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Self-determination for the Kurds!

ONCE AGAIN tragedy has befallen the Kurdish people. After the poison gas attack at Halabjah in 1988, they are the victims of a new onslaught, a new genocidal massacre by Saddam.

But the Kurds are not just the victims of Saddam's regime. They are the victims of an unholy alliance against them, an alliance which wants to stop them gaining the one thing which would guarantee their safety – self-determination, their own state.

The alliance ranges from George Bush, Turkish president Ozal, to Syria's Assad and Saddam himself. All the powers in the region are against the Kurds, whose 30 million population stretches over five countries, establishing their own state.

The 'safe heavens' are no substitute for self-determination. They are not safe, nor are they havens. If they are permanently established they hold out a miserable future, a future in despairing, hopeless refugee camps, like the Palestinians.

Western aid, the pathetic parcels dropped from planes to the starving Kurds, is in marked contrast the huge and concerted military effort which won the Gulf war. Those who fought Saddam find the Kurds an embarrassment and a threat.

In a few weeks the Kurds will probably disappear from the headlines. But they must not be forgotten, as they were after Halabjah.

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- Debate with Neil Ascherson ● Midnight in Moscow

Dumping grounds for the Kurds

Neither safe nor havens



Kurdish women in Halabjah

By Geoff Ryan

The appalling fate of the people of Kurdistan is a direct, and predictable, outcome of the US attack on Iraq. Now the Kurds face an awful dilemma – either they stay in the ‘safe havens’ which would become Palestinian-style refugee camps, or to face the danger of being massacred by Saddam’s forces.

Saddam’s promise of limited ‘autonomy’ for the Kurds is absolutely worthless. It is a stunt aimed at ending the limited allied occupation of the north, and rapidly ending UN sanctions against the Ba’ath regime.

Saddam has promised it before – in 1970, and again in 1975. But it meant nothing but permanent war against the Kurdish people.

The Kurds have every right to feel betrayed by the West. Bush *did* call on the Iraqi people to rise up against Saddam. With the regime weakened at the end of the war, both the Kurds and the rebels in the south took their opportunity. It is clear now that Saddam kept back most of his elite Republican Guard away from the Kuwait front. They were to be kept in reserve to crush internal rebellion.

It is also clear that the rebels in the south were not just Shi’ahs – many Sunni Muslims joined the revolt to bring down the Saddam regime. But Bush and the reactionary regimes which border Iraq did not



Rebelling against Saddam: Kurdish guerrillas

want Saddam brought down by a popular rebellion. Most of all they did not want an independent Kurdistan established through popular revolt.

The 25 million Kurds are split between five countries – Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and the Soviet Union. Each one of these states has a record of repression against the Kurds. And for the US, and independent Kurdistan brought about by nationalist revolution would have destabilised the whole region.

The performance of Turkey and the West towards the refugees has been a shameful episode. Turkey has kept hundreds of thousands on freezing cold mountains, starving and freezing, with

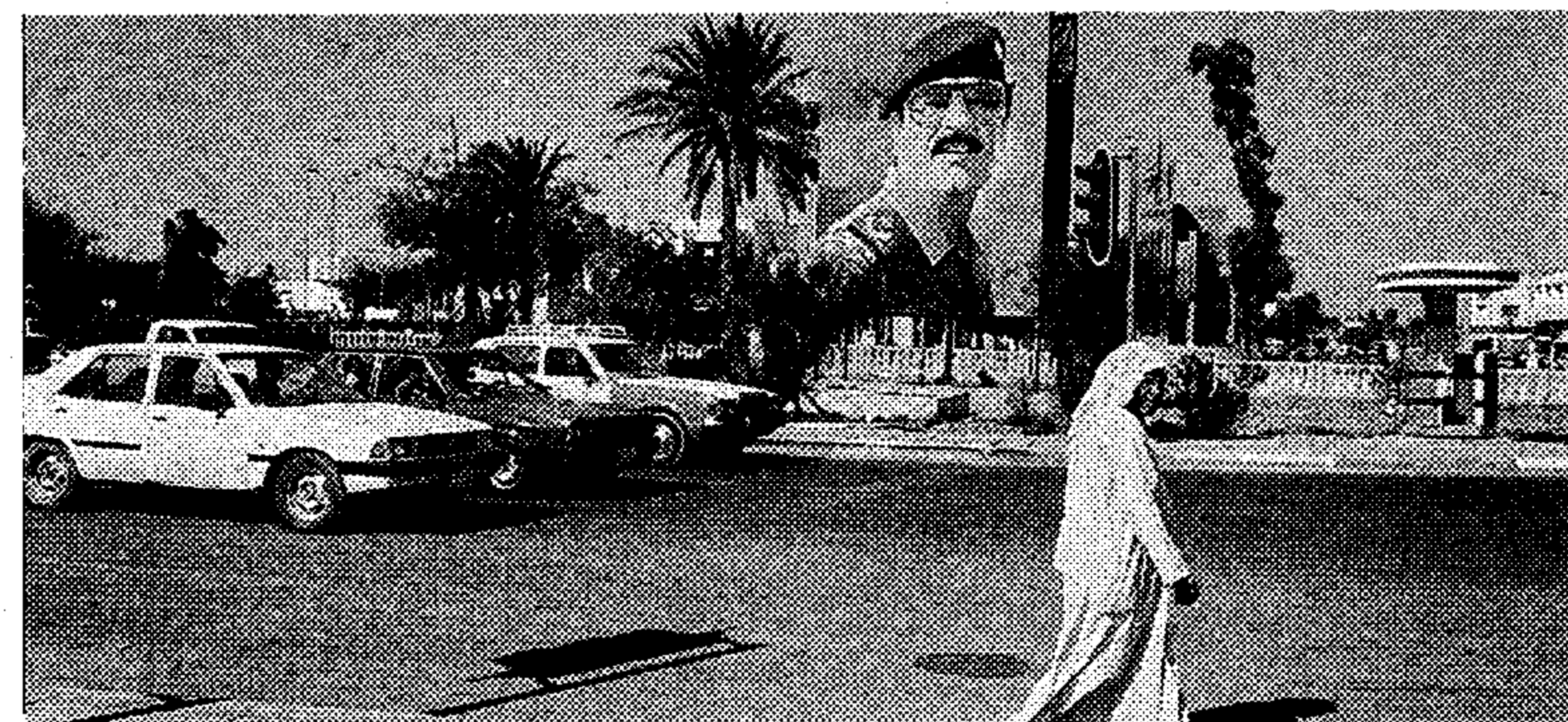
hundreds dying, because the Ozal regime fears the consequences of enlarging its own Kurdish population. No one could fail to see the contrast between the paltry Western aid effort for the Kurds and the immense and efficient mobilisation of resources for the war.

And no one could fail to see the hypocrisy of the US allowing Saddam’s helicopter gunships to rain death on the fleeing Kurds.

Hypocrisy has not been confined to the West. The USSR and China have been more vociferously opposed to giving any aid to the Kurds than have some western states. Insisting on the necessity ‘not to interfere in the internal affairs of other states’, they are both defending their rights to repress their own national minorities.

What should socialists say about the ‘safe havens’? What proposals should socialists put forward to defend the Kurds? Of course socialists should support humanitarian aid to the Kurds, whether it comes from the United States or anyone else. Indeed we should demand it – in much greater quantities than it is being supplied. But the ‘safe havens’ are a different issue. They can turn into a trap for the Kurds. There are two dangers which arise from them.

First, if they remain a permanent ‘solution’ they will



Big brother in Baghdad

turn the Kurds into a refugee people. The fate of the Palestinians is eloquent testimony to what this will mean. The Kurds will be easier to repress, to hem in and demoralise, if they are corralled into camps.

Second, the US commitment to this solution is skin deep. Bush’s intervention was determined by the pressure of public opinion. The United States can abandon defence of the ‘havens’ at any time, leaving the Kurds to Saddam’s mercies.

The only solution which will defend the Kurds is self-determination – the right to their own state. And the only thing which will gain it is the revolutionary national struggle of the Kurdish people. Insofar as demands are put on Western governments, they should be on the need for massive humanitarian aid, and the need to give the Kurdish people the means to defend themselves – arms.

The debate on the left about the ‘safe havens’ has parallels with the dispute in 1969 over

the sending of British troops to Ireland. The anti-imperialist left opposed sending troops. British troops were sent because of Loyalist pogroms against Nationalist areas. The pogroms real. At that time the nationalist communities lacked the military means to defend themselves adequately. And the troops *did* provide a buffer for a while.

But many socialists pointed out that despite the short-term breathing space, the imposition of imperialist troops would mean, in the end, they would be turned against the nationalist community. Over time, the consequences would be a bitter war. So it has turned be.

It is a shame to see some people who took the right line on the Gulf war, people who understood that although Saddam was an oppressive dictator, imperialism would serve no progressive purpose in attacking his regime, have deserted this logic over the Kurds.

All Iraq is suffering

The fate of the Kurds has rightly become a matter of concern and grief internationally. But the whole of Iraq is suffering enormously – from the effects of the war and from Saddam’s repression.

Following the crushing of the rebellion in the south, hundreds of thousands have fled into the marshes which lie between Iran and Iraq. Their fate is said to be worse than that of the Kurds. All over the country people are falling victim to Saddam’s torture and death squads.

The whole country faces famine and epidemics. Cholera has already broken out. UN under general secretary Finn Martti reported last

month that Iraq had been thrown back to ‘a pre-industrial age’. The bombing, he said, had seriously affected food supplies, agriculture, water, electricity, hygiene and health.

The heat of the summer has not yet come. When it does the danger of epidemics will drastically increase. While Saddam’s military machine ruthlessly scours the country crushing rebellion, Western sanctions are continuing to subject the ordinary people to destitution.

Opposition to Saddam’s regime, as before the war, cannot justify support for sanctions. The people of Iraq as a whole need aid, with or without Saddam.

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Rushing for the centre ground

British politics today is dominated by a paradox. The Tories may have got rid of Thatcher, but not the causes of their unpopularity. Banana skins abound. The economy is in deep trouble. Tory attacks on education and local government remain deeply unpopular. And the real effects of NHS Trusts - mass sackings of health workers - are beginning to become apparent.

Such a situation should lead to a certain Labour general election victory. But the polls remain volatile - one moment showing a Labour lead, one moment a Tory lead. For the average voter it is extremely difficult to discover the policy differences between Tories and Labour.

The rush to occupy the 'centre' ground of politics - a centre which has been shifted drastically to the right by the years of Thatcherism - has obliterated major differences between the main parties.

Nowhere is this more true than on economic policy. Both Kinnock and Major are converts to the old SDP watchword of the 'social market'. The social market means simply that the market rules everything (and any talk of social ownership is dispensed with), while its adherents have a 'conscience'.

No pledges

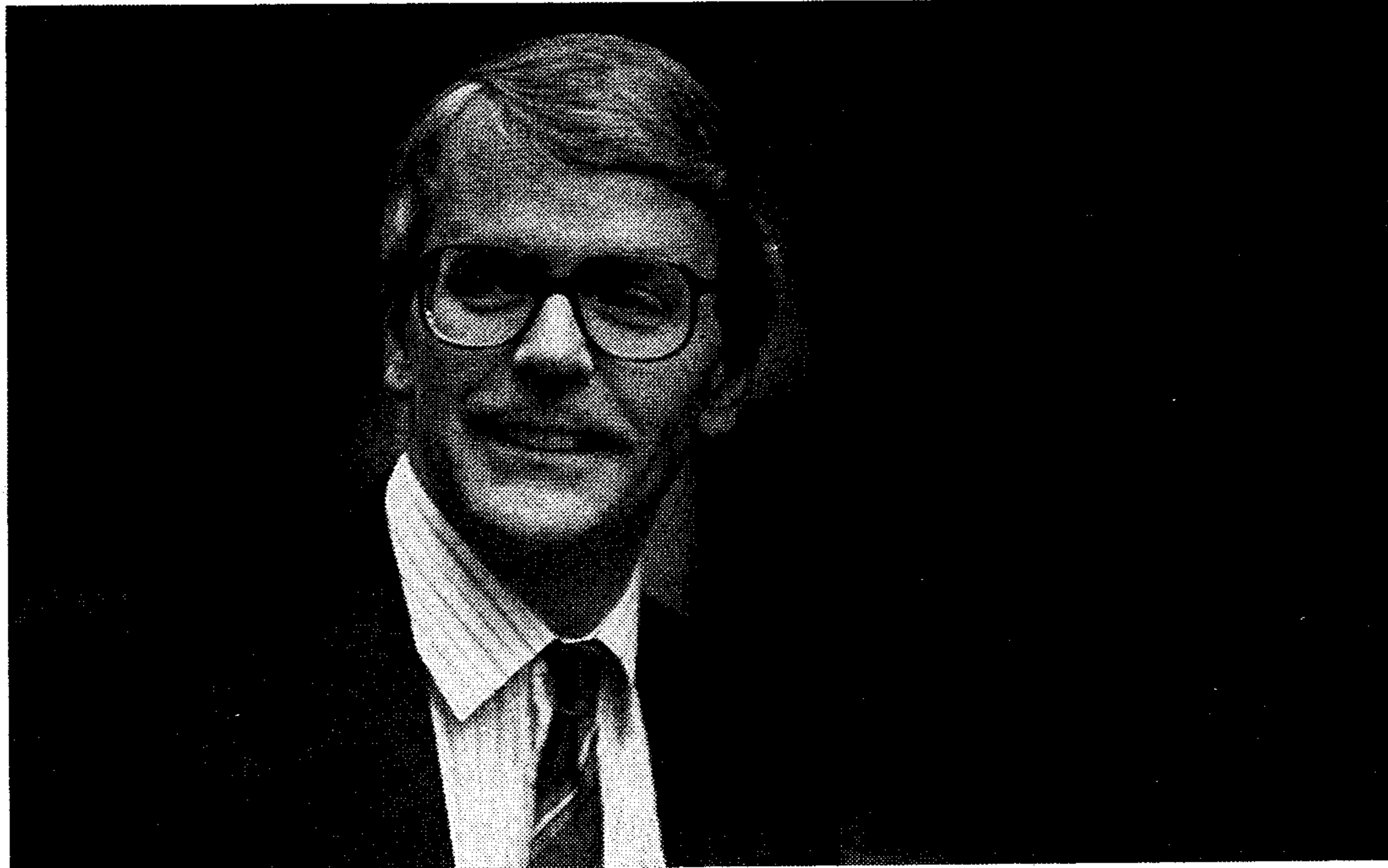
Labour is making absolutely no pledges about improvements in the lot of working people under a Labour government. With the sole exception of a national minimum wage, any other reforms will have to await the (illusory) hopes of a major economic recovery.

The change that Kinnockism has wrought on the Labour Party is drastic. While the Labour left is still relatively strong compared with its counterparts in countries like France and Germany, there is no use pretending: it is much, much weaker than it was, and many socialists no longer see any point in activity through the party.

How has this change been brought about? Electoral defeats, in 1983 and 1987 have played

a role. Those defeats made it easier to argue the party had to move right. But election defeats do not automatically shift parties rightward. The explanation is more profound than that.

The basic reason is the successive defeats of working class struggle in the 1980s, most crucially the defeats of the miners strike, the dockers and the print workers. During the 1980s trade unionism declined from 48 per cent to 35 per cent of the workforce. These defeats were



compounded by the successive Tory victories against the local government left.

The Kinnockite operation in the Labour Party has been centrally underpinned by the grip of the 'new realist' right wing in the trade unions. This grip is tightening with what seems likely to be an important victory by the aptly-named George Wright in the TGWU general secretary election. Time and again, it has been the right-dominated union block vote which was the foundation stone of Kinnock's domination in the party. But on that foundation was built a dramatic reversal of left domination in the constituencies.

"Strengthening left organisations in the unions is an obvious task"

What should socialists do now? One thing that is certain is that the smug certainties of Kinnockism are heading to a crash. The next

election will either produce defeat, and Kinnock's replacement, or the most right-wing Labour government ever. A Kinnock government would have nothing to offer the working class; there is most unlikely to be a 'honeymoon period' of mass good-will towards such a government. Either way there will be new ructions in the party. It is too early to write off a new surge of the Labour left for a whole period.

British politics are heading for profound transformations. The important thing is that socialists prepare for this new period. What are the priorities? Strengthening left organisation in the unions is an obvious task, including crucially beginning to organise against the trade unions laws.

In the coming period unemployment will go over three million. Mass unemployment will again be used to discipline workers and to force down wages. The left has to begin to re-raise demands for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay, and for work-sharing. But overall socialists have to work towards the preparation of a coherent nation-wide socialist opposition.

Socialist Outlook supporters have been active in building the Socialist Movement (SM). Linking together socialists inside and outside the Labour Party the SM, especially its 'sectoral' structures like Labour Party Socialists, Women for Socialism and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee can play a vital role in organising such an opposition.

The new-style Socialist Outlook will fight to build the Socialist Movement. More than that we will fight to win new forces to the politics of Marxism. We reject the fainthearted pessimism of those who think that 1980s Thatcherism and its ghastly Kinnockite mirror-image shows us our future indefinitely.

The events in eastern Europe have shown us how quickly things can change. British politics will change drastically, that is certain. The question is whether the left will be ready for these changes. Socialist Outlook will fight to help ensure that it will.

Economy - plunging into a nosedive

CBI director John Banham got himself into trouble with his Tory friends last week by pointing out that the economy is still plummeting. In reply, confident noises have been made all round, in line with chancellor Norman Lamont's budget statement that the economy 'would begin to turn the corner' in the second half of the year.

Upward blips in the general decline are not impossible. But the overall situation is that Britain's secular economic decline, interrupted by the mid-80s boom years, has resumed with a vengeance.

The best estimates put the rate of decline of economic output at four

percent a year - roughly equal to the pre-1990 growth rate in Germany, although Germany's growth may decline because of the costs of reunification.

Last year something like 25,000 businesses went bust - a 35 per cent increase over 1989. And last month's record increase in unemployment to an official rate of over 2 million show the scale of the recession.

What has happened to the confidence of the mid-1980s Thatcher years? The British economy boomed in those years because the US economy did. 'Reagonomics' meant the vast pumping of state deficit finance into arms production, financed by massive borrowing from Germany and, above all, Japan.

The result was a speculative boom which boosted world trade but did nothing to solve the basic problems of either the British or US economies. Britain's industrial base was not restored; industrial productivity in the US took a back seat to the epoch of the junk bond dealers.

Like all speculative booms, the result was crash - in this case the November 1987 stock market crash. Once that had happened, the US and especially Britain were faced with the danger of resurgent 'stagflation' - falling output plus raging inflation.

The consequence has been the adoption of high interest rates and a sharply deflationary strategy. For Britain the only way to avoid pushing down wages to crush inflation would

have been allowing the value of the pound to fall. This is now excluded by membership of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

The consequences of the recession for the working class are stark. Unemployment will rise sharply exerting further downward pressure on wages. Employers will fight hard in 1991/92 to prevent wage settlements being nearly as high as they were in



1989/90. We are back to the same cycle of decline as existed in the early 1980s.

Tube workers prepare strike action!

by an RMT tube worker
London Underground (LUL) management are preparing to smash effective trade unionism on the Tube, removing workers' right to strike, paving the way for privatisation. Meanwhile, underground workers and booking office staff are preparing for action.

Major restructuring of the industry is being implemented on a planned basis in order to force the rail workers' union, the RMT, to defend its weakest members first. They hope to kill not just two, but three, birds with one stone: to impose a no-strike agreement, to rid themselves of a score of militants, and to prepare for privatisation.

This grim reality is being dressed up in a package of cuts in staffing, service and safety which would result in the loss of at least 2,000 jobs, the tearing up of numerous agreements and the destruction of collective bargaining.

Split workforce

However, train drivers are not being attacked in the short term, in an attempt to split the workforce. The leadership of the train drivers union, ASLEF, is doing everything to assist the management - in a vain attempt to safeguard their right to organise drivers.

This is consistent with ASLEF's history of sectionalism and capitulation to new realism.

They are not, of course, giving the membership an opportunity to express their view. In addition, the Assistant General Secretary of the union, has announced that members respecting RMT picket lines cannot expect automatic support. By contrast, the TSSA, which organises booking office staff, is balloting to take action.

The London Underground management is still smarting from their defeat in 1989. This is not over the Train Operators' pay claim, which was eventually ineffectual. Rather, they want to avenge the defeat of their attempt to destroy the 'seniority principle'.

Had they succeeded, the majority of agreements would have been undermined, along with joint negotiating structures. It was the co-ordinated strike action on rail and underground that stopped public transport and won the strike.

The RMT is now balloting

for strike action. Workers who take strike action will be asked to sign a statement on their return to work. This will require workers to work in accordance with current duty rosters and not to take action against their contract.

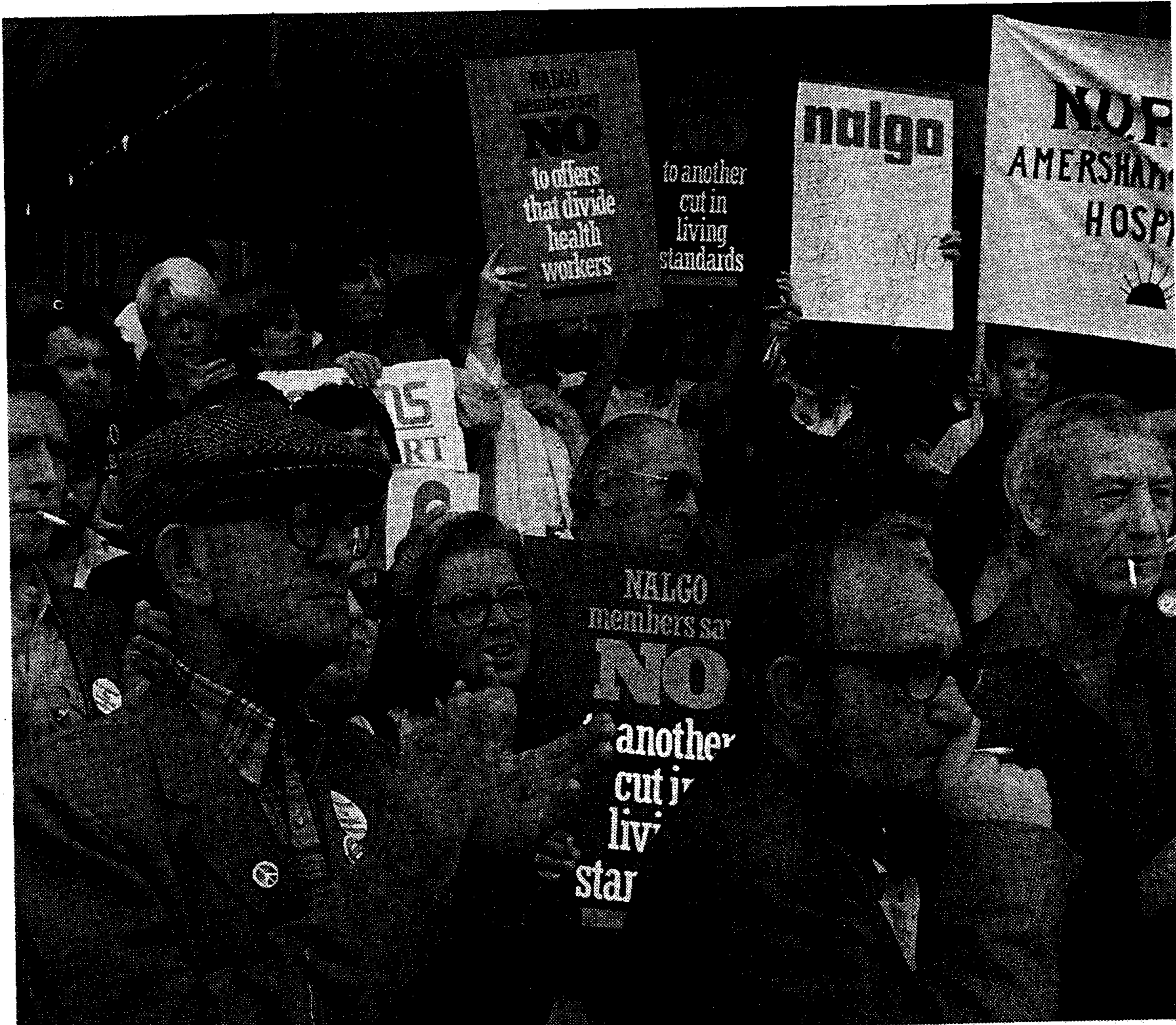
The management correctly guess that whatever the union instruction, half of the membership will sign under duress. This is not because they don't want to fight or are anti-union. The nature of the industry, with hundreds of booking-on points, gives a built-in advantage to the management.

Suspended

After a second strike, a further 25% would sign and the rest of the workers would be suspended without pay or dismissed. At this point the 'refuseniks' could apply for their jobs back. The management assume that the activists will not apply - and would reject any that did.

Immediate all-out action would solve many tactical problems. Given that one-day strikes were successful in 1989, the RMT executive have decided to commence the action in this way, despite arguments to the contrary.

Strike Rally - Friends Meeting House, Euston, Wednesday 8 May.



NALGO's 500,000 white collar staff face job losses

NALGO ducks redundancy fight

This week sees the start of a huge one and a half-million pound publicity campaign by NALGO. But publicity campaigns and the fanfare about the proposed merger with NUPE and COHSE cannot disguise the fact that many NALGO members are under siege.

NALGO's half-million white collar local government workers are

by Fred Leplat (Islington NALGO)

threatened with a tide of redundancies. All over the country councils are demanding jobs losses. Councils affected so far include Haringey (1200), Lambeth (600), North Tyneside (700), Harrow (200), Derbyshire County (1000), Liverpool (1000), Newcastle (850) and many others.

After five years of cutbacks among manual workers, now NALGO workers are under attack. Some of the worst attacks have come from Labour councils.

Last year NALGO's local government membership went down 5000; in the next eighteen months up to 50,000 jobs could be at risk.

But NALGO has no answers. Local branches are being encouraged simply to negotiate the best redundancy deal.

Central government funding of local government has fallen from 60 per cent in 1979 to 33 per cent this year. Apart from the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan counties, the biggest jobs losses have been in services affected by competitive tendering - direct labour, refuse collection, cleaning, and catering. But the poll tax squeeze on council funding now threatens a whole swathe of non-statutory services. In Haringey, for example, there is now no adult education or school meals; whole areas of social services, education and housing are to go.

There is absolutely no national or district-wide campaign organised by NALGO against the redundancies. The only significant fightback has been a 3-day city-wide strike in Liverpool including both NALGO and the GMB, and some sections are now on all-out strike. Action is also being planned in Islington, Lambeth and Derbyshire.

However, these are isolated examples. These attacks cannot be fought on a branch-by-branch basis, and the members know it. They will support industrial action which offers a prospect of winning, not long-drawn out local action with little chance of success. This means a national industrial action and publicity campaign involving the whole local government membership. Merger with NUPE and COHSE may be an answer for defending the NALGO apparatus but it won't, on its own, defend jobs. And once NALGO starts suffering mass redundancies there is a danger of de-recognition to follow.

Disillusion fuels right wing in TGWU elections

By Martin Anthony

VOTING takes place in May for the new General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), to replace Ron Todd who is retiring next year. The two main contenders are right-wing George Wright and Todd's favoured candidate, his deputy Bill Morris.

Morris, who has been nominated by 1163 branches is supported by the Broad Left, although his record is hardly left wing. On crucial struggles he has adopted the same attitude as Todd, especially in insisting that workers must not break the law. But like Todd he doesn't go all the way with the extreme right of the union.

Most of the regional secretaries, the power-base of the right, are supporting George Wright.

Wright, presently secretary of region No. 6 (South Wales) has been nominated by 1120 branches. He is far to the right: if he wins, the TGWU

will occupy an even more right-wing position than Bill Jordan's AEU. Wright is strongly supported by the popular press, especially the *Daily Mirror*, which has run a strong campaign on his behalf.

A clear idea of the way Wright would run the TGWU has been given in a circular he sent to branch secretaries. His starting point is the poor financial position of the union. In an obvious attempt to buy votes, he promises to increase the secretaries' commission - the money paid to branch secretaries for collecting subs.

He calls for the National Union of Mineworkers to be united with the scab Union of Democratic Miners, and brought into the TGWU - but declares that Arthur Scargill would not be allowed into membership!

The TGWU under Wright would be part of the engineers' (AEU) and electricians' (EETPU) axis. This would not just be a shift for the TGWU but a major shift in the balance of

power in the union movement as a whole. It would have major implications for the Labour party, strengthening the hold of 'new realism' and Kinnock.

Because of this, the left is (reluctantly) supporting Bill Morris. It will not be an easy battle. The Broad Left are making much of the fact that when Wright stood against Todd last time he had more branch nominations but lost. This time Morris has more nominations than Wright.

But the battle is different this time. Media interest is intense. The right are waging a powerful campaign. And dissatisfaction with the existing leadership is widespread.

Morris is part of the leadership which let down the dockers; he is rightly seen as being part of the problem.

Disillusionment could lead to a big vote for Wright - and that would be a major defeat for the left in the labour movement as a whole.

Left organises against Kinnock's attacks

by Pete Firmin

RECENT WEEKS have seen the Labour leadership step up the witch-hunt of the left. This has more to do with removing any potential challenge to a future government than the appeasement of the popular press.

Though the two most prominent cases have been the suspension of 13 Labour councillors in Lambeth and 29 in Liverpool, the witch-hunt has spread further with the suspension of 7 councillors in Bristol and the suspension of Brighton CLP.

In addition, alleged supporters of Socialist Organiser have been suspended in Nottingham East CLP, Sheffield and Southampton. Supporters *Labour Briefing* and *Socialist Outlook* now look like likely targets too, with threatening noises coming

from the Labour Coordinating Committee, the leading proponents of the witch-hunt.

Though some are justified by their supposed connection with a left tendency, most suspensions have occurred due to refusal to implement the Poll Tax and carry out cuts.

Local campaigns have been established in Lambeth and Brighton with support from the majority of the Labour Parties concerned.

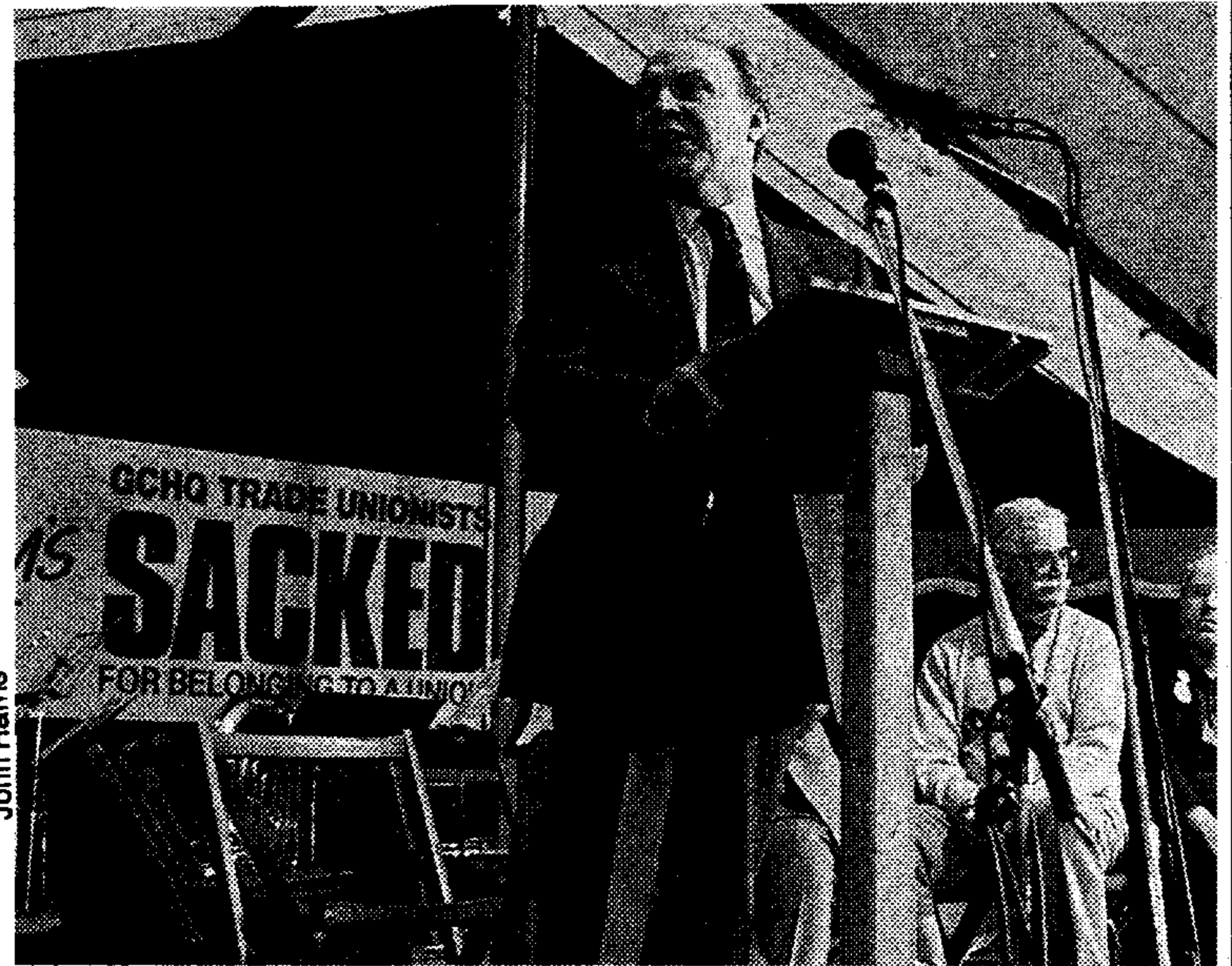
A particular feature of the situation in Liverpool has been the standing of 'Real Labour' candidates against those imposed by Kinnock's bureaucracy.

However, this has not been linked to a campaign against the witch-hunt, and some have expressed fears that this could lead to widespread further expulsions.

On a national level, the vast majority of the 'soft left' have caved in before the witch-hunt, with figures such as Phil Kelly, ex-Editor of *Tribune*, remaining the exception to the rule. On the Labour National Executive, Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner remain the only two prepared to defend party democracy.

However, opposition is now being organised in a more united and systematic way than ever before. Since the current attacks have hit a much wider swathe of activists than previous attacks on the left, such as the 1982 expulsion of the *Militant* Editorial Board, it has been possible to assemble a broader response around issues of party democracy.

A meeting called by Lambeth Against the Witch-hunt, and End the Ban (the campaign against the ban on SO) on April 27 made important



Arguing for democracy at GCHQ, and against it in the Labour Party!

progress towards establishing a unified campaign against the witch-hunt.

The meeting, attended by representatives from more than ten areas, agreed to produce a newsletter and organise resolutions and fringe meetings for Labour Party con-

ference. The high degree of co-operation achieved at the meeting indicates that these practical steps forward will be followed by the establishment of united campaign to lift the suspensions and re-establish party democracy.

Women for Socialism Trade union conference called

by Sam Inman

THE LABOUR Party has discovered that women win votes. With the general election looming in the not too distant future, the debate over Labour's programme for women will intensify.

All this comes at a time when the pressure on women activists has never been greater. But with so much happening politically there is an even greater tendency for women's experience to be marginalised. This can be seen as not just a political marginalisation of 'women's issues', but also through burning-out with overwork, the experience of sexism within the labour movement and many other reasons.

Despite the rhetoric this marginalisation is not just confined to the right wing of the labour movement. It very much exists throughout the whole of the left. It is not surprising then, that Women for Socialism, the autonomous socialist feminist network within the Socialist Movement, has also been subjected to this squeezing effect.

Very often on the left it is clear that women's political work and their experience is underplayed and undervalued. This was seen most recently in the anti-war movement where WfS activists played a pivotal role.

They usually led the way in challenging the right-wing of the movement as well as being the only current to seriously build a women's dimension to the work through Women Against War in the Gulf (WAWG).

It is often forgotten that it was WfS who called the first action in Britain that launched the anti-war movement here. The reason why WfS could respond so quickly was that they had an extensive internationalist background that could be drawn upon.

Whilst building WAWG has been and still is very valuable for WfS, the experience has not been without its problems. Being in the leadership of WAWG meant that the independent profile of WfS suffered through the strain on resources. WfS was unable to capitalise on its success and bring more women activists into its ranks.

Women for Socialism is now trying to turn this situation around, build its own profile and show that socialist feminism is alive and kicking in the 1990s. There are several important initiatives on the horizon and space for plenty more.

'Women in the unions' will be the theme for a national meeting called by WfS and the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee. The meeting, to be held at the end of

November, will be an excellent opportunity to collectivise the hidden experience of women trades unionists.

Jo Richardson MP's Sex Equality Bill, likely to be a cornerstone of Labour's policy for women, could well provide the momentum for a major campaign around the problems that working women face.

Women for Socialism continues to play a role in other Socialist Movement projects in trying to ensure that these are geared to the needs of women activists. WfS members have been involved in the SM Education Working Group, Labour Party Socialists and the Red-Green Network.

WfS also plans to have public forums around issues that members feel need discussion on the left. Domestic violence, child sexual abuse, women and health, the experience of Kurdish women, and the future for socialist feminism are some of the themes suggested so far. Socialist feminists now need more than ever to set their own political agenda. Women for Socialism can provide a network that allows us to do just that.



School testing - back to grammar schools

EDUCATION secretary Kenneth Clarke let the cat out of the bag when he revealed last week that that opted-out secondary schools are going to have the opportunity to become grammar schools much more quickly than expected.

In effect, the government plans the gradual return to grammar and secondary modern schools.

The new testing of seven-year olds (Standard Assessment Tasks or SATS) fits in with this plan. The five week testing period which seven year-olds (now called Year 2 pupils) will have to undergo is designed to start streaming children, in preparation for an 11 plus-style selection.

The five week period of SATS means children repeating work

they have already done and more work for increasingly hard-pressed teachers. At the Easter NUT conference a huge majority voted to boycott SATS.

But NUT General Secretary Doug MacAvoy made it quite clear that, for the second year running, he will ignore conference decisions. The resistance to SATS has been left to sporadic boycotting at local level.

The government has taken advantage of MacAvoy's sabotage to announce that it is going back on its pledge to restore teachers' negotiating rights.

Kenneth Clarke claims that this will give teachers a 'professional' status like doctors and judges. Teachers forced to administer yet another government change which adds to their work-loads are unlikely to be taken in.



Being too pliable? Mandela side by side with De Klerk

South Africa

ANC shows a new belligerency

By Charlie Van Gelderen
THE AFRICAN National Congress has given the De Klerk government an ultimatum.

It has called for its resignation and for it to cede to a 'neutral' interim government. This is to prepare for multi-party negotiations for a new post-apartheid constitution.

It has come on top of a demand for the sacking of Minister of Defence Magnus Malan, and Minister for Law and Order Adriaan Vlok.

However the ANC leadership softened the impact. They denied that their demand was the

immediate resignation of the government. Instead they wanted recognition of the necessity of such a government to safeguard the transition to democracy. The government then rejected both an interim government and a constituent assembly.

Why has the ANC leadership changed its tactics? Why has it gone from calling for the sacking of defence and security ministers, to demanding the resignation of the government? The answer is not only the repressive role of the state, but also the internal politics of the ANC - a

situation of which the government is aware.

There has been growing dissatisfaction in the ANC at what is seen as the pliable positions of the Mandela leadership. This has been manifested in the power struggle between the 'pragmatics' and 'radicals'. The 'pragmatics' are led by the ANC's International Relations chief, Thabo Mbeki, and the 'radicals' by the head of military staff, Chris Hani.

The struggle between the two leaders is over who will succeed Mandela as Vice President when he, as expected, succeeds Tambo as President at the ANC's June conference.

But this conceals real differences between the 'Robben Islanders', the exiled leadership, and internal members. There is also tension over SACP/ANC relations. Dual membership, regarded as advantageous to the communists by ANC members, is being questioned.

Distrust

There is distrust of the leadership among ANC members and a growing belief that they must be challenged. One West Rand activist was quoted in Vrye Weekblad

'They think that a few grey-heads can take decisions (like in the 1950s) and the rest must follow. It is high time that the ANC leadership recognises that negotiations are about the aspirations, the emotions and the dreams of people.'

The way in which negotiations are being conducted now excludes us. We have shed our blood for democratic institutions and we are not going to be silenced now.'

This reflects the views of a large section of ANC members and supporters in the townships.

Suspicion arises because a deadline, 9 May, was originally set for the resignation of the two ministers and government action to halt the township killings.

This was despite the ANC December conference decision that the deadline should be 30 April. 'The goalposts are being constantly pushed back because

the leadership is afraid of the reaction of the people on 30 April. The new deadline has nothing to do with the people. It is the NEC's deadline. As far as we are concerned 30 April stands. After that we will see mass actions like those of the early 1980s.'

Plans for mass actions were discussed at a closed session of about 200 members including Alan Boesak and Bantu Holomisa.

It warned leaders to prepare to go abroad after 30 April. It was thought necessary to make emergency plans because it was expected that the government might declare a state of emergency, with thousands arrested.

Actions contemplated are prison hunger-strikes, consumer boycotts and stay-aways.

Lawson Mhloni, Publicity Secretary of the ANC Youth League in Heidelberg, expects that the white right-wing may use the situation to launch a race-war and 'we will have to consider going over to the armed struggle once again'.

According to him, many youth cadre are already going abroad.

Pragmatic

In order to contain this fervour Mandela, believed to favour the 'pragmatics', has supported the interim government. This new position was adopted at a meeting between the ANC and the Pan African Congress (PAC) in Harare in mid-April. The announcement came from the PAC General Secretary Benny Alexander and was reluctantly confirmed by the ANC's General Secretary Alfred Nzo.

This will strengthen the 'radicals' in their fight for leadership. It also underlines the point that rank-and-file pressure can keep the leadership in line.

One side-effect of the growing disillusion with the ANC leadership is that the PAC has become a serious force. Only two years ago, the PAC was almost written off in South African politics. The new strength of the PAC forced the ANC to agree to such a joint meeting. It was the first since the PAC-ANC split in the 1940s.

World Order

Kohl Defeat

GERMANY'S Christian Democrats suffered a major defeat last week when they lost the state elections in Rhineland Palatinate. Chancellor Kohl's party got 38.7 of the vote against 44.8 per cent for the Social Democrats (SPD). The Christian Democrats now control only one of the 10 state parliaments in what used to be West Germany.

The Greens got back into the state parliament, crossing the 5 per cent cut-off barrier to get 6.9 per cent. The defeat is due to growing disillusionment with the economic effects of reunification. Kohl is unpopular in the east because of the growing unemployment and austerity; and in the west because of taxes to pay for unification.

Pavlovian reaction

THE CRISIS in the Soviet Union has taken a new twist with the events surrounding last week's Central committee. With the collapse of perestroika Gorbachev is caught in a vise between the hard-line Stalinist Soyuz group and the supporters of Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev has taken two main initiatives: the economic rescue package announced by prime minister Pavlov, and the new union treaty proposals agreed with Yeltsin.

Pavlov's 'rescue package' is a major move towards growing authoritarianism. It would ban strikes and political rallies 'during working hours'. Goodbye perestroika, and now goodbye glasnost as well.

'Cut benefits' - IMF

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund has turned its well known skills at imposing austerity on the third world to Britain. Last week it urged Britain to cut unemployment benefit to curb wage increases.

Stating that Britain faced the worst recession of any major country, the IMF solution is aimed at using the fear of total impoverishment as a discipline on workers - when official unemployment has shot past two million.

An absolute majority of Europeans below the poverty line now live in Britain, according to the EC.

Bulgaria, Hungary go for privatisation

BULGARIAN PREMIER Dimiter Popov has announced that Bulgaria will have a new privatisation and property law by the autumn. Bulgaria has suffered worse than any other country from the collapse of the communist trading bloc; much of its economy depended on subsidised trade with the Soviet Union which is being withdrawn. It is owed billions of dollars by Iraq, which it will not get back.

The country is ruled by an alliance of the 'Socialist' Party - the old CP - and the Union of Democratic Forces, which includes 19 groups from the extreme right to semi-anarchists.

Meanwhile Japanese company Suzuki is to open a plant in Hungary to produce 60,000 cars a year. General Motors and Ford already plan Hungarian operations. GM is also pushing to open a plant in Poland (see page 13).

Hungary has passed a law to give huge compensation in state bonds and land to those who had their property confiscated by the former communist regime. Hungary's extremely successful co-operative farming sector is being dismantled and the land given back to peasant smallholdings.

Palestinians - no deal

AS COULD HAVE been predicted, shuttle diplomacy by US Secretary of State James Baker has come up with nothing for the Palestinians. Doing something 'for' the Palestinians was a US promise during the Gulf war. But Baker has found the Israeli government unwilling to make the slightest concession, especially on the issue on new settlements and land seizures by Israelis on the West Bank.

A special meeting of PLO leaders in Tunis, called to review the outcome of the Gulf war, rejected proposals to oppose the US diplomatic initiative.

Cholera - the price of imperialism

THERE COULD be no greater indictment of imperialism and the debt crisis than the outbreak of cholera in Latin America.

The epidemic is already the worst this century - a ghastly throwback to a time when drugs were scarce and ineffective.

More than 1000 people have died of the disease in Peru since February. Another 150,000 are affected by the disease. It is not confined to the towns but has reached the farthest-flung villages. It has spread from Peru to Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and Brazil. Experts think that 3 million people will contract the disease in Brazil in the next few years.

The disease has hospitalised 140,000 people in Peru, in addition to those who have died. Peruvian health minister Carlos Vidal says he expects there to be 10,000 fatalities and that there are 300,000 carriers of the disease.

Cholera is exclusively a disease of the poor. In areas with proper sewage and clean water it is almost impossible for the disease to spread.

World Health Organisation experts say it will take 15 years to eliminate the disease. With proper sanitation and nutrition it could be eliminated in months. The tens of thousands who will die are victims of imperialism and the debt crisis it has inflicted on the continent.

Midnight in Moscow

Last year, ALAN THORNETT won a trip to the USSR in a raffle to raise funds for the new Socialist Movement paper *socialist*. He went in April, on the eve of the massive price rises. This is his report.

When our plane arrived in Leningrad the pilot apologised for the pot-holed runways and the time it took to reach the dilapidated terminal.

But this was nothing compared to the scene as we drove through the suburbs. We knew there would be queues, but they were enormous. The whole population seemed involved in a quest to buy something from empty shops.

Our guide told us that the next day the price of all food, manufactured goods and transport would be raised by an average 500 per cent, and the rouble devalued by 500 per cent. It is hard to imagine the impact.

Price rises

In many cases these were the first price rises since 1928, for transport since 1939. Next day the shops would be closed and then the following day, 3 April, the new prices would apply. There was an air of impending catastrophe.

Our hotel was in the old working class Vyborg district, close the famous Putilov factory, (now the Kirov works), the centre of the revolutionary convulsions of 1905 and 1917. Now the people had nothing in this most run down part of the city.

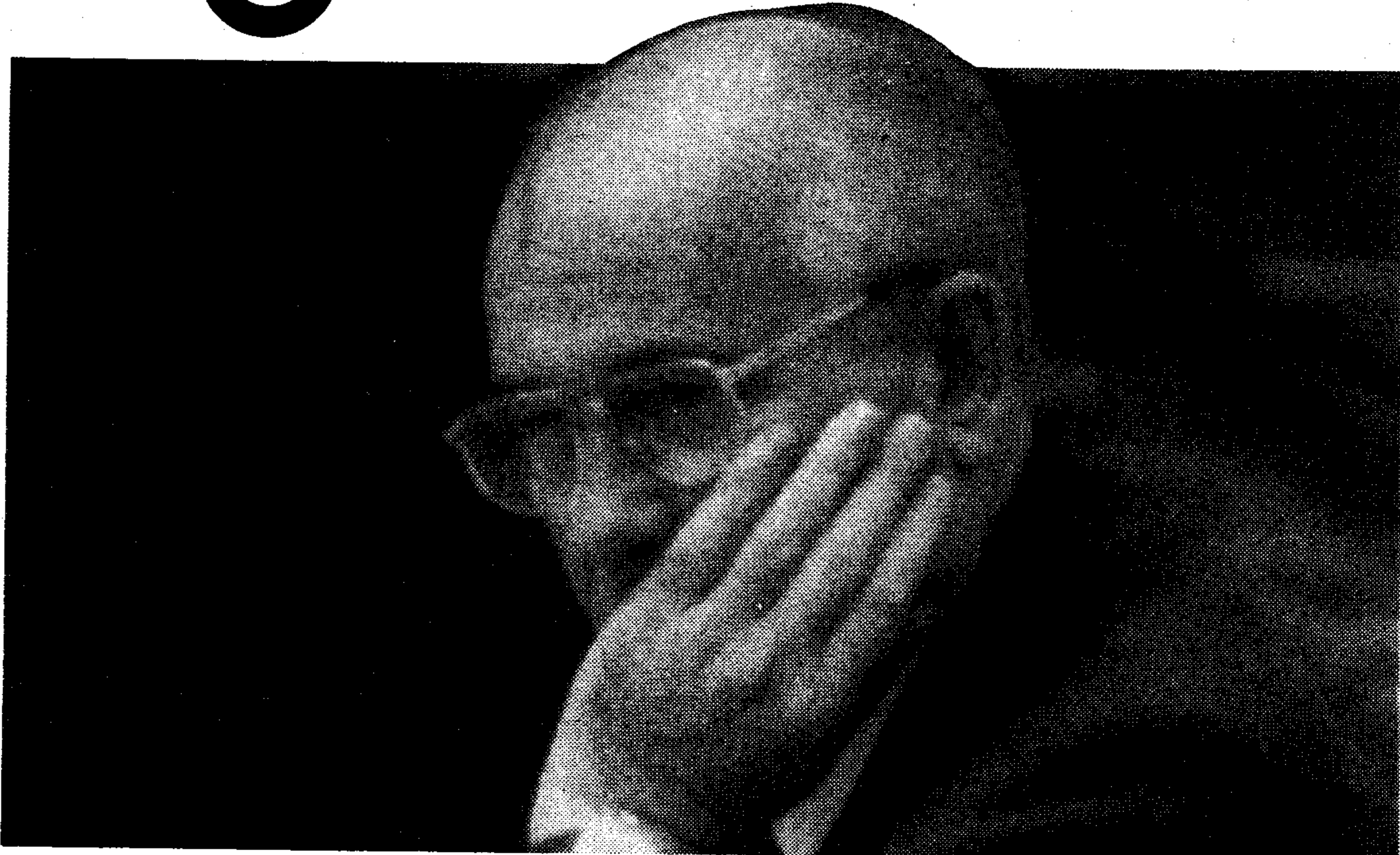
People were inadequately clothed in the freezing weather and lived in broken down blocks of flats. They were surrounded by a desolate environment which had been deteriorating for decades. I had seen such conditions in Govan in Glasgow in the 1960s.

Public transport was extensive and frequent but falling apart on unrepaired roads broken up by winter. The water in Leningrad comes out of the tap a dirty brown colour and is unfit to drink.

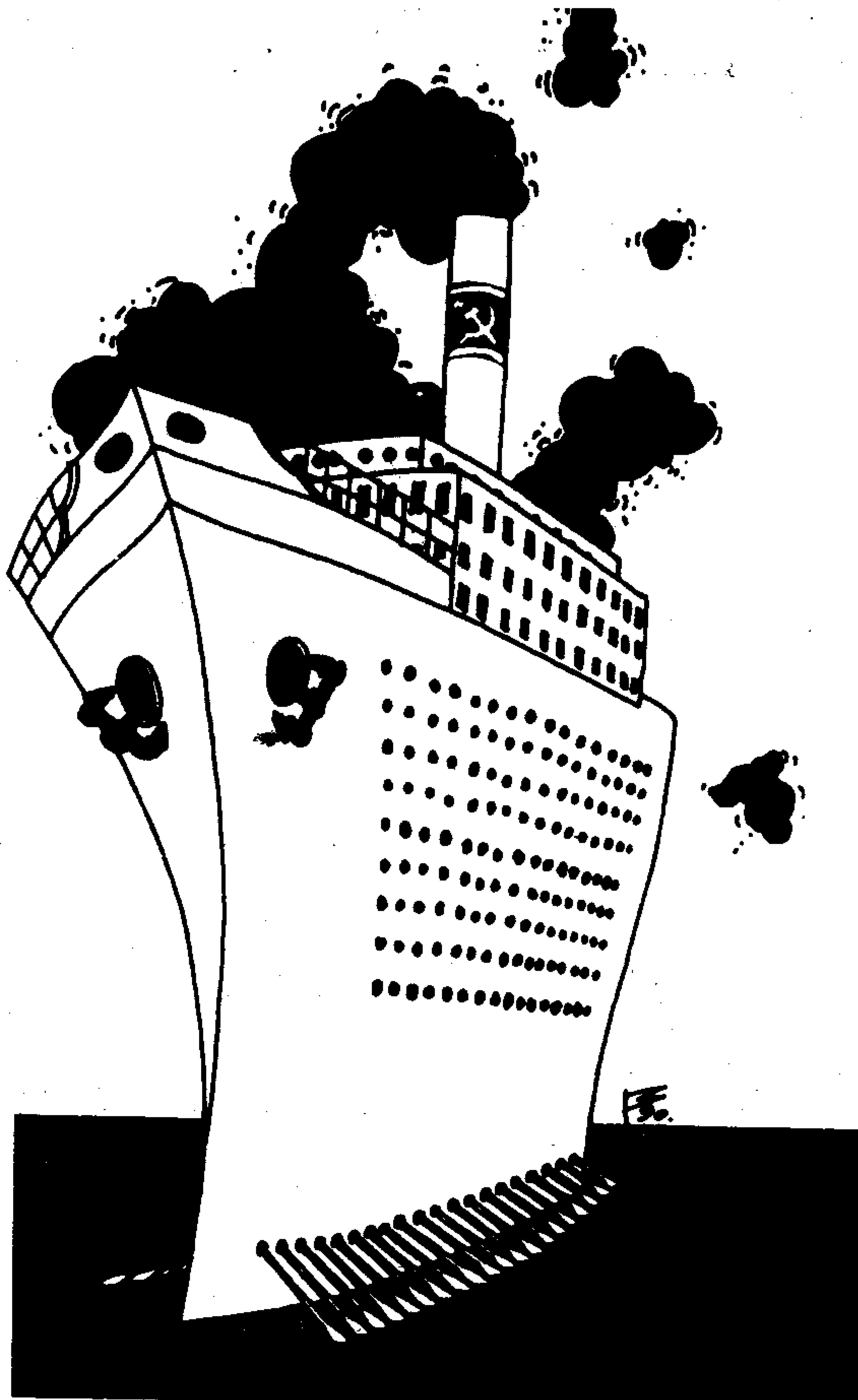
Despair

This all left a feeling of despair and anger at what Stalinism had done to the visions of 1917. We were looking at a bureaucratised command economy which had lost its ability to command, and a people who had lost all confidence the 'socialist' system.

The enormity of the price increases hit us the following day when we saw the official exchange rate rise from 10 to 48 roubles to the pound. Our



Gorbachev: running out of ideas as well as food. How much longer can it go on like this?



guide told us that her wage was R120 a month. The average wage is R230 and the wage for a surgeon R300 a per month, equivalent to just £6!

To offset the impact of the price rises the government gave everyone a 'token' wage increase of R60 a month.

The following day the shops had more in them and the queues were shorter. But the new prices were staggering when set against the wage levels. A pair of shoes cost R200 and a woollen jumper between R200 and R300, against an average monthly wage of R230. A metro ticket had risen from 5 kopecs to 15: even the world-famous transport system is becoming relatively expensive.

Food

The rent for a flat is about three per cent of wages and electricity and telephone equally cheap. But this is little

consolation if clothes and manufactured goods are beyond your means, and food is difficult to get and of very poor quality. Foreign travel is theoretically possible but in practice impossible if your month's wage converts into £6.

Even though many people have more than one job our impression was that the price rises must lead to a social explosion. It was no surprise to learn, after returning to Britain, that mass strikes had broken out.

Our tour started with the famous Peter and Paul fortress. We were shocked when we realised that even the tour itineraries were changing. We were told about the Fortress not as the place where the Provisional Government were taken after their arrest by revolutionary workers in 1917, but as the burial place of Peter the Great, who we were told is now very popular with the Russian people! We discovered that many people are supporting attempts to find the remains of Tsar Nicholas II and bring him to his 'rightful place' in the Peter and Paul!

At the Winter Palace, it was Peter the Great all over again. You would not have known that the palace had been the seat of the Provisional Government and had been stormed in the October revolution.

In fact most revolutionary

sights are now off the tourist itinerary altogether. We left the tour and made our own way to the Smolny Institute - the headquarters of the Bolsheviks and the seat of the revolutionary soviet government before it moved to Moscow. Lenin's room in the building, which our guide book, told us still had 250,000 visitors a year, was closed to the public. We had to find the Tauride Palace, the seat of the Petrograd Soviet and venue for the 2nd congress of the comintern in 1919, and the Leningrad Duma building ourselves.

The black market is everywhere. Hotel workers try to sell you watches and make currency deals as they serve you dinner. Our attempt to retrace the steps of the Petrograd masses along the Nevsky Prospect resulted in us being assailed by dozens black-marketeters selling anything for hard currency. Our walk was impossible.

Life was noticeably better in Moscow - although still very difficult. Our hotel was 16 kilometres from the centre in the midst of miles of huge drab blocks of flats. Our guide told us that 20 per cent of Moscow families share a flat with another family. And virtually all young couples start their life together with parents. You have to be married to even be considered for a flat.

At the Kremlin where we were again told about the Tsars and the history of the churches. Prompted by questions our guide explained that 'communism' had failed and the country now had to turn towards capitalism. An old British CP loyalist in the group, who was visibly shaken by the state of things, suggested that there were parts of the world where people were worse off - 'Bangladesh for example', she suggested. This did not make our guide feel any better.

We skipped the convent tour

and went to the Lenin museum where we were almost embarrassed to find ourselves the only visitors in the huge building.

We were given our own English speaking guide who had clearly not yet come to terms with the new situation. Half way through the one and a half hour tour he took us to one side to ask where all the tourists had gone. He was mortified when we told him that the museum had been taken off the tourist itinerary.

The version of history he was expounding, however, was part of the problem rather than the solution. Trotsky, he told us with some pride, had been 'expelled from the party' in 1912 in order to establish it as a 'pure Bolshevik party'. He then managed to tell us about the revolution without mentioning Trotsky. Any moves towards the rehabilitation of Trotsky had clearly not reached his tour script - although in the museum there were some newly displayed photos with Trotsky included.

This distortion has clearly done great damage. The constant identification of the regime with Lenin has done its work. In the minds of most people Lenin is as responsible for the situation as Stalin.

We went from the Lenin museum to join a two hundred yard long queue outside McDonalds in Pushkin Square, passing the Pizza Hut in what used to be Gorky Street. That McDonalds is a smash hit with people - many make it their big night out - is in some ways the greatest condemnation of what has taken place in the Soviet Union.

Our stay concluded with the Orthodox Easter weekend and images of the reemergence of religion. A small church near to our hotel was inundated with people - many of them older women. We estimated that it was visited by about 1,000 people an hour on a housing estate of 50,000 people.

The position of women was depressing as well. Women are in the workforce, but they are also the ones who join the queues at the end of the day. Pornography is back on the streets in a big way and prostitution, at least in the tourist hotels, is extensive.

'The problem with our revolution', our guide told us, 'is that all the rich were eliminated and now we are all poor'. It was a view shaped by the distortion of history and the failure of the command economy. We left asking 'how long can the USSR survive'. The answer must be 'not much longer'.

Confessions of a Reluctant Warmonger

TOWARDS the end of the Gulf war, NEAL ASCHERSON, well-known left wing commentator for the *Independent on Sunday*, wrote a column ('Confessions of a Reluctant Warmonger') defending the US attack. PAUL CLARKE, a member of the *Socialist Outlook* editorial board, wrote to him accusing him of backing a barbaric imperialist war. The following correspondence ensued.

Ascherson:

"Like all choices about wars, it was between evils:"

Dear Mr Clarke

Let me explain my position to you. Like all choices about wars, it was between evils:

1. The evil of war itself, and the slaughter to which it led.
2. The evil, for the people of Iraq and for the populations surrounding Iraq – including the Iranians, the Palestinians and the Israelis, among others – of leaving the Saddam Hussein regime triumphant and with its aggressive power intact after the occupation of Kuwait.

I thought the second evil was the greater one. The argument against using force against the Iraqi occupation could rest on one or all of several points:

1. That no great harm to the region or the world would have resulted from leaving Saddam in possession. Objection: the regional balance would have been upset so violently that further war would have been inevitable sooner rather than later. Such further war would probably have extended to other Arab countries the treatment Saddam awarded to the Kuwaitis and his own people. It would have ended in another conflict with Iran or Israel (a nuclear power devoid of scruples about using such weapons).

2. That war is always and absolutely wrong. I respect this view but would make exceptions to it. The Cubans, for example, did a necessary job for Angola.

3. That sanctions would have worked, given time. It would be comforting to believe that. However, Iraq has been under an arms embar-

go since 1985. I have always backed sanctions against South Africa, but they have not been effective because Western corporations and governments have dodged them. The same has been blatantly true about Iraq.

4. That to support the war meant supporting American imperialism. Yes, it did. Supporting the Red Army's struggle in 1941-5 meant supporting Stalinist imperialism, but the effect of Soviet victory was judged worth its price by many non- and anti-communists (though fewer now, I agree). This is the choice between evils, again. In this case, my own hunch is that Bush's New World Order is mostly flannel; the period when the Americans dominated the world is coming to an end with the end of the Cold War.

5. That disproportionate force was used. This is not an argument against the use of force itself, but it is true. The fighting should have stopped when Saddam accepted the Soviet compromise and agreed to withdraw. If the truth about the killing is ever told, we will find out that most – perhaps 80 per cent – of the casualties happened during the 'hundred hours' of the ground war.

6. That because the Americans did nothing about Timor, Pinochet's Chile (which they largely created), Tibet, etc, they must be opposed on the rare occasion when they do take action against an aggressive dictatorship. I do not understand this argument, except that it underlines that the Americans have a perceived national interest in fighting Saddam, and none in fighting Indonesia over Timor etc. Did anyone think otherwise?

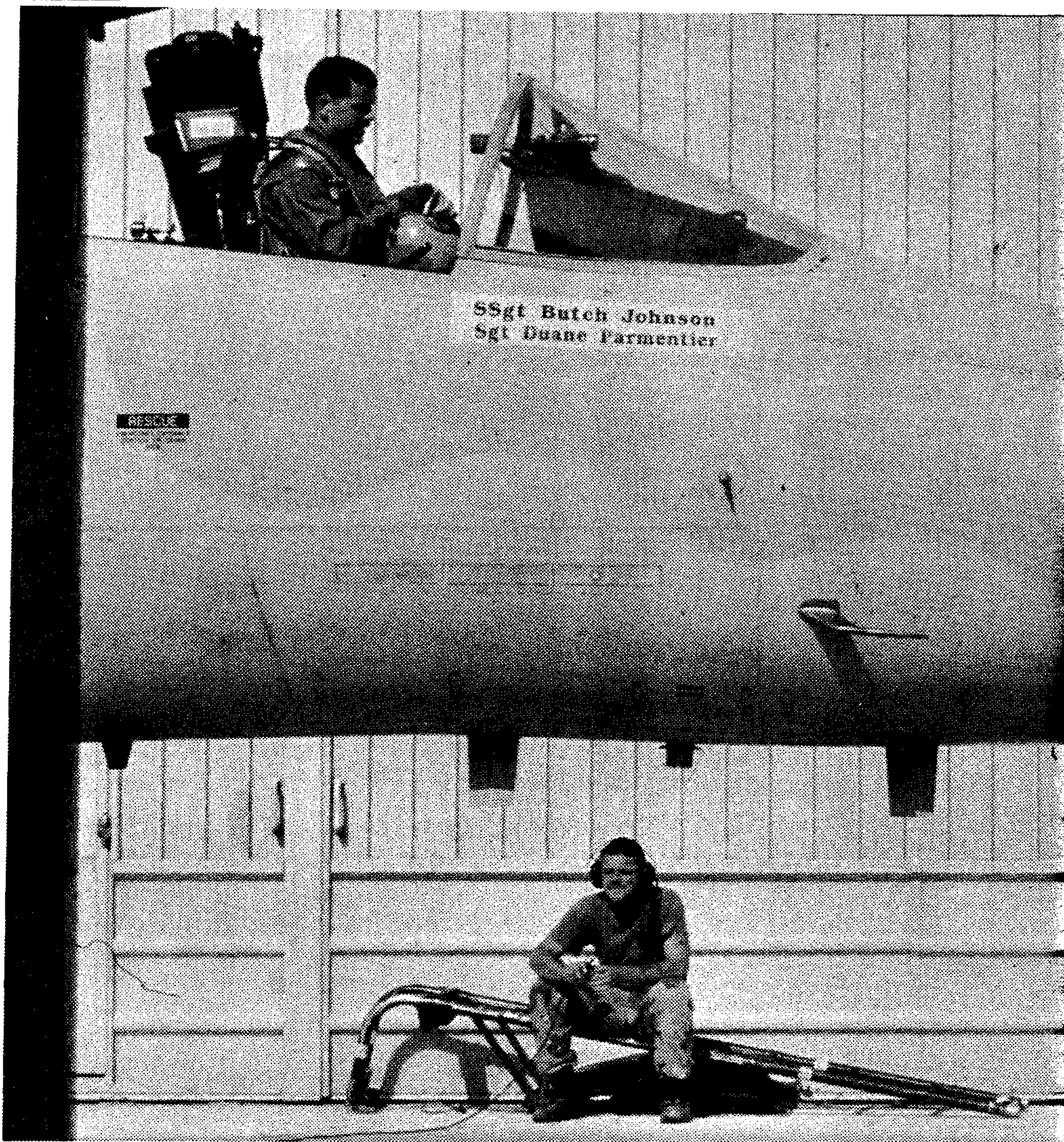
7. This is 'an American war for oil'. As everyone has said, if Kuwait had exported oranges, America would have left it to stew. Yet it is not just about oil – even in American perceptions. The war was also meant in Washington to restore the kind of stability to the region which American leaders want for many reasons.

I can't guarantee that the outcome of the war will be more peace and justice (though I have a strong feeling that the feudal oil sheikdoms have been dealt a mortal blow by it). But you have to demonstrate to me that the world would have acquired more peace and justice if Saddam had not been threatened by a military response. Can you?

Yours sincerely
Neal Ascherson
March 4, 1991



US military: face of a new world order?



Clarke: "US militarism has been s

Dear Mr. Ascherson,

I am not a pacifist, so my objections to your position are not about being always and absolutely against war. My objection is precisely on the point with which you challenge me: the balance of good and evil, of peace and justice – in the Middle East and worldwide – of this war and its aftermath.

Let me start by saying that the one point you really concede – that the force used by the United States was disproportionate to the objective of 'liberating' Kuwait – seems to me a bigger point than you admit. Yes, the level of violence used against Iraqi conscripts fleeing the battle (and surely to Iraqi civilians as well?) was disproportionate to your objectives and the formal objectives of the US: But was it really disproportionate to the real objectives of the United States – to utterly destroy Iraq as a regional power, to crush Saddam's army as a regional threat?

Israel

On this point I think there is a non-sequitur in your argument. All the dangers which you cite of leaving Saddam in power, for example a possible future war with Israel, would have existed if he had not invaded Kuwait. So was it right to go to war against Iraq even if the Kuwaiti invasion had not taken place? Because if you follow the logic of those like Fred Halliday (I don't mean to imply you agree with all his arguments) that 'if it comes to a choice between fascism and imperialism, I choose imperialism' – then of course the invasion of Kuwait has nothing to do with it. It is enough that the US has, in your words, 'taken action against an aggressive dictatorship' to decide which side you are on.

The violence and destruction visited

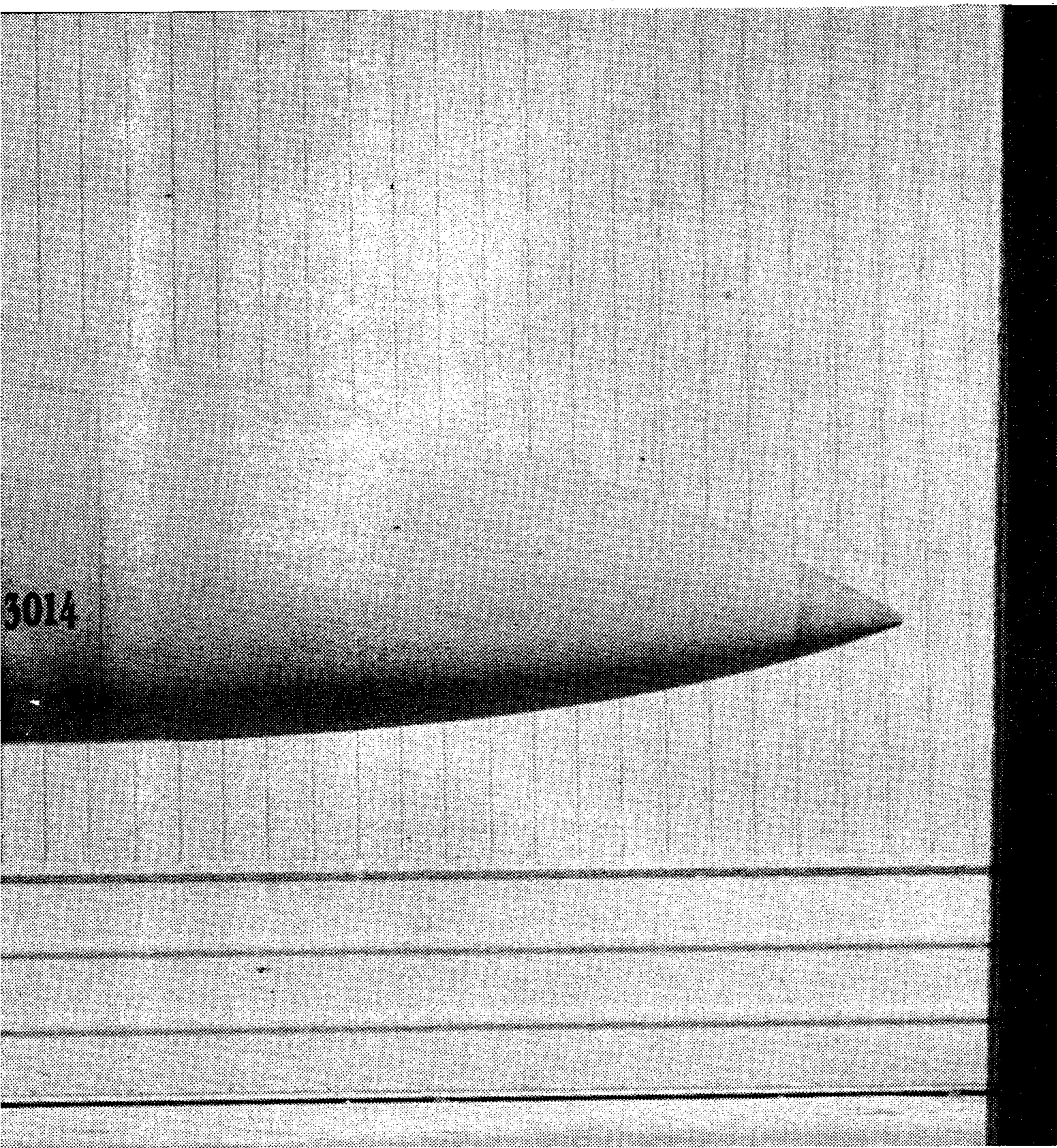
on the people and army of Iraq was exactly in line with the kind of 'Pax Americana' Bush wanted to impose on the Gulf, and the worldwide demonstration of US power he wanted to give. This is the nub of the matter. I never thought this was just a war about oil (although strong Iraqi leverage over the Gulf sheikdoms and Saudi Arabia could have caused the US problems on that front).

Rather the war was a straight continuation of the US policy initiated by Reagan and Weinberger, to use US military might and the political clout it gives to bolster its declining world dominance – especially against its major economic rivals, Japan and a German-led Europe. I think the policies of the '80s, especially Star Wars and the siting of Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe were intimately connected with this objective. Military and political leadership of the West through NATO has been the vital cornerstone of US post-war power.

US victory

In this militarist project the Gulf war was a big, if temporary, victory for the US. The West was bounced into support for a US-led war, with a positive spin-off for US power and influence in the short term. And what will the consequences of that be? You must concede that, at the very least, it will encourage the United States to continue its use of militarism, especially against the 'third world'. The consequences of that will be profoundly reactionary.

I am not an apologist for the Castro regime in Cuba, but I am sure that what the US would put in its place would be very reactionary. Yet the Gulf war has made this more likely. Castro is now certainly in the US gunights. I suspect also that the ARENA government in El Salvador sleep more soundly as a result of the US war, knowing that it was now easier for the US to intervene directly



Ascherson: “collaboration between imperialisms may be our dark future”

Dear Paul Clarke,
Thank you for your letter. It was closely argued, and I think that events since you wrote are making some of your points stronger.

It is, I admit, the 'liberal' centre of the debate which is disintegrating. The fate of the Kurds and of the Shia rebellion strengthen those who say that Bush did not go far or hard enough, who always argued that the coalition armies should go to Baghdad or – at least – that even the 100 hours ground war did not properly achieve the objective of destroying Saddam's military machine. The same fates also, on the other wing, help the arguments which you would more easily accept: that any 'limited' war to throw Iraq out of Kuwait was bound to flood over into uncontrollable, unintended and appalling human consequences. That was one of the reasons for opposing any war in the first place.

It is now difficult for me to go on using a sort of utilitarian calculus to justify throwing Saddam out of Kuwait by force. The balance of pain has swung the other way. The war is, in effect, still going on and has led to more suffering in the short term than if no attempt had been made to liberate the Kuwaitis. I say: in the short term. My feeling that Saddam, unchallenged, would have used his military power again remains, and I don't accept your assumption that Saddam was as likely to attack Israel before his occupation of Kuwait as after it. But that sort of gain:loss calculation is unprovable.

I have not used the 'inevitability' line. Hobsbawm rather took it, in *Marxism Today*, saying in effect that there was no way to avoid the Gulf war – that America was bound to use

force against such a provocation to her interests – but at the same time utterly deploring the war and prophesying that all its consequences would leave matters worse than before. It's not that I disagree with Eric Hobsbawm. It's rather that I feel it was an evasion. My sense was, and at an instinct level still is, that any invasion of a small country by a larger and crueller one should be resisted, and that it's no good hoping to be choosy about one's allies in the resistance.

Perhaps the moral for me, is that it's safer to stay by instincts than argue by balances of suffering when it comes to war. By the way, what would your approach to the Kurds be now? You can of course decline to have an approach. But should they be assisted? Or is George Bush right for all the wrong reasons? We may all wish that another power, not only the Americans, were in another position to save them physically in their own country. But the wish remains empty.

We agree broadly over the New World Disorder, and the growing weakness of America. About the new helplessness of Cuba and Latin America in general, there's no doubt. Yet I cannot see the Gulf expedition as the beginning of a new Pax Americana; it looks to me like the end of something. Neither am I easy with your assumption that the traditional context, rivalry between imperialisms leads to militarism and war, still survives. It's a question of to what extent it was ever true. The left has looked too little into collaboration between imperialisms, and that may be our dark future.

Yours sincerely
Neal Ascherson
April 2, 1991

strengthened”

against the FMLN if that becomes necessary.

Let me put it another way. Why shouldn't the logic of the US confronting a dictatorship apply to their invasion of Panama? There was a rotten, corrupt regime, which routinely violated human rights, if ever there was one. But so far as I know, all left wing opinion in Latin America, and a very broad swathe of liberal opinion too, was against that invasion. Because informed political opinion on that continent has very good reason to know what a stepping up of US militarism in the region means.

Balance

This brings me straight back to the question you asked me – can I substantiate that the balance of peace and justice coming out of the Gulf war will be worse and not better. That can only mean 'who does this war strengthen and what will they do with this new strength?' Clearly the decline of US economic power cannot be overcome in the Arabian desert. But the US can, and will, try to replace the Cold War (intimately tied to its leadership of the West) with a Western confrontation against the 'South' and especially the Islamic world.

The gun turrets of a newly-defined NATO can be swiveled from the east, southwards. I do not think we can regard this prospect with equanimity. The terrible consequences of US militarism – US imperialism – have been visited in the last two decades on the people of Nicaragua, of Vietnam, of Grenada, of Cambodia – you know the list as well as I do. Why should it be any different in the future? It is even a fiction to believe that empty waffle about a new Middle East peace process doing anything whatever for the Palestinians. Especially as the war has only strengthened the hand of Israel, and Arab governments whose concern for the Palestinians is ritual rather than real.

No. The arrogant militarism of the United States has been strengthened. It will use that strength for wholly reactionary purposes. That is my balance sheet.

What now are the prospects? Yes, the bi-polar world of the Cold War is gone, to be replaced most likely by a triangular struggle between the US, Germany and Japan. That is the new world order, not Bush's fantasy. I think we agree on that.

But if 'Americanism' is remorselessly going under, it will not do so without a fight. And it has terrifying resources at its disposal.

Meek

It struck me during the war how meekly Japan and Germany fell into line behind the US. Neither felt strong enough to dissent; neither is strong enough for, or yet aspires to, leadership of the West. But when you have strong capitalist powers in bitter rivalry with each other, it has led, in the past at least, always to military competition. This will, I think, be the direct consequence of the decline of the global power of the USSR and the decline of American hegemony.

For the moment perhaps Germany will be obsessed with reunification and eastern Europe. But in the medium term the danger of a resurgence of Japanese and German militarism must be very strong. That is my second conclusion. The Gulf war has made a revival of global militarism more likely.

If I am only half right about the kind of world which is emerging, then political resistance to the many terrible things that could happen is better prepared by left wing and democratic public opinion keeping its hands clean of any support for what the partisans of imperialist militarism have in store for us.

Yours sincerely
Paul Clarke
March 23, 1991

Clarke:

“the poor and the oppressed have to rely on themselves”

Dear Neal Ascherson,
A final thought. Did you ever see the film 'FIST' – a not very good Sylvester Stallone piece loosely based on the life of Jimmy Hoffa?

As a rising rank and file Teamsters union leader in the 1930s, the Stallone character runs up against the bosses' goon squads, a very realistic scenario for the 1930s. How to defeat them? In desperation he makes a pact with the local Mafia. In return for their muscle, he agrees to impose Mob-owned fruit machines on all Teamster-supplied premises – and he gets a rake off.

The strike is won – but at a price. First, the Mob has the union leader in their pocket. Before he knows it, he's part of the Mob. And finally he's assassinated by them.

Gut instincts may say the only practical thing is not to be too choosy about your allies to fight oppression. But 'victories' won with the help of gangsters turn out to be something different to what you expected. It's their victory, not ours.

My instincts are different to yours. Mine say that the people who brought us Vietnam, Cambodia, and the rest are never going to take military action to defend peace, freedom and justice. And this is something which the Kurds today are learning the hard way.

This may be a harsh conclusion. It means that the poor and the oppressed cannot rely on any 'power' to achieve justice, they have to rely on themselves. If that is impossibly utopian and unrealistic, then the hope for a world not dominated by imperialism is as well. It means the end of all progressive hopes since the Enlightenment and a descent into barbarism. I don't comfort myself by thinking that a socialist world is inevitable. But since it depends on human consciousness and action, then it is possible. And has to be fought for.

Yours sincerely,
Paul Clarke
April 15, 1991



Dispossessed must fight for their own liberation



FILMS

Life as we know it

Riff Raff

Directed by **KEN LOACH**, written by **BILL JESSE**

Reviewed by **Sean Tunney**

RIFF-RAFF is a state of the nation address.

Stevie has left Scotland to find work in the big city. He's demolishing a hospital to build luxury flats. He sees needless death on the job, followed by sackings of those organising to prevent others.

Meanwhile in his squat he fights with his Irish companion, Susan. Serious subjects dealt with by a socialist director. Also, one of the funniest films for years.

Loach achieves this humour through an improvised style similar to that of Mike Leigh's, which lets the comedy emerge through the characters on Stevie's site. This leaves space for the film to probe the vicious exploitation of the labourer's life to full effect, without sermonising.

Played for laughs

So when health and safety questions are all dealt with they are played for laughs. Even the loos aren't decently kept, forcing them to use the luxury show-homes to relieve themselves, exposing themselves to the potential buyers.

Riff-Raff makes clear it is harder to escape from the brickie's life 'than it is for a one-legged cat to bury a turd on a frozen pond'.

The precarious life of false names combined with the constant threat of the P45 is deftly exposed. Despite this, the film possibly over-romanticises the class camaraderie that this existence produces.

All the workers take a crack at each other, but are quick to help each other out when needed. Black workers live in harmony with the whites, free from racist attacks.

Inevitably, such subject matter invites comparisons

with Bleasedale. But here *Boys from the Blackstuff's* unrelenting air of defeatism is replaced by a spirit of defiance.

The socialist character in Bleasedale's series dies within the first few scenes. In Riff-Raff, the scouser, Larry, played by Ricky Tomlinson, provides a continuous witty commentary on the site's class war.

Accepted

He is accepted as one of the gang by the rest, if not always taken seriously, since; 'every time you open your mouth, it sounds like a Parliamentary debate'.

Indeed, when he starts talking about the 5,000 houses built by Liverpool Council, even he verges on self-parody.

Riff-Raff is a fine film. Its authentic feel, comes from being based on Bill Jesse's real life as a brickie. All the more reason therefore that it is thankful that Columbia Pictures didn't make this gem as originally planned.

Columbia's loss saved the spectacle of Hollywood actors Dick Van Dyking their way through the British class struggle.

Instead Channel 4 agreed to finance Loach's 'documentary' style reading of the script which suits its gritty realism perfectly. Loach manages to weave the serious and the comic to produce a socialist parable and a great film. Go see it.

'Lean production' - management by stress

TERESA HAYTER looks at how the management techniques of 'Japanisation' are being deployed in the car industry.

BY 1992, the bulk of car production at Rover's Cowley plant in Oxford will end. Unless a new model is brought in, the plant could close altogether.

Cowley jobs will have declined from 10,000 in 1988. Some of Cowley's work will almost certainly go to the new Honda-Rover plant being built in Swindon on a greenfield site.

The plant will subject to the new 'Japanese' management techniques. Honda intends that eventually 2000 workers will produce 100,000 cars a year - many fewer jobs per car than at Cowley.

Copied

Whatever the rhetoric, these new management techniques - pioneered in Japan but copied by increasing numbers of British and other firms, aim to cut jobs through speed-up. The 'best' Japanese-copying firms require half the number of worker-hours per car than the European average.

The adoption of the new techni-

ques is at an early stage in Britain. But Japanisation hit the US earlier. A much publicised book by the Massachusetts Technology hails the new system as 'Lean Production'.

From the other side, the rank and file union publication Labor Notes calls them 'Management by Stress'.

Labor Notes has studied a series of plants where the so-called 'team concept' has been applied. During the 1980s the three big US car manufacturers (Ford, General Motors and Chrysler) threatened their workers with closure if they did not accept it. Most of them did.

As well as the threat of closure, US management used a lot of rhetoric to get acceptance of the team concept. Workers, they said, would be given more respect. They would have a say in their own jobs. The system would be based on mutual respect and commitment to common goals. Workers and management would eat in the same canteens, park in the same car park and even wear the same uniforms.

Union support

The national leadership of the United Auto Workers (UAW) actively supported the team concept. But the workers won over to it so found out what it was about.

It meant workers had to constantly promote *kaizan* or 'constant improvement'. This means the workers themselves suggesting how

to load more work on to some jobs so others could be eliminated. They had to 'improve' themselves and their fellow-workers out of jobs.

Each job itself was minutely scrutinised and routinised. Each cycle must be performed exactly the same way every 60 seconds. The team concept turned out to be a vicious system of industrial dictatorship.

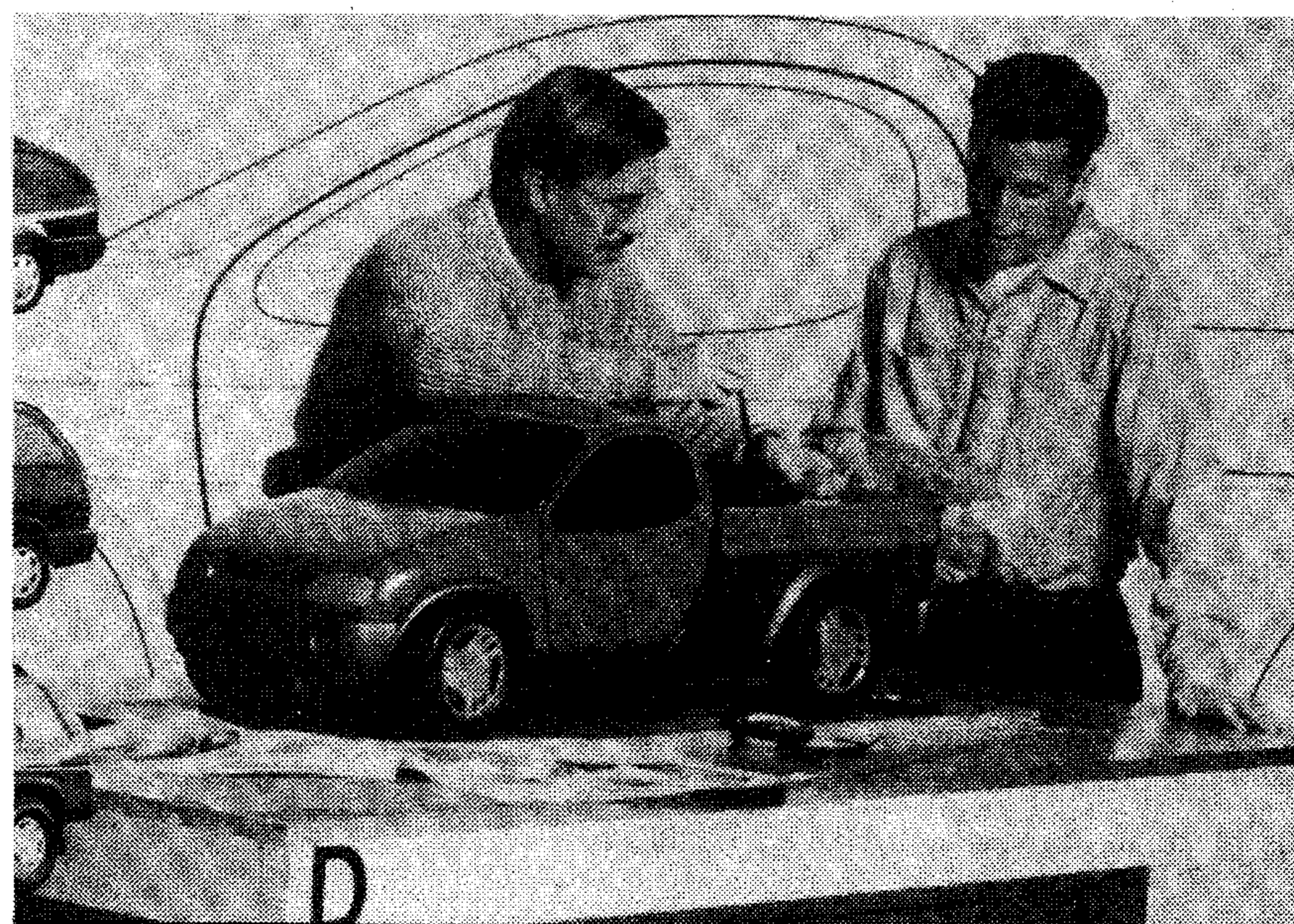
In Britain, Ford and General Motors are beginning to transfer the lessons the lessons they have learnt in the USA to their British plants.

Closure

At the Vauxhall plant in Ellesmere Port senior stewards were threatened with closure and then taken to General Motors plants in the US to see what is expected of them. They decided they had no alternative but to negotiate the best team concept deal they could.

Ford workers in Britain have been subject to changes explicitly called 'after Japan'.

Once Nissan, Toyota and Honda plants are open in Britain, the pressures on other car plants will intensify. It threatens to massively weaken trade union organisation in the British car industry.



American workers, Japanese methods: designing for Nissan in San Diego

Already at the Nissan plant in Sunderland, with the team concept and the AEU negotiating a single-union deal, the role of trade unionism is almost non-existent.

Honda has an engine plant in Swindon employing 500 people. There is no union and Honda seems intent on keeping them out. The workforce is extremely young, and workers' co-operation is secured through a combination of sticks and carrots.

Compulsory

There is compulsory overtime is production schedules are not met; jobs for life; and opportunities for promotion for those who show enthusiasm for speed up. Management and workers wear the same green hats and white overalls, which makes it easier, managers say, for former

accountants and salesmen to fill gaps on the production line.

In Oxford, where we are faced with the substitution of Honda jobs for Cowley jobs, we want to spread the word about what Japanisation means. The Oxford Motor Industry Research Project has held a one-day meeting on the topic, with convenors and shop stewards from many car plants nation-wide. We hope that many more will follow. There is a vital need to build resistance nationally and internationally.

*The proceedings of the research Project Conference will be available soon. Write to: Secretary, Publications, School of Planning, Oxford Polytechnic, Gipsy lane, Oxford. Teresa Hayter is the author of *Aid as Imperialism and other works on third world economics*.

Sex, morality and Madonna ...is she a feminist or isn't she?

SARAH PICKETT and SAM INMAN try to answer the question **LOVE HER** or hate her, you can't ignore Madonna. Reputed to be worth around 70 million, she is the single most successful American businesswoman in recent years. Singer and songwriter, dancer and actor, producer and business person, Madonna oozes sex and success.

Constantly evolving her image she is one step ahead of everyone else, a creative

genius. Warren Beatty, co-star in 'Dick Tracy' and one-time lover of Madonna's, attributes her success to her courage, energy and the fact that she works damn hard.

Madonna's own theory is that 'it comes from a rebelliousness and a desire to fuck with people'. Whatever the recipe and however controversial, it certainly works.

Yet when she stormed into the charts in 1983 with the squeaky disco hit 'Holiday' everyone saw her as just another bimbo.

The real key to her success and the reason for much of the

surrounding controversy is that she's turned this cultural stereotype on its head. Powerful and sexually assertive, Madonna is the ultimate 'wannabee' for literally millions of young women around the world.

What really gets up the noses of most Madonna-bashers though, is her use of sex and sexuality in her art. The latest outcry from the moral right came with the video for 'Justify my love' where she is seen in bed with another woman.

This fuelled the debate seen in the tabloids last year around Madonna's sexuality - a debate initiated by her close friendship with famous lesbian comedian Sandra Bernhard.

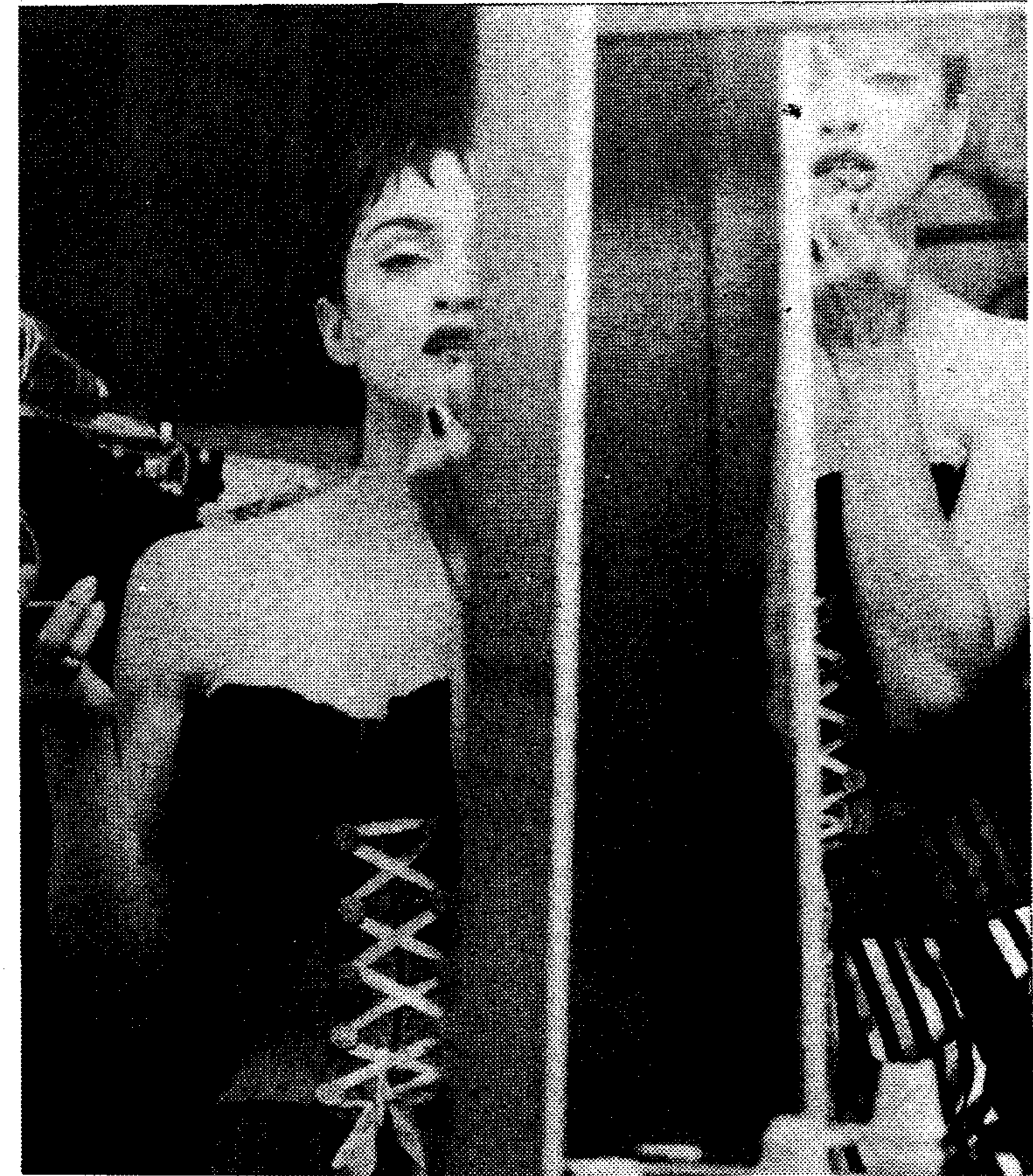
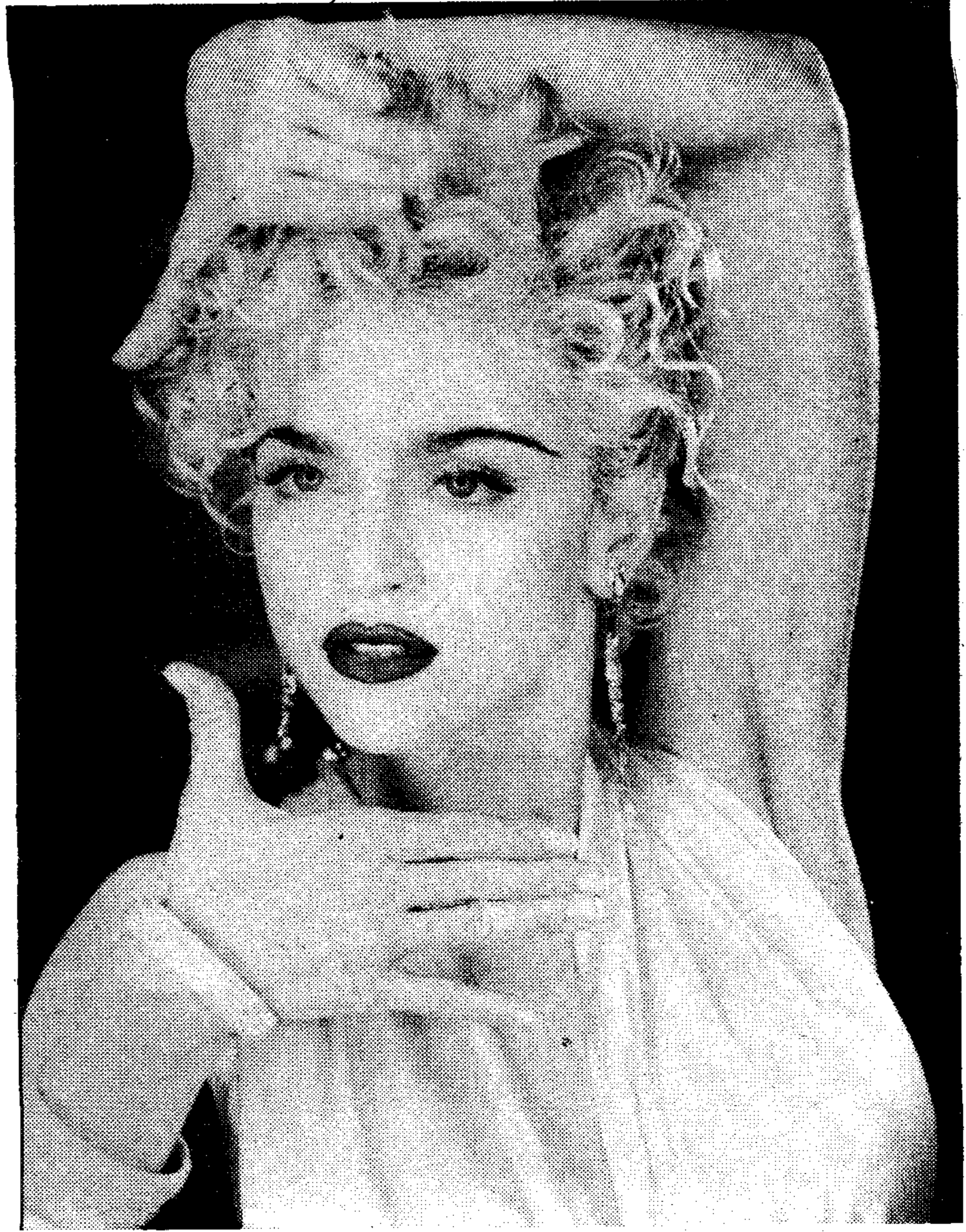
The focus of controversy amongst feminist and left critics is over Madonna's occasional voyages into 'sado-masochist' imagery. The video for 'Express Yourself' showed her physically chained to a bed. And with 'Hanky Panky' she again provoked the accusation of playing up to the woman-as-victim stereotype.

Critics cannot see that she is teasing their sensibilities. Some male critics had their shattered when she simulated masturbation on stage at Wembley last year. As Judith Williamson wrote in the Guardian in a blistering attack on such male art critics last year - they just don't understand that women can camp it up too!

Madonna herself recognises the difference between fantasy and reality, consensual and non-consensual sex. In a recent Channel 4 interview she said, 'I chained myself. There wasn't a man standing there making me do it. Degradation is when someone else is making you do something against your wishes.'

'I may be dressing like a bimbo but I'm in charge - of my fantasies, my career, my life. Isn't that what feminism is all about? In society a woman who is overtly sexual is to be feared. What I am saying is, I can dress this way, behave this way - but I'm in charge.'

Madonna breaks sexual taboos. But she wants to provoke open discussion on sexuality, particularly with young people. She has also used her status to take up the question of HIV, AIDs and 'safe sex not no sex'.



the story would be completely different. Images of sexually assertive women can only be good. What socialists need to do is use the political space opened up by the controversy to argue that sexual freedom should exist for all women not just those at the top.

Alexandra Kollantai wrote that there has never before been a time 'when the problems of sex have occupied such a central place in the life of

society.' Eighty years on and many socialists still don't appreciate the social and class significance of sex and morality. Madonna has helped open the debate amongst millions of young working class people. It's time that revolutionary socialists take it seriously too. Bring back Kollantai...

She's a champion of bourgeois individualism, in Kollantai's sense of the phrase, as well as being an example of a classic rise from rags-to-riches. And yes she could even be described as a feminist, albeit of the bourgeois variety.

The fact remains that it's because she's a sexually assertive WOMAN that she's so controversial. If she were a man

FILMS

Wonderful - but still a fairy story

Dances with Wolves

Starring and directed by KEVIN COSTNER.

Reviewed by Kate Ahrens

THIS FILM was the child of one man. He fought the establishment of Hollywood to create it. He fought the unwillingness of American financiers to put money into it.

He directed it and he starred in it. And he won. The film won seven Oscars and has received rapturous critical and box office acclaim since its release last year.

The story is told through the diary of Lieutenant John Dunbar (Costner) who is left alone in a deserted outpost on the American Frontier. He meets and is befriended by Sioux people and through them comes to change his perceptions of both Sioux and white culture.

Soon, Dunbar decides to make his home with the Sioux, but returning to the outpost to collect his belongings, he discovers that soldiers have returned.

The soldiers are gleeful at the thought of having captured a real live 'injun' and when he turns out to be merely a deserter from the army are only marginally less satisfied at the prospect of him being hanged as a traitor.

The killing of these soldiers by the Sioux coming to Dunbar's rescue is looked upon as a triumph of right

over evil. Not just because of the film's sympathy for the Sioux, but also because the soldiers are seen as unfeeling brutes, who get their kicks from the thought of Costner being hanged.

The film is a brave attempt to portray the Sioux not in the traditional Hollywood way, but as real, good people who fought to preserve their way of life from invasion by the whites. It is a fairy tale story, not a realistic portrayal of life in the mid nineteenth century in America.

Its failing is not in its portrayal of the rights and wrongs of the invasion of America by whites, but that it is a film about that invasion presented from a white perspective.

It is not a film about the destruction of the Sioux way of life from the perspective of the Sioux. This is the real tragedy: even in a film which is trying to present an honest view of what the Europeans did in America, the real victims are still not the ones who tell the story.

Within these limitations however, *Dances with Wolves* is a wonderful film. The majestic mountains, the desolate wilderness, the brutality of the American army and contrastingly the difficult yet harmonious life of the Sioux are all captured with almost painful intensity.

Thirteen years after the film was set, the last group of free Sioux gave themselves up to white rule. It has taken this long for the struggle of native Americans to gain even this much recognition in Hollywood. How long will it be before a Sioux can make a film about that struggle?

Why marxists don't oppose all wars

Opposition to needless death and suffering is a driving force behind most who turn to socialism: but why is it that marxists refuse to join the pacifist denunciation of all wars? HARRY SLOAN explains.

IT TAKES TWO to tango, and it takes two sides to make a war. But though locked in a mutual, deadly battle, the two combatants will by no means always be equal in the eyes of the working class and the oppressed.

War has been correctly described as nothing more than the 'continuation of politics by other means'; and just as there are many variations of political struggle, so there is a whole spectrum of types of war.

Unlike pacifists, who denounce any war regardless of the specific circumstances, marxists seek to make a concrete judgement on each war as it occurs. Before we decide our attitude, we want to analyse who is waging it, and on behalf of which class interests.

Class struggle

Unlike pacifism, marxism starts not from moral abstractions, but from a materialist analysis which makes it possible to understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within each country. We also know that wars cannot be 'abolished' unless capitalism, which has carved the world

into rival states and which perpetuates exploitation and oppression, is overthrown.

As socialists seeking the overthrow of capitalism we recognise the legitimacy of *civil wars*, those waged throughout history by the oppressed against their oppressors (slaves against slave-owners; serfs against feudal lords; workers against the capitalist class).

Equally we support wars of national liberation, in which oppressed nations fight military occupation or colonial domination by a 'great' imperialist power.

Taking sides

Civil wars and wars of national liberation therefore call upon socialists to do more than abstractly decide an approach: they place a duty upon socialists to *take sides* with the oppressed against the oppressor, to lend solidarity, and to build working class opposition to the war efforts of our 'own' ruling class and other imperialist ruling classes.

Hence the obligation on British socialists to build solidarity with the Irish struggle for self-determination – and to fight in Britain for the immediate withdrawal of troops from the six counties.

For marxists it is the concrete *class analysis* of the given war that decides our line. While we support the insurgent struggle of the FMLN liberation forces in El Salvador against the US-backed regime, for example, we also supported the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in its war against the US-backed 'contra' guerril-

las who were fighting to turn back the gains of the 1979 Revolution and instal a pro-US regime.

Not neutral

However there are other types of war, notably between rival imperialist powers, or between two equally reactionary regimes, in which marxists can lend support to neither side. However this does not mean we adopt a passive, 'neutral' policy: rather the task in these situations is to seek ways for the working class in each warring country to exploit the war crisis in its own interests.

In World War 1, Lenin showed how six 'great' powers controlled empires that effectively enslaved half a billion people, and that war was effectively a struggle between these 'imperialist' nations over the spoils. The interests of the working class could not be served by supporting any of the warring capitalist governments:

"It is not the business of Socialists to help the younger and stronger robber (Germany) to rob the older and overgorged robbers. Socialists must take advantage of the struggle between the robbers to overthrow them all.

"To be able to do this, the Socialists must first of all tell the people the truth, namely that this war is in a treble sense a war between slave-owners to fortify slavery...."

(*Socialism and War*, 1915)

In taking this line of principled opposition to the imperialist war, arguing that in each country the 'lesser evil' was the military *defeat* of the



government, and calling instead for the war to be turned into *civil wars* for the overthrow of each imperialist government, Lenin found himself in a tiny minority within the Second ('socialist') International.

Bolsheviks

But in October 1917 it was precisely the Bolsheviks' stance of internationalist opposition to the imperialist war effort that enabled Lenin to win mass support among the urban workers and the peasant-based army, opening the road for the October Revolution. Elsewhere, the pro-war 'socialist' parties played a very different role, each in their own way assisting the reconstruction and consolidation of capitalism.

Today's social democrats have learned nothing and forgotten nothing from their infamous forebears, who so slavishly voted in August 1914 for war credits to assist their

'own' ruling classes slaughter 'foreign' workers.

Labour's recent dismal display of 'bi-partisan' support for the imperialist Gulf War comes from the same party whose leaders backed US slaughter in Korea and Vietnam, and who themselves sent British troops to repress the Irish national struggle in 1969.

The working class has no interest in fighting to defend any capitalist government. But far from avoiding the concept of war, marxism sets out to *win* the war for socialism.

That's why we fight to develop the maximum international solidarity and organised links between workers, in readiness for the day when Che Guevara's dream of 'two, three, many Vietnams' becomes a possibility, with mass uprisings giving the world's multi-millioned oppressed a real chance of dividing, defeating and casting off imperialist rule and capitalist exploitation.

agenda

International youth summer camp

Join us in Czechoslovakia!

This year for the first time in its eight year history, the International Youth Summer Camp organised by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International is to be held in eastern Europe.

There will be between 800 and 1000 young people from across the whole of Europe and parts of North America, Africa, and Australia congregating in northern Czechoslovakia for what promises to be the best summer camp yet.

The camp is an ideal place to

find out more about the Fourth International and its sections in over 40 countries worldwide.

The summer camp provides a unique opportunity to talk about all aspects of marxist and trotskyst politics with young people from many different countries and with a wealth of different experiences.

This year this opportunity is extended more than ever as for the first time we have the opportunity to talk to people from all over eastern Europe

and the Soviet Union not only about the events going on now but to explore some of the more traditional marxist discussions with the benefit of a range of experience previously inaccessible to western socialists.

There will also be plenty of opportunity for fun and relaxation – volleyball courts, tennis courts, football pitches, a swimming pool a kilometre away, and a river just near the camp are just a few of the sporting activities available. There will also be a disco every night, and a bar (which will also sell soft drinks!).

There will be a women only space at the camp where women can go to relax and talk about whatever they want to. On one evening there will be a women only party. There will also be a lesbian and gay space and party.

The themes of the camp will be:

- Western Europe and the capitalist market
- Eastern Europe: economic reform and self-management
- Women's oppression and feminism
- Imperialism and the Third World
- Nationalism and socialism
- Our politics: democracy and revolution

There will be forums on each of these topics, one every day, followed in the afternoon by workshops exploring different aspects of them.

There will also be time to meet with the delegations from other countries and talk with them.

The cost of the camp, including food for the week and

travel to the campsite will be just under £200. But, we are hoping to subsidise those who have never been to the camp.

If you are under 26 and interested in attending this year's camp or if you are able to translate into any European languages and would be willing to come and help, please fill in the form.

Come and join us in Czechoslovakia and find out what the Fourth International is all about.



I would like more information about the Youth summer camp

Name

Address

.....

Tel

Age

Please return to: Kate Ahrens PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU

IN

Person

Jane Kelly

A temporary disablement

IT'S TRUE what disabled people say, you're either invisible or treated like a child. After a serious accident in which I broke my back and smashed my ankle, I spent several months in a wheelchair, before learning to walk again. In the process I got a unique insight into the discrimination people with disabilities suffer, as well as the problems faced by women in wheelchairs.

First there's the general problem of access - it's impossible to use public transport, many public buildings are inaccessible unless you have at least two strong people to yank you and the chair up steps, and the pavements and roads in London are in such a state of disrepair that getting around under your own steam is well nigh impossible. Apart from such logistical problems, the attitude of other people to you is quite extraordinary.

Having spent five months in a sheltered hospital environment going out was a shock. The most common response is that you're not there - people glance at you, notice you're disabled and look quickly away.

Whether this is because they are frightened of what they might see on closer inspection, or just embarrassed, the effect is to make you feel invisible. Given that women in our society get used to being looked at, this has a particularly negative effect on a disabled woman.

The other, even more devastating response from strangers, is to greet you, either smiling or remarking on something. This has the effect of making you feel like a child - the only other known recipients of such behaviour in the South East, where strangers avoid all eye contact, let alone talk to each other!

Does she take sugar?

This is further reinforced by the tone of voice which at its worst assumes that someone who has lost the use of her legs is probably incapable of intellectual activity of any sort - the 'does she take sugar' syndrome.

But there are other more subtle problems which women who are in any way incapacitated have to deal with. These I felt most strongly while in hospital in Stoke Mandeville. About two thirds of the patients in the spinal injuries centre were young men, mostly injured a car and motor bike accidents.

Because most of the care was carried out by women - nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists - a relationship with (hetero)sexual overtones was set up between male patients and carers - a relationship which excluded the women patients.

And because women in our society are expected to play the role of carer, becoming incapable of caring because of being in a wheelchair, removes the central function society prepares us for. This had a disastrous effect on some women patients, who became very depressed.

All this was reinforced by a complete lack of positive visual images of female paraplegics. Although the hospital was very well designed, built and equipped, nowhere were there any picture of women in wheelchairs. Instead we were surrounded by paintings of athletic young men throwing the javelin, playing basketball and other sports - stereotypes which undermine older men as well as women.

I am walking on two sticks now and people's reactions are less extreme, though I still get more strangers talking to me than would an able-bodied person. Upright again people think I have regained my mental capacities, and get treated with exaggerated courtesy, with people rushing to open doors for me although I can do it myself - to say nothing of the friend I'm with who could easily do it for me.

No longer in a wheelchair the experience has made me very sensitive to the logistical and psychological effects of disabilities nearly all of which could be removed by greater social awareness and relatively small sums of money.



Walesa's support was built during his period as a 'rebel': since he became part of the government, disillusion is growing

Conversations with a Polish Mole

POLAND EXPERIENCED a drop in GNP of 17% in 1990 - the second highest in Eastern Europe. Under the leadership of Lech Walesa and the Finance Minister Balcerowicz, it has become one of the leading advocates of rapid marketisation. As in East Germany, the results have been dramatic - the pauperisation of working people.

The growth of the far-right has been another striking development. By contrast, the forces of the left are divided and dominated by rightist social-democratic currents.

PATRICK BAKER of Socialist Outlook spoke to **JAN SYLWESTROWICZ**, a leading member of the Polish revolutionary organisation, *The Mole*, who have recently launched Poland's first revolutionary newspaper *Dalej!* (Forward!).

SO: The Polish government has portrayed the country as the flagship for marketisation in Eastern Europe. This was expressed in the *Balcerowicz Plan*, which envisaged rapid privatisation of the economy. On 16 April a new Stock Exchange was launched. But what has marketisation really meant?

JS: You have to look at the process from two angles: First, the general aim of structural reform of the economy, the privatisation of enterprises. Second, the atomisation of the working class, the smashing of its capacity for self-defence.

In terms of structural reform, the government has encountered enormous difficulties. Considerable effort and funds have been put into the establishment of the Stock Exchange and the Ministry for Ownership Reform. But their success has been very limited - there is no-one to buy the firms. Stocks have been sold in five factories so far, bought by Western investors. But even this took much longer than expected.

Western firms have been discouraged from investing in a serious way by the political instability - the working class has not yet been crushed. In addition, the economic infrastructure is very weak. Western capital is more interested in speculative trading than buying into production.

But the government is on the offensive, preparing for marketisation. Companies are being 'privatised', but all the stock is owned by the Treasury - so they are still state-owned. But they are now

totally controlled by a committee of directors - the workers council no longer has any veto.

An example is the FSO car plant in Warsaw, prior to a visit by Walesa. Redundancies were declared and now General Motors have expressed interest in the company.

SO: When Walesa came to power he was a popular figure. But now things seem to have changed. Is there any sign of a struggle - perhaps through a wing of Solidarnosc - against Walesa's marketisation offensive?

JS: Disillusionment in Walesa is increasing, and there is a growing number of strikes. But there is no organised national force that is leading a counter-offensive. It is a fragmented struggle, led by factory committees.

The exception to this is among farmers. They have been very active, regularly organising demonstrations. They have established a strike committee opposing the Balcerowicz Plan and supporting state subsidy to agriculture.

Walesa is conscious of this disillusionment. He knows that he hasn't fulfilled his election promises. Thus inflation has risen. He has not challenged the power of the nomenklatura, who are gaining a niche in business. This is why Walesa wanted to call elections quickly, before his popularity decreased further.

But these moves were blocked in parliament, and the elections were postponed until autumn.

But the basic problem remains - the workers have no national organisation

which can represent their interests. One response to this has been the establishment of horizontal union structures, such as in Warsaw and Wroclaw. These were formed on the basis of opposition to the Balcerowicz Plan, to privatisation, and the Payroll Tax (a tax on wages).

SO: What has happened to the remnants of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS)? Haven't they played any role in the opposition to Walesa?

JS: Since the expulsion of the left from the PPS, the various currents of social democrats have only been active on a parliamentary level. A group has recently been formed called *Labour Solidarity*. It has two deputies who were self-management activists in the early 1980s.

So on paper social democracy has potential, but it does nothing to organise at the workplace level.

SO: What about *The Mole*? What are its main activities?

We are very active in the trade unions - Solidarity and Solidarity '80. In the Warsaw FSO car plant, for example, our comrades lead Solidarity '80. We have launched an Independent Workers Platform, sponsored by the plant union.

The axis of our propaganda is around workers control, linking up privatisation and unemployment. This has resonance, given the experience of the self-management movement in the early '80s.

Another campaign has been around women's rights, linking up with the women's movement. The campaign is focussed on the government threat to outlaw abortion and some forms of contraception. This is part of an ideological campaign to get women 'back in the home'.

Finally, we have a campaign for the continuation of the anti-stalinist revolution, purging the power of the nomenklatura. They are now setting up private companies, and are gaining control of the repressive forces. There has been no parliamentary inquiry, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, into the past activities of the secret police, the army.

Hospital sackings at Guy's and Bradford NHS Trusts get down to business

By John Lister

ONLY THE TIMING of the announcement of 600 job losses and the axing of 25 medical specialities in a 12m cuts package by the Board of Guy's Hospital Trust came as any real surprise.

Tory ministers were far from pleased that these cuts, followed quickly by another 300 jobs axed in Bradford, have pushed the NHS back on to the agenda in the run-up to the local elections. Worse, this salvo fired by the 'flagship' of opting out hospitals could seriously damage or even sink the efforts to push through another 100 or more hospital opt-outs this summer.

Less than a month after floating free from any local control or accountability as a self-contained business, Guy's 90,000 a year chief executive Peter Griffiths has moved faster than many had expected to apply the traditional profit-seeking methods of

the private sector as he confronts an accumulated 6.8m deficit.

The Guy's cuts were announced just the day after the first redundancies were decided in the newly-privatised Powergen: but while the electricity industry represents a licence to print money, the urgency to cut staff in the new NHS Trusts is a measure of the huge financial problems at the centre of the health service.

Guy's and Bradford are not alone: more Trusts will be setting the pace in cutbacks, while many directly-managed hospitals will be following closely behind as the brutal realities of the new 'internal market' in health care inflict arbitrary closures.

Campaigners against opting out have always warned that the Trusts' much-vaunted 'flexibility' on pay and staffing levels would be used by management to award themselves sky-high salaries while attacking the pay and conditions of front-line health workers.

Many campaigners also stressed

that Trust boards, meeting in secret with every item of information cloaked in commercial confidentiality, would feel free to axe specialities which they saw as unprofitable, without any need to consult or even inform health authorities, staff or the local community.

These dangers have now been vividly confirmed, making life more difficult for managers trying to push through another wave of opt-outs. But few campaigners looked in detail at the financial *viability* of each Trust. Health Secretary William Waldegrave paid city analysts Coopers and Lybrand a reported 500,000 for a highly embarrassing report which he ignored and has refused to publish: it showed that only a dozen of the 65 opt-out applicants were viable.

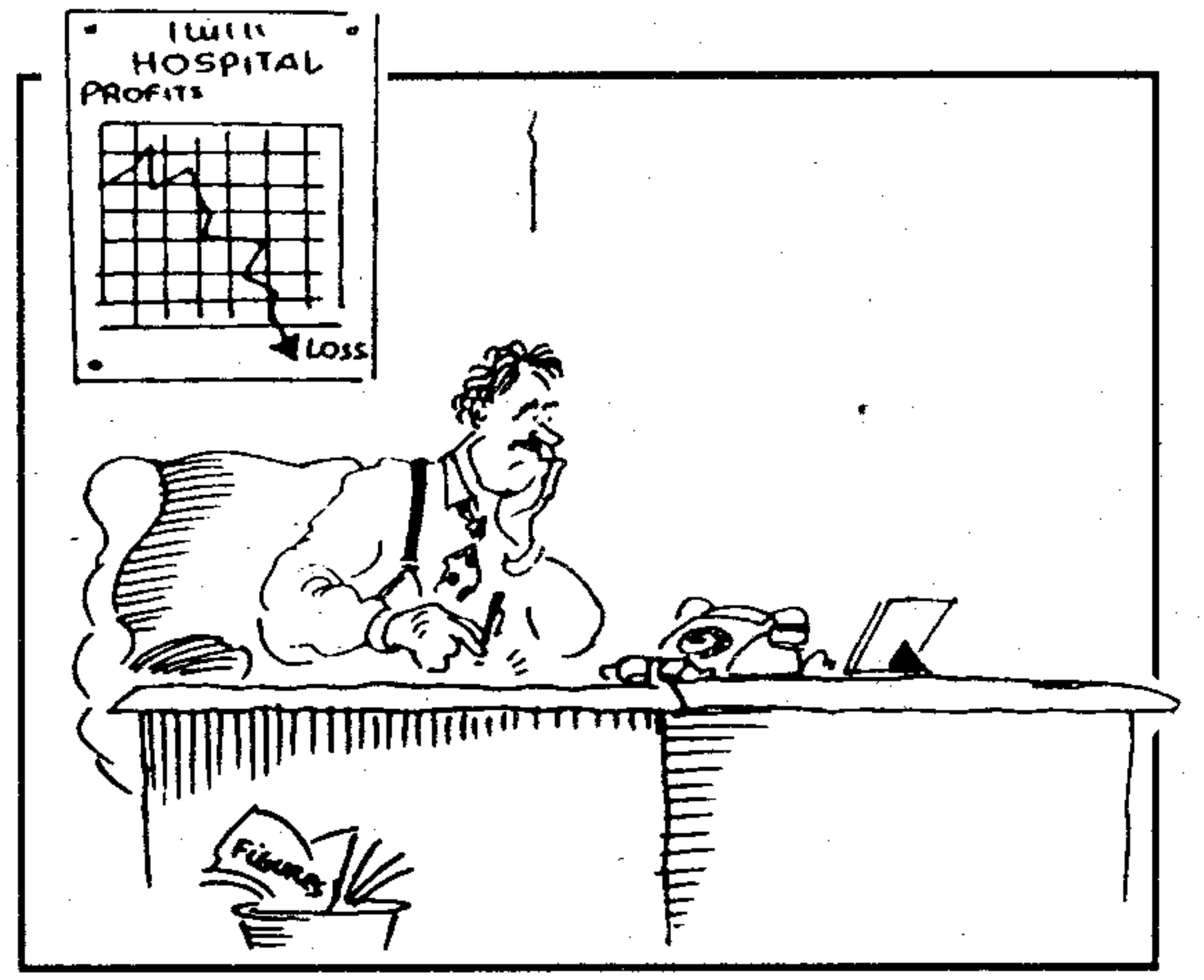
Pressure group London Health Emergency published a much cheaper (10) report showing much the same thing. Most Trust applications were based on ludicrously op-

timistic assumptions on levels of activity, inflation and increased income from private beds: even then 31 of the 65 applicants were expecting a total surplus of just 49m in the first year,

with many of these expecting as little as a few thousand pounds.

The government then announced regulations which forced many Trusts to pay 50% more interest on their multi-million pound assets than they had hoped, bringing immediate losses of 1m or more to Trusts in Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Manchester and Epsom as well as several in London.

With huge unresolved problems in the new NHS 'internal market', and many health authorities still making cuts to resolve last year's overspend, no Trusts and precious few directly-managed hospitals have



any financial stability.

The 'smooth take-off' has already produced its first crash-landings: the task of the labour is now to turn this to advantage by redoubling the campaign against the second wave of opt-outs, which begins its consultation stage in May, to be completed in July.

● New leaflets one explaining Trust finances, and Ten Good Reasons against opting out, along with a new issue of the tabloid newspaper *Health Emergency* are now available (1) from Hands Off Our NHS, 446, Uxbridge Rd, London W12 0NS.



Mark Sairon

Victory against racist immigration laws

Following a campaign led by the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign (WMADC), Dharmotwee Surju has defeated attempts to deport her under racist immigration laws.

Dharmotwee came to Britain from Mauritius in April 1990, believing that she had a right to join her husband, who had lived in Britain for more than

18 years.

But, like so many others, she was refused leave to enter the country at Heathrow Airport. Despite support from Clare Short MP, the Home Office refused her application to enter the country and repeatedly attempted to deport her to Mauritius.

Dharmotwee was one of three Asian women in Birmingham fighting

Britain's racist immigration laws. Finally, after a vigorous campaign by the WMADC, two of these women have won the right to stay in Britain. Prakesh Chavrimootoo is still fighting, and needs support.

For more information contact: Muhammad Idrish on 021 551 4518 or Raj Joye on 021 554 9233.

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Focus on India

A leading member of the Fourth International's Indian Section, the ICS, has arrived in Britain for a six week speaking tour.

Achin Vaniak is a prominent marxist activist who, from his base in Delhi, has written extensively on the crisis facing the Indian workers and peasants.

International attention is turning to the Indian election campaign which, in this country of 850 million, is on a huge scale with many regional variations. The recent terrible violence between religious communities will probably be cynically stirred up by local and national politicians. But the main problem, as always, is

economic development and on this front the workers and peasants of India stand to gain little, whatever the result of the election.

Achin Vaniak will be talking about the struggle of the Indian people to audiences across Britain, ranging from academic seminars to trade union meetings. His tour has been organised by the International Forum on Asia and the Southall Monitoring Group. It includes fringe meetings at the National Union of Students Conference, Trades Councils meetings, including the Birmingham May Day rally and meetings with British Asian community organisations. For details ring 081 843 2333.

Conference on South Asia

A highlight of Achin Vaniak's tour will be a conference on South Asia. It has been organised on 25/26 May in the University of London Union. However, widespread interest may mean this venue will be too small.

Speakers booked include: Tariq Ali (Britain/Pakistan), Karamat Ali (Pakistan), Amrita Chhachhi (India), Kumar Jayawardene (Sri Lanka), Naila Kabir (Britain/Bangladesh), Romilla Thapar (India), Pierre Rousset (France), A. Sakai (Japan), Hafiz Mirza (Britain/Pakistan), Swasti Mitter (Britain/India), Rizalina (Philippines/Netherlands).

NUS conference – the bureaucrats' dream

by Andrew Berry

The National Union of Students (NUS) Conference, held in Blackpool from 22 to 25 April, was dominated by undemocratic manoeuvring by the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS).

However, two important political debates took place. The conference debated lesbian and gay rights, and agreed important policies in opposition to Clause 25 and Paragraph 16.

In addition, the conference voted to suspend Standing Orders in order to debate the situation in the Middle East after the Gulf War. Policies supporting an independent Kurdistan were overwhelmingly agreed.

But the conference was dominated by introspection. Attempts by NOLS, via various underhand tactics, to regionalise the structure of NUS were defeated. In addition, moves to undermine the democracy of the union

through the abolition of the Winter Conference were deferred.

The Labour Students did, however, succeed in a procedural move which allowed their candidates to stand in elections. This had been in some doubt, since they had failed to submit their nominations by the appointed date. This was then followed by the suspension of various rules governing election procedures. Protests at these undemocratic manoeuvres were, however, ignored.

What does this mean for socialist students? With the collapse of NOLS's credibility, and both the Liberals and the right on the offensive, there is a serious danger that NUS could fall into right-wing hands. The left needs to go on the offensive. The only response that can beat back the right is to organise for a campaigning NUS that involves rank and file students, as opposed to the current domination of the NUS bureaucracy.



Defying the last Labour government's anti-union laws – the Grunwick strike

Andrew Ward/Report

Unshackle the unions!

by our correspondent

'DEFIANCE of the law is the only way to defend hard won gains and to win new victories' was the message that came out of last week's 'Unshackle the Unions' dayschool.

200 trades union activists met in London on 27 April to discuss in detail the 1990 Employment Act and how best to fight back against the anti-

union laws. The dayschool was jointly sponsored by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, the Solidarity Network, Labour Party Socialists and Trade Union News.

Representatives were present from some of the most important disputes in recent years including oilworkers, dockers, postal workers, railworkers, journalists, local government workers, and teachers.



Tony Benn

Graeme Cookson

NUJ faces both ways

This year's Conference of the National Union of Journalists was the first presided over by its new right wing General secretary Steve Turner.

He believes that the union executive is dominated by a far left conspiracy.

On policy, however, the conference was a mixed affair for the left, condemning the Gulf War and the conduct of the Western powers in its aftermath, but rejecting calls for British withdrawal from Ireland. Supporters of the NUJ Left were successful in union elections, and won support for industrial action against union derecognition.

One bizarre incident perhaps sums up the contradictory nature of the event: a British Army recruitment stall was established outside the conference hall, neatly sandwiched between the SWP and Pergamon Press strikers. Perhaps they had been encouraged by the servility of so many journalists during the Gulf conflict?

Solidarity not charity!

AS WE ARE bombarded by media images of the African famine, one of the major causes of this disaster – the debt burden on the countries concerned – is scarcely mentioned.

Our response to this situation – and the only one which will have a long term effect – must be 'Solidarity not Charity'.

The Campaign to Cancel the Debt is organising a major demonstration in London on July 13 to 'greet' the Group of Seven (richest nations) summit taking place the following week.

The campaign, which demands unconditional cancellation of the debt, and end to the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the

World Bank and a just and fair international economy, involves activists from many solidarity campaigns. A parallel organisation is being set up in Scotland which is planning a demonstration in Edinburgh on the same day.

Following a successful fringe meeting at NUS conference last week, it is vital that students are mobilised in the colleges around this issue. Initiatives to build for the demonstration need to be planned in as many cities as possible and support built through Labour parties and trade unions.

Organising such a major event costs a good deal of money, particularly as we want to involve speakers and

performers of all kinds to celebrate resistance against oppression and debt in many different countries. Rush affiliations and donations to the Campaign.

For further information contact:

Cancel the Debt
c/o IFAA, 23 Beviden St,
London N1 6BT,
Tel 071 281 8148

or
Cancel the Debt (Scotland)
c/o Latin America Institute,
60 Oakfield Ave,
Glasgow.

There were also delegates from the car industry and various trades councils.

In opening the dayschool Tony Benn described how successive Labour and Tory governments had used the law to curb trades union activity. The current anti-union laws, he said, were not just a denial of rights in the workplace, but a real attack on basic democratic rights. To illustrate the seriousness of the attacks he quoted Mussolini and Hitler who spoke of the 'excessive power' of the organised labour movement as being the single biggest obstacle to the ordered and well-run society they favoured.

John Hindley QC who represented Arthur Scargill and the NUM in cases brought to court under the last seven major Employment Acts brought in by the Tories spoke at the school. He called for the establishment of 'positive rights for trades unionists' based on the relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) laws.

Geoff Revell brought solidarity greetings from the RMT London Transport District Council who are presently balloting for strike action. He described the plan to privatise London Underground, smash the unions and make the workforce pay the cost of the 100 million deficit run up by the bosses. He said that when the anti-union laws are taken as a whole 'the aim is to make it a crime to strike'.

Campaigning initiatives that came out of the workshops included working in the Labour Party and the unions for repeal of the laws, campaigning for union democracy, bringing in the international dimension and fighting for positive rights for trades unionists.

Solidarity greetings came from Iranian oilworkers, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), Ronnie McDonald from OILC, Anna Wagstaff from the Pergamon 23, Andy Dickson from the NUT national executive, Cate Murphy from LPS and Micky Fenn a sacked Tilbury docker.

Amnesty for poll tax prisoners! Release Matt Lee!

The victimisation of protesters from the 1990 'Battle of Trafalgar' continues apace. On 25 March, nearly one year later, Matt Lee, a supporter of *Socialist Outlook*, was imprisoned for 30 months on the basis of three minutes of edited police video.

Matt, the chair of the Birmingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation, is one of more than 100 people imprisoned for their part in defending the protesters against a police riot. Thirty remain in custody. The severity of the sentences

reveals a clear policy of political victimisation. Though the John Major may have conceded defeat over the Poll Tax, the state is clearly determined that those arrested are punished in exemplary fashion.

Though the movement against the Poll Tax may now lose some of its impetus, the labour movement needs to ensure that those imprisoned are not forgotten. Prisoners Support Groups (PSG) have been established on a national and local level to fulfill this role, and have won support from Labour councillors and trade

unionists. Lively demonstrations and pickets have been organised to keep the issue alive and in the public eye.

More information on activities in support of Poll Tax prisoners is available from:

Prisoners Support Group, c/o Room 205, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1.

Birmingham PSG, c/o 5 Exton Gardens, Blackpatch, Smethwick, W. Midlands B66 2LT

Write to Matt Lee: Matthew James Lee MW1054, HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Rd, London SW18 3HS

Scottish Solidarity with the Kurds and people of Iraq

Procession and Vigil for those who have died and are still dying

Saturday May 14
Assemble 12 noon Kelvingrove Park bandstand.
March to George Square

Speakers include
Kurdish community,
Iraqi democratic opposition.

Kurdish, Chilean and Scottish Music

Socialist **OUTLOOK**

Local elections

Sweep out the Tories!

Kill off the Poll Tax!



By Tracey Doyle
MAY 2 SEES local government elections for more than 12000 council seats in England and Wales. The results will not only reflect public reaction to the 'close relative of the poll tax' proposals, but are likely to determine the date of the General Election.

The escalating crisis in local government combined with further Tory proposals for privatisation and education reform mean the stakes are now higher than ever. Cuts, capping and poll tax non-payment are leading to increasing levels of financial deficit and

service decimation.

Nurseries, adult education, libraries, youth services and voluntary sector funding are just a few of the areas where some councils now provide no more than the statutory minimum.

Plans are on the table for compulsory opting out of schools, privatisation of whole swathes of support services such as legal and architects - even careers advice! The next Tory manifesto is likely to go even further and force the privatisation of bus services, leisure centres, museums, libraries and parks.

These attacks follow on the heels of local management of

schools and colleges, the announced take-over by central government of Further Education and Sixth form colleges, the imposition of the national curriculum, and compulsory testing of school pupils. Local authorities are losing large areas of responsibility, or facing abolition, as local government structure is again reviewed.

It is now no exaggeration to talk of local councils meeting once a year to award contracts to private companies - this is now stated Tory policy! Selling off assets and removing public subsidies represents their plan to keep down the cost of services.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs are on the line. Pay and conditions are up for grabs. Society will be increasingly divided into 'haves' and 'have nots' or rather 'can pay' and 'can't pay so why should the state provide?'.

Response

The response of the Labour leadership? A spirited defence of local democracy and local services? A united stand with the local government trade unions and services users to demand adequate resources and an end to the sell offs? No chance!

Instead Kinnock's team offer continuing attacks on council workers, new realist hands to wield the axe on jobs and services, and bailiffs sent in to enforce the Tory poll tax.

Instead of lending support to non-payers and defence of services, fighting to kick the Tories when they're down and put forward a real alternative, Kinnock and his cronies choose another round of purges, launching a new witch hunt in Lambeth as they move

to make Labour a completely centralised, non-activist party.

A swing to Labour in the elections may well represent more of an anti-Tory vote than a positive vote for Kinnock's threadbare alternative. Nevertheless it would serve as a resounding 'no' in the subterranean referendum taking place on the Tories' poll tax alternatives and would raise the expectations of the working class.

A boost for Labour on the back of the anti-poll tax move-

ment can only serve to raise demands for a reversal of the decline in services and for a just and adequately funded system of local government finance. Further setbacks for the Government may herald its imminent demise.

A Labour vote must be combined with a continuing battle to kill the poll tax now, to defend non-payers and fight attacks on local services, and to oppose new realism and witch hunts, putting forward a real alternative to Tory policies.

Paragraph 16/Clause 25

Step up the pressure!

by Sheila Thomas

Last week the government backed down over specific reference to lesbians and gay men in the notorious Paragraph 16 of the guidelines to the Children Act. Many lesbian and gay activists have seen this decision as a major victory over the Tories.

However, the guidelines, which will be implemented by local authorities in October, still contain the following wording: 'The chosen way of life of some adults may mean they would not be able to provide a suitable environment for the care and nurture of a child'.

As happened with Section 28, the danger in with local authorities practising 'self-censorship'. What is needed now is an offensive campaign aimed at local authorities demanding equal rights for lesbians and gay men in fostering and adoption. In the run-up to the general election the Labour Party will be under increasing pressure to back

off from its (paper) commitment to lesbian and gay rights.

Meanwhile the attacks continue. Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill which threatens many thousands of gay men with even harsher sentencing for consensual sex is back in the Commons next week. Police harassment and homophobic attacks are increasing. The 'virgin birth' scandal in March was designed to stir up public outrage, at a time when Licensing Authorities are being set up to implement the Embryology Act.

The West Midlands Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (CLGR) has called a national conference entitled 'Thinking about the future' on 18 May. There will be information updates on the latest attacks and the conference will also look at ways of carrying the campaign forward into an offensive for lesbian and gay equality.

Further details about both the conference and the LCLGR AGM can be found on page 15.

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