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# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Labour backs Tory welfare meltdown

# Defend the Welfare State

**WHEN** even Kenneth Clarke says Labour is too obsessed with cuddling up to the City things must be really bad.

The Labour Party leadership seems determined to rip up ever decent policy in advance of the election.

Chris Smith's recent statements are indistinguishable from the Conservative party front bench. "It is time to get away" he says "from the sterile battle lines between public and private".

So it looks like private finance initiatives will be here to stay under a Labour government. The battering of health, education and housing will continue.

The media have devoted much space to the internal rivalries of Brown, Mandelson, Smith and Prescott. Tensions do exist.

But their differences are all about personal ambition. Not politics.

Many supported Blair's removal of Clause 4 because they thought it a necessary price to pay to secure the election of a Labour government in order to defend schools, hospitals and pensions.

The decision to abolish free universal education shows the direction of the party. Blair has no regard for the lives of working class people.



Single issue campaigns against cuts and closures in many parts of the country continue to grow

Photo: Linn Hjort

All the talk about community and stakeholding is hot air—the obsession with keeping down tax means continuing Tory austerity. Beveridge's Welfare State rests on a progressive taxation system.

The post-war settlement was flawed in many ways. It was necessary to fight to defend welfare provision so that benefits were index linked and that services democratically accountable to users and work-

ers. But the joint anti-welfare offensive by Labour and Tories now throws even minimal provision up in the air.

We are told that final decisions have not been made on removing child benefit from 16-18 year olds.

This cuts little ice where constituency and trade union involvement in real decision making have been seriously undermined.

The recent Policy Forum in Manchester contained no genuine debate.

If Blair has his way there will be no democratic discussion on the manifesto—just a rubber stamping exercise by plebiscite.

But there is resistance. The Welfare State Network organised a picket of Smith's surgery the week of his major speech and held a fringe meeting at the Policy Forum as part

of its weekend of action in defence of the welfare state.

Single issue campaigns against cuts and closures in many parts of the country continue to grow.

In Scotland and Oxfordshire action against education cuts has been particularly buoyant.

Socialist Outlook supporters are fully committed to playing their part in all these activities, linking them to the battle inside the Labour Party.

# Socialist OUTLOOK

# Support Post strike

POSTAL workers voted two-to-one in the ballot for industrial action against Royal Mail's 'Employee Agenda'.

Despite previous talk of a series of one-day strikes, General Secretary Alan Johnson's immediate response was to reduce the vote to a lever in further negotiations with management.

Management answered with their usual talk of how strike action would only endanger jobs. They called for further talks and raised the possibility, dismissed by them earlier, of ensuring that no postal workers lose out financially from their proposals.

Strong support for action indicates that most postal workers recognise that it is not primarily money which is at stake. The 'Employee Agenda' is about massive job losses and destroying the union.

Management wants to introduce 'teamworking' which would require postal workers to cover all vacancies and absences for no extra pay. Each team would be set a mythical productivity figure which could only be achieved by working flat-out all day,

every day.

Teams would be expected to deal with any paper work connected with the job in their own time. If all targets were achieved a monthly bonus would be paid.

It is this issue that Royal Mail refuses to budge on.

It took intense pressure from the union membership and the rest of the CWU executive to force Johnson to break off previous negotiations and go to a ballot.

The danger now is that Johnson will do everything possible to avoid calling action, or call the minimum he thinks he can get away with, in exchange for minor concessions from management.

It will take more than a ballot alone or even a series of one-day strikes to defeat the centre-piece of managements' strategy. Postal workers need to step up the level of organisation at both the workplace level and nationally within the union to ensure the ballot victory is built on.

The rest of the labour movement should be cementing links now with CWU branches so they can provide maximum support when strike action takes place.

## Make Rail privateers pay



**Greg Tucker, RMT Train Crew  
National Secretary**

**EVERY** month sees new parts of British Rail being given away into private hands.

Whilst Labour continues to fudge on what it will do in office, rail unions have proved unwilling to combat the threat of privatisation directly themselves.

While TSSA plays dead and ASLEF have settled for acting as an "employment agency", an honest broker providing a service for the new private companies, the RMT has borne the brunt of direct attacks on its rights to organise. But unlike the other unions,

it has at least tried to find ways to fight back.

In the latest move, the RMT is preparing for battle over demands by Train Crew for proper pay and conditions.

Operating companies have had up to last weekend to respond to demands for properly booked meal breaks for Guards and for an 11 per cent pay rise for past productivity, standing separate from the ordinary annual pay claim.

Progress has been made with some of the companies over the breaks, pay is a different matter.

We are demanding of the National Executive that ballot papers go out ur-

gently and that we open up a campaign of industrial action.

Our claim is clear - in recent years, train miles worked and revenue collected by each guard has soared, while the overall wage bill has actually gone down. At our recent RMT Train Crew Conference, delegates from around the country were forthright - the membership wants to see action.

Whilst we still demand of any incoming Labour government that they immediately renationalise our industry, it is clear that we cannot simply wait for such a change - the time has come to stand and fight on our own demands.

## Welfare State Network defends Hackney libraries

Eileen Gersh

ANTI-CUTS activists took over Hackney's Central Library over the Bank Holiday weekend. They used it as an organising centre for a well-supported rally and demonstration protesting against the planned closure of half Hackney's libraries.

The protests were organised by the Welfare State Network (WSN). Hackney is London's poorest borough. Its Labour council plans to close half its libraries, claiming that this is the only way to bring others up to date with new technology.

"The Tory government's cutting of funds is basically responsible for this decision" explained WSN spokesperson Jean Lane to a Bank Holiday rally, "but the Labour council should be fighting the Tory government not imposing its cuts."

Ken Loach, Melvin Bragg, Ruth Rendell and other celebrities supported the occupation. Libraries and their union, UNISON, added to support from users, teachers and local branches of the TGWU and MSF unions.

The WSN is keeping library closures in the public eye. Activists are preparing a lobby of the Council with street stalls. Support for the libraries is helping to build up a wider campaign against other government attacks like benefits, pensions, education, health and housing.

Campaigners ended the occupation with a rally and march.

• **The WSN is launching a campaign to defend Hackney's services. Come to the Unity Club in Dalston Lane at 7.30pm on Saturday June 10.**

## Manifesto campaign for equality launched

Peter Purton, LCLGR

THE "Manifesto for Lesbian and Gay Equality" published by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) and launched at a press conference by UNISON general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe, is a comprehensive statement of the changes a Labour government needs to introduce if discrimination against lesbians and gay men in all areas of life is to be outlawed.

The goal is seen as winnable. Every single demand in the Manifesto has been carried by a Labour Party conference - five times since 1985 - and the vote in favour in 1994 was 97.6 per cent. Wide backing exists already - for example, from UNISON and the NUS LGB Conference. The document is providing the framework for detailed discussion with Alan Michael MP, the home office shadow minister with the lesbian and gay minister.

The Manifesto is also a campaigning document. LCLGR has no illusion that Labour in office will rush to overturn a century of legal oppression in the face of tabloid homophobia. A couple of days before the launch, Labour MPs were given a free vote on ending the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces. Eight voted against and most were away. Tony Blair, who did speak out on the age of consent issue in 1994, stated that he was against the ban - but first the armed forces chiefs had to be convinced! No wonder LCLGR recognises it has an uphill struggle to win backing in the lesbian and gay communities, where the great majority which hates the Tories is understandably doubtful of Labour's commitment.

Everyone can play their part in making Labour MPs conscious that they must not betray these conference commitments to absolutely basic principles of equality. LCLGR wants the Manifesto discussed everywhere in the labour movement. It is especially keen to explain why the issues which MPs find "difficult", like fertility rights for lesbians, artificial insemination and fostering and adoption rights, are essential to winning equality.

Speakers can be provided. Every CLP has been sent a copy of the Manifesto.

This is a rare campaign where all wings

of Labour have worked together, in LCLGR, in pursuit of a principled goal. Ultimate success depends, however, on winning active support from all sections of the labour movement in the run-up to the

election.

\*Contact LCLGR at PO Box 306, London N5. Copies of the Manifesto available at 30p each plus postage from the same address.



LCLGR has no illusion that Labour in office will rush to overturn a century of legal oppression

### JOIN THE WELFARE STATE NETWORK!

★ **AFFILIATION:** £25 unions and Labour Party branches; £10 pensioners' and unemployed groups. Affiliates receive 10 copies of each issue of *Action*.

★ **INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP:** £5 (waged); £3 (students, senior citizens, claimants). Members receive each issue of *Action*.

★ **BUNDLES** of 25 copies of *Action* are available: £6 (unions / large groups); £3 (pensioners groups).

Enclose (tick as appropriate):

- £25 affiliation     £10 affiliation     £5 membership  
 £3 membership     £6 for 25 *Action*     £3 for 25 *Action*

I also enclose: £..... donation.    Total enclosed: £.....

Name: .....

Address: .....

Organisation: .....

Send to: WSN c/o Camden People's Centre, 183 Queen's Crescent, London NW5 4DS.

Cheques payable to "Welfare State Network."

## Unionist election ransom

David Coen

AT LEAST part of the reason why John Major last February went along with David Trimble's demand for elections in Northern Ireland, apart that is from depending on him to keep the Tories in power if they lost their Westminster majority, was the need to keep the Ulster Unionists inside.

Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists refused and still are refusing to talk to Sinn Fein. No Unionists: no talks.

The method was not one approved by Trimble and the election results show why — the UUP, though still the largest party, lost ground to Paisley's DUP.

Any chance the British could have used the UUP to force Paisley to the talks on June 10 has also gone out the window. Their only success in outflanking the DUP and fragmenting the Unionist bloc is the winning of two seats each by the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party, linked to the UVF and the UDA respectively. Both are willing to join the talks,

though ironically neither is prepared to give up any arms prior to a deal.

Sinn Fein increased its vote by 55 per cent since the 1992 election, mostly at the expense of the SDLP, giving it its highest vote ever.

The purpose of the vote was to force Sinn Fein to publicly acknowledge its acceptance of an internal settlement.

In a number of recent speeches, including an interview with the *Financial Times*, Gerry Adams has shown his desire to be flexible. Irish unity is, in his opinion, a long way off.

An IRA cease-fire is not likely in the near future. More likely, Sinn Fein will turn up at the talks on June 10 and demand admittance on the basis of their mandate. They have accepted, in advance, that British withdrawal and Irish self-determination will not be on the agenda.

With general elections in the offing on both sides of the Irish Sea in the next year or so, the talks look likely to drag on without any serious outcome.

The main hope of the British, David Trimble, has taken a hammering from the DUP. He is under no pressure from the Labour Party about less sympathetic treatment under a Blair Government. He knows that the Tories in opposition

will be less restrained about defence of the Union.

Despite all the choreography about de-commissioning, the main obstacle to British success in re-making the partition settlement of 1921 is not the Republicans but the Unionists.

Socialists maintain that the six-county statelet is not reformable. What the "peace" process is dem-

onstrating once again is that the British ruling class are incapable of reforming the British state.

It is incapable of making the most minimal concessions in return for an agreement which would actually strengthen its position in Ireland by strengthening partition.

Surely a lesson for reformists everywhere.

## Exeter tangle

Pete Firmin

IN THE rush to keep the parliamentary party free of anyone who might be remotely critical of a Blair government, the Labour Party has got itself in a twist over several candidate selections.

The number of cases where there has been abuse of election procedures has risen, leaving the NEC to sort out the mess it has created. In the process any regard for the constitution has been ignored, as when they declared that Tory defector Alan Howarth is eligible for selection despite not having been a member for two years as required by rule.

The left has to defend the right of constituency parties to select the candidate of

their choice with no ballot-rigging and no interference from the national party. Within that the left should obviously fight for the candidates they want.

Sections of the left have abandoned this position over the selection by Exeter CLP of John Lloyd, a man who has been 'economical with the truth' about his past when he gave evidence for the prosecution leading to the hanging of a member of the African Resistance Movement in South Africa. The NEC instructed Exeter CLP to select another candidate, then deselected him. The Left needs to be clear - Exeter CLP should have the right to select the candidate of its choice, even if Lloyd should be rejected as an unacceptable choice.

### From one election to the next...

	General Election 1992	Forum elections 1996	Seats
Ulster Unionist Party	34.6%	24.2%	30
Democratic Unionist Party	13.1%	18.8%	24
SDLP	23.5%	21.4%	21
Sinn Fein	10%	15.5%	17
Alliance	8.7%	6.5%	7
Others	10.2%	13.6%	11

[Source: Irish Times]

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# A summer of chauvinism

The latest attempt to re-forge the Tory little England alliance around the politics of 'Allo 'Allo is a mark of deep desperation.

But Major's gush of anti-Europe beef bile is about more than saving his own moth-eaten hide.

The terminal crisis of British Conservatism is itself intimately linked to the failure of the European bourgeoisie to overcome their long-term political and economic crisis.

The never-ending uncertainty over monetary and political union arises out of the combined crises of the traditional parties of big capital, the impasse of social democracy and the continuing capacity of the working class to resist the austerity offensive.

It takes a different form in every country, but the overall pattern is clear.

To a greater or lesser extent, Europe has relied on the US for the most part of a century. Its money was crucial in overcoming the wave of social revolution that began in 1916, went on to conquer state power in Russia and threatened capitalism all over Europe for nearly a decade.

After the Second World War the Dawes and Young support systems were re-lived in the Marshall Plan's huge subsidy package.

It was the only way of getting western European capitalism on its feet again—battered empires in Asia, bourgeoisies discredited by fascism and a resurgent Soviet Union, all forced the USA to intervene to prop up the system.

The arrangement was tempered by the recession of the late sixties and early seventies—the end of Bretton Woods in the 1970s and the hike in oil prices marked a changing strategy. The USA became less able to dole out the dollars.

This put the European ruling classes in a bind.

Ever since they have struggled to find a solution. The European Community—now the European Union—was an attempt to find a new way forward.

But Euro-capital has always faced special problems in relation both to the USA, and Japan and the far East. And this relative weakness is not primarily caused by national division.

Because of the social settlement after the war European capitalism was obliged to shape its patterns of accumulation around a developed system of welfare.

Parties based on the organised working class developed a mass politics of welfare and trade unions were able to win a position of influence in the corporate state.

This explains in part why US productivity has been generally higher than Europe.

On top of these advantages, the States'

## EDITORIAL

main military competitor—the USSR—was not a capitalist country. And the only other capitalist country capable of presenting a challenge to Uncle Sam was divided into Western Germany and the GDR.

Maastricht is the latest development in the attempt to overcome these innate weaknesses of Euro-capital. To achieve the level of profitability they desire will require a complete re-working of the post-war order.

The convergence criteria aims to limit overall total debt to sixty per cent of GDP. It means a massive onslaught on jobs and conditions, increasing unemployment, cracking down on immigrant communities and moving power increasingly to unelected bankers.

The bitter fruits of the proposals are already being gathered. Long-term unemployment is at record levels throughout the Union—at least twenty million.

Yet despite the bourgeoisie's willingness to sign up to crippling cuts in state spending, they have not been able to persuade their populations that "it hurts therefore it works".

Profound political crises are gripping every country that tries to qualify for monetary union—from Sweden Austria, from France to Italy.

It is a bit of a problem for the bourgeoisie—parties that lead the way in implementing Maastricht get booted out of office at the first opportunity.

The parties that represent the interests of big capital, like the British Conservatives, have traditionally relied upon the support of sections of the petit bourgeoisie—small shopkeepers, farmers and small workplaces.

But this sector is getting a hammering in the new Europe—small enterprises are being driven out of business quicker than you can say Barclays Bank start-up loan.

This is due to the concentration of European capital and its penetration into retail and agriculture.

Such a break down at the base of the big parties of capitalism provides the conditions for a new rise of the far right all over Europe.

The ridiculous war footing of the cabinet is Major's Little England version of the same. He is trying to cash in quick, hoping that a summer of



Blair's response has been predictably pathetic

chauvinism will re-unite the reactionary alliance at the core of the Tory party and tap into the deep-seated chauvinism of British culture.

Blair's response has been predictably pathetic, swinging in behind the Tories with a completely politically impoverished argument over National Unity.

annoyance of the soft-left intellectuals he is trying to court at the moment.

And a sack-load of spin does not make up for the fact that behind the rhetoric there is a massive void of policy. Just what is a Labour government going to do about health cuts? About unemployment? About beef for that matter?

It is clear to most activists in the labour movement that Blair's radicalism does not extend much further than

re-labelling the doors on the corridors of power.

Hoping to benefit from the Tory crisis over European direction by turning the Labour Party into the champion of integration only makes his unwillingness to break from the nonsense of the Tory beef war even more hypocritical.

It is not as if Blair is the first to tread this path. Throughout the eighties social democratic parties came to office in Europe with similar aspirations.

It worked for a while—when the German balance of trade deficit was able to fund some reforms. But when the Deutschmarks stopped flowing the crisis hit quickly. The parties went into decline in France, Italy, Germany and Spain.

Blair will not even get the short period of honeymoon. It will be straight into austerity, accompanied by a rightwing social agenda.

Any attempt to move to a single currency would mean £12,000 million in cuts.

A campaign in the labour movement

against Maastricht is long overdue. We need to add our voice to the debate.

Increasingly the implication of Maastricht are becoming generally apparent as European governments continue to try to force through cuts.

The attacks on welfare and the rise of the far right are all products of the same process. Those who defend Maastricht, or try to work within its framework—such as large sections of the British intelligentsia—will find their line completely discredited.

Blair's strategy will flounder almost immediately—people simply will not accept the destruction of the welfare state for the sake of monetary union.

This is why the new Alternatives to Maastricht initiative sponsored by over fifty Labour MPs is so important.

The platform rejects both Maastricht's sado-monetarist framework and the jingoism of the right.

The left has to fight for an alternative to the bosses' Europe, one based on full employment and democratic control rather than isolation and nationalism.

This can only be achieved by linking the battles inside the labour movement to the struggles of those at the sharp end of the Euro-offensive.

The left has to work toward an alternative that shows a way out of capitalist decline and crisis. The Alternatives to Maastricht conference helps make this possible.

• For more information send donations and support to: A Peoples Europe c/o Alan Simpson MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

## A campaign in the labour movement against Maastricht is long overdue. We need to add our voice to the debate

For all the cappuccino drunk in Islington, Blair has not been willing to publicly break from the Little Englandism of his Conservative colleagues—much to the

## Dockers launch network

Glenn Voris

**THE NATIONAL Dockers' Support Conference was attended by 135 delegates. They represented support groups, Trades Councils and union branches from around the country.**

**A number of workshops discussed practical support, employment law and contracts, anti-trade union laws, womens support groups and developing national and international solidarity.**

**The delegates condemned the TGWU leadership for not raising money, let alone making the dispute official. Donations are slowly drying up so it is necessary to get more labour movement support.**

**The dockers have received tremendous international support which is having a real effect. The United Secretariat of the Fourth International is organising a European tour which will boost support for the dockers.**



Dockers have received tremendous international support

**National Dockers' Support Committee is set up on a broad and democratic basis.**

**The next demonstration is on June 29.**

• Send messages of support and donations made payable to Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal to: Jimmy Davies, Secretary, Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, c/o Trans-

**Alternatives to Maastricht Conference**  
**Saturday 6 July 12.30pm-4.30pm**  
**Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1**  
 For more information contact Ken Livingstone MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Solidarity with the fight against Neo-liberal war on workers and peasants

# The West's new Crusades

**R**ather than opening up a period of peace, the new world order has seen the big powers even more willing to indulge in military adventures. Conflicts in Rwanda, the break-up of Yugoslavia, the massacres of Chechnya, the civil war in Algeria and the Gulf war all re-inforce the ideologies of racism and reaction. Although the era of imperialism's long-term direct military subordination of its dominions is past, new economic relations of control remain in place. The general withdrawal from occupation since the Second World

War has been used by some liberal commentators to portray the West in a benevolent light, gradually helping tottering democracies to their feet. Decades of support for some of the most murderous and brutal torture regimes the planet has ever known contradicts this claim. But increasingly it has been primarily through economic means that the West has sought to shape the economies and politics of the world to suit its own interests. The last decades' neo-liberal offensive spear-headed by the International Monetary Fund and

World Bank is having a devastating effect on the peoples of the so-called third world. At the alter of competitiveness whole populations are being condemned to misery, with structural re-adjustment programmes forcing massive attacks on living standards. But the attacks have not been accepted without a fight. The Zapatista National Liberation Army has been able to sustain a fight against the Mexican state backed up by US imperialism with huge success.

## Zapatistas launch worldwide fight

The Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) is the first left-wing guerrilla army to emerge since the collapse of Berlin Wall. It is something new in the struggle of the masses throughout the Latin American continent and beyond. ALAN THORNETT recently attended a two thousand-strong conference held last week in solidarity with their struggle.

Europe's first 'Meeting for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism' in Berlin was a direct response to an appeal by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) for such events world wide in preparation for their Intercontinental Meeting for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism to be held in Chiapas from July 27 to August 3.



THE INSPIRATION of the event was overwhelmingly the armed uprising by the EZLN

THE INSPIRATION of the event was overwhelmingly the armed uprising by the EZLN in January 1991, its impact on politics both in Mexico and worldwide, and more recently the Fourth Declaration of the Laconda Jungle in which Marcos called for the formation of a new political force—the

Zapatista National Liberation Front.

The central theme of the event was the globalisation of the economy and the advance and effects of neo-liberalism - by which was meant the unfettered advance of the market since the collapse of Stalinism.

The opening and closing plenaries were each attended by about 1300 people, with many more attending 40 workshops and working groups held in over 20 venues across Berlin. There was also a delegation from the ESLN.

The opening plenary was addressed by

# The Tragedy of Liberia

**A BOAT-LOAD** of refugees from Monrovia travels back and forth along the coast of West Africa, desperately seeking a port or country which will give it haven. A young girl flies to Britain from Freetown to have a bullet removed from behind her eye. The media images surrounding the brutal six-year long civil war in Liberia, and its spill-over into neighbouring Sierra Leone, portray yet another tribal conflict in faraway Africa. But the west is far from innocent. **BOB WOOD** examines of the roots of the war.

The state of Liberia has its origins in the settlement by freed slaves from the United States in the early nineteenth century.

The existence of freed slaves was a problem for both southern planters and northern liberals. Those

who set up the American Colonisation Society could see no better way of ridding themselves of this embarrassment than shipping the ex-slaves back to Africa.

The first settlers arrived on the West African coast in 1822. Their

leaders were often of mixed race, their views of Africa essentially those of nineteenth century United States whites. The indigenous people were sometimes referred to as "heathen savages" and the tribal people reciprocated by calling the Americo-Liberians "whites", a habit that persisted well into the twentieth century.

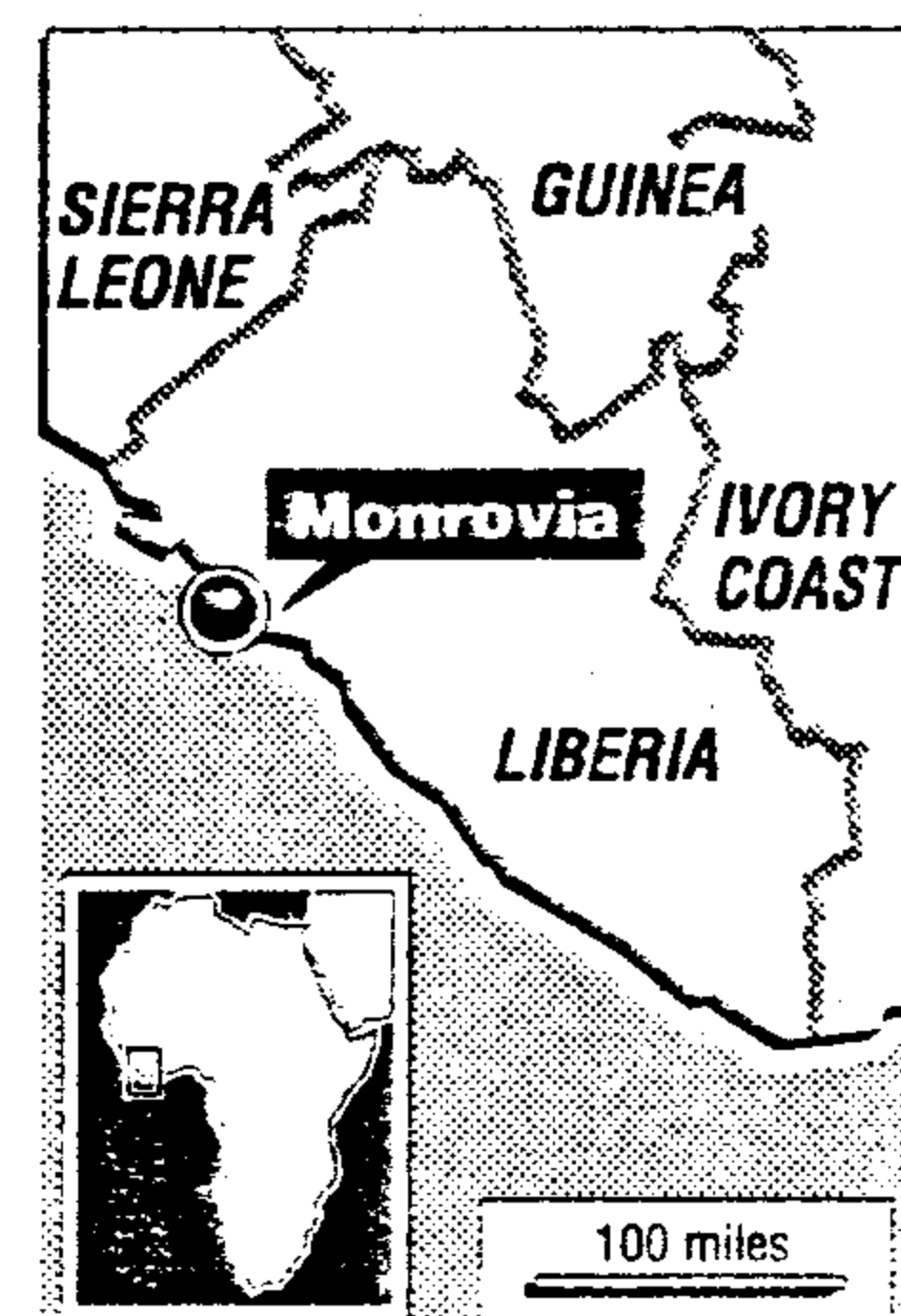
Independence was declared in 1847, the settler regime maintaining its cohesion through a single party, the True Whig Party, and its dominance through limiting the franchise through a property qualification, a practice that continued as long as the True Whig Party maintained its ascendancy. Trade and a plantation economy kept the new state viable but the worldwide depression in the 1880s led to a period of instability before the potential for rubber production was seen by Firestone, who established their first plantations in 1926. Much

of the labour required on the plantations was forced and at one stage the Liberian government was implicated in the "recruitment" of forced labour for the Spanish island of Fernando Po, a tremendous irony given their origins as freed slaves.

From the mid-forties, Liberia was ruled by one man for nearly thirty years, President William Tubman. Following the defeat in the early fifties of the "patriotic" wing of the ruling class, who wanted to develop an indigenous capitalism, Tubman proceeded to open up Liberia to inter-

national capital through what became known as the Open Door Policy. Huge deposits of iron ore were discovered in the north of the country, near to the border with Guinea,

to supplement the income from rubber, and the Liberian rain forest was plundered by a new timber industry. In the sixties and seventies, the economy grew steadily at an average of 7 per cent per annum, but it was growth without development. The mining and agricultural businesses operated as enclaves within Liberia without any noticeable links to the local



### AGAINST THE CURRENT

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, ATC is a U.S. socialist bi-monthly of news analysis, reviews, and dialogue. The May/June issue features: Sol Dollinger, Nelson Lichtenstein & Charlie Post on the Flint Sitdown and Its Historians • Rene Arakawa on Ruth Hubbard's Feminist Critique of Science • Cecilia Green on Imperialism in the Caribbean Today • Tim Dayton on the Utopian Marxist Legacy of Ernst Bloch.

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Jose Perez, a French rail worker from Rouen who was an organiser in the recent strike movement against public sector cuts and the results of the Maastricht Treaty.

Olga Juck from the women's and lesbian movements in Russia also spoke alongside Dragmir Oluje of the Serb independent metal workers union who have recently gone on strike demanding the payment of unpaid wages and Marta Duran, a journalist from Mexico.

Ramon Rodriguez Pulido representing an Andalusian farmers union and Marcela Sosa-Krahl also spoke on the women's movement.

The audience at the event came from across Western Europe—particularly Germany, Spain and France—and a few from the East.

The most numerous political currents at the event were anarchists and independent movementist groups of various kinds—communes, ecology groups and anti-racist initiatives. Fourth Internationalists from a number of countries also participated.

The event was weakened by the sparse attendance of the organised workers movement—trade unions and left parties. The French strikers were an exception. Accounts of the strike were the subject of workshop discussions on self organisation throughout the weekend.

Morale was high with a good level of participation in all aspects of the event—despite the problems of multiple venues across a big city.

The audience was overwhelmingly young—seventy to eighty per cent—and at least half were women.

Women were well represented in most of the forums and in the final plenary well over 100 lesbian women mounted the platform to cheer, clap and sing as the reporter from the lesbian working group gave the report, which included a call for a European women's conference.

There were workshops on a range of issues grouped around the following themes: neo-liberalism in all its aspects; the new and old world orders; the mass strikes in France; for another Europe; internationalism; women and feminism; women, violence and liberation; Eastern Europe; the consequences of neo-liberalism in Eastern Europe; socialism, has it failed; old and new left; migration and racism in Fortress Europe; work, labour movement and trade unions; self organisation; imperialism and militarism; German coffee barons in Chiapas; education learning and science; repression, the violation of the rights of political prisoners; health care and health for all.

There was an over-subscribed showing

of Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* and a discussion long into the night around the Spanish revolution.

Despite this diversity of discussion the event related most strongly to the EZLN and its strengths—its revolutionary war against the Mexican Federal Army; its demands for democracy justice and liberty for all Mexicans; its opposition to discrimination against indigenous peoples; its fight against poverty and exploitation; its anti-capitalism and its opposition to imperialism and neo-liberalism, and its internationalism which has created the wave of international solidarity of which the event was a part.

The event reflected the weaknesses of the EZLN as well—particularly their ambiguity over the state.

Marcos insists in the Fourth Declaration that the Zapatistas do not struggle for political power in the sense of the overturning or winning control of the state.

### The event recognised of the role of the working class in revolutionary change with a wary attitude to their traditional organisations and forms of organisation

Yet the Declaration is a call to oust the present powers and substitute them with the power of the people. It calls for the ending of the current system and the extension of democracy. This cannot be achieved without dealing with the problem of state power.

In fact it is this state power which currently surrounds the EZLN in its jungle strong holds with tens of thousands of troops and which is pledged to its destruction.

This ambiguity over the state was strongly reflected throughout the event in the forums discussing how to confront neo-liberalism. The introducers repeatedly stressed that the fight against neo-liberalism was not a struggle for state power and that neo-liberalism can be confronted through raising an understanding of what it represents and the effects it is having on the world.

It is an idea that the anarchist currents can easily identify with, and in part accounts for their enthusiasm for the project.

This was reflected in the debates, and in

the forum, on internationalism. The Zapatistas are not Marxists and there was little debate an international with a revolutionary programme and strategy to establish working class power and a socialist society.

They call for what they term an International of Hope. This would reflect their themes of justice and liberty and the struggle against neo-liberalism but it would not be an organisation and would not have a programme.

It would be an international network or networks. Its purpose would be the spreading of the ideas of such an international and developing a critique of, and alternatives to, the relentless march of neo-liberalism.

There was recognition of the role of the working class in revolutionary change at the event but a wary attitude—in some cases a sectarian attitude—to their traditional organisations and to their traditional forms of organisation. The opposition to

organisation is a contradiction in terms since the EZLN is itself a highly organised force militarily confronting the Govern-

ment in Mexico.

These weaknesses may limit the impact that the movement in support of the Zapatistas can have at the present time but it does not negate its importance as a political phenomenon in the mid-1990s.

The left is having to come to terms with new conditions after the collapse of Stalinism and the struggle in Mexico is an important part of that discussion.

It also links into a mood of repositioning which is present in the European left at the present time, although the practical results of that thinking—organisations such as the United Left in Spain and the Scottish Socialist Alliance—were not present.

It will not, however, be the last such initiative in Europe. Already there is discussion about a bigger and better conference in Madrid or Paris.

The proposal should be welcomed and efforts should be made to link it more closely to the workers movement and its organisations.

## Six days against the neo-liberal nightmare Lyon 96—Unemployment, Debt, War: Enough is enough!

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economy, and 60 per cent of the national income continued to be appropriated by only 3 per cent of the population. Meanwhile, 70 per cent continued in their traditional way of life, subsistence farming.

Nevertheless, the nascent working class in the new industries began to organise itself, in spite of the immense obstacles placed in its path by the Tubman regime. In 1963, 20,000 Firestone workers went on strike and were savagely suppressed by the government.

Of the two trade union federations, one was led by the President's son (who doubled as a personnel advisor to various foreign companies) and the other by the President's former social secretary. Strikes were illegal unless the dispute had first been heard by a labour court, but - catch 22 - no labour court was ever established. Hardly surprising then that three-quarters of all strikes in 1976 were in non-unionised companies.

In tandem with the open door policy, Tubman developed very close links with the US, concluding a mutual defence pact and allowing a very powerful Voice of America transmitter to be installed, capable of reaching the whole of the African continent.

When Tubman died in 1971, he was succeeded by his Vice-President, William Tolbert. Unfortunately for Tolbert, Tubman's death released all the pent-up frustrations

of the urban poor and the rural peasantry. A rising tide of radicalism threatened to engulf the Tolbert regime. Students returning from America and Europe, perhaps inspired by the Cuban revolution and the campaigns against the war in Vietnam, began to organise, forming political groups like the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA).

After nine years of agitation and instability, the Tolbert regime succumbed. The army, traditionally of-



S.K. Doe

ficered by elite Americo-Liberians, but with a soldiery recruited from various tribes, particularly the Krahn, stepped into the breach.

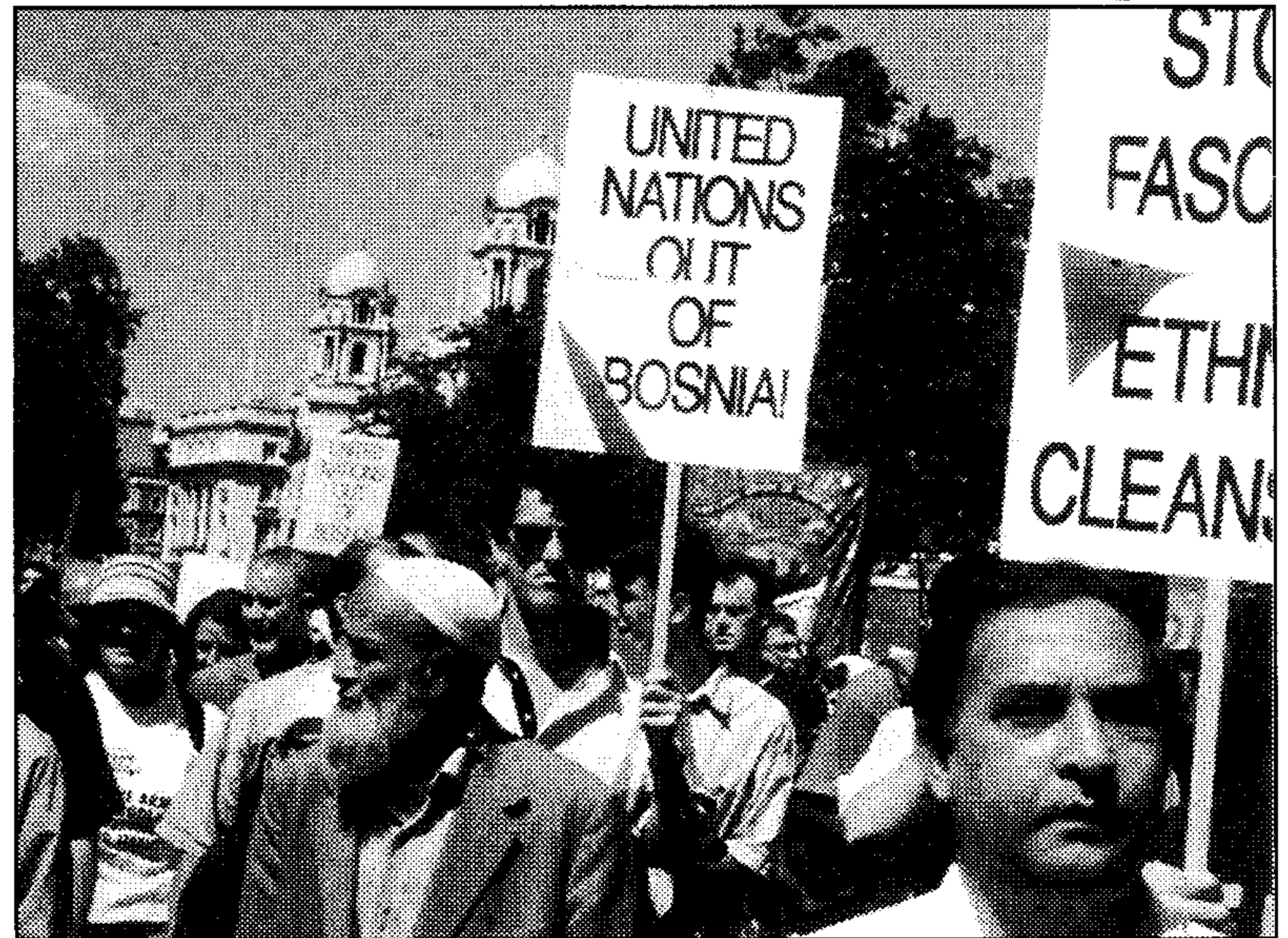
Quite possibly with the assistance of the CIA, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe staged a coup in 1980, with overwhelming popular support. The radicals and left, who were becoming better organised as time went by, were successfully headed off. At first Doe's government included representatives of the left, including Togba-Nah Tipoteh, the leader of MOJA, as Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs. But within a couple of years President Doe had rid himself of those troublesome, principled people as his regime became increasingly corrupt and dependent on United States aid. Within a few years, a pre-coup level of aid of \$9 million had increased to \$75, supplemented by an increase in military aid from \$1 million to \$16 million.

No longer encumbered by his former allies on the left and amply funded by the United States, Doe maintained his rule by corruption and brutality. Demonstrations at the University of Liberia were bloodily suppressed and the presidential election in 1985 was shamelessly fixed.

In 1989, funded by expatriate Americo-Liberians in the United States, a former civil servant, Charles Taylor launched an armed rebellion and Doe was killed in the following year. The collapse of the Liberian state has begun.

In 1990 a multinational peacekeeping force under the lead-

## West behind Bosnia break-up



### Roland Rance

AFTER three years of war and six months of 'peace', the future of a unitary, democratic and multi-ethnic Bosnia seems as remote as ever.

The establishment and security of such a state is not Nato's goal in the region; its main reason for intervention was to prevent the war spreading and engulfing the whole of south-east Europe.

The motivation is not to ensure justice and freedom, but to protect markets, contain dissent and oversee privatisation of the economy.

The Nato army of occupation is implementing the policy of the US and Western Europe, which can be described as 'peace through partition' - the functional division of Bosnia between a Greater Serbia and a Greater Croatia.

Nato's allies in this process are Croatian president Franjo Tudjman and Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

The victims are not only the people of Bosnia, but the hundreds of thousands of refugees from all parts of former Yugoslavia, still unable to return to their homes; the democratic forces in the region, facing growing repression and censorship; and the working class, divided by new borders while struggling in a shattered economy. Despite this, there is growing class assertiveness, with a wave of strikes in Bosnia,

many of them against the refusal of the government to pay wages.

War crimes trials have started in The Hague.

But those on trial are the small fry, who were 'only obeying orders'. Nato forces have repeatedly ignored the opportunity to arrest the indicted Bosnian Serb leaders, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. This would embarrass the west, since their trials would be bound to incriminate the leading war criminal, Milosevic himself. To prevent this possibility, the US has refused to hand over intercepts of communications between Serbia and the Bosnian serbs prior to the capture of Srebrenica, widely believed to have been planned by Milosevic.

These trials are merely a fig-leaf for western intentions in former Yugoslavia. Having encouraged the ethnic cleansing and genocide, having permitted the fall of Srebrenica and the subsequent massacres, the imperialists now attempt to portray themselves as neutral arbiters, motivated by humanitarian concerns. To have any meaning, however, such trials must be conducted in the region, by the victims of the atrocities themselves.

It would be mistaken to demand that Nato troops arrest war criminals for trial in the west. Socialists can make only one demand of NATO - to get out of the Balkans at once!

ership of Nigeria and known as ECOMOG, was despatched to the Liberian capital, Monrovia. Its propensity for looting provided little respite for the beleaguered inhabitants, who quickly dubbed it "Every car or moving object gone".

In the years since, factional warfare has continued, loosely based on tribal allegiances. The role of the

peacekeeping force has not been benign and there can be little hope of any rapid end to Liberia's troubles. Years of imperialist exploitation and interference, refracted through a settler regime, have taken their toll. In 1979 MOJA predicted that they would be faced with "repression, brutality and demagoguery". They were right.

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# Israeli elections: swings to the right

Roland Rance

TWENTY years ago, Israeli journalist Uri Avneri used to speculate that Israeli policy makers had a secret map of their country, which showed it as an island in the mid-Atlantic.

Otherwise, he argued, there could be no explanation for their assumption that the only foreign powers that mattered were the USA and western Europe, and their refusal to accept that Israel was geographically and politically part of the Middle East.

The recent Israeli election indicates that, for half of the population, this map is still valid. Indeed, for a fifth of the electorate, the country is apparently not even located in the twentieth century, but some three hundred years ago, in the ghettos of east Europe and the mellahs of north Africa.

The replacement of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, architect of the 'peace process', by hardline Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu is a setback for this process.

The likely coalition, in which Likud will be outnumbered by the Jewish fundamentalist parties and reliant on the votes of the even-further right Tsomet, the populist Gesher, and Natan Sharansky's Russian immigrant party - all with their sectional demands - will restrict any freedom of action Netanyahu may have had. It looks like being the most right wing government in Israel's history.

The new electoral system, which includes a vote for Prime Minister as well as for parties in the Knesset, forced Peres to appeal to the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who voted in unprecedented numbers, and overwhelmingly for Peres. Among Jewish voters, Netanyahu led Peres by ten per cent.

In the eyes of many Israeli racists, this would in any case have invalidated a narrow win for Peres. Although non-Jewish



The 'peace process', as *Socialist Outlook* has consistently maintained, is a device for maintaining the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem and for containing Palestinian dissent

citizens have the vote, politicians - including in the Labour party - have always sought a majority among the Jews.

In a desperate bid to hold on to the Jewish vote, Peres simultaneously launched the murderous 'Operation Grapes of Wrath' against Lebanon.

This seems to have done little to stop the haemorrhage of Jewish voters, while possibly alienating enough Palestinians to ensure Netanyahu's narrow victory. Not for the first time, the internalised racism of Israeli liberals has brought about their defeat.

The election of Netanyahu is a humiliation for PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who had all-but-publicly endorsed Peres. Last month's renunciation of the Palestinian National Charter was supposed to pave the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories.

## The election of Netanyahu is a humiliation for PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who had all-but-publicly endorsed Peres

But would the election of Peres have made any difference? The 'peace process', as *Socialist Outlook* has consistently maintained, is a device for maintaining the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem and for containing Palestinian

dissent, while recruiting the PLO to police the occupied territories and control the population.

Netanyahu has the same interest, though expressing greater scepticism than Peres over the ability and willingness of the PLO to act as Israel's agent. If he sticks

by his opposition to any further 'concessions' to the Palestinians, we can expect to see a renewal of Palestinian resistance to Israeli rule. Led by a new generation of young activists schooled in Israeli prison camps and torture chambers, and without the restraining influence of a discredited PLO,

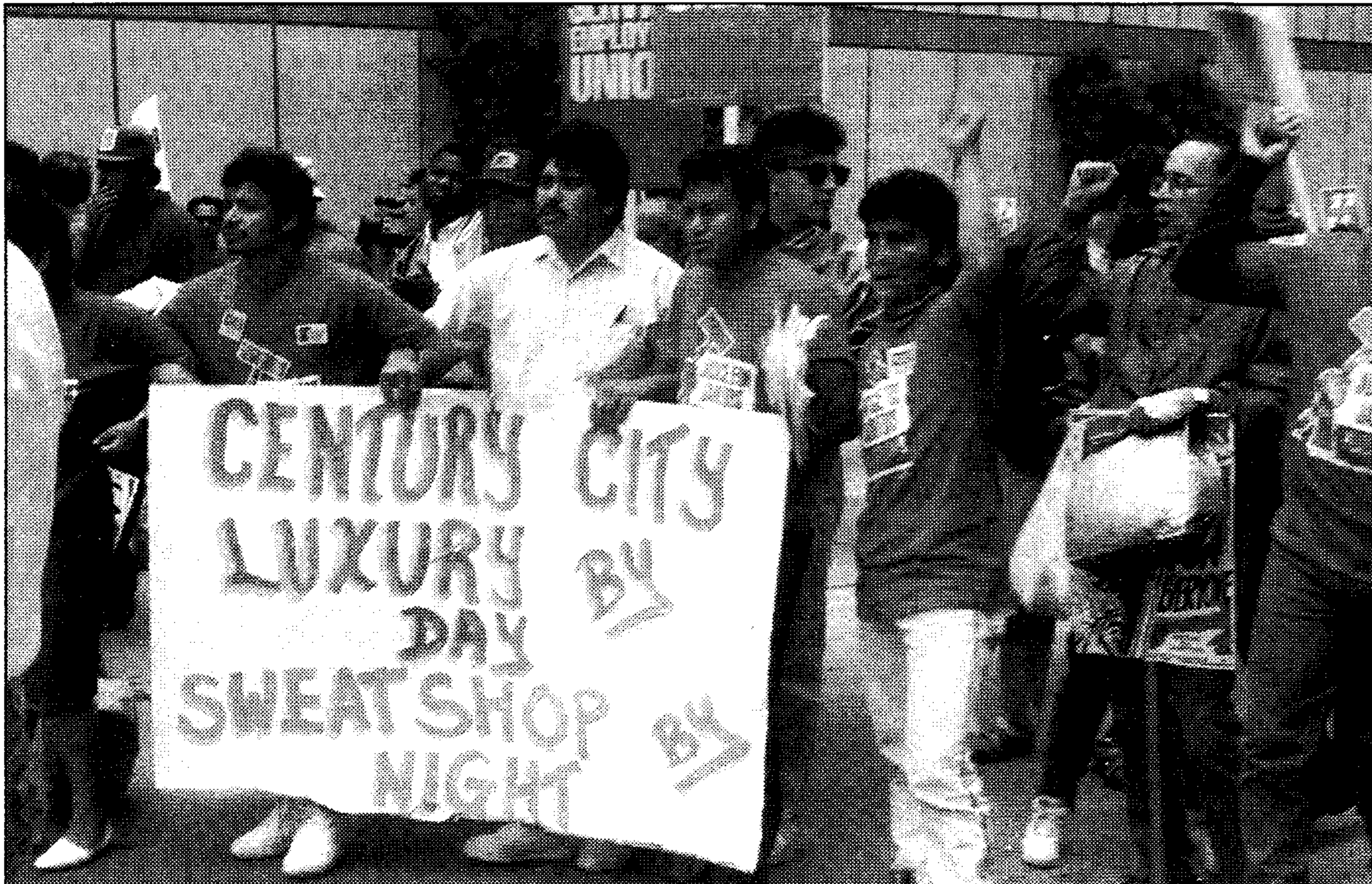
this is likely to be more militant than the earlier Intifada.

Although such a rising would not be motivated by Islam, the fundamentalist parties remain the only force capable of mobilising and generalising the protest.

Meanwhile, in Israel, the growing influence of the Jewish fundamentalists is likely to be seen in further restrictions on women's rights, subjection of education to religious control, bans on the sale of non-Kosher food, Sabbath observance laws, and other attacks on democratic rights.

The polarised Israeli electorate has dealt a double victory to the forces of religious irrationalism in both Israeli and Palestinian communities.

## US Labor Party to launch



Service employees union backs formation of Labor party; but real break with Democrats lies ahead

Jonathan Joseph

JULY NINTH could be a historic day in US history. At long last a US Labor Party is set to come into being.

The founding convention has been organised by Labor Party Advocates. This organisation was set up in 1991 by Tony Mazzochi, then secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union.

Indeed trade union support has been the strong point of Labor Party Advocates.

This includes the International Longshoremen's Union, the union that has solidly backed the Liverpool dockers.

The Labor Party call also has the backing of the Miscellaneous Way Workers, the United Electrical Workers and the CIO's The Technicians Union, the Serv-

ice Employees International Union and the American Federation of Government Employees.

Striking workers at Staley, Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone have supported the initiative.

Since the call for the founding convention more and more workers have become convinced of the need for a new party. The Democratic Party is dominated by the interests of big business. Workers need their own independent voice.

Therefore as well as national support, the call has also gained the support of many local union branches. Indeed more than 100 endorsements have been received.

Over 1,000 delegates representing over a million workers from 40 states will meet at

the Cleveland convention.

The organisers are conscious that other groups - such as women's organisations need to be involved. However, many black workers will be attending.

Many Labor Party advocates cite as their inspiration Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party leader who ran for US President from jail in 1920.

However, the Labor Party will initially be non-electoral. Instead it will concentrate on building up its union base and securing its foundations.

A platform is being produced on education, health and welfare and the working week although sadly the question of abortion rights is being avoided.

Socialist Outlook will cover a full report on the founding convention.

## Police storm NSSP Centre

ARMED police have raided the headquarters of the NSSP in Sri Lanka. The Nava Sama Samaja Party's leadership were meeting when about thirty police armed with automatic rifles, grenades and sub-machine guns broke in under the pretext of suspecting illegal activities.

The NSSP, the section of the Fourth International in Sri Lanka, is the principal organisation supporting the electricity workers' strike which began on May 29. The raid is clearly linked.

The 14,000 strong workforce are demanding that the government gives up its plan to privatise the electricity board.

The state has moved against the NSSP earlier this month—with a violent police attack on the NSSP-led May Day demonstration.

The electricity chairperson Chandrika Kumaratunga vowed at a press briefing that she will resort to any means "short of killing" to get the workers back after the four day black out.

She declared the strike illegal and ordered the mass arrest of strikers.

Within hours of the threat gunmen opened fired at the telecommunication leader JPB Dissanayaka. Although he escaped unhurt it was a clear act of intimidation. Several members of the NSSP have also received death threats.

There have been some attempts by pro-government Sinhala forces (Sri Lanka's ethnic majority) to mobilise the population against the strike on the basis that it is hindering the war against the Tamils.

Significantly, the Deputy Minister of Defence Major General Anuruddha Ratwatte as well as being the uncle of the President is the minister for power and energy.

The NSSP is calling for a campaign against state terrorism, war and privatisation. A picket will be held on May 5 in Colombo.

• Write or fax letters of protest to: The president of Sri Lanka HE Chandrika Kumaratunga, Colombo 01, Sri Lanka. Fax 0094 1 334822. Send a copy to the NSSP fax 0094 1 334822.

## What's Happening

### JUNE

Friday 21 to Sunday 23 Counter-Summit to the G7 meeting, Lyon, France. Details: Cedetim, 21 ter, rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris. Tel (00 33 1) 4371 0911.

### JULY

Thursday 4 Rally and march on Parliament in support of Liverpool dockers.

Saturday 6 Lesbian and Gay Pride demo, Embankment tube to Hyde Park, Carnival Clapham Common.

Friday 19 to Saturday 27 International Youth Summer Camp, Portugal.

Saturday 20 TUC anti-racist music event, Finsbury Park, London.

### AUGUST

10-20 Socialist Outlook Summer School, Aberystwyth.

## This issue's Feedback

There has been quite a response to last week's interview with Geoff Martin. As a forum for discussion and debate *Socialist Outlook* is always keen to talk to others on the left, even if we do not agree with all their positions.

We do not think, for example, that Geoff's decision to break from the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union is the right one, nor did we support Rodney Bickerstaffe in the election for General Secretary.

Although Bickerstaffe is certainly one of the better union leaders, we believe that part of the role of the left in the union is to promote action in defence of jobs and conditions. Bickerstaffe does not share this approach.

Similarly the issue of Labour Party membership is not the decisive criteria in deciding on a General Secretary.

*Socialist Outlook* supports the CFDU. It is the best way of drawing together activists in the broadest possible left organisation in the union.

### CFDU is credible

I READ the interview with Geoff Martin with some interest. Whenever I meet UNISON lefts of one sort or another, they usually pay credit to the vote gained for me as the CFDU candidate in the UNISON General Secretary election, yet Geoff Martin apparently remains unconvinced.

This is despite the fact that the CFDU has emerged as a credible force on the left in the union, intervening successfully at the Health Service Group Conference, bringing lefts together on the Asylum and Immigration Bill, preparing interventions at the Annual Delegate Conference and looking towards building the defence of Self Organisation.

It is simply not true to brand the CFDU as ex-Nalگو. Throughout the General Secretary election I was overwhelmed by active the support that I received from Shop Stewards from all former partner unions. If my membership of Militant was such an issue for Geoff, why did he not seek to nominate a Labour Party member to take on the right wing in the union?

It is easy to be wise after the event, as Geoff is now about the intervention of Peter Hunter, but at no point prior to Hunter declaring his candidacy did Geoff refer to this "danger". The real issue is Geoff's support for Rodney Bickerstaffe, not his opposition to the CFDU campaign. Rodney opposed UNISON's policy on the Minimum Wage being taken to the TUC, he supports the witch hunt of left activists in the Liverpool branch and opposes defiance of the Tory anti-union laws. If the CFDU had not raised its banner against him in the election, it would have been saying by default that these things are not important, thus standing aside from the predominant mood of left activists.

Roger Bannister

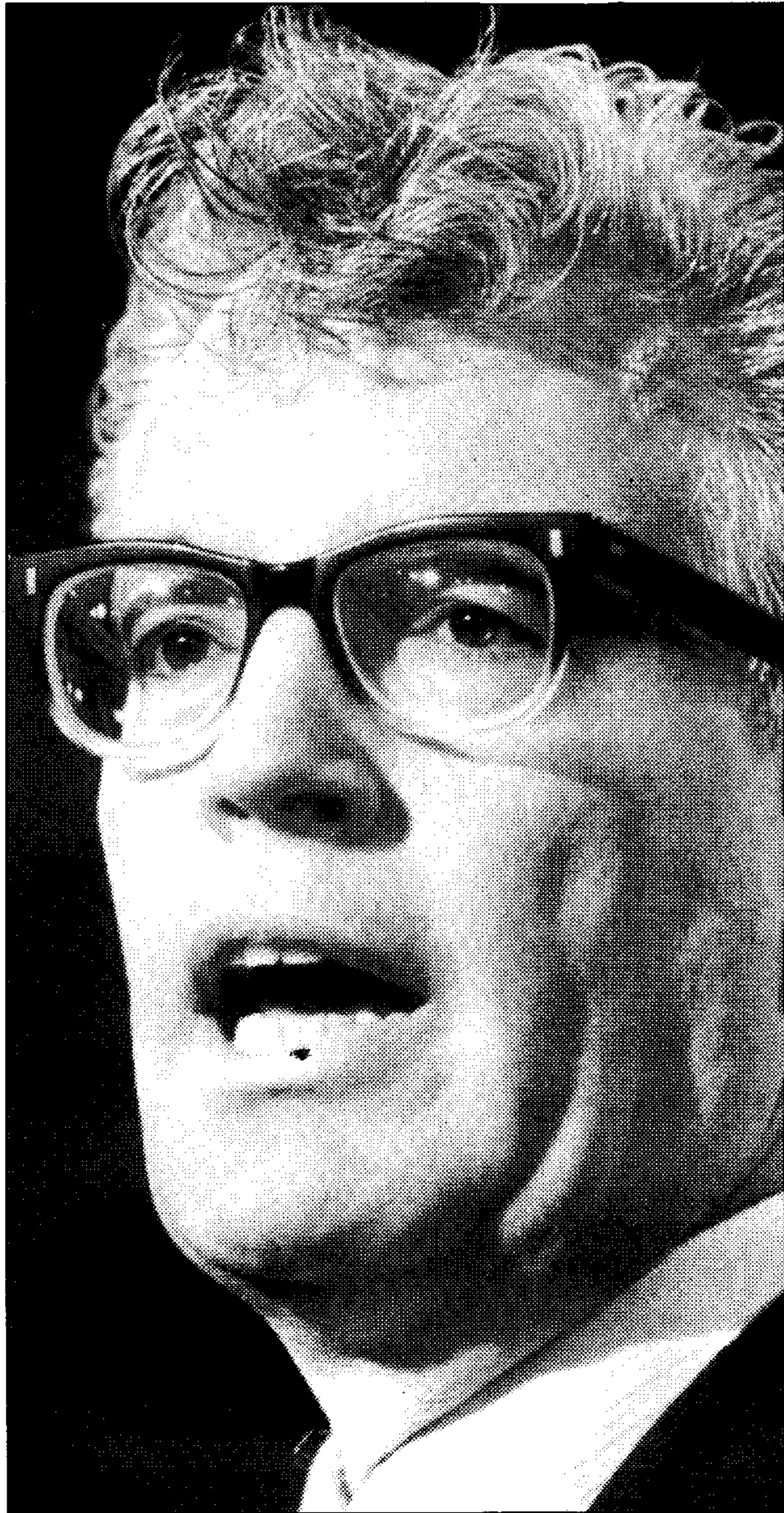
### No ghetto

GEOFF Martin is wrong to refer to the CFDU as being in an "EX-NALGO ghetto". As a former member of NUPE I have been impressed by the mix of CFDU supporters in terms of former partner unions both locally and at national level, in particular at the national conferences so far called by the CFDU.

It is a welcome change for me to be able to link up with so many other lefts, to build the campaign for policies in defence of jobs, pay and conditions, against a national bureaucracy which presided over a union which took no effective action against job losses and pay cuts.

Geoff's comments about the Labour Party also seem quaintly out of date, given that on Merseyside groups have now been standing against Labour candidates for number of years, occasionally winning elections.

Does Geoff expect me, as a local government worker, to vote for Labour candidates who attack our jobs and conditions when I could



CFDU campaign motivated by "Bickerstaffe's failure to give any sort of lead"

vote for a socialist candidate pledged to oppose those policies.

Meantime the CFDU has a job to do in building its base and making the strongest possible challenge to UNISON's right wing. The general secretary campaign was a welcome part of that process.

T Nelson, Netherton

### CFDU replies

I read the Geoff Martin interview with interest and surprise.

His comments on the General Secretary election are, as they have always been, a cover for supporting the left bureaucracy. Nowhere has he attempted to explain the reasons for the vote for the right wing candidate Peter Hunter, which was due to Bickerstaffe's failure to give any sort of lead, enabling Hunter to try and whip up prejudice.

Incidentally, Hunter is now believed to be a member of the Labour Party!

CFDU supporters are used to the fact that Geoff Martin doesn't support CFDU policies such as the

election of union officials, opposition to barring UNISON members from standing for elections in the APF and the fight against the witchhunt against UNISON members in Liverpool, who face expulsion for fighting racism and taking industrial action.

But what surprises me is that *Socialist Outlook* is completely uncritical failing to question Geoff Martin and his role. After all, *Socialist Outlook* supported standing a candidate in the General Secretary election, for which they were accused of being "Militant's poodles" (by Geoff Martin in Labour Left Briefing).

It is also interesting that no criticism is made of Martin when he says the CFDU shouldn't have supported a candidate who was a member of an organisation who supported standing a candidate against the Labour Party. A recent article in *Socialist Outlook* on the Scottish Socialist Alliance congratulated those involved and the fact that it was going to stand 25 candidates in the general election. Is *Socialist Outlook* confused or what?

Given that *Socialist Outlook* members are currently active within the CFDU, indeed, the National Treasurer is an *Socialist Outlook* member, what are *Socialist Outlook* now saying about the CFDU? Do they support the setting up of a rival left organisation that Geoff Martin is trying to organise in secret at the moment? Is there a contradiction as to what the *Socialist Outlook* members in the CFDU are saying and doing, and what the organisation is saying or not saying in its paper?

Glenn Kelly National Secretary CFDU

### Hull hath no fury...

HULL Militant Labour member Ray Duffill writes (101) that the Hull City Council Labour Group voted against co-operating with the workfare scheme Project Work for fear of "election defeat" in a by-election in which Militant stood a candidate.

Readers outside North Humberside might have the idea that the election result was a close-run thing between Militant and Labour. The reality is that the Militant candidate came fifth with 66 votes and the Liberals came second. The electoral threat to Labour came from the Liberals not Militant.

Why then did the local Labour council come out against Workfare? The answer is not very dramatic but is important. Last summer, following a Hull Trades Council public meeting on the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), local CPSA members in the Labour Party fought and won opposition to JSA in the Hull Labour Party. This paved the way for the same activists to win opposition to Project Work along with the initiatives of the Trades Council in winning support for a boycott amongst local charities.

The significance of this episode is that activists still need to fight within local Labour Parties and affiliated unions for support on such issues as Project Work. Militant comrades face a contradiction. They have supported the Deputy Leader of the City Council speaking at Hull Trades Council's recent demonstration against Project Work. However, they now appear to believe that the Labour Party is a straightforward bourgeois party.

If that's true, they should have thought tooth and nail against a bourgeois party. If that's true, they should have fought tooth and nail against a bourgeois party speaking on the platform of a left-wing trade union organisation. The reality is that the class nature of the Labour Party has not changed and that all local campaigns should aim to win over local Labour Party organisations.

Keith Sinclair, Hull Socialist Outlook

### New website

*Socialist Outlook* is now online at [HTTP://www.gn.apc.org/labourmet/so](http://www.gn.apc.org/labourmet/so)

## The politics of 'Socialist Outlook'

# WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

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

*Socialist Outlook* exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism. Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing the working class. We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

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

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

*Socialist Outlook* is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries. Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism. But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences. If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in cities across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

### Contact us now!

- I want to know more about *Socialist Outlook*.
- I would like to sell *Socialist Outlook*.
- Please send me your introductory pamphlet: 'Socialism after Stalinism'. I enclose a PO or cheque for £1.00 payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund'.
- Please send me details of the *Socialist Outlook* Fourth International Supporters Association.

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## FEEDBACK

*Socialist Outlook* welcomes readers' letters. Post them to 'Feedback', PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words will be edited.



# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Make the Tories pay

# Stop cuts in Education

THE GOVERNMENT is frustrated that parents are not opting for grant maintained status. So now they are passing more legislation to make opt outs compulsory in certain circumstances.

The Tory election manifesto is likely to contain proposals for all schools to become self governing, an increase in selection and for compulsory education to end at 14.

Meanwhile the Tories continue to create a smokescreen, blaming teachers and Labour local authorities for failing standards in order to cover for their own inadequate researching.

The project of the Tory right is to return to the dark ages of education in which those who can afford to pay will receive the best on offer.

Clarke claimed to be giving council's an "extra" £774 million for education. But many councils were already over their



Through the Welfare State Network and campaigns like FACE, these attacks can be stopped

allocation to avoid cuts in schools budgets.

The nett result is small.

A survey by the *Times Education Supplement* found that more than a quarter

of all education authorities are planning to cut spending, and a third standing still.

A third of authorities expect to cut teaching jobs, and almost half expected to

axe other education jobs.

There are now 10,000 fewer teachers than in 1993, but 14,000 more pupils.

Over a million children are being taught in classes of more than thirty.

Instead of challenging the Tories Labour Party policy on education has collapsed. It is hard to tell the two parties apart.

Shadow spokesperson David Blunkett says that a Labour government will crack down on failing schools and sack teachers who do not come up to scratch.

Two weeks ago he announced that student grants would be abolished and replaced with a system of loans. University vice chancellors are now toying with the idea of a £300 flat-rate registration fee.

Education is yet another area in which Labour seems hell-bent on out-doing the Tories and shredding the safety net of the welfare state.

Through the Welfare State Network and campaigns like FACE, these attacks can be resisted.

• Contact Fight Cuts in Education, c/o St Giles Middle School, Hayes Lane, Exall, Coventry CV7 9NS

## Hands off Langham School

AN ACT OF political thuggery is about to be carried out against the people of Tottenham in North London. On May 9 the government announced that it is "minded" to transfer control of Langham Secondary School to an education association on the grounds that it is a failing school.

A final decision is likely in June. If the government goes ahead with the decision it will become the second school in the country, after Hackney Downs, to be taken over by an education association.

The implications locally are immense. Control of the school and all its assets will pass from the governing body to a hit squad of businessmen and academics chosen by the government. At the same time £800,000 will be removed from Haringey Council's education budget. Cuts will almost inevitably follow.

The story began in 1994 when the school was declared to be "failing" following an inspection by the Office of Standards in Education - OFSTED.

This required the school to draw up and implement an action plan to improve the school.

Since then everything the government might have hoped for has occurred. The existing headteacher was sacked, new management brought in and action taken to "improve" curriculum delivery in a way likely to appeal to inspectors.

The government's decision to take over the school has nothing to do with improving educational standards. Follow-up inspections of the school have noted improvements and the implementation of the action plan still has a year to run.

Nationally one-hundred-and-forty schools have been designated as failing, yet none have been taken over by an education association.

Nor can the government claim a local popular mandate. Last month, parents from a neighbouring school voted overwhelmingly against going grant-maintained. If the education association take over local people will have no say.

The announcement was an attempt to try to divert attention from the Westminster scandal. There was no regard for the interests of the pupils.

The press knew of the decision before the school and the council were told. Students leaving the school on May 9 were greeted by the press telling them their school would soon close—a great boost for those going away to revise for their exams!

A local campaign has been launched by the school to stop the hit squad taking over. The local MP Bernie Grant has given his support. A petition has been drawn up and a letter-writing campaign to Gillian Shepherd begun. Large public meetings supporting the campaign have been held.

• Demonstrate against the closure of Langham School.

• Saturday June 8, Assemble 11am, Bury Road, Wood Green, N22.