, including the 'Judaizing' of the Galilee and the Triangle area (Um el Fahem region which borders the West Bank), would continue uninterrupted. Ashkenazi (European Jewish) middle class yuppies, most of them 'pursuers of peace', who were looking for a suburban 'quality of life', built settlements in the Galilee and the Triangle. In their opinion, they maintained good 'neighbourly relationships' with their Arab neighbours with the youngsters of

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they supported the government in the Knesset, although they were not part of the government.

At that time an assumption prevalent in progressive academic circles in Israel was that the 'Israelisation' process of Arabs in Israel, was at its prime, at the expense of their identification with their people in the '67 Occupied Territories ("Palestinisation").

Sami Samoha, Professor of Sociology at Haifa University determined that it was inevitable that the Palestinians in Israel will accept the Jewish state, which was passing through a deep process of democratisation, “simply because they have no better alternative to their lives in Israel. The prospect of living in a Palestinian state certainly holds no charms for them. Thus it is clear that life in the Jewish – and democratic – state of Israel, with all its defects, is still the best deal on offer”.

The individual and collective disorganisation of the national Arab minority was of no interest to the Israeli Left. As said before, the main dimension of their world view is that of the security of the state of Israel and its existence as a 'Jewish' state.

But once again the massive demonstra-

However, they are calling not only for “equality of rights” on the individual level, but are demanding the recognition of their collective rights, such as returning the lands which have been stolen from them, granting them cultural autonomy etc. Moreover, they are challenging now the very legal and ideological foundations of the Jewish-Zionist state in which their oppression is structurally inevitable.

## Old Zionism vs. Neoliberalism

It seems that Israel is ready to take off the gloves now that the cracks have been revealed in the colonialist structure that Zionism erected. Confronting the genuine national desires within the Palestinian people is bringing the Labour establishment to show its real face.

There are no more deceiving attempts to claim that there are substantial differences between Left and Right – attempts that have continued since the beginning of colonisation in Palestine. The Labour Party is almost liquidated by now, as is the 'political centre' that Barak founded before the last elections – 'One Israel'.

The majority of the Labour representatives will support a united national government, together with the Likud headed by Sharon, which will adopt a policy of slaughter and bloodshed to oppress the opposition in the Occupied Territories, and to force the Palestinians to accept the Israeli-American dictates.

This has, from the very beginning, been the strategy of the Zionist Labour Movement – conquering the land in 'peaceful ways', by adding another acre and another goat, and simultaneously getting ready to exploit fully the military power which was developed over years- as was the case in the 1948 war. This is the future plan of a united government after the failure of the diplomatically enforced surrender.

The Israeli public opinion has also been prepared as in 1948, to accept a blatant and cruel policy of force. A Gallup Poll reports Israeli society has become seeped in religious-nationalistic fanaticism. Not a day passes without reports of persecution of Arab citizens, beatings, arson, and attacks on

# Another brutal episode of Israeli criminal violence

**Statement on Palestine from the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, October 2000**

THE BLOODY autumn unleashed by the provocation committed by general Ariel Sharon, supervisor of the massacres at Sabra and Chatila in Lebanon in 1982 - with the escort graciously provided for him by general Ehud Barak, "Labour" prime minister of an Israeli state more than ever dominated by the military - already constitutes one of the most brutal episodes of the long history of criminal violence perpetrated by the Zionist enterprise against the Palestinian people.

The entire world has seen yet again to what point the discourse of the imperialist powers on human rights and the rights of peoples is variable according to the interests of their world hegemony: intensive bombardments and murderous embargos for Iraq and Serbia, "rogue states"; unequalled levels of military aid and friendly advice for Israel, key member of the strategic apparatus of imperialist domination in this major oil-producing area of the world and in any case non-recognition of national rights, whether of Palestinians or Kosovars.

Sharon's provocation was nonetheless only the drop of water that made a cup that had been full to the brim for a very long time run over. It shattered the process opened up by the Oslo accords and their signature in Washington, on the White House lawn, in September 1993. It is the consequence of the over-accumulation of frustrations in the course of the seven years since then, during which the economic and social position of the Palestinian people have worsened.

### Fraudulent

In signing these accords, general Rabin offered the Palestinians a fraudulent deal. He could proceed to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from inside the zones of Palestinian population in the territories occupied in 1967 - a withdrawal which Israel's military top brass had demanded since the Intifada in 1988, motivated by a concern to preserve the moral of their army and worried about the consequences of its being bogged down in the tasks of repression in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on its state of general preparation in relation to the Arab environment. Beyond this redeployment,

Rabin offered no concession of a nature to satisfy the elementary demands of the Palestinians: dismantling of the Zionist settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, total withdrawal of the Israeli army from the territories occupied in 1967, establishment of a Palestinian state on the whole of these territories, including East Jerusalem, and the return to Palestine of the refugees of 1948 and

a lot of difficulty in muzzling Palestinian society completely, despite its efforts to do so. Moreover, Yasser Arafat and his lieutenants were much less inclined to push the repressive escalation further given that, on the one hand, they knew that in losing all legitimacy in the eyes of their population, indeed in the eyes of a section of their troops, they weakened themselves in relation to Israel; while on

of the Oslo accords would be the absence of direct collaboration between the Palestinian leadership and the Zionist government and a contemptuous indifference on the part of the latter as to the internal management of the Palestinian territories.

Faced with this, the only progressive perspective which is offered to the Palestinian people would be to develop anew the forms of self-organisation which characterised the early days of the Intifada, instead of the repressive and highly corrupt administration set up in the framework of the Oslo accords.

The Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip does not have the means on its own to free itself from the Israeli yoke. The relationship of forces is unfavourable to it in a crushing way. It can hope to change it only by finding the points of support which until now have been cruelly lacking:

- in the pressure of the popular movement of solidarity on the Arab governments to force them to give the Palestinians the diplomatic support and economic aid which are indispensable to them;

- in the pressure of the movement of international solidarity for the recognition of the right of the Palestinians to a state, for an emergency international aid, to stop the state of Israel from pursuing its policy of strangulation of the Palestinian territories and to cut off all military and related aid. One of the conditions for an effective movement of solidarity with the Palestinian people is to forcefully reject any expressions of antisemitism;

- inside the state of Israel itself, where the outburst of violence of which those Palestinians holding a second class Israeli citizenship have been the victims has shown to what depths Israeli society could plunge.

It is to be hoped that this fearful perspective could impel a large number of Israelis to mobilise to force their government to stop starving the Palestinians and to recognise their right to a sovereign state on the whole of their territories occupied in 1967, as an indispensable element on the road to a just settlement on the principle of equal rights of all people Arabs and Jews, without which this region of the world would have no perspective of the future other than murderous violence and permanent insecurity.



property. Most of these events are not reported to the police or even to Human Rights organisations, mainly due to the lack of confidence in legal authorities, which have been strengthened in the recent demonstrations.

In no small way the responsibility lies on the shoulders of the Zionist Left, which assumed it was possible to reach the realisation of the Oslo Agreements by convincing the Israeli public with arguments such as "security" and "separation", - but without any change in the prevailing discourse justifying Zionism and without recognising the impact of what the Palestinians call Naqba (the impact of the defeat of 1948).

We have indeed witnessed supposedly new trends of 'Post Zionism', which presented a local version of neoliberal and multi-culturalism ideology of the capitalist globalisation era.

The representatives of the new bourgeoisie which emerged with the development of the Israeli economy, and their mouthpieces - the Labour Party and the left Zionist party Meretz - who initiated the Oslo Agreements have meanwhile failed to achieve the goal of ensuring political and 'security' stability.

It should be noted that large parts of this new bourgeoisie, (including professionals and academics, the majority of whom are Ashkenazim) are the biological and ideological offspring of the Zionist Labour movement that founded the state of Israel.

There is a structured contradiction between their class interests regarding a free economy and privatisation - and their Zionist commitment to the existence of a Jewish state, to rule over the entire area of historic Palestine. The latter demands the continuity of

some of the ideological and socio-economic collectivist dimensions of traditional Zionism, which may be an obstacle to a wild free market, and to the ideology which legitimises it.

Within this inner contradiction in the policy and ideology of the political establishment in Israel, the classic Zionist trend of 'Blood and Soil', of conquest and direct brutal oppression, has so far won over. It indeed seems that Barak and his followers in the Labour party have decided to disconnect themselves from the unholy alliance with the Israeli big industrialists who are seeing the destruction of their dreams of the "new Middle East".

They are now trying to protest against Barak's attempts to unite with Sharon and are calling upon him to establish a coalition with Shas (an ultra-orthodox party representing largely n African Jews) - the same Shas of which, at the time Barak's government was being formed, the same people repeatedly cried, "Anybody but Shas!"

A wide consensus is now emerging around the continuation of the Zionist project in its year 2000 version, which is no less brutal than its previous versions. However, the unity between Right and 'Left' will inevitably widen the cracks in the Israeli-American project: it will strengthen the opposition of the Palestinian people on both sides of the Green Line, and within Israeli society will hopefully create a solid core which will be able to disconnect itself from the new nationalistic alliance.

This may well ignite the fire of true solidarity with the Palestinian people among the masses in the Arab world - all of which threaten American imperialism and its Israeli clients in the region.



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1967.

It only held out the possibility of accepting a largely truncated and perverted version of Palestinian aspirations, on the express condition that the Palestinian Authority (PA) headed by Yasser Arafat fulfilled its part of the deal, by showing that it was capable of bringing the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to heel efficiently and on a lasting basis.

### Concessions

This fraudulent deal very quickly came up against a major contradiction: successive Zionist governments, those of Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu and Barak, conceded to the Palestinians only some of the promises of Oslo, with an eyedropper and increasingly late, demanding each time that the PA increase its proxy repression as condition for the following stage.

Their "security"-fixed mentality, their chauvinist arrogance and their racist contempt for the Palestinians meant that their priority concern was pandering to the most reactionary fringe of Israeli public opinion. Meanwhile, they have carried out a policy of development of the Zionist colonies and a military and infrastructural parcellization of the Palestinian territories, which has been humiliating and revolting to the highest point for the population of these territories.

In such conditions, it was totally predictable that the PA, confronted with the exasperation of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, would experience

the other, they feel increasingly that they have been duped.

This increasingly obvious impasse determined the recent explosion and the bloody autumn which has resulted from it and which is still going on. These events illustrate in a cruel manner the total bankruptcy of the strategic choice of the Arafat leadership, consisting in counting on the benevolence of the Zionist state and the so-called arbitration of Washington so as to obtain a Bantustan in the 1967 territories. The increasingly evident bankruptcy of this strategy only fostered the growth of Islamic fundamentalism among the Palestinian population.

### Zionist unity

Barak, who is trying to win the participation of Ariel Sharon in a government of Zionist unity, proclaims today his intention to go back to the initial project of the Israeli military leadership, as it was conceived in 1988: to carry out unilaterally the redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in such a way as to consolidate strategic Israeli control of these territories and their external frontiers, placing the enclaves of Palestinian population under permanent siege, reduced to the situation of vast self-managed concentration camps, constantly threatened with being asphyxiated by a retightening of the Israeli blockade.

The first difference between this perspective and the Israeli interpretation

This is a slightly edited version of an article in the first edition of *Between the Lines*, a new monthly magazine produced from Jerusalem by the former editors of *News From Within*.

*Between the Lines* aims to continue the political perspective of a categorical rejection of the Oslo process, and the Apartheid reality which has been established in its wake in the '67 Occupied Territories and strengthened within Israel.

The first edition also contains articles by, Graham Usher, Azmi Bishara, Amnon Paz, Yoram Paz, Sam Sharon Chetrit, Heidar Eid, Avia Orr and Tofiq Haddad. An annual subscription at \$45 can be obtained from PO Box 681, Jerusalem.

# No to all out war in the Philippines!

*Resolution from the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, 31.10.00*

1 When President Estrada declared an "all out war" policy against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in Mindanao, he intended to finish the war in a few weeks.

He has mobilised almost three quarters of his armed forces (air force, army and navy) led by the elite force trained by the US through the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement.

2 The objective of this war is to militarily weaken the MILF and to draw it to the negotiating table where the Estrada government can impose its concept of peace on it.

Using the modern military hardware provided by the US like the Global Positioning System (GPS), satellite photos and heavy weaponry, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) attacked the 47 camps of the MILF including those camps where the Revolutionary Proletarian Army-Alex Bongcayao Brigade (RPA-

ABB), the armed unit of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (RWPP) of the Philippines share with the MILF.

3 The "all out war" policy of the Estrada government is not only directed against the MILF. The strategic role of Mindanao for the success of the neoliberal project of capitalist globalisation in the Philippines is the main reason for this war.

It is a war directed at all those who will oppose capitalist globalisation. The Revolutionary Workers' Party in the Philippines has been one of the main forces leading the campaign to stop this war, not only in Mindanao but in the whole country.

It has been launching grassroots based peace conferences (local and international) and conducting humanitarian projects for those who have been dislocated by war.

4 The Moro people has been fighting for their right to self-determination for more than 50 years. In fact, it has consistently resisted all Philippine colonisers and invaders for more than 300 years.

Currently the struggle of the Moro people for self-

determination is led by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Banga Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). The Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines has been supporting this struggle of the Moro people.

5 The Estrada military solution to a non-military problem has been a failure. But it has displaced almost a million people in Mindanao. Many of these people are children and old people are forced to live in the "plastic tents" in the evacuation centres. Several hundred children have died because of lack of food and medicine in these places.

6 The RWPP has been working together with other progressive groups among the three peoples in Mindanao, the Moro, Lumads (indigenous peoples) and the majority Christians to achieve a comprehensive solution to the problems of Mindanao.

There have been gains achieved in this already but the Estrada regime and US imperialism would not want to pursue this.

7 It was not circumstantial that at the peak of Estrada's military offensives against the MILF, the Abu Sayyaf (Muslim fundamentalist

group) came back to life.

They carried out several kidnappings of Christians and foreign tourists in a nearby Malaysian island resort. These acts made the headlines locally as well as internationally.

In fact at an early stage they had announced political demands as conditions for the release of the hostages. The propaganda machinery of the Estrada government had successfully packaged the Abu Sayyaf and the MILF as one.

The terrorist acts of the Abu Sayyaf justified the arming of the Christians in Mindanao to fight not only the Abu Sayyaf but the MILF or the Muslims as well. The Muslims and Christians who have been neighbours for a long time have begun to mistrust each other.

8 After thousands of lives lost and heavy destruction of homes and farms, Estrada announced military victory over the MILF, especially after the capture of the main camp of the MILF (Camp Abubakir).

The leadership of the MILF announced jihad, not so much to recapture their camps but to defend their cause and their



*Protestors demand impeachment of Estrada*

homeland. In the last part of July 2000, Estrada sent his representatives to the Foreign Ministerial meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Kuala Lumpur to block the application of the MILF as observer in the OIC. A week after this he went to the United States to ask for military assistance from President Clinton.

9 At present the MILF has been conducting guerrilla counteroffensives against the AFP. The war has totally drained the resources of the government, so that it has overshot by more than 30% of the allowable deficit by the IMF. At the peak of the military offensives the government was spending more than a million dollars a day. This is one of the major causes of the economic crisis in the country.

10. The crisis has worsened in the last three weeks because of the scandal faced by President Estrada. One of the members of his inner circle has exposed Estrada's involvement in illegal gambling in the country. And now he is undergoing an impeachment procedure in the Congress.

The bourgeois political

parties have taken advantage of this scandal to further weaken Estrada.

11. In this difficult situation there is an urgent need for forging solidarity among the progressive parties and groups in the world to stop the continuation of the "all out war" policy of the Estrada government directly or indirectly supported by the US imperialists.

There is an urgent need for us to support the struggle of the Moro people to self-determination and the progressive organisations embodying this struggle.

12. The Revolutionary Workers' Party of the Philippines has been struggling with the Moro people to attain their political objective of self government through helping them in the revolutionary work of building and strengthening organisations among the working and peasant class to ensure the proletarian content of the right to self-determination.

The FI expresses its full internationalist solidarity with the RWPP comrades and pledges to continue its political and material support to them.

# China: death toll of market system

**Zhang Kai**

LABOUR SAFETY has become a critical issue in China, with the government keenly pressing ahead the market economy, and seeking optimum economic "efficacy".

So severe is the problem that the government has now been forced to embark on a national inspection of production safety in an attempt to contain major accidents and hazards.

The Emergency Circular issued by the State Council on 7 August 2000 pointed out the gravity of the problem. Within a period of ten days in late June 2000, a series of major accidents had occurred:

■ 130 people died in a shipwreck in Hejiang County, Sichuan Province on June 22;

■ 49 people died in a plane crash of the Wuhan Airline Company;

■ 38 people died in an explosion of a fireworks factory in Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province on June 30;

■ 10 people died in an explosion of a firecrackers factory in Dianjiang County, Chongqing Municipality.

For years, industrial and traffic accidents have been rampant, with around 100,000 deaths every year. Of this, about 16,000 are



*Market forces are less than finger-licking good for Chinese workers - just ask them in Leqing City*

workers whose deaths are induced by industrial and mining accidents. China produces about a fifth of the world's raw coal output, yet Chinese miners account for four-fifths of the world's mining casualties.

According to the State Coal Industrial Bureau, each year there are about 70 mining accidents killing more than 10 people. This means an incident every five days.

In 1996, coal output in China was 1.374 billion tons, with 10,015 miners killed in accidents. In the USA, the figure was 38 deaths for a coal output of 0.96 billion tons. In 1998, the Chinese death rate was 6.04 persons per 1 million tons of coal output - 200 times the casualty rate of the USA.

Up to the end of 1998, there were 550,000 pneumoconiosis

sufferers across China, of whom 130,000 have died. This equalled the total number of pneumoconiosis cases in the rest of the world. Numbers of Chinese pneumoconiosis victims are growing at a rate of 15,000 to 20,000 a year.

Incomplete statistics show that there are around 380,000 hazardous or poisonous industrial enterprises in China. A Health Ministry survey of 1,426 foreign invested enterprises, found 37% involved occupational hazards in the process of production, and 35% of workers were exposed to such hazards.

Large numbers of people also die of poisoning. According to incomplete statistics by the health authorities, occupational poisoning took the lives of hun-

dreds every year, and jeopardised the health of thousands. In 1999, the number increased by 47% as compared to 1998.

With no legislature to monitor occupational health problems, the violation of production safety and health standards by small and medium township enterprises has been getting serious.

According to a Health Ministry survey in the early 1990s, industrial hazards existed in 83% of township enterprises; 34% of workers in township enterprises were in contact with dust and poisonous substances, and 16% of the workforce faced occupational hazards.

Another major hazard is the danger of the same building housing workers' quarters as well as the factory and warehouse. When fires have broken out, the casualties have been high.

In November 1993, 83 workers were killed when a fire broke out in Zhili Toy Factory in Shenzhen; and in 16 June 1994, 93 died when a fire broke out in Yuxin Dye and Textile Factory in Zhuhai, and the next day the building collapsed.

Long working hours, fatigue and lack of safety protection equipment have also caused numerous accidents to occur. On June 19, Yang Cheng Evening News reported that pri-

vately run enterprises in two townships in Leqing City, Zhejiang Province, were using cheap and unsafe machinery.

The two hospitals in Leqing City had set a record of stitching severed fingers for 14 workers per day, treating over 5,000 workers during the year.

The *Workers Daily* on March 2 also reported on the situation in a "village of severed fingers", where in one village alone there had been hundreds of casualties, "and it was said that severed fingers could fill up a basket".

There may be a correlation between the hundreds of thousands of victims of industrial hazards and accidents and the high suicide rate in China. *Shenzhen SEZ Daily* reported on May 27 that the suicide rate in China - 19.58 per 100,000 population - was well above the world average of 15.23. 42% of the world's suicide cases happen in China.

The *Workers Daily* of March 13 reported that some employers signed "Life and Death Contracts" with workers, stating that workers would receive only wages but no compensation for whatever injuries or casualties they might suffer.

As most workers in low-paid and hazardous jobs are peasants from the countryside, they constitute a vulnerable labour force and a vast reserve labour army, and the ill or injured are simply sent back home. They

are not covered by medical insurance or labour insurance schemes.

According to newspaper reports in mainland China, fees for medical care have soared in the last decade. In the early 1990s, the average outpatient fee was 10 yuan (US \$1.20) and hospitalisation fee was 400 yuan. By 1997, they were respectively 60 yuan and 2,300 yuan.

In addition, 80% of the state's medical and health resources are in urban cities, with two-thirds concentrated in large hospitals. Health care has become simply unaffordable and unavailable to the rural working masses.

Before the economic reform of 1978, workers were lauded as the masters of the country, even if sometimes it was lip service. The economic reform has given autonomy to the management of the enterprises, and now it is difficult to find even propaganda about workers' rights or workers' power in the enterprises and in society.

Trade unions are powerless on matters of occupational health or safety. The Labour Laws cannot offer protection. With such intensification of contradictions and tensions, it requires the effort of both workers and groups working for workers' welfare to improve on the situation and fight for workers' rights.



# US Presidential race: a choice of Tweedledum – or Tweedle-Dumber

## Nader's challenge

As we go to press, the outcome of the Presidential race still hangs in the balance.

With the recount in just over half of Florida's 67 counties completed, Bush's lead over Gore has been cut by about 600 votes - around a third of the 1,700 votes that separated him and Bush on the first count.

Both candidates need to win Florida to win the presidential election and have sent teams of lawyers to the southern state to investigate a series of alleged irregularities in the voting.

A number of Democrat voters have filed a lawsuit demanding a new election in Florida because they say a confusing ballot paper led them to vote for the wrong candidate. Legal challenges or the counting of postal votes could delay the process further and the votes of an estimated 2,300 people living abroad are still awaited.

None of this has stopped the vitriol against Ralph Nader's candidacy from leading Democrat supporters - strengthened by the fact that in a number of key states Nader's vote was greater than the difference between Bush's success and Gore's showing.

While there are many justified criticisms that can be made of Nader, as his supporter Michael Moore points out, Nader and his supporters cannot be blamed for the right-wing policies of President Clinton and Vice-President Gore.

It is this neo-liberal trajectory that has led more and more American voters to recognise what has always been the case - the difference between the two parties of American capitalism have always been

**T**he United States is now approaching the culmination of a contest for the most powerful elected position on earth. Yet, if previous elections are anything to go by, barely half of the electorate will even bother to vote.

It is not hard to see why: the election is between two rich white men, each representing a party that has consistently promoted the exploitation of working people, the exclusion of women and ethnic minorities and the pursuit of corporate interests abroad through imperialist wars.

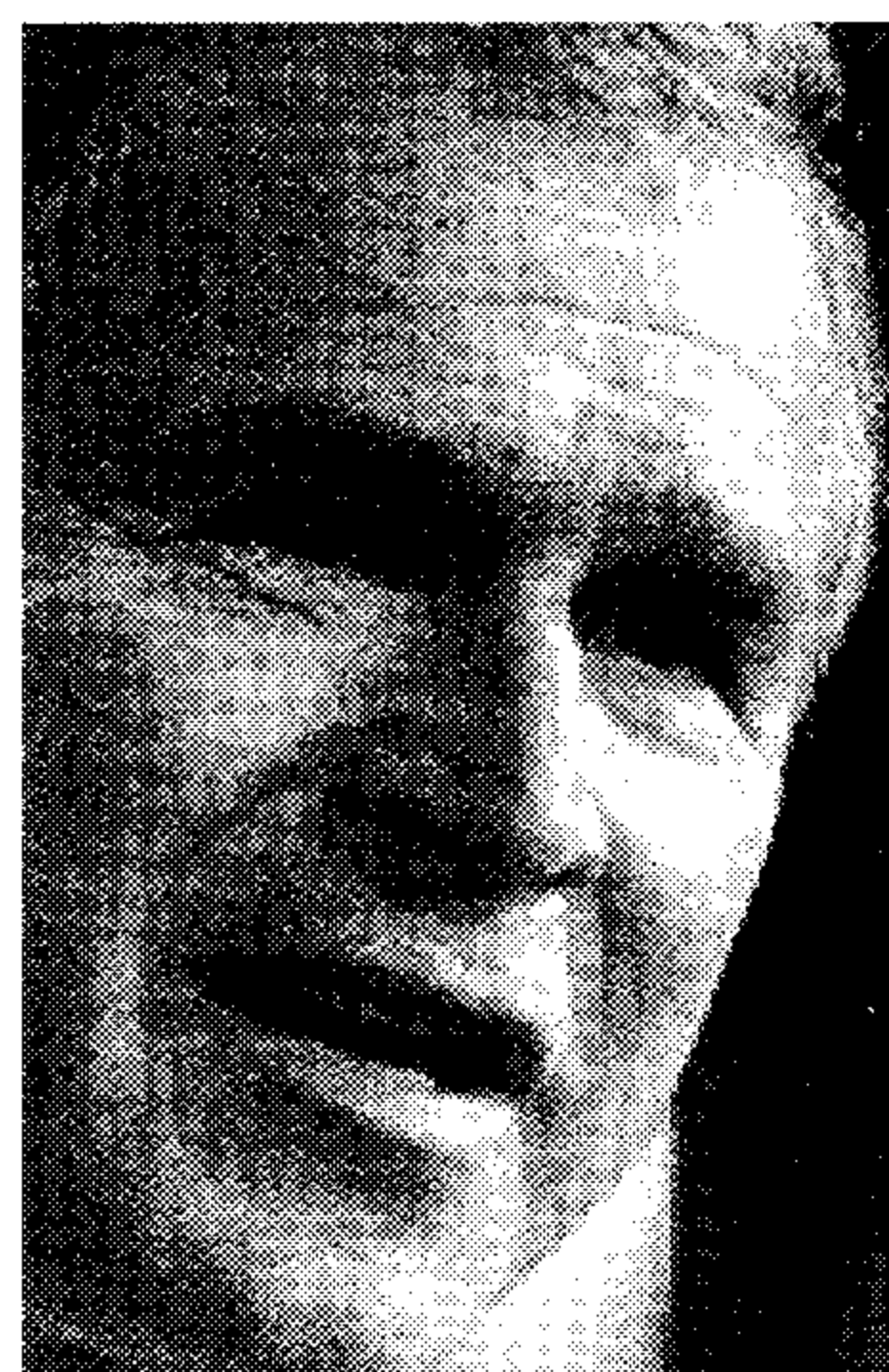
The Clinton-Gore administration, in its eight years in power, has continued the neo-liberal project initiated by Reagan and Bush, with its 'reform' of the welfare system, the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement and the deregulation of the communications

industry. While allowing the gap between rich and poor to widen, the administration has pursued tough 'law and order' policies and supported the expansion of the death penalty.

**Y**et despite this, the leadership of the labour movement in the United States continues to support the Democratic Party, pouring money and volunteers into Al Gore's election campaign and mobilising its members to turn out the vote.

At national level, almost every union has endorsed Gore, seeing him as the lesser of two evils, a safeguard against a Republican Party characterised at its worst by union-busting bosses, white-supremacists, anti-abortionists and religious fanatics.

Yet, while Gore will grate-



So which is which?



fully accept the unions' support and pay lip service to their concerns during his campaign, if elected he will assuredly continue with the same anti-working class policies that he has supported for the last eight years.

### Unions under Democrat thumb

And as long as there is felt to be no alternative to the left of the Democrats, this will continue to be the case. As the American Marxist, George Breitman, put it more than forty years ago:

"The Democrats have much more influence in the labor movement than the labor movement has in the Democratic Party. The Democrats can take the unions for granted because they feel they have them in their pocket; because the unions, having sworn not to create their own party, have nowhere else to go.

"The union leaders not only have become dependent on the Democratic Party. They have become its captives. And this is one of the reasons why the Democratic Party has been moving steadily to the right year after year."



Supporters of Nader (right, and above) packed Madison Square Gardens - the first time a politician has done this since the 1930s, challenging the two parties of big business and the super-rich

**A**ttempts to create a viable working-class or socialist alternative to the two big parties have always faltered, since the time when a strong Socialist Party, which had won nearly a million votes in the 1912 presidential election, was smashed by the state for its opposition to the First World War.

A Labor Party was established in 1996, at the behest of activists in a number of unions who were determined to fight for working-class independence of the Democrats. It now has the support of nine unions at national level, and numerous local branches.

But, as a compromise to maximise its union support, it has agreed that it will neither stand its own candidates against the Democrats, nor endorse candidates of any party (including the Democrats).

**I**n this year's election, however, many trade unionists (including Labor Party activists) and others on the left are supporting the candidacy of Ralph Nader, a veteran consumer rights campaigner who is standing as the candidate of the Green Party.

While Nader makes no claim to be a socialist, his campaign includes pledges to restrain corporate power, to boost the minimum wage, to introduce a universal system of healthcare and to repeal anti-union laws.

He would fight racism and sexism at every level, cut back military spending, abolish the death penalty and phase out nuclear power in favour of renewable energy sources. And he would open up the political system by regulating campaign financing and introducing PR.

Predictably, there have been attempts to frighten would-be Nader voters by claiming that "a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush" in those marginal states that Gore hopes to win. This argument is countered by the writer and filmmaker, Michael Moore:

"A vote for Gore, who supports the death penalty, and NAFTA, and WTO, and won't support universal healthcare immediately, that is a vote for Bush. A vote for Gore is a vote for Bush; that is the new equation.

"A vote for Nader is a political Molotov that we need to throw into a corrupt and bankrupt system filled with its dirty money."

**T**hroughout the United States, trade unionists and left activists who agree with this sentiment have been organising for Nader. He has won the endorsement of one small national union, the United Electrical Workers, one statewide union and a few local branches.

In Detroit, a "Labor for Nader" group has been set up, including six local branch presidents and organ-

ised a 350-strong Labor Day rally at which Nader spoke. A similar group has been set up in New York.

Nader's union supporters hope to help him reach the target of five per cent of the vote, which will entitle him to state funding for a further campaign in 2004. But he is also, by his presence in the presidential race, raising issues on the national political agenda that would otherwise go unheard, and most importantly, encouraging class-conscious workers, feminists, environmentalists, black, Latino and native American peoples and 'progressives', to break the stranglehold of the two-party system.

**S**ocialists can, of course, have no illusions in any political campaign that, like Nader's, remains within the constraints of the bourgeois political system and fails to challenge capitalism as such. But Nader's campaign presents the best opportunity in decades for a break with the political duopoly of the 'Republicrats'.

It helps to give expression to the demands of the Seattle demonstration against the WTO and like that demonstration, it unites greens and radical campaigners of all kinds with the most progressive wing of the organised labour movement. And in this way, it helps to create the conditions for the construction of a genuine working-class socialist party in the future.

# Remembering Terry Harrison

**Alan Wassell and  
Garth Frankland**

TERRY Harrison tragically died on 7th September 2000. He was 49.

He was a life long trade unionist and active member of the labour movement, and Terry's funeral at the beautiful village church at Felkirk was packed with his family, friends and members of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Wakefield Council leader Peter Box, NUM President Arthur Scargill, and local MPs John Trickett and Mick Clapham were also present.

The branch banner of the Kellingley NUM graced the front of the church with its sharp graphic message that the working class could only obtain benefits of its labour by destroying capitalism.

This was a message that Terry had fought for throughout his too brief life.

He was the President of the NUM at Kellingly pit, the "Big K". He was also a former Chair of the Wakefield District Labour Party and of Hemsworth Labour Party. He should have been the MP for Hemsworth, but the national Labour Party leadership cheated the people of the area of the opportunity to vote for Terry by their undemocratic by-election selection procedures.

Yet despite this his great loyalty to the movement and hatred of the Tories was shown in the way he turned out to work in the by-election. The same loyalty was shown in the enormous effort and sacrifice that he made during the miners' strike.

During this period he

worked with a small number of supporters of Labour Briefing and the Workers Socialist League to build support for the strike.

Particularly he helped form the link between Hull and Castleford during the Strike.

Terry spoke at the first Miners Support Group meeting called by Hull Trades Council. The plight of the sacked and victimised miners was always high on his personal agenda.

He was tireless and an imaginative picketer, and sometimes this was personally dangerous. Once he wrecked his car engine over an obstruction left for scabs. The expensive repair to his car was done for free by a garage in Leeds so he could continue his picketing.

### Food parcels

Terry appreciated the important role played by women during the strike, and when he found that women from the pit kitchens were not getting food parcels from the union, despite being NUM members he queued up with his colleague Alan Wassell at the local TASS office which ran a "Food Parcel Service" to ensure they got what they deserved. Terry and his mates had helped to raise the donated food in the first place.

It has been said that Thatcher defeated the Miners: but she didn't beat Terry or his life-long mates. This bond was forged too strongly in the year long battle of 1984. Terry was secretary, treasurer and leading organizer of the annual World Peace Gala

However Terry's life was

not all politics and trade unions. He was a keen supporter initially of Castleford in rugby league, but in recent years supported Barnsley football club, and was a joint season ticket holder with his youngest son Neal.

He was a member and Vice Chair of Havercroft Parish Council and a school Governor. Terry was a driving force of the new Havercroft and Ryhill Sports Centre.

People were attracted to Terry by his strong personal characteristics. He was an honest man who voiced his opinion in a straightforward and non-offensive way. He was a good man, who never put anyone down - either to their face or otherwise. Above all he would help whenever and wherever he could.

He was genuinely interested in both local and wider politics and would invest his valuable time into whatever he thought might make a difference.

He had many friends both in his local community and well beyond. Terry thought the world of his family and his sons Richard and Neal, and was with them at all stages of their lives and growing up.

They provided a major source of conversation with his friends.

While he loved talking about politics, he had a rule to avoid all mention of politics when he went for a drink with his friends on Sunday evenings.

Terry will be remembered as a good and a very sincere man, a caring father and a trustworthy, true friend.

# The letter on fuel protests Socialist Worker wouldn't print

*Dear Socialist Outlook I have just received your October issue and was relieved to read the article on the fuel protests which in the main I agree with.*

*I enclose a copy of the letter I sent to Socialist Worker which, needless to say, was never acknowledged, let alone published.*

*I hope that despite the sweetness and light over the formation of the Socialist Alliances (which I support), you will publish the letter I sent them*



government. The blockade was designed to destabilise the government, and open the door to a far-right Tory government in the near future. As a bonus, big business and farmers expect to get increased profits from petrol tax concessions.

You write that the Sun, Mail, and Telegraph "denounced the militant tactics adopted by the farmers and lorry bosses". This is just not true. It was only towards the end of the week that the gutter press advised a cessation of the blockade "to retain the moral high ground in the dispute" (Mail, September 14). They recognised that the mood in the country could become hostile if the blockade continued.

When the CIA financed and inspired hauliers to strike in Chile in 1973, would your sister party in Chile (if there was one) have encouraged its members to join the picket line, and would its paper say, in enormous type on its front page: "BITTERNESS EXPLODES IN ALLENDE'S FACE"?

Allende, like Blair, was a reformist who refused to nationalise big business or improve conditions, and thereby lost the support of a

section of the middle and working class. For the left to have made him the main enemy would have been dangerous sectarianism, but your headline, makes Blair the main enemy rather than big business.

Your front page should surely have attacked the main enemy with a hard-hitting demand such as: "LABOUR MUST COUNTERATTACK: NATIONALISE THE OIL COMPANIES AND THE BIG HAULIERS WITHOUT COMPENSATION. Reduce oil prices and cut profits." Wouldn't that appeal more to Labour supporters?

The cleverly organised blockade and campaign by the employers, Tories, and their allies in the media, have shifted the mood to the right. We must not allow the return of another Tory government, which would be even further to the right than the Thatcher government.

The SWP has the duty to analyse events far more critically, and not invent "facts" to justify its erroneous theory. And it has to emphasise that the main enemy is capitalism, not the Labour and TU leadership.

That does not mean that we should have anything but hatred and contempt for those "lieutenants of capitalism". Unfortunately there are millions who don't understand the role of Blair, Monks & Co. It is for marxists to find a route to those millions.

**David Finch  
Croydon,  
24 September**

### Unpublished letter to Socialist Worker

Dear Editor

No: it's not the big employers' organisations, the Tories and the gutter press that the "blockades have confused" (What we think, SW 16 September): it's you!

There is irrefutable evidence that the blockade was organised by the big haulage companies in collusion with and in alliance with the oil company chiefs, Farmers for Action, the Countryside Alliance, and the Tory leadership.

Even more sinister groups such as the BNP were involved. The police and media looked on approvingly. Just one example: a spokesman for Humberside police says: "the protesters were extremely well-behaved, with absolutely no intimidation or violence used whatsoever".

Although New Labour is certainly no threat to big business, they still prefer and are far more comfortable with a Tory

## Socialism on the web

Socialist Outlook web site: [www.labournet.org.uk/so](http://www.labournet.org.uk/so)  
International Socialist Group: [www.3bh.org.uk/ISG](http://www.3bh.org.uk/ISG)

# Where we stand

AS A NEW CENTURY BEGINS, the battles of the last century remain to be won. millions of women and men are taking part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic or communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

**Socialist Outlook** is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.



The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence.

Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

# Socialist Outlook

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly

fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men, and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an es-

sential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations - an alliance which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By building simultaneously revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary International, we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed.

By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

If you think this is worth fighting for, and you like what you read in *Socialist Outlook*, why not join us? Drop a line to us at **PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU**, and we'll be in touch.

# Breaking down racist barriers

**Open Borders – The Case Against Immigration Controls** by Teresa Hayter, (Pluto Press £12.99)

Reviewed by Charlie van Gelderen

There can be few people more qualified to write a book about why immigration controls should be scrapped than Teresa Hayter. She is not only a diligent researcher, but also a dedicated activist, a partisan in the Campaign to Close Campsfield and the campaign to stop the former RAF barracks in Oakington, outside Cambridge, being turned into another Campsfield.

She has also visited and talked to asylum seekers in Winson Green, Rochester, Blakenhurst and Bullingdon prisons.

These experiences, the lessons to be learned from them, form the basis for this well-researched and well-written book. It is essential reading for all who want to get to grips with this issue which is only a problem because governments, aided and abetted by a jingoistic media choose to make it so.

In the present-day global economy, money is free to travel. Traversing national frontiers is no problem. Capital is literally flying all over the world.

It is not only capital in the shape of currency that can travel freely in today's world. This is also true of fixed capital – machinery.

Multinational enterprises think nothing of moving whole factories from one part of the globe to another, in search of higher profits, wringing more surplus value out of underpaid work force.

The movement of currencies, has little to do with increasing the world's productive resources. While, before 1971, over 90 per cent of exchange transactions in

the world bore some relation to financing trade and future investments, and less than half was speculative, today these figures are reversed: over 90 per cent of all transactions are speculative. There are no closed borders against these currency speculations. Capital can go where and when it wants.

There is, however, no such freedom of movement for people trying to escape from abysmal poverty, racial and political oppression. For tens of thousands of people trapped in these conditions it is becoming, as Hayter demonstrates time and again, increasingly difficult to find a country willing to accept them.

While, once upon a time, people openly moved from one country to another in search of improved living standards for themselves and their families, and if successful were hailed as entrepreneurs.

Today, the wretched of the earth, coming from the under-developed to the more prosperous countries of the West, are greeted with scorn as "economic migrants", to set them apart from "genuine refugees."

As Hayter puts it: "Migration for economic betterment, rather than being considered, as it should be and as it was when Europeans did it, desirable, is now regarded as criminal and somehow shameful."

Ever since the Neanderthals and after them Homo Sapiens, emerged from Africa, human beings have been migratory, moving from area to area in seek of better conditions. Today they would all be characterised as "economic migrants"

As Hayter makes crystal clear, most people would, given a choice, prefer to remain in the land of their birth; with their families and friends; in familiar surroundings and their traditional way of life.

They emigrate for two reasons mainly – through poverty, when they are unable to provide for their families; or to escape from oppressive regimes where they are subject to imprisonment, torture and even death, often only because they are politically opposed to the party in power.

The irony of the situation is that the poverty prevalent in the so-called developing world, is worsened by the economic actions of the wealthier countries of the West – to which the refugees seek to flee.

Conditions imposed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund through structural adjustment programmes are a major cause of emigration. The financial establishments on these countries do nothing to improve the living standards of these people. Quite the reverse!

Today the easy access to international news have made most would-be migrants aware of the difficulties they would have to

overcome in the countries where they seek asylum. Controls imposed on would-be immigrants, are harsh and often brutal; the aim to try and stop the inflow.

They are also aware of the growing racism in these countries, a racism stimulated by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the government and the media, although the proponents of the spate of anti-refugee legislation tried to argue that its aim was to minimise racist tensions.

Thus, Margaret Thatcher, in an interview with ITV's World in Action, January 1978, said that "if you want good race relations, you have got to allay people's fears about numbers."

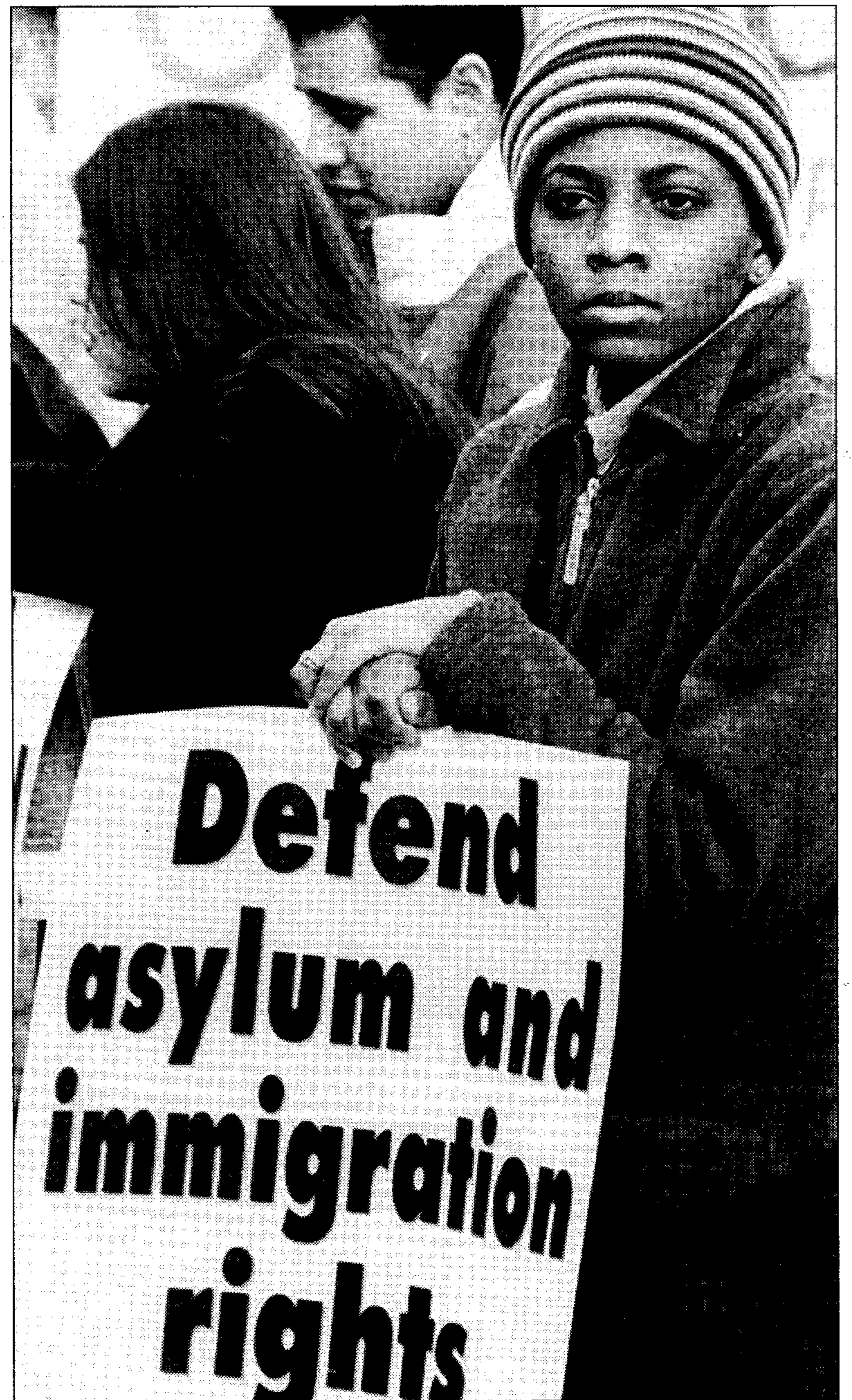
These sentiments have been echoed by successive Home Secretaries and, far from the proclaimed aim of allaying racism, have actually stimulated it, leading to increased activities by the National Front and other extreme Right groups.

The Treaty of Rome which set the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, was supposed to eliminate, not only trade barriers and free movement of capital within Europe, but also to stimulate the free movement of people. Migrants within Europe were to have full social and family rights.

In the 1970s immigration from outside Europe was virtually stopped, but the rights of 'third country nationals' already settled in European states, were severely curtailed. Fortress Europe was being created.

Britain would not agree to the Schengen Convention, under which border controls between countries in Europe agreeing to the Convention would be abolished by 1 January, 1990. Britain insisted on maintaining its own severely restrictive border controls.

It is within the discretion of governments to determine who is a "genuine" refugee and who is not.



British governments, whether Tory or Labour, have an eye on the electorate who could be swept into a xenophobic view by a manipulative media.

There is no real distinction between the positions of Jack Straw and his predecessor, Michael Howard, both of whom are, incidentally, descended from immigrants, in Howard's case, only two generations ago.

Thus, in 1994, around 80 per cent of asylum seekers, amounting to some 16,000 were refused the right to stay.

A recent MORI poll found that the media-fed public have completely wrong and exaggerated views of the situation.

Those questioned hugely overestimated the money asylum seekers receive, believing they got an average £113 a week whereas a single adult seeking asylum gets just £36.54 a week in vouchers to be spent at selected shops – only £10 may be converted into cash.

They also estimated that immigrants make up 20 per cent of the British population, while the real figure is around 4 per cent.

Arguing strongly for the aboli-

tion of existing border controls, Hayter stresses especially that these controls lead to great suffering and abuse of human rights; they are racist and help to legitimise racism.

She also trenchantly disposes of the case that the free entry of immigrants leads to the loss of jobs in the host countries, working conditions or the welfare state in Europe.

Drawing on empirical material and first-hand experience, Hayter shows that these imposed controls, at vast human and financial cost, do little to reduce the number of people trying to enter the countries of their choice.

She calls for the free movement of people to be recognised as a universal human right – for open borders.

This book provides valuable material for all engaged in the fight against immigration controls, for every one who recognises that the global economy require global recognition of the right of every man and woman to be treated as a human being and not as merchandise or political fodder for the xenophobes and racists.

## The power to exclude

"Most people now appear to take immigration controls for granted, at least in the rich industrialised countries of the West. But comprehensive controls to stop immigration are a recent phenomenon. 100 years ago they did not exist; it was the people who advocated them who were condemned as extremist...."

"The state powers to which the governments of industrialised countries most tenaciously cling are their powers to keep people out of their territories. Their object, though not always achieved is to exclude poor people, and especially black people."

## Free movement of people

"There is now a flagrant contradiction between the current, regressive promotion of the ideology of the free market as far as goods and capital are concerned and its denial where people are concerned. But too much should not be made of the analogy.

"Migrants are people and they should be treated differently from mere material goods and flows of capital. The current situation should in fact be reversed. It is quite possible, and quite right, to oppose the free and uncontrolled movement of capital and the domination of the World Trade Organisation by the interests of big capital, and yet be in favour of the free movement of people.

"In an ideal world investment would be planned and democratically controlled so that benefits were widely spread to reduce inequality, share necessary jobs and improve working conditions and social conditions world-wide and to protect the environment and other essential interests which are now threatened by profit-seeking capital.

"Within Britain, some argue that workers who have been made redundant in the North, rather than being forced to migrate South where there are jobs but no housing, should have access to jobs in the North. But people should have the right, internationally as they do within Britain and the EU to chose freely either to stay where they are or to migrate. Free movement of people will enable workers and the mass of people to share ideas and organise internationally..." (Open Borders, p171-2)

# Socialist

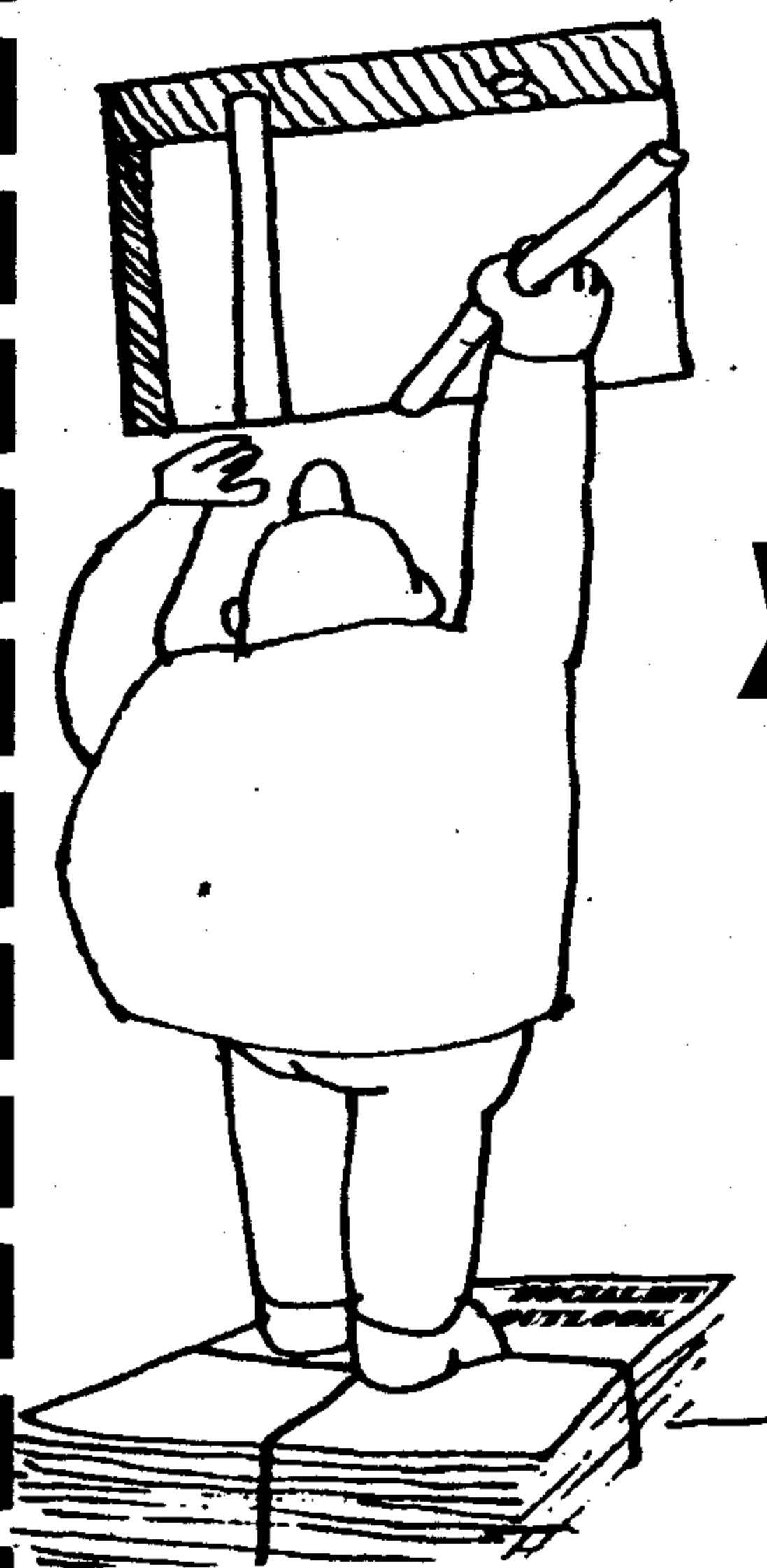
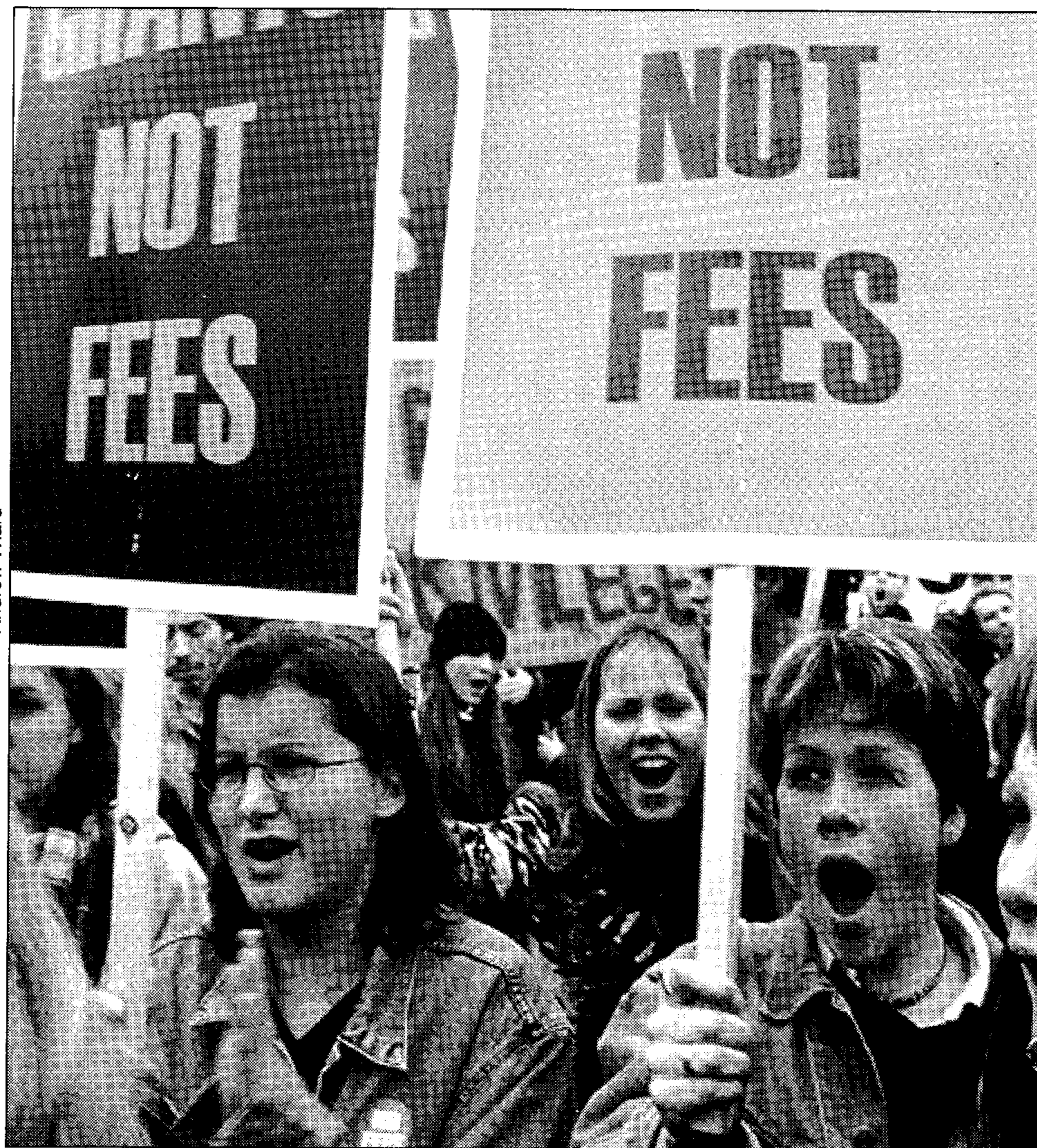
A monthly marxist review. No 39. November 2000. 50p

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