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socialist **OUTLOOK**



**Serbian
hands off
Croatia!**

PHOTO: David Stewart-Smith/INSIGHT

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Yugoslavia

Milosevic prepares massacre

The civil war which has simmered in Yugoslavia all summer is coming to a climax. It is the finale of the plans by Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic to create a 'Greater Serbia' by subjugating the other republics by force. As we go to press it seems inevitable that a devastating military onslaught by the federal army against Croatia will occur.

Yugoslavia has been in a spiral of crisis for the past three years. The leadership of Serbia, the largest republic, has under Milosevic tried to maintain its

power by playing the Serbian nationalist card.

The Albanian people in the Serbian province of Kosovo have been mercilessly repressed. Since the middle of the summer Milosevic, and the Serbian generals who command the federal army, have used the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence to launch their murderous war of repression.

The governments of Croatia and Slovenia are anti-communist reactionaries. But the peoples of these republics have responded to repression with the demand of independence. Independence is their right. No

socialist can support the maintenance of a united Yugoslavia by massacre

The outcome of the conflict is hardly in doubt. The Yugoslav army is overwhelmingly more powerful than the lightly-armed Croatian militia; and the army and the Serb nationalist 'chetniks' have shown themselves prepared to use the most ruthless methods, bombarding Croat towns and villages, and driving out their populations.

It is hardly surprising, given their desperate situation, that Croatian leaders have called for armed intervention by the European Community. But the



Serbian tanks: military devastation is just round the corner for Croatia.

EC is concerned about stability – especially a stable framework for restoring capitalism – and not the rights of peoples. Imperialist troops in Yugoslavia are no solution. What the Croats desperately need is the arms to defend themselves; the EC, despite its crocodile tears, will do nothing to provide this kind of material aid.

Milosevic and his ex-communist government are concerned with keeping and extending their power. Doubtless some Yugoslav generals are genuinely committed to a

united Yugoslavia. But the massacre under way shows what happens when the Stalinists and ex-Stalinists resort to force to maintain their power – and what would have happened in the Soviet Union if the coup leaders had kept their nerve.

Socialists abhor reactionary nationalism. But in Croatia a whole people are under attack from reactionary forces. Despite the right wing character of the Croatian government, socialists must stand with the Croats and their right of self-determination.

New Socialist Outlook prize draw

Better than Bingo!

Socialist Outlook may be far better than any other paper on the left – no false modesty, it is undoubtedly superior – but we share a common problem with every other left-wing newspaper – we need money.

We can't maintain the high standards that our readers have come to expect just through the sales of the paper. We have no rich backers to provide the necessary financial resources; we can only rely on the generosity of our supporters.

Other papers would have just set up a 'Fighting Fund' but we thought you, our readers, deserved something a lit-

tle better. We want to give you the chance not only to contribute to our paper but also to get something back.

For only £5 a month (the cost of a pint of beer or 10 fags a week) you will be able to take part in our fortnightly draw. Every fortnight we will be giving away £50 to a lucky reader. We will also have a different second prize every fortnight – a free subscription to Socialist Outlook; a book; a T-shirt; a bottle of booze. Who knows what exciting prizes you may win!

To further show our appreciation for your support (and to capitulate to the rampant bourgeois

commercialism of the season?) we will be making even greater offers at Xmas. The first prize will be doubled to £100 and there will be lots of other prizes on offer.

The first draw will take place shortly before the publication of Socialist Outlook #10 so make sure you fill in the form below and get it back to us as soon as possible.

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Swedish Tories win power after 63 years

by Dick Forslund,
(Swedish Socialist Party)

SWEDEN'S social democratic government has fallen in the heaviest defeat suffered by the workers movement since 1928.

The heaviest defeat was suffered by the social democrats, whose vote fell by more than 5% since the 1988 elections. The market-orientated right will now form the government for the first time in more than 60 years.

It was also a defeat for the Left Party (LP). The former Left Party of Communists lost 72,000 votes, but the principal defeat was political – their abject failure to attract those workers disillusioned by social democratic austerity.

'Reasonable'

Instead, MPs have been pressing the party to be more 'reasonable' and 'responsible', arguing that this must be the conclusion of the fall of 'actually existing socialism'.

In the few days immediately before the election on September 15, this developed into a full-blown witch hunt, aimed at 'driving the communists out of parliament'.

Despite their public opposition to the coup, LP leaders were unable to challenge the identification of socialism with stalinism. Confronted with a right wing campaign against 'stone dead socialism', LP leaders tried to avoid the debate.

No answer

Thus in 45 minutes of questioning on television, the party

chair was unable to provide a clear answer to the question 'Do you support the ideal of communism or not?'

The clear winners were the Conservative Party, Christian Democracy and New Democracy – Conservative leader Carl Bildt will now form the next government. The election also saw a rise in the racist vote, where an election campaign on the slogan 'Stop immigration' won 7% of the vote in some areas.

This was also a theme of the far right New Democracy, much feted as a novelty by the Swedish media. Their populist campaign, focusing attacks on the social democrat bureaucracy, attracted audiences of thousands.

Inroads made by New Democracy into the working class vote, combined with a high abstention rate, cut considerable swathes from the Social democrat/ Left vote.

Local exceptions to what has been dubbed 'the right wing revolution' by the Swedish press occurred in a few towns, where local branches of social democrats had criticised their party from the left.

Unity candidates

The Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, ran unity candidates with the LP in half a dozen towns. SP candidates were elected in Umea and Nacka outside Stockholm.

But the overall balancesheet is clear. This is the biggest defeat of the labour movement in Sweden for over 50 years, qualitatively different from the 'bourgeois interlude' of 1976-82. The SP has called on the left to unite in resistance to the rise of the hard right.

Where is Britain going?

Only a hermit could have been surprised by the recent wave of youth rioting. The wonder is that the 1980s have not seen more inner-city riots, given the levels of poverty and unemployment. Rioting in Britain has a long and illustrious history, from Peterloo to the Chartists to the 1920s. It's always a sign of deep crisis in the system.

As Britain heads towards a general election what is the shape of this crisis? And is there a solution in sight?

During the mid-1980s the economy went through an inflationary boom, which gave rise to the 'yuppie' phenomenon. Borne aloft by the debt-led boom of the US economy, the Lawson boom in Britain was a false dawn.

Britain is heading inexorably towards becoming a third rate capitalist power. The partial collapse of the country's industrial base, the poverty and squalor and the concentration on quick profits among the rich, as opposed to long-term investment, are sure signs. There is no huge upswing around the corner, just the drift into further decline.

If the 1980s did not see any fundamental advance in capitalist fortunes, they did see a major restructuring of the economy, and huge attacks on the working class. *The ruling class was able to inflict major defeats on the workers movement without thereby solving its own problems.*

Rioting youth of course are not the least bit interested in Kinnock's Labour Party. Indeed the inability of the labour movement as a whole to offer any perspective to the most disaffected in society is a massive indictment.

The one major defeat inflicted on the Tories

in recent years, over the poll tax, was imposed by a campaign largely outside the labour movement. In the 1980s the labour movement, with the exception of the miners' titanic struggle against redundancies, did precious little to resist unemployment.

The heritage of the defeat of the miners strike is a labour movement suffocated by right-wing inertia and inanity. All Roy Hattersley could do during the recent riots was demand more police and more arrests.

log jam? Any result of the general election will cause new ructions in the Labour Party. On the most recent opinion poll figures, a hung parliament is a definite possibility. Any attempt at a coalition government including Labour and the Liberals would lead to a major fight in the party's ranks.

A Labour government, on the other hand, would be the most right wing ever, and again break the log-jam as political and industrial rebellion developed.

A straightforward Tory victory however will deepen demoralisation and set back the left; the Labour leadership and trade union bureaucracy would push for much more right wing policies and a further witch-hunt.

If Labour loses, its credibility as a potential government party will slide. Sections of the ruling class who already smell blood, might go on the offensive to try to marginalise Labour and promote the Liberal Democrats as the second party, in an attempt to create a US-style system with two capitalist parties predominant.

This is no easy job, and would be a long process. It would in turn create a massive battle over Labour's soul as a panicked leadership flailed furiously for ever more rightward policies.

No one can predict with certainty; but the whole experience of politics in the 1980s is building to a crescendo. Sooner or later workers' militancy will be rebuilt. And sooner or later - probably sooner - Labour's endless crisis will explode again.



PHOTO: Mark Pinder/FSP

While the labour movement stands pat under the thrall of new realism and Kinnockism, further attacks on workers' rights, organisation and living standards accumulate. Defeat piles on defeat, apathy piles on despair. Periodic outbursts of anger are bound to be the result.

For the moment British politics seems suspended in a time-warp. What will break the

Protests mark riot anniversary

PRESSURE is mounting now for the release of the Tottenham Three, jailed for their alleged involvement in the killing of PC Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm disturbances.

Up to 5000 people are expected to join the families of the three men - Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite - and the Birmingham Six on a 'March for Justice' on Saturday 5 October.

Revelations that crucial evidence was tampered with by police have vindicated the Three and their supporters. But

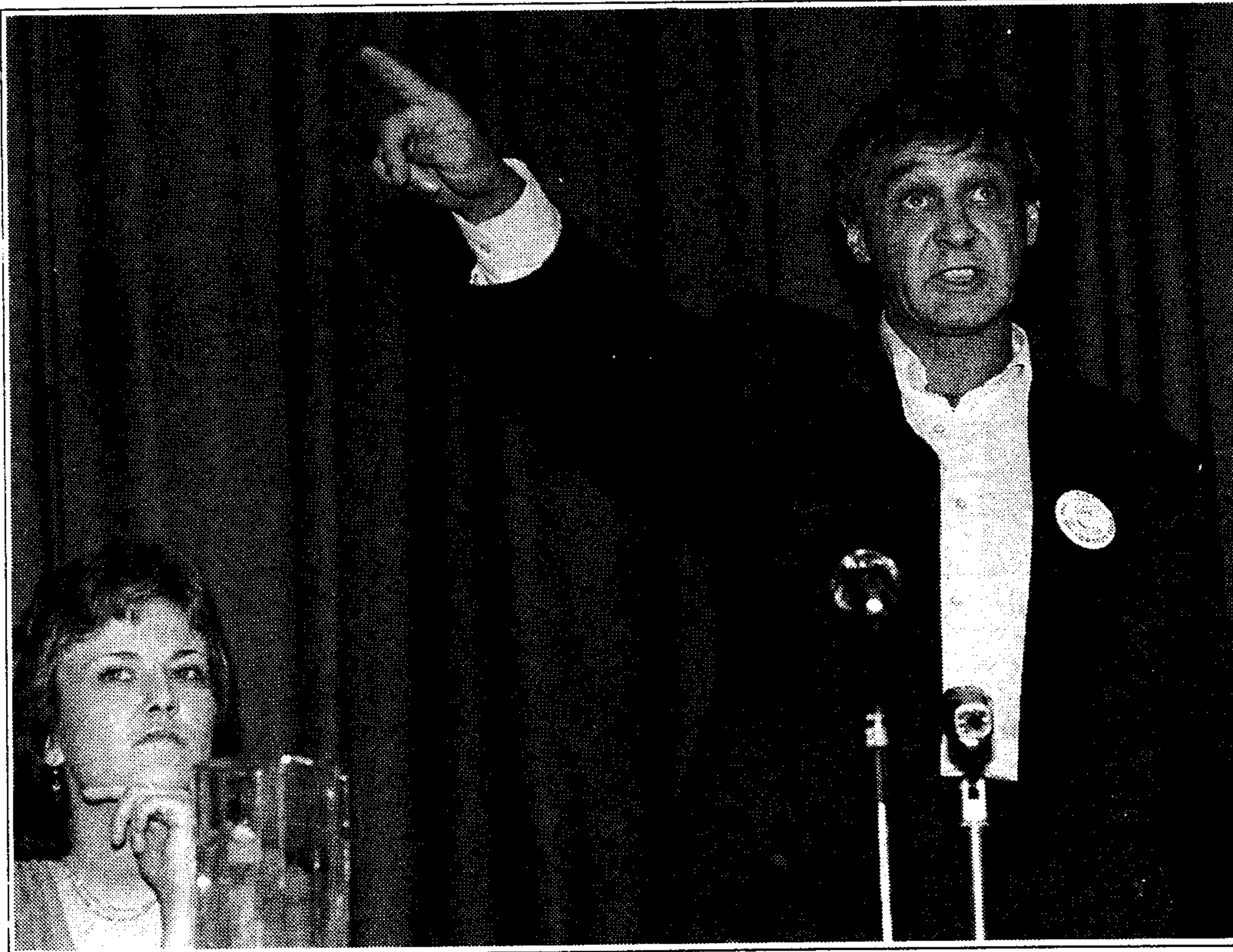
lawyers for the men have accused the authorities of stalling in order to delay an embarrassing appeal court hearing until after any general election.

The 'March for Justice' demonstration through North London will mark the anniversary of the disturbances in which PC Blakelock was killed and will demand the immediate release of the three men. Two public meetings, in Hackney and Islington, will precede the demonstration.

Speakers at the events will include Paddy Joe Hill and Billy Power, recently released after 16 years of wrongful imprisonment for the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings. Also joining relatives of the Three on the platform, will be MPs Bernie Grant and Jeremy Corbyn, Paul Foot, NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield, and performance poet Benjamin Zephaniah.

A spokesperson for the Tottenham Three said, 'How much longer do they have to remain in jail to suit the political convenience of the Home Secretary and the government?'

The Tottenham Three Families' Campaign can be contacted at 247a West Green



Paddy Hill (one of the Birmingham Six) speaking at a Birmingham meeting to launch the 'Justice for All Campaign', which is championing the cause of people wrongly imprisoned. Next to Paddy is Sharon Raghip, wife of Engin Raghip, one of the Tottenham Three. Also on the platform was Anne Wheelan, mother of Michael Hickey, one of the Bridgewater Four.

The Justice for All Campaign can be contacted by phone on 081-809-6483.

Road, Tottenham, London, N15 5ED, Tel: 081 809 6483.

Hackney Public Meeting: 1 October, 7.30pm; Hackney Town Hall, Mare St., E8. More information: T3 Campaign Office or Tash Shifrin: 081 442

4692.

Islington Public Meeting: 3 October, 7.30pm; Cannonbury Community Centre, Sebbon St., N1. More information: T3 Campaign Office or Nigel Davy: 071 739 6346.

'March for Justice' through Haringey: Assemble 12 noon, Wood Green Civic Centre, N22. Rally 2pm, Finsbury Park, N4. More information: T3 Campaign Office or Shaun Waterman 081 985 6140.

JUSTICE



MARCH

SAT 5TH OCTOBER

ASSEMBLE 12PM CIVIC CENTRE WOOD GREEN N22

RALLY 2PM FINSBURY PARK

Sexual harassment is no joke

In this second article in our 'Women in the Unions' series MARIAN BRAIN, member of the Women's Advisory Committee of the National Communications Union, looks at the issue of sexual harassment and explains why it is a trade union issue. Marian writes in a personal capacity.

Sexual harassment is one of the topics for discussion at the Women for Socialism/Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee 'Women in the Unions' national meeting in November.

It is also a subject rarely debated on the left, despite being a common experience for literally millions of working women.

The labour and trade union movement has only very recently begun to take the issue of sexual harassment seriously.

Like many other issues important to them, women trade unionists have had to battle hard to establish the problem as

a trade union issue and not just a personal issue for the woman in question.

Indeed, the TUC only established policy in 1983. Its document, 'Sexual Harassment at Work' has been used by many unions for establishing policy.

But what is sexual harassment? It is any unwanted sexual comment, look, suggestion or physical contact that a woman finds objectionable or offensive.

Offensive pranks

Many forms of men's behaviour can be included. In sensitive jokes or pranks, unnecessary touching or physical contact, suggestive remarks or verbal abuse, personal comments about appearance, size or clothes, leering, pin-ups, displays of pornographic pictures, demands for sexual favours, physical assault or explicit sexual violence. All constitute sexual harassment when the behaviour is not asked for and not wanted.

Why is sexual harassment a trade union issue? Because it imposes conditions of work on women which are not usually inflicted on men, sexual harassment is one of the most serious forms of sex discrimination. It creates a hostile and intimidating working environment. It af-

fects women wherever they work, and is often used as a form of intimidation in jobs that are traditionally done by men.

Many women who are victims of sexual harassment suffer tension and fear, some have nervous breakdowns, and many are forced to resolve the problem by transferring or resigning.

Sexual harassment seriously undermines a woman's job security. It can present a danger to health in the same way as asbestos or defective work equipment. Women should not be forced to work in unhealthy conditions, in an atmosphere polluted by sexual harassment.

Real problem

In the National Communications Union (NCU), women have had to fight hard to get the union to take this issue seriously. Many trade unionists do not believe either that sexual harassment existed or that it is a real problem to be dealt with.

It was one of the first issues that the NCU's Women's Support Group took up. They produced an information pack describing what sexual harassment is, and also how to combat it. They also looked at the problems experienced by women at conference socials and how sexual harassment oc-



cured at these.

For the past three years now, the Women's Advisory Committee has been organising socials where people could have a good time in an atmosphere that is encouraged to be free from sexism, racism and homophobia.

Leaflets

The NCU has now produced leaflets to distribute to members, and also guidelines for branch officers on how to deal with sexual harassment when it occurs.

When women in the NCU were fighting to establish policy on the issue, they were greatly helped by the material that

other unions, including NALGO and the TGWU, and the TUC had published.

Women trade unionists have developed a wealth of experience in fighting sexual harassment.

Readers may well remember last year's victorious week-long strike by the Union of Communications Workers in Oxford, caused when the Post Office management refused to discipline a supervisor who had sexually harassed a woman cleaner.

These experiences need to be shared so that new activists have the necessary ammunition to take the fight against sexual harassment still further in the unions.



PHOTO: Mark Salimon

Fascists on the march: can the left mobilise to drive them off the streets?

10,000 at anti-fascist carnival

By Pete McDonald

Over 10,000 people turned up to the 'Unity Carnival' in Hackney, East London on 8 September. Organised by Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and Cable Street Beat (an anti-fascist music fanzine), the event was a great success with live music from bands like Five-Thirty, Soho and The Indestructible Beat.

In contrast to recent anti-racist/fascist actions in London, the organisers put considerable effort into mobilising the local community. This was rewarded by an impressive turn-out from Hackney residents, ensuring a much wider audience than the usual far-left and their periphery.

The carnival was sponsored by the National Union of Students, the Communist Party of Britain, a num-

ber of trades councils and - contrasting with the usual stereotype of the racist cockney cabbie - the Cab Section of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The SWP did not sponsor the event nor, surprisingly, were they much in evidence.

AFA would certainly not have been able to organise such an event a year or two ago. But whilst everyone can agree with the carnival's programme statement that "we have organised today's event to draw attention to the growing number of racist attacks, especially in East London", the question still remains: how do we "isolate the fascists and kick them out"?

AFA are organising a Rally Against Fascism plus workshops, 'The Lessons of Cable Street', on Saturday 12 October at the Davenant Centre, 179 Whitechapel Rd., London, E1.

Left must combat rising fascist threat

By Liam Mac Uaid

When the British National Party (BNP) won 25 per cent of the white working class vote in a by-election in East London's Tower Hamlets last year, it was the first firm sign that new political opportunities were opening up for fascist groups. The fascists seem to have used their years in the wilderness to refine their tactics and methods of work.

In Tower Hamlets the BNP used the stabbing of a white youth by young Bangladeshis as a platform to launch their 'Rights for Whites' campaign. This is a borough notorious for its high levels of attacks on Bangladeshis and other ethnic minorities.

Tapped anger

But the fascists tapped into a real anger in the white working class population of one of the most deprived areas of London. They attributed the blame for inadequate housing, lack of jobs and all the other difficulties facing working class people in Britain to black immigration.

The election result shows that they were successful in finding a layer in the white working class, the long term unemployed and those who make their living by 'a bit of this and a bit of that', which no other political force was addressing with answers relevant to their daily lives.

This is the party-building

model the fascists are now using in London and the rest of England. They have also started a serious campaign of harassing left-wing activists. A black SWP member, living in East London, had his house firebombed in August. Supporters of Socialist Outlook have been attacked in London, Leicester and Manchester and reports of attacks on Socialist Worker sellers are becoming common, particularly in Scotland.

Harassment

These are precisely the sort of people who will be among the first to organise anti-fascist activity in their areas. The fascists calculate that with sufficiently high levels of harassment, they will erode the numbers of people prepared to combat them.

Defending a threatened regular papersale from attack is a simple enough matter of mobilising the local labour movement and far left. Fighting the increase in fascist and racist attacks is a more complex problem which is not being adequately dealt with by anyone, anywhere.

Tories

But it is a problem that is getting increasingly serious. John Major is a much less appealing leader for the racist right-winger than Thatcher was. The convergence of Labour's policies and rhetoric with that of the Tories will leave increasing numbers of working class



Thatcher stole racist vote from fascist parties

people vulnerable to the fascists' answers.

This is why it is essential to keep up the fight inside the Labour Party around politics that fight the new realist, pro-capitalist mainstream. The party should be forced to organise campaigns with organisations representing the communities under attack.

Socialists must also challenge the fascist assumption that they alone have the right to agitate in the white working class around the question of racism. As soon as racist attacks or fascist propaganda appear in an area, socialists must respond with anti-racist/fascist propaganda and meetings.

Links

Even in areas where the fascists are not yet organised, links should be made between black organisations and tenant and community groups that are predominantly white. Maybe the left must now consider whether the time has arrived for a new anti-fascist and anti-racist umbrella organisation, like the Anti-Nazi League, to drive the fascist shit back into the sewers.

Labour Conference Is Labour heading for disaster?

The Tories winning the next election would be disaster enough. But, argues DAVE PACKER, a much bigger disaster for Labour could lie beyond defeat at the next election.

IT IS still touch and go on a November election. Underlying the possibility that Major might go for November is the poor performance of Labour, which has dropped to below 40 per cent in the polls. Either the parties are even, or the Tories have a slight lead, with the Liberal Democrats around 17 per cent.

True, the gutter press has been doing a job on Neil Kinnock. And it's also true that John Major got a lot of media coverage during the summer over the defeated Soviet coup.

But, many loyal Labour voters, desperate to put an end to 12 years of Tory government, must be asking how this dire situation has come about.

Failure

The opinion polls are not necessarily accurate, but they do highlight Labour's political failure.

To simply blame the right wing tabloids (when aren't they anti-Labour?) or extensive TV time devoted to boosting Major, is to avoid facing up to a hard truth which lies at the very core of Kinnock's new realism.

In the end, a 'lay down in the middle of the road and pretend to be dead,' strategy, inspires nobody. Neither does empty bluster nor rambling rhetoric. How many new voters can be attracted by a party that appears to occupy much of the ground of the Liberal

Democrats, or the wet Tories, and which has lost its radical edge and binned all its principles?

Almost everything about Labour, even within its own narrow electoralist and reformist framework, lacks lustre, drive or coherence. The party only just manages to keep the high ground in traditionally strong issues like the NHS. The hope that the other side will just blow it won't work.

Kinnockism has failed to make inroads into poorly organised sectors of the working class, or among service workers, white collar workers and sections of the salaried middle class.

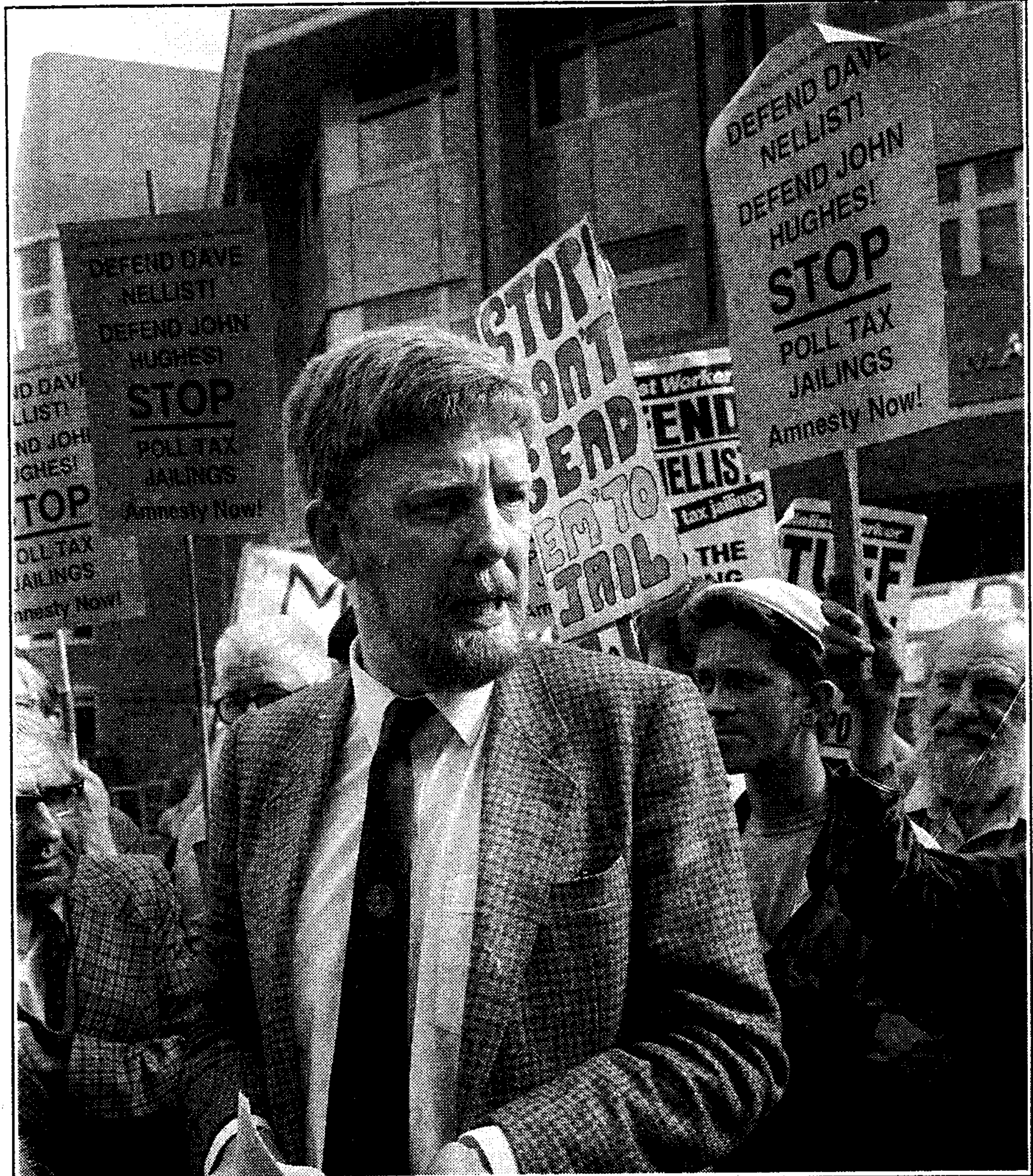
1987 defeat

In fact, the electoral failure of the 'new realist' strategy was proven by the 1987 general election, in which the Alliance replaced Labour as the second party in 230 out of the 376 Tory seats (in 1979 Labour was second in 260 of 330 Tory seats). The undemocratic character of the electoral system means that Labour now needs an exceptional swing of something like eight per cent - the same scale as 1945 - to win many Southern marginals. Even in Scotland the Labour party is losing support because of its appalling line on the poll tax and self-government.

Hung parliament

All this means that a modest lead in the opinion polls by either of the main parties is likely to lead to a hung parliament.

If proportional representation were introduced, the Liberal Democrats would emerge as a major electoral party even now. But whatever the electoral system this party can be crushed by Labour.



Kinnock's favourite hate figure Dave Nellist MP: witch-hunt against him and the hard left will further damage Labour's chances

PHOTO: John Harris

History shows that the middle layers and less class conscious sectors of the working class, layers upon which the Liberal Democrats base themselves, can be mobilised for the left. This can be achieved by a confident and radicalised working class movement on the offensive - something that is clearly anathema to Kinnock.

But there are even bigger issues at stake than victory or defeat at the next general election. The question is this: will 'new realism' lead the Labour Party backwards to a situation that existed before the first world war, when a small Labour Party was confronted by two big capitalist parties which dominated

politics - in a way that it still does today in the United States?

US Democrats

The question is not that posed by some in the 'Militant tendency', who maintain that the Labour Party itself is becoming the same as the American Democratic Party. The real question is whether the ruling class, with the help of the 'new realist' labour bureaucracy, can engineer a major electoral shift away from the Labour Party to the Liberal Democrats - thus inflicting a major defeat to independent working class politics.

This may seem a long way off or even incredible, with the collapse of the old Alliance and the blood feuds between the erstwhile Gang of Four.

But the underlying trends, mentioned above, shows that the 'mould' of British politics could still be broken. The move by the Liberal Democrats at Bournemouth to outflank the Labour Party as the radical alternative 'in the post-socialist epoch', has achieved some credibility, and clearly indicates their intentions.

If, in the likely event of a hung parliament, Labour engaged with them in a bourgeois and inevitably right wing coalition, (rather than attempt to form a minority government and then go for a second election) then a disaster scenario for the workers' movement could be set in motion.

A coalition could only discredit Labour and work to the advantage of the bourgeoisie in general, and the Liberal Democrats in particular. In any event, a Labour catastrophe, of either an outright defeat, or a coalition, after twelve years of Thatcherism, is unlikely to leave the present political scenario intact.

The left in the workers' move-

ment cannot resist this trend in British politics by passively clinging on to a 'first past the post' electoral system, a peculiar and undemocratic constitutional arrangements of an archaic British State.

Left alternative

Only a vigorous class struggle leadership can resist the pressures of class collaboration and a coalition government, not an undemocratic constitutional fraud. Only a vigorous left alternative can inspire the working class and its allies amongst the oppressed and in the middle layers.

This strategy of class struggle and for the maximum extension of democratic rights, is the only way to crush the politics of consensus and the parties based on them.

The task of the left at this Labour Party conference is to sound the warnings about coalition, irrespective of Kinnock's present disclaimers, and to warn against the fundamental historic dangers posed to our movement by the strategy of the 'new realist' bureaucracy.

We must also project and build the Socialist Movement, which is the only national current which wants to fight the Tories, but also wants to challenge the betrayal of the new realists on the streets, in the unions, and in the Labour Party itself.

Women in the unions

Fighting for our rights!

Sat 23rd Nov, 10-5
Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1

NEC suspends 25 in Brighton

If proof is needed that a full scale purge is under way in the Labour Party, then look no further than the town where its conference is being held, Brighton.

After a year's investigation the Party's Organisation Committee last week charged 25 members of Brighton Labour Party with either membership of Militant or bringing the party into disrepute. They have also instructed the anti-witch hunt campaign 'Friends of Brighton Labour Party' to stop meeting.

Shocked

These suspensions have shocked people for two reasons. First, the number involved. Also that the list includes several on the left who have had no connection with any newspaper and whose only 'crime' has been to publicly oppose the witchunt.

Included are all the nine left borough councillors who have broken the whip over the poll tax. As

part of the charges against one of them, Fiona Roberts, is the crime of signing a motion in support of Sarah Thornton that had not been authorised by the Labour Group.

Double standard

As if to rub in the double standards that operate, the chief whip has not taken any action against 2 right wing councillors who broke the whip causing a Tory victory at a planning committee.

Also suspended are a number of leading left activists such as Dave Lewney and Tony Greenstein. Nearly all of those charged have supported the 'Friends Of Brighton Labour Party'.

This was set up in order to stop mass resignations after the NEC suspension. Its success has been measured by over 500 people signing a petition against the suspension and by over 150 people attending 'Friends' meetings over the last year.

Apart from keeping LP members informed of proceedings, a central part of the Friends' work has been to encourage people to give evidence to the investigation forcing Joyce Gould to visit Brighton several times.

Some of the publicity work of the Friends have been very effective. Its press officer, Petra Kopp, organised an extremely sympathetic news broadcast on Channel 4 warning of divisions in Brighton affecting the parliamentary campaigns.

Left under attack

This left the image-conscious NEC none too impressed. Petra has now been suspended.

Overall, the suspensions in Brighton show that post-Walton the whole of the left is now under attack. The right wing have used the NEC to try and smash the left in Brighton. This could be the shape of things to come in many CLPs around the country.

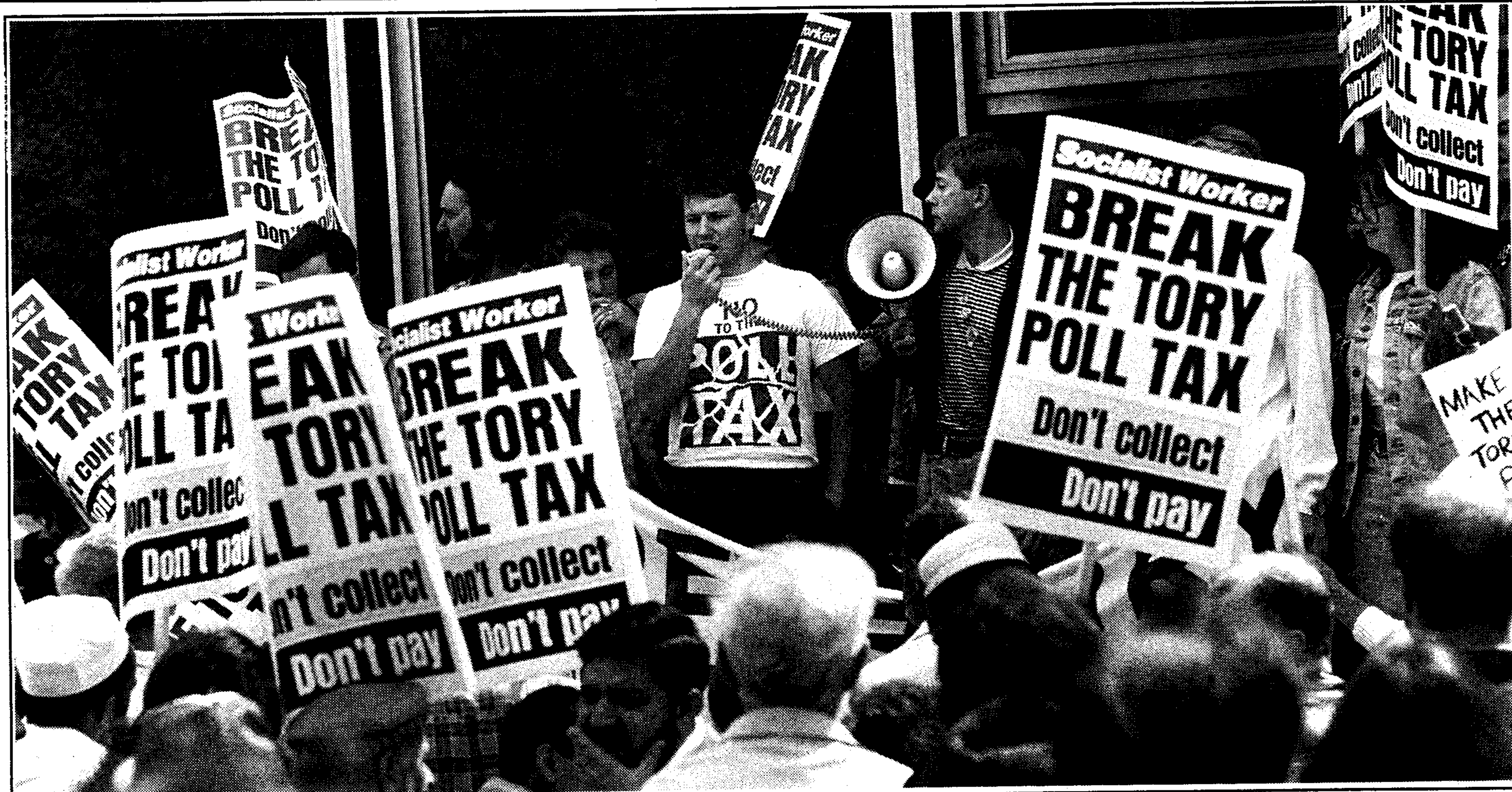


PHOTO: John Harris

For the SWP united campaigns are subordinate to 'building the party'

What's wrong with the British far left?

by Harry Sloan

Compared with many advanced capitalist countries, the far left in Britain is relatively organisationally powerful. But in terms of its impact on the class struggle, the far left remains weak. Why?

Part of the answer is the political situation, with 'new realism' dominant and the left on the defensive. But that is just part of the answer.

It is not so much the diversity of the '57 varieties' of groupings on the British left that is the problem so much as the errors that almost all of them hold in common.

Almost all of them are undemocratic and sectarian in their political practice. Most in practice reject the united front, and seek to by-pass the problem of raising working class political consciousness by strident propaganda, and frenetic effort.

This article will look only at those groupings which aim to build a mass revolutionary alternative to reformism, and leave aside the varied currents - such as *Tribune* - which have thrown in their lot with the Kinnock camp, and those small tendencies, such as *Labour Briefing* which seek only to act as a pressure group within the Labour Party.

Regime

The propensity of British left groups to split over what may seem relatively minor tactical issues or political disagreements reflects a general failure to establish democratic internal regimes which allow different

viewpoints to coexist constructively.

One immediate effect of this is that since the early 1950s the left has been divided into a proliferating range of relatively small groupings, none of which has been able to grow even to the 10,000 member mark.

There has been an almost universal failure to implement Leninist democratic centralism, in which implementation of majority decisions is coupled with full freedom within the organisation for minority currents to organise and debate out their differences.

Lenin's Bolshevik Party was always full of lively debate, with the full right of minority tendencies and factions to organise. Lenin himself was often in a minority of one. This is a far cry from the British 'Leninist' sects, with their harsh and bureaucratic centralist internal regimes.

Caricature

A consequence of this is that many thousands of good militants have been repelled by the caricature of 'Leninism' and rejected it.

In the context of a relatively weak Communist Party, some of the British sects in the post-war period have from time to time grown to become relatively large, some with thousands of members mobilised around an essentially unchanged core leadership.

However numerical growth on this basis cannot compensate for the qualitative development: all such groupings retain the potential for explosive factional divisions and splits at

any time should their inner core leadership fall out, or a layer of members decide to challenge the received wisdom they have been fed.

Workers' movement

It is not only the internal regimes that have been sectarian. The other main feature of the British left has been its generally sectarian political stance towards the organised workers' movement.

In Britain the trade union movement has always been central to workers' political development. Uniquely in Britain it was the unions that built the mass reformist workers' party, and Trotsky argued that the apparent separation of the trade union and Labour bureaucracies was simply a technical 'division of labour', making it extremely difficult for Marxists to separate out 'trade union work' from work in the Labour Party.

The key strategic issue has always been how under these conditions they should relate to the mass of workers, and find ways politically to break decisive sections from their illusions in reformist trade union and Labour leaders to create the basis for a genuine mass revolutionary party.

In the 1930s Trotsky argued that British Marxists, too small in numbers to mount any serious challenge to Labour, should work inside the Labour Party and trade unions as well as relating to other layers of the working class.

Any perspective of building a mass revolutionary current one by one through propagan-

da has always been hopelessly idealistic: no mass party has ever been built in this way.

The key to the development of a revolutionary party in Britain has always been the possibility of a substantial left-right political split within the existing mass organisations of the working class, and for this reason marxists have always been obliged to follow and find ways to intervene in struggles within them.

Strategy

The question of the united front is not just a matter of a serious orientation to the mass organisations of the working class. It also involves the attitude marxists adopt to the mass campaigns which arise in period of capitalist crisis, and to the movements for the self-organisation of the oppressed.

Too often on the far left campaigns like that against the poll tax, anti-cuts struggles and anti-racist movements, are seen simply as an arena for paper sales and recruitment.

The priority of building united campaigns on the basis of mass action is, for organisations like the SWP, completely subordinate to 'building the party'. Serious and experienced working class militants are rapidly repelled by this kind of sectarian propaganda.

Of course, marxists *should* seek to win new forces through propaganda. But if that becomes the sole objective of their activity they end up counterposing their own interests to those of advancing working class struggle.

Factionalism

Too often inside the unions, for example, serious attempts to build unity of the militant left to wage a fight to defeat the right wing are disrupted by petty or-

ganisational warfare of far left groups.

The scandalous failure to build a viable Broad Left in NALGO, where the left is strong, is entirely due to the disruptive factionalism of the SWP and Militant. These examples show that the problem of democracy goes beyond the internal regimes of far left groups; sectarian factionalism extends to disrupting workers' democracy in the labour movement itself.

That sections of the far left have this weakness on the basic question of democracy is a terrible indictment. Workers' democracy is a vital question in the struggle against the right wing in the unions and the Labour Party, against Kinnock and new realism.

Once the far left becomes tainted with manipulative and bureaucratic practices then it repels an important part of its potential audience, and begins to surrender the moral high ground in the fight against the right wing.

Liberation movements

A fundamental factor in the contemporary fight for socialism is the emergence of movements and currents fighting for the self-organisation and liberation of those specially oppressed under capitalism - the women's movement, black liberation movements, the lesbian and gay movement and the movement of people with disabilities.

These movements pose a challenge to the whole labour movement, and to the far left in particular. The fight for socialism requires a strategic alliance between the labour movement and these movements of the oppressed.

Socialists then have a dual task; to champion the self-or-

"Of course, marxists *should* seek to win new forces through propaganda. But if that becomes the sole objective of their activity they end up counterposing their own interests to those of the working class"



organisation and struggle of the specially oppressed and fight for the adoption of their demands in the labour movement; and inside these movements to argue for a socialist perspective.

The prolonged failure of the labour movement to adequately take up these questions creates enormous difficulties and tensions in this project. But this is compounded by the sustained inability of the major far left currents, especially Militant and the SWP, to cope with these issues. In the case of the Militant, this has simply reflected the backwardness of the British labour movement. In the SWP and other groups, it has reflected a deeper problem: the model of socialist transition and the revolutionary party which they adhere to.

A flawed tradition

There can be no argument with the need for an organised marxist force to give leadership to the struggle for socialism. Britain has never offered the left any easy shortcuts. The Russian revolution and post-war revolutionary crisis generated huge splits in the European workers movement, opening the door for new mass communist parties; but it failed to generate any such split in Britain.

When in 1933 Trotsky concluded that the official communist movement was 'dead for the purpose of revolution' and a new International had to be built, the British forces which rallied to this call were a small minority in relation to the already small Communist Party.

From the beginning British revolutionary socialists were divided on tactics towards the Labour Party, while their small propagandist groupings tended to be dominated by individual personalities, intrigues and gossip.

In 1944 came the move to reunify British Trotskyists in one organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Party. From this organisation came the three personalities who were to head the main groupings of the British far left for three decades; Gerry Healy, Tony Cliff and Ted Grant.

Fierce debates broke out on two fronts; whether or not the Trotskyists should go into the Labour Party, as well as the

unions, to fight for their political line and win support; and on the analysis of the huge events taking place in eastern Europe, as Stalin's armies presided over the overturn of the old capitalist regimes.

By 1951 when the British Communist Party broke definitively from even any pretence of revolutionary politics, to embrace the parliamentary perspective of the *British Road to Socialism*, the far left was divided into three traditions, each one in the Labour Party.

Gerry Healy was the first to come out of the Labour Party in 1959-60 following the proscription of his Socialist Labour League. Cliff's International Socialists did not emerge until the 1960s, while Grant's political line, thoroughly adapted to the Labour Party milieu, is still one of transforming the party from within.

Much of the British far left comes from the tradition described above. It is a tradition which fundamentally underestimates the project of socialist transition as being based on the self-organisation and self-activity of the working class and the oppressed. In effect, it rejects the real Leninist tradition of respect for political pluralism in the workers' movement and the left itself.

In this siege-mentality 'Leninism' there are only those of the true faith and those to be led (the masses); other left organisations become 'revisionists', enemies to be treated with utter scorn and contempt.

The irony is that the Socialist Workers Party and its predecessors base themselves theoretically on the struggle of 'the workers'. In the 1950s, SWP leader Tony Cliff rejected Leninism, and his group was heavily influenced by spontaneism and syndicalism. When in 1968 Cliff became a convert to Leninism, it was rather a modified form of the Gerry Healy variety that he turned to.

What is to be Done?

The British far left has not just got to prove its ability to win rebellious students (generally for short periods) or sell hundreds of papers; it has to prove its usefulness to the class, in its ability to wrest the leadership of the labour movement

away from the right wing and new realists.

To make this change means a fundamental re-think. Militant supporters now have the opportunity to make this, with the fearful crisis in their tendency (see article on these pages). But there is no getting away from the long slog of building an alternative.

Who are we to talk?

So what is so different about *Socialist Outlook*? Our supporters come from a variety of political traditions and currents, and are united on four fundamental issues that make us distinct from others:

- A rejection of undemocratic organisational methods, and an insistence that only through freedom of discussion can a correct marxist analysis be derived, defended and developed.

- A commitment to defending and building the self-organisation of the oppressed.

- A commitment to genuine internationalism as against the building of small, dependent, British-dominated clone groupings and circles of co-thinkers on the model of the WRP, SWP and Militant.

- Defence of the method of the united front, recognising that in the concrete context of the British labour movement this means working within the Labour Party as well as with forces outside it, building campaigns and promoting struggles that can show workers the need to break from reformism and build a marxist alternative.

- Rejection of any notion which subordinates the actual struggles of the working class to the narrow sectional interests of a particular left group.

Our current is by no means the biggest on the British left, and still has much to prove. But we believe that our record in constructively building labour movement campaigns and promoting broad-based initiatives such as the Socialist Movement while consistently arguing our own political line offers a welcome break from the sectarian legacy of the British left.

After all, it is not enough to define what is wrong with the British left: our task is to do something about it.



Lesley Mahmood's Walton candidacy was a watershed in Militant's crisis

Militant in Crisis

By Paul Clarke

The crisis in the Militant tendency poses hard questions for all their supporters. At a surface level the dispute is about whether to prioritise activity outside the Labour Party, including standing independent candidates, and possibly establishing a 'Real Labour Party'. Founding theoretician of the tendency, Ted Grant, bitterly opposes the outside the Labour Party orientation.

One thing is clear: Militant does not have mechanisms adequate to deal with major differences among their supporters in a democratic and comradely fashion.

The moves towards abandoning Labour Party activity stem especially from the pressures of Militant's experience in the campaign against the Poll Tax. New supporters came forward, especially in Scotland, without much experience of labour movement activity. Kinnock's anti-Militant witch hunt, the crushing of the LPYS, and the huge lurch to the right inside the party added to this pressure.

Walton

The outcome was the decision to stand Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election. Her 2,613 votes in a Militant stronghold did not vindicate the new 'outside the Labour Party' perspective. It showed that the base for a new 'real' Labour Party did not exist.

Peter Taaffe has argued in successive Guardian letters that Kinnock cannot be given 'free rein' - and therefore the tendency will prioritise activity outside the Labour Party. But this is illogical. Declaring a new party with no significant support and abandoning the struggle in the Labour Party precisely gives Kinnock 'free rein'.

The problem for Militant is that the *type* of Labour Party activity it has traditionally conducted is very difficult in today's conditions. The tendency has always conducted essentially propagandistic activity in the party, aiming at 'winning people to socialist ideas', selling papers, and recruiting to the tendency. No real attempt to utilise the weight of Militant supporters to build the left for a real fight against the right wing has ever been made.

That is the weakness of Ted Grant's position. If the sole criterion for Labour Party work is supporters recruited and papers sold, then the party is indeed today an unpromising terrain of work. But once Labour Party work is put in the perspective of united front activity, building the left, and preparing for the new crises which are inevitable, the importance of this work becomes clear.

New realism

This does not imply that the sole work of socialists today should be debating resolutions in Labour Party branches - but then it should *never* have been. The fight against new realism in the unions and building mass campaigns on a range of issues including the NHS, local government cuts and the upsurge of racism are vital components of socialist activity.

The key question is whether this activity needs the building of a new party; and in any case whether a new party is *possible* at this time.

In an historical sense the renovation of the labour movement to win socialism will necessitate a party qualitatively different from today's Labour Party. But to attempt to declare a new party now is suicidal. Any result from the general election - victory, defeat or a hung parliament - will create new turmoil inside the Labour Party which socialists cannot avoid.

In the anti-poll tax movement they sought at each stage to maintain an iron grip on the movement's structures, rather than build a genuinely united and democratic movement. Sectarianism has even disrupted the fight against the witch hunt, which Militant has never seriously fought.

Its position on Ireland and other oppressed nationalities has been appalling; and it is only recently that its old time positions on the struggles of the specially oppressed, opposing the women's movement, ignoring the fight for lesbian and gay liberation and only making propaganda about racism have changed for the better. Internationalism for the Militant is a matter of pious words and supporting their clones in other countries, never participating actively in solidarity campaigns.

The current crisis in Militant should be the occasion for serious marxists in the tendency to stand back and take a long look at their activity. To justify its existence a marxist tendency has to go beyond being able to explain socialist truisms, but be useful in the fight to defeat the right wing, promote workers struggles, build the movements of the specially oppressed - and not counterpose its narrow interests to those of the workers movement and the left as a whole.

An organised movement of marxists is certainly necessary today. Militant's sectarian propagandism, marked by narrow nationalism and numerous concessions to labourism, belongs in a museum of antiquities.

USSR after the coup

A rocky road to market

Though the majority of the left was united in denouncing the recent attempted coup in the Soviet Union, opinion has varied widely as to what the future will bring for Soviet workers. PATRICK BAKER asked OLIVER MACDONALD of New Left Review for his views on the prospects for the Soviet state(s).

What do you think has happened in the Soviet Union – a step forward for democracy, a gain for the working class; or is this the first step of the 'new world order', the beginning of unbridled capitalism in the Soviet Union?

What has happened with the attempted coup and its reversal is the speeding up of a process that was already underway, which would have worked itself through, but much more slowly.

Namely the disintegration of the Soviet Union and support for the Communist Party, the growing powers of the republics and so on.

The coup was prompted by the threatened union treaty, which was perceived by the coup-makers to be a catastrophic break-up of the USSR.

This shows who the coup-makers were: those who were extremely worried about the break-up of the union – those tied into the union apparatus, the KGB, the military, the diplomatic corps – and also representatives of the central ministries and the big all-Soviet enterprises. What it was not was a coup inspired by stalinist ideals.

Their sole ideal was *order*. It was not at all a coup for a return to stalinism, the glory of communism and the CPSU. Indeed it's significant that some of the most prominent stalinists opposed the coup.

So it was more a case of the market with a heavy hand?

Whether they were for the 'market' – more precisely, a capitalist market – or not is another question. They were for the existing power of the Soviet state and its apparatus – in other words, the *nomenklatura*.

Then there was a reaction against the coup, and it's important to see what sort of reaction it was. There was a substantial mobilisation in Moscow and Leningrad, but there was no great

popular seizure of power across the country. So why did it fail?

It failed because the mobilisation led by Yeltsin was sufficient to break the unity of the coup-makers, and their repressive force. The disintegration of the bureaucratic command system had already gone too far – there was very little political energy behind it. So we are talking about the collapse of the old system, rather than a popular revolution.

But it does nail down the coffin lid on the old system...

Well, it gets the body two thirds in, anyway. So when the system collapses what do you have left? Republican governments. It's clear that Yeltsin and those around him were not expecting this.

What is important is to characterise Yeltsin's politics, now he has the power. This is difficult to do, because Yeltsinism has until now been a negative force. He has a huge, but heterogeneous, support in anti-communism.

It's only now he has to decide what he stands for, and then make it happen. Yeltsin has not put forward and defended a positive political programme as yet. So we must interpret gestures and tactics.

For example, at the beginning of the year he strongly supported the Baltic republics, and this led some to say 'Yeltsin takes a strong stand on the national question'. Others say that this was entirely tactical, and had much more to do with undermining Gorbachev.

Then if we come to Yeltsin's socio-economic programme, he has been championing the capitalist market – but some would say this is another stick to beat Gorbachev, not a matter of principle. So things are unclear.

So what is Yeltsin's trajectory?

It's too early to say whether Yeltsin is preparing an authoritarian regime. He is the product of a very primitive political differentiation in Russia – we don't have properly formed parties, let alone parties linked to different social groups.

This pushes Yeltsin in authoritarian directions – because when you have big popular movements that aren't properly structured, this shifts all the power into the hands of the leader, and he tries to solve the internal contradictions by acquiring more and more power.

What about the USA? They've said they'll only deal with a Soviet superstate, with Gorbachev.

Well, they're trying to put the union together again, as is Yeltsin. Rebuilding the Soviet state is the only way the republics will be kept in the orbit of Russia.

Yeltsin and Gorbachev aren't fighting – he is backing Gorbachev, and Gor-



Huge crowds outside the Russian parliament opposing the Stalinist coup

bachev is deriving his authority from Yeltsin.

Now Yeltsin has the political authority, and is trying to drag as many of the instruments of power into his control as possible. Gorbachev is in no position to resist.

But he still has one card to play – the support of imperialism.

True – but the US is quite capable of living without the Soviet Union.

On the economic level, the pressure will be for immediate solutions to consumption problems. These are not the circumstances to engage in wild marketisation experiments – particularly with the big industrial enterprises. Yeltsin has declared himself in favour, but he won't do much in the next 18 months if he's got any sense. I suspect they'll try to privatise small business.

What will happen to the Communist Party?

It's been banned, and we don't know what the popular perception of its role in the coup is. Important people in the CP were involved in the coup, but its leading organs didn't back it and large elements at the base opposed it. Significant numbers still support the CP – when asked in a poll if communism would survive as a force in the USSR, 43% said 'no', over 30% said 'yes'.

A substantial number also said Gorbachev would survive as President. We should expect communists to retain political support in Russia. As an example, if you take all elections in Europe in the last 18 months, the biggest communist vote wasn't in Italy; it was Czechoslovakia, where the CP got over 18% – and it had resisted a popular revolution.

The fact the CP is banned means their influence on various layers is massively diminished. Direct political pressure towards rebuilding a socialised economy is very slight.

But there could be real problems if those that support some form of socialism can't express their view. I suspect Yeltsin will allow a re-formed party – maybe 2 CPs, one hardline, one social democratic.

Gorbachev's project was to integrate the USSR into the world market, while preserving some sort of market socialism, and restoring the CP's popularity.

So would it have been better if the coup hadn't happened at all? Have the social guarantees that went with Gorbachev's market socialism been destroyed in the defeat of the coup?

The crucial point is that forces identified by the population with communism were seen to be trying to smash democracy. That was a terrible blow to the left.

Does that mean the people who emerged victorious from the coup are on the left? No. Does it mean that now the coup is defeated, there is a radiant future for the left in the USSR? Certainly not – I think there's a very bleak future for the next period. But our criterion for judging politics isn't what's good for us – that would be machiavellian, the sort of politics the coup-makers had.

We should be saying what thousands of east European communists said: 'We must never be military opponents of the people' – even if they're being led in a direction we oppose. But we'll go on telling people what we think.

And we think that the coup was a despicable attempt to reimpose a dictatorship. But we must also say that the idea that the heterogeneous forces of anti-communism around Yeltsin have got good solutions to the USSR's problems is also wrong.

But there is a tendency for people here to think that what the Soviet people are rejecting is simply symbols, not socialist ideas. We must be very cautious about that.

So what are they rejecting?

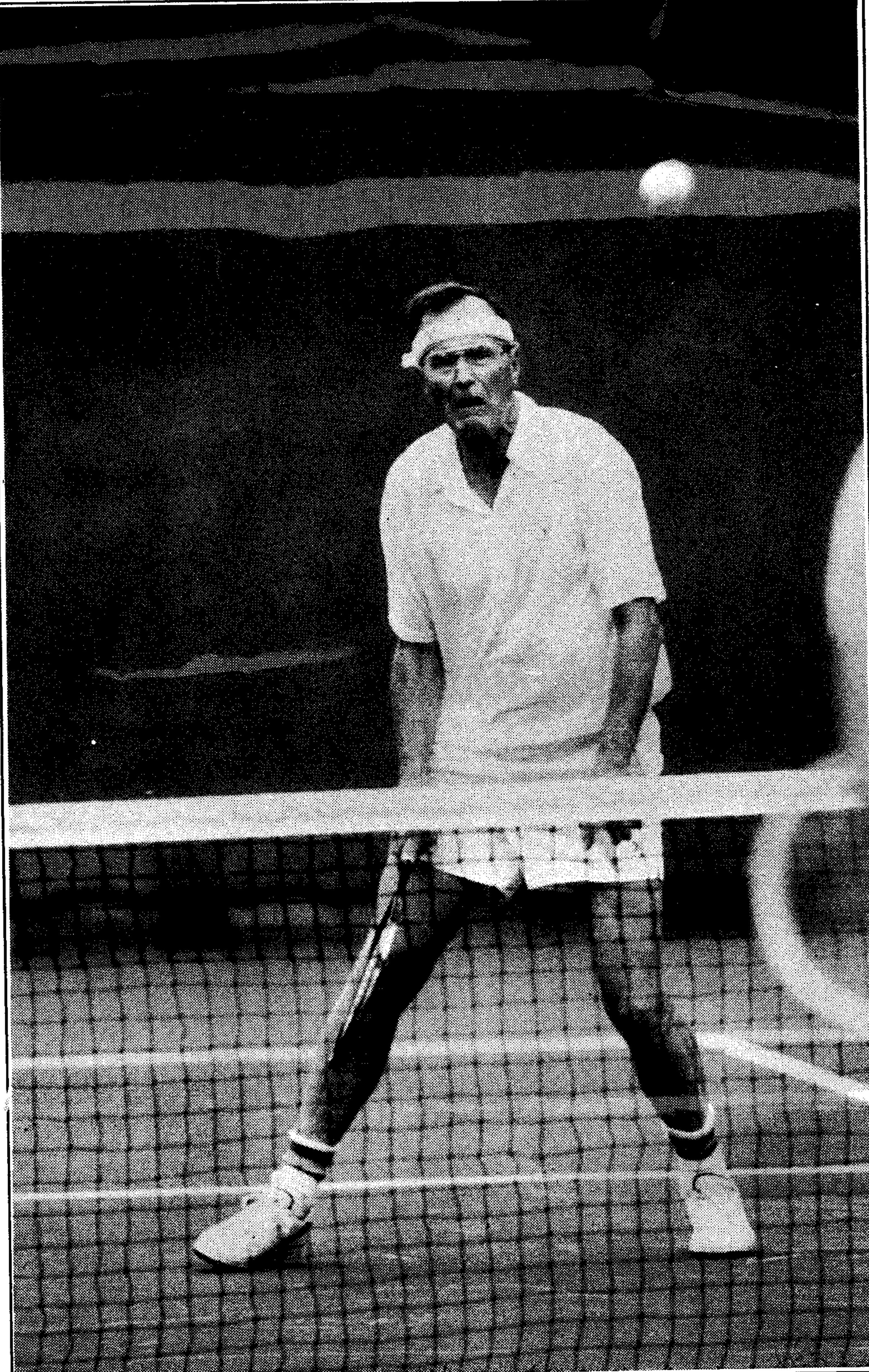
Experience from eastern Europe suggests that most workers think they have experienced socialism, and it failed. What they're rejecting is what they have been told is socialism, and the ideological baggage with it. Their idea of socialism is primarily an economic system – which they reject.

Economic failure leads them to believe that the socialist solution is not possible, and there is only one other mechanism – capitalism – and that seems to work.

Anybody in Yeltsin's position, who wasn't very sure of where they stood, and trying to stabilise their position, would answer: blame communism. This is politically very powerful – we've seen it in Poland. The Polish workers were



PHOTO: Jeremy Nicholls/KATZ



The ball is now in his court, but which way will George Bush play it?

prepared to go through two years of hell with the Balcerowicz Plan.

They blamed it all on the communists, despite there being hardly any left. It is only now that this anti-communist basis of politics is wearing thin.

So we should have no illusions that the USSR is going to be rebuilt. It is very unlikely that, say, the Ukraine will be part of the Soviet Union in two years.

Though it may be in a Soviet economic bloc of some sort.

OK. But the most likely development is the creation of a number of states out of the Soviet Union. In the Ukraine now, the basis of the political fight is who is the strongest leader of a separate Ukrainian identity – it is entirely geared around separation from Russia.

So are we going to see a 'Europe of nations' – but possibly warring nations in the USSR, as we're seeing at the moment in Yugoslavia?

This is a big danger. And these are not small nations we are talking about – the Ukraine is well over 50 million people. Without question we will be in a highly volatile and fragmented situation in the ex-Soviet Union.

Maybe we'll see a united Europe, under the umbrella of the EC?

But the EC hasn't got an umbrella. Usually by this people mean a military umbrella – and the only umbrella of this sort is sitting in the Soviet Union, but I'm not clear who is holding the handle!

The EC hasn't got an umbrella of its own – look at what is happening in Yugoslavia. Some of the states in it would dearly love the EC to have one, but others have no such intention. And the Americans have no intention of the EC having a military umbrella.

A federal Europe is what some undoubtedly want – but as time goes on, it becomes increasingly difficult.

So the Soviet Union is disintegrating. The question is whether it is possible to prevent conflict between the republics and move towards economic revival. These are questions the left has to focus on.

On the first question, the left has to face the fact that the USSR has broken down. Therefore, whoever is running the show in Russia has to accept the right

of these nationalities to statehood. Yeltsin's remarks about boundaries are catastrophic if they are an indication of his ideas. They were subsequently withdrawn, but there are those in his entourage who are very dubious on this.

One consequence of the collapse of the Soviet state and the coup is that great power sentiment in Russia will no longer be expressed through the old institutions of the USSR and the CP, but as Great Russian sentiments.

Desperate

All of these economies of the ex-Soviet Union are now desperate to be integrated into the world market, but whether that happens is up to the West. Gorbachev tried this great gamble – he realised that it is impossible for the USSR to develop in isolation – a socialised economy in one country. The more the economy advances, the more impossible it is.

He was trying to push into the world economy, without going over to capitalism. Things came to crisis point at the G7 Summit. Pressure was put on Bush, but he didn't budge – partly because he doesn't have the resources (though others do). So Gorbachev's attempts to use all his carrots to get into the world economy failed. That was another background to the coup.

He could not say 'We are now going to be treated as a normal economy, with no barriers to trade, capital transfer and so on.' The West's response was 'No way are we allowing you in until you go down the capitalist road.'

So we're not on track towards a united Europe – but one divided West/East, like the world is North/South?

Yes. The problem is not aid – that's a red herring. The real question is free entry into the institutions and division of labour of the world economy. There's this huge campaign for a free market in eastern Europe, but this goes hand in hand with resolute opposition to free international trade.

So Poland has abolished all tariffs on Western imports – but the West refuses to do the same for Polish exports. Also, most of the 'aid' is designated for privatisation – it's not designed to im-

prove output. What is really important is private investment – but that's not aid, it's business.

Newspapers say that eastern industry is so backward they have nothing to sell us, but that's not what the EC steel or chemicals cartels say. They are up in arms against free trade, because it threatens their market.

If the east Europeans could sell goods without tariffs or quotas, that would make a real difference. It would improve their balance of payments position, they could get hard currency, then buy equip-

space of the EC, EFTA, and perhaps Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Both of these factors point towards a more powerful Germany, now that the USSR is gone as a power in Europe, and Russia greatly weakened.

What should we say to the new governments of eastern Europe?

'If you want strong national economies, don't privatise'. The textbook 'big bang' plan of privatisation

"One consequence of the collapse of the Soviet state is that great power sentiment in Russia will be expressed as Great Russian sentiments"

ment, and so on.

Also, Western capital won't invest while barriers are up. Capital invests to get cheap labour, then sell the products back to the West. If they are barred from selling to the West, there is no point investing.

Does the new situation mean an end to Soviet support for third world struggles, and so US world dominance?

It means an end to Soviet support for those struggles. The USA may be militarily strong enough to destroy everyone, but it doesn't have the economic strength for world leadership.

There are strong centrifugal forces in the West, as well as enormous pressure towards a single European economic

– as with the Balcerowicz Plan in Poland – is crazy. Capitalism doesn't work by textbooks – the only stability it has brought to Poland is that of the grave.

They said the economy would decline, then recover to a better position than before. Instead, it's declined and stayed there. Now the most optimistic predictions of the World Bank say that Poland will be back to its 1989 position by 1996.

Any Thatcherite would tell you – you privatise when business is booming, not when it's in crisis. What is needed is rational planning to pick the industries that are likely to fare best in the world market and to subsidise them.

Who knows – if the people see in a couple of years that they are doing quite well without privatisation, perhaps they'll begin to wonder whether it's such a good idea at all.

What happened to the Iranian revolution?

By Peter Purton

IRAN TODAY is run by a reactionary Islamic regime. Using the language of seventh century religion as the basis for its laws and social programme, the Islamic Republic suppresses all hints of socialism, liberalism, women's rights, rights of national minorities and freedom of speech (remember Rushdie?).

Yet in 1979, the Iranian revolution was hailed by the left as a revolution against imperialism.

The Shah of Iran, with huge financial and military backing from the US, reinforced imperialist domination of the economy, based on agriculture and one main industry - oil. Traditional agriculture and the large class of small merchants in the bazaar were pauperised. While vast shanty towns arose, only a tiny bourgeoisie profited.

Sixty per cent of the population were from national minorities, and denied national rights; a vast army and secret police (SAVAK) repressed all opposition; the Shah was imperialism's Gulf policeman.

Millions

The Shah was overthrown by the people in a giant struggle which started in 1978. The response was repression, but each massacre led to even greater mobilisations, based on the 40-day mourning cycle. Four million people demonstrated in September 1978 chanting 'death to the Shah!' Strike action by the 3-million strong working class sealed the fate of the regime.

The armed forces cracked, and the final insurrection took place on 9 February 1979.

Left parties were active, armed and



Disaster for imperialism as the US attempted hostage rescue crashed into the desert

growing in influence among students and workers. Strike committees turned into workers councils (shoras). Women demonstrated on International Women's Day. The new bourgeois government looked fragile. Would Iran's February revolution be followed by a socialist October?

The question of leadership of the struggle proved to be decisive, and the price of getting it wrong was paid in blood.

Nationally-known

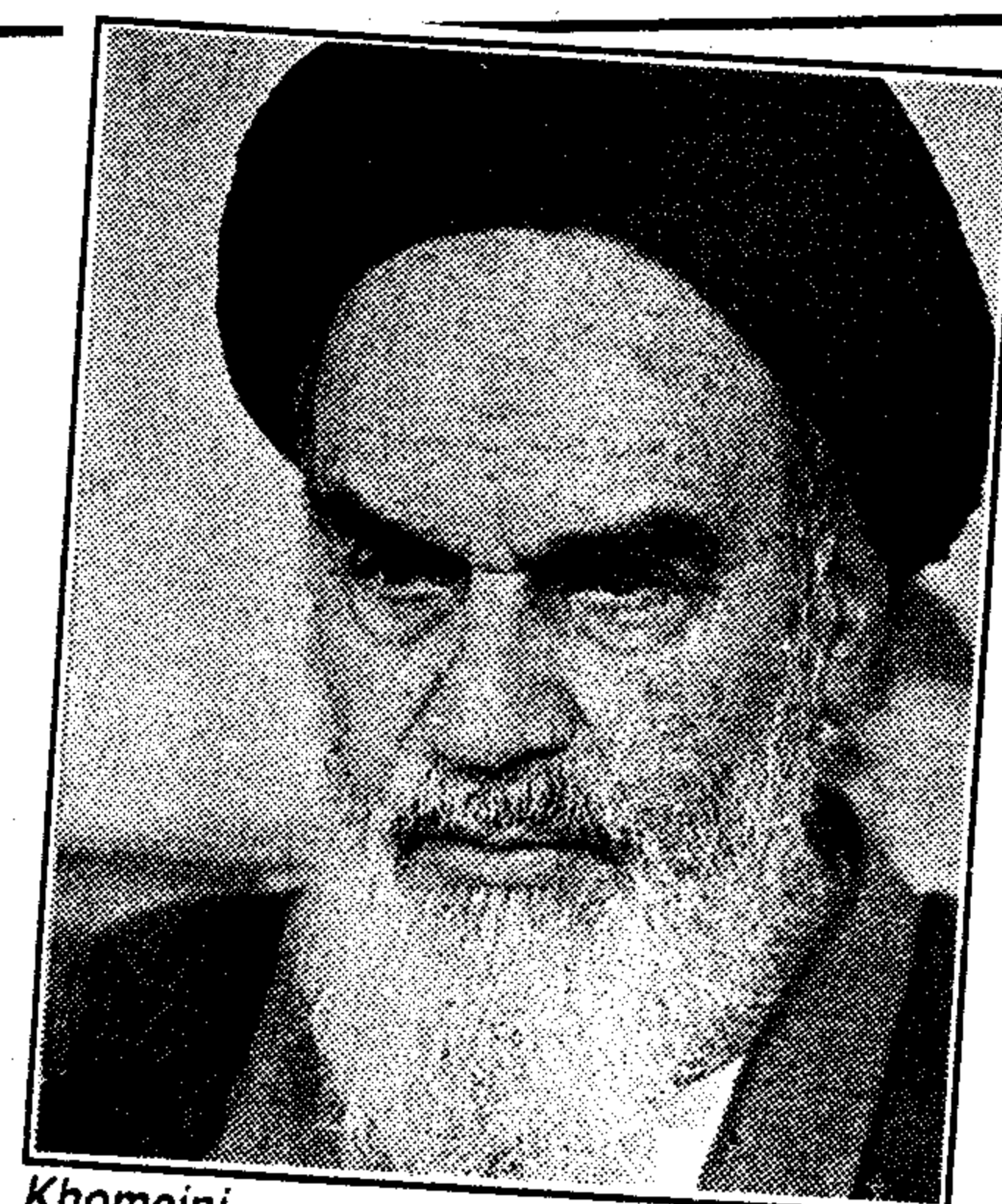
The Shi'ite clergy filled the gap left by the failure of the rest of the opposition. The bourgeois nationalists were weak and divided. The Communist (Tudeh) party, had long tail-ended the Shah's regime. Only Ayatollah Khomeini, in exile since 1963, was a nationally-known figure who consistently fought the regime.

In the absence of alternatives, the network of 80,000 mosques and their dedicated army of mullahs and religious students provided the organisational base of the revolution. The revolutionary guards (Pasdarans), the revolutionary

committees, the revolutionary courts, were all heavily influenced by the mullahs.

The victory of Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party was not inevitable. While the IRP had a strong base in the bazaar and among the dispossessed where it recruited its thugs (the Hezbolahis) its programme was openly against the interests of the workers (trade unions were 'unislamic'), the poor, the peasantry, national minorities and of course women.

But convinced that Khomeini represented the anti-imperialist revolution, the left was silent when he rushed through a referendum establishing the Islamic republic, with final power for the clergy. When Khomeini launched the occupation of the US embassy, the left either ignored the mass mobilisation which followed or tail-ended it uncritically. When Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980, left parties became enthusiastic supporters of the regime's orders rather than demanding a real mobilisation of the masses linked to political demands. As the IRP carefully consolidated its position through 1980/1, banning the press, purging the



Khomeini

army and government, the left found that the policy of subordinating the class struggle to Khomeini's 'anti-imperialism' was not enough to save it.

The largest left group, the Mujahadeen, abandoned mass struggle for guerrilla warfare in 1981. Crushed by repression they formed an alliance, the National Resistance Council, with bourgeois forces on a bourgeois programme.

Political independence

Had revolutionaries instead advanced a programme based on *class independence* from bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces (such as the IRP), and fought for the rights of nationalities, for land reform, for women, there was a chance of building a mass party capable of challenging first the old regime, then the fundamentalists. The Iranian left instead abandoned the class programme either to follow Khomeini, or his bourgeois opponents.

In any revolution, where the masses take control of their own destiny, there can be more than one outcome to the struggle as rival class forces fight for their interests. It was not guaranteed that a mass revolutionary leadership could have led the Iranian masses to liberation - but it was certainly guaranteed they would not if they did not try.

Feedback

We welcome letters on any subject but please keep them brief. Letters over 350 words will be cut. Send your letters to: **Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU**

Workers' democracy and the ex-USSR

After introducing the demand for a Constituent Assembly to resolve the question of independence for each republic in the Soviet Union your editorial (SO7) informs us that Yeltsin and his supporters are 'at best supporters of Western-style parliamentary democracy'.

What unfortunately is not made clear is that a constituent assembly is, in all essentials, nothing other than a 'Western style parliamentary democracy'.

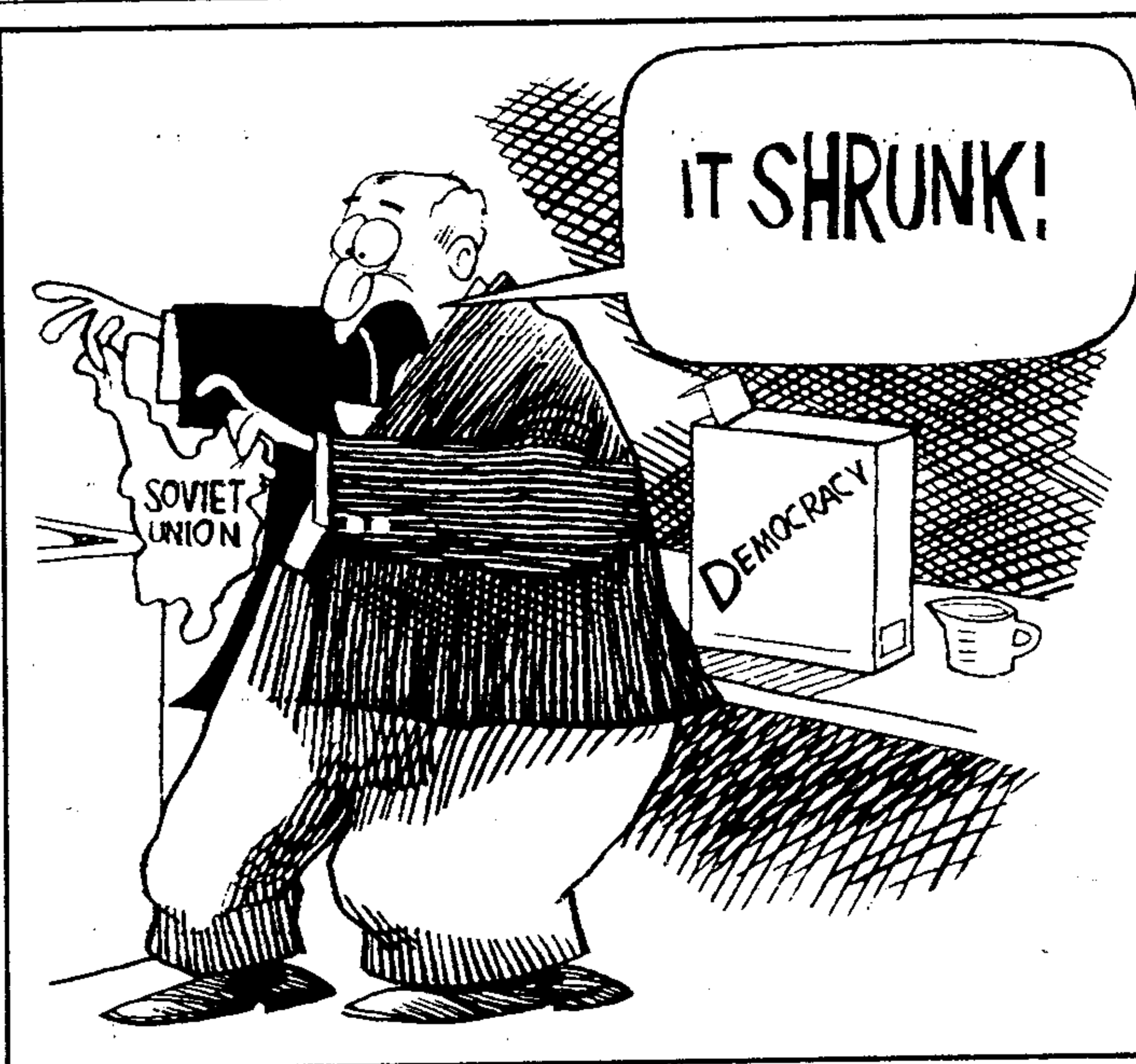
Despite this socialists must be support a constituent assembly, but must be clear that only a government based on *soviets* can really achieve the democratic aspirations of the exploited and oppressed in the republics.

Soviets are organisations of the

exploited and oppressed structured across local, town and national level that emerge in openly revolutionary periods. They operate not on 'universal franchise' but with positive discrimination for the exploited and oppressed and therefore rightly exclude representation of bourgeois elements and bureaucrats.

Soviets represent a qualitatively more participative and democratic form of government than any form of parliamentary 'democracy'. Despite illusions held by some socialists, a parliamentary form of government, by excluding the mass of people from any effective participation, essentially only represent the interests of a limited group of rulers.

In the case of the 'soviet' republics it is, for instance, possible that 'national' sections of the bureaucracy that have previously



Should we defend the Cuban revolution?

I am somewhat puzzled why your editorial on the collapse of Communism (SO7) sees as one of the main dangers the possible overthrow of the Castro regime in Cuba.

Of course the replacement of the current system with an American market model would not represent any improvement for Cuban workers.

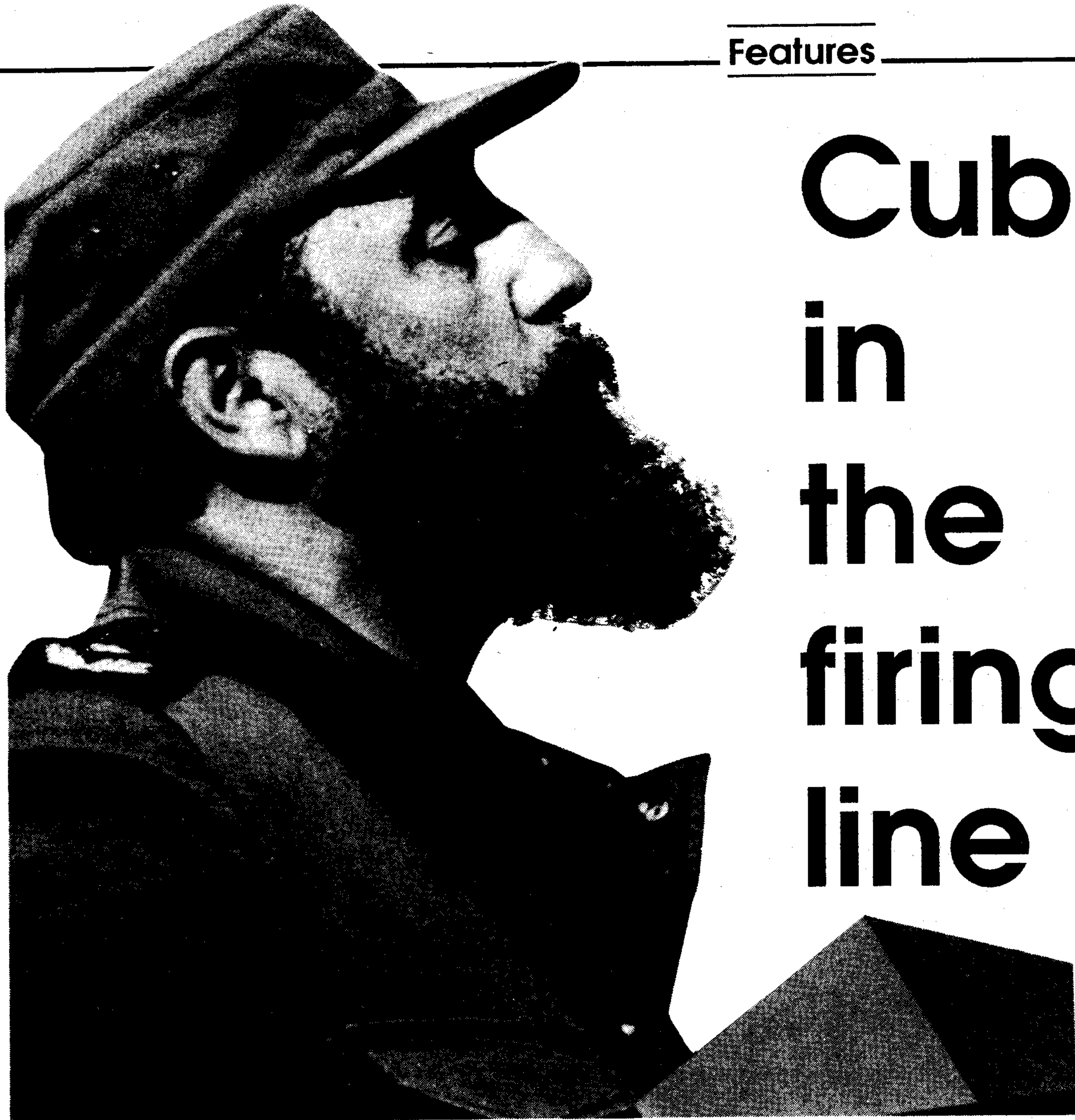
However, when I read Alain Krivine's and Jeanette Habel's account of their visit to Cuba and find that produce is being directed 'to the tourist hard currency sector which Cubans are banned from' I conclude this represents something more than 'tensions'.

Rather Cuba is a society just like those in eastern Europe before 1989 where workers are not in control.

Cuban workers will, hopefully, wish to defend themselves against American imperialism, but that is rather different to defending a revolution over which they have never had any control.

Roy Ruddit
NW London

Keith Flett
London N17



Cuba in the firing line

Gorbachev has unilaterally announced the impending withdrawal of Soviet troops from Cuba, amid intense speculation that the US administration might even be contemplating a military offensive to overturn Fidel Castro's regime. Defence of the Cuban revolution could again be placed on the agenda for marxists. But what kind of regime is it today? In July, ALAIN KRIVINE and JEANETTE HABEL, leaders of the French Trotskyist organisation, the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, visited Cuba. We reprint here the second part of an interview with them published in the LCR's newspaper 'Rouge'. The translation is by Patrick Baker.

Q: What is happening in terms of the bureaucratisation of the regime?

AK: It is clearly visible. Obviously neither the leadership nor the party are comparable to eastern Europe – they did not develop out of a real counter-revolution.

Among the 600,000 CP members the situation is contradictory. Some of them are amongst those who have worked the hardest – voluntary work, the war in Angola – while corruption has hit other layers.

It's the existence of a single party, tied into the state apparatus, and into the sapping of grass roots popular power, which provides the basis for a layer of bureaucrats.

We were often received by the 'party secretary', the only one who speaks, who knows everything and can go anywhere... And it is the same official who will tell you that the new line aims to give a voice to the people...

In a cigar factory it took me some time to discover that among those who said nothing and left the party secretary to talk, there was the factory director!

These methods are frequently denounced by leaders, but they don't put forward any concrete solution. For example, we went to a barracks, along with the general secretary of the Young Communists.

He made a two hour speech against bureaucracy to 50 officers. This was

"to resist the imperialist offensive, real changes are vital. Popular power must become real power, which is not limited to local government, but allows real workers' self-management"

often perceptive: 'At the base we have popular power, which is very popular, but has absolutely no power. At the top, we have an Assembly of the People which has considerable power but is cut off from the people.'

In fact, the functioning of the Cuban regime is based on a mixture of the traditions inherited from the armed struggle, and a Cuban copy of Soviet stalinism, with a considerable amount of insolence and critical spirit thrown in. The leadership knows how to listen, but governs in a paternalist way.

So there is a real problem with democracy, even if the Cuban government has never used the gulag. The demand for democratisation and debate is very strong. Surprisingly, there is not the same demand for pluralism. The hatred of the USA, the feeling of being the only country to resist imperialism, and the rejection of any idea of allowing a 'pro-american' party to form perhaps explain this.

Q: The IVth party congress has been set for October. What political and institutional changes have been proposed?

JH: The seriousness of the situation risks slowing down, if not preventing, essential political changes. And economic and social tensions haven't yet translated into politics. Everyone agrees that the dissident groups are not representative.

The big debates are taking place inside the party and the Young Communists, as well as some mass organisations.

The main discussions are on economic policy and political reform. The functioning of the party is also being questioned, particularly the way that leaderships are elected. They are trying to debureaucratise the bureaucracy without going to the root of the problem.

The 'bad years', when they 'copied' the USSR, are being questioned – while emphasising that the regime has always had a base incomparable with eastern Europe. But the problem is that they don't mention the basic causes of bureaucratisation and corruption – the monopoly on power, the single party system, and the privileges associated with it.

The single party system is justified by the need to defend the revolution and the understanding that 'divide and rule' is the USA's favourite tactic. But to resist the imperialist offensive, real changes are vital. Popular power must become real power, which is not limited to local government, but allows real workers' self-management.

Second, political pluralism is an absolute necessity. Debates and confrontations between different currents and policies are essential for political health.

This is the only way that the corruption linked to a monopoly of power can be avoided. It could allow politicisation, and combat passivity and demoralisation, or even a dangerous depoliticisation of young people.

Q: From what you've been saying, a noose is tightening around the neck of the Cuban revolution...

JH: It is at a turning point. The combination of external pressures, in an transformed, unfavourable international situation, is a considerable threat.

In 1983, there was the intervention in Grenada; in 1989, it was Panama; this year there was the Gulf war... Today the Americans' main aim is the defeat of the Cuban revolution.

Q: That poses decisive choices for the Cuban leadership – they form the backdrop to the IVth congress of the Communist Party. How is the debate going?

JH: The main theme of Bush's campaign, supported by the Cuban emigrants in Miami, is to say to Castro's leadership 'You say that your regime has enormous popular support. Prove it by organising elections.'

Not only will Washington not relax the blockade, but it makes any economic aid conditional on the holding of 'free elections'. The Cuban leadership must respond to this 'democratic' challenge.

The main decisions, which will be made at the Congress, obviously need to combine an economic response with a political and structural perspective. First of all, it seems likely that in the current difficult situation, the Cuban leadership will have to retreat.

That could take the form of economic reforms which allow mixed enterprises to develop – which is already happening, in fact – going further than what was allowed by the 1982 law, which allowed up to 50% ownership by foreign capital.

This could involve farming and small businesses, which would improve the chances of increasing the popular standard of living. But it would also give rise to social differentiation and corruption.

The alternative would be a sort of 'war communism' – but it's difficult to see how that would be viable for long. If you move towards economic openness, towards the penetration of foreign capital and privatisation, that poses the problem of the policies that inevitably accompany these measures.

One possibility would be a similar road to that taken in China and Vietnam. This is definitely the policy of some leaders.

Another possibility would be to grasp the nettle of measures acceptable to the Miami emigrants. This would mean an openness which was not based on increased popular control. On the contrary, it would allow the intervention of parties linked to the emigrants – which means, in the long term, the liquidation of the gains of the revolution.

At the moment, this is unthinkable. But it is openly supported by Gorbachev and might win support from Cuban bureaucrats who are looking for a new way to preserve their power.

A third possibility would be an increase in social control of the towns and the factories, with the aim of limiting price rises and corruption.

The dilemma facing the sections of society who are most conscious of the problems facing the revolution is that they fear that opening up means risking US intervention.

But on the other hand, isn't allowing the Cuban people to intervene directly into this crisis essential for the unity which is needed to defend the country?

The other options are much more dangerous. Also, even those who support the 'Vietnamese' or 'Chinese' road are asking what such a policy would mean 100 kilometres from the USA. Tiananmen Square in Havana would be the end of the revolution.

But let's be modest. No-one has a ready recipe for a third world island of 10 million people, trying to build socialism in such an unfavourable international situation. This is why there is such a need for solidarity.

Q: So what should we do?

JH: At the same time as questioning political choices and certain policies, we shouldn't forget our primary duty – solidarity. The Cuban revolution is a real revolution which still has real popular support, even if it's decreasing.

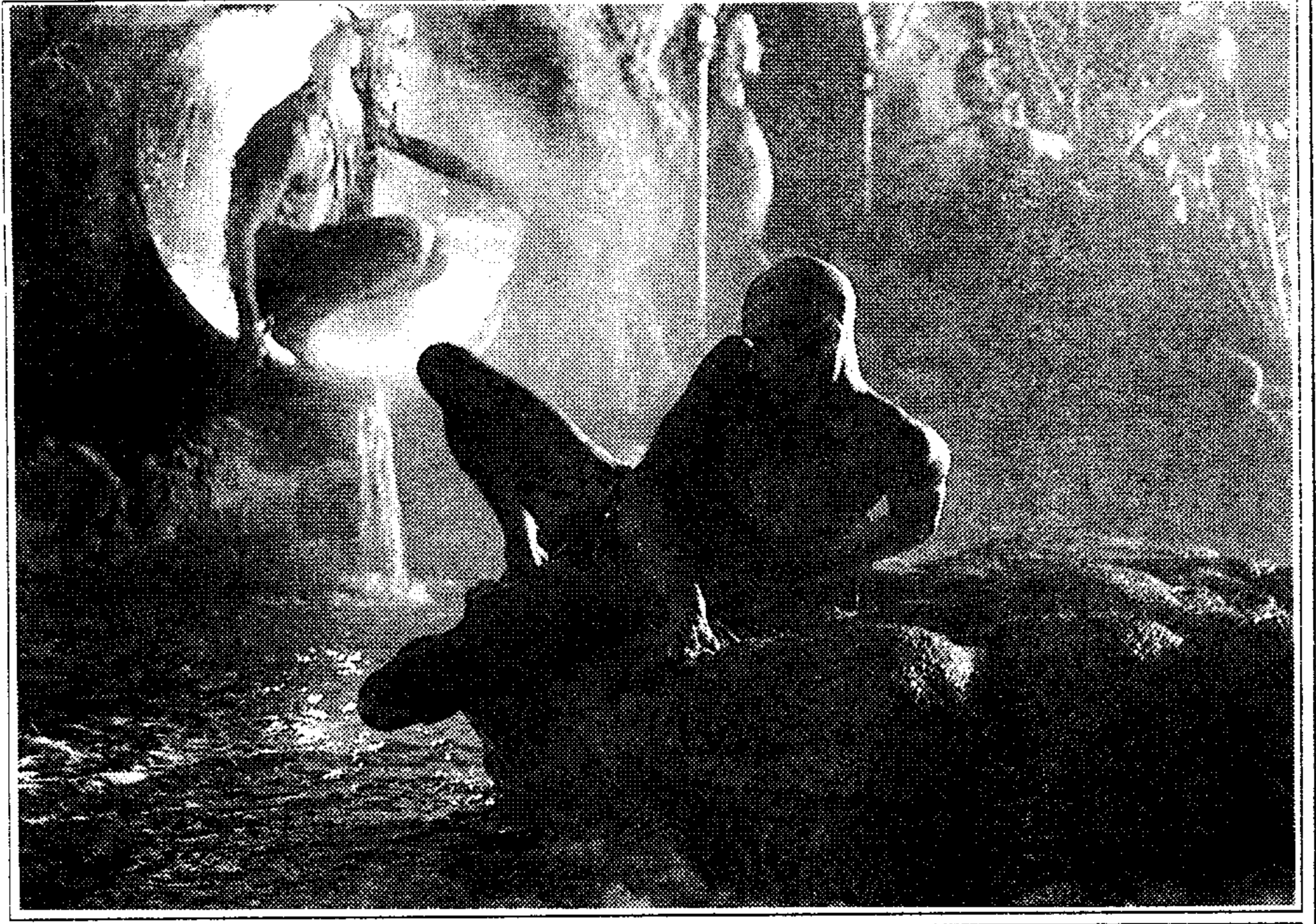
Taking into account the gravity of the situation, the question is how long that support will last.

This is where solidarity comes in. Obviously, it will be easier to extend that support when the limitations on democracy are lifted.

AK: As you can see, we are not uncritical supporters of the Cuban regime and Janette is right to emphasise the seriousness of the situation.

That's why we can't play Pontius Pilate in the battle between the Cuban revolution and its opponents, East and West. An imperialist victory in Cuba would be a defeat for people everywhere, not just Latin America.

We have many things to say about democracy in Cuba, but it's for the Cuban people to sort these things out – certainly not the US administration.



Shakespeare in a way he could never have imagined

Prospero's Books

Directed by Peter Greenaway.

Reviewed by Louise Holloway

It is surprising to learn that every line of this adaptation of the *Tempest* is in Shakespeare's original text,

because Peter Greenaway has turned the play into something which is entirely his own.

It has his trademark of the spectacular use of colour and lighting, which has been brilliantly filmed.

The film stars a very regal John Gielgud who stands resplendent over his magical creatures in a pageant of miraculous images.

However as Gielgud speaks

all the parts, he becomes omnipresent and adds to the film's inaccessibility – not least because this prevents the other characters from becoming fully developed.

Therefore only Caliban (played by Michael Clarke) comes close to his potential.

Agony

His is a devious creature contorted in agony, played in an amazingly sinister ballet.



The stuff that dreams are made on: Miranda sleeps (top left) while Caliban broods and Prospero tries to figure out the special effects.

Even here though, Greenaway does not go on to explore either Caliban's oppression or the acceptance of Prospero's conquest of the Island.

Unlike Greenaway's previous 'The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover', this film does not aim to shock. Very few left the cinema I was in before the end.

However, like his previous work, prepare for a visual feast, but do not expect to be able to sit back and relax.

It is hard to follow Gielgud's every word and the chronology of the plot. At times it is frustrating if you don't know the text of the play inside-out, but it is a rewarding experience in the end.

Blinkered view of Beijing bureaucracy

The Road to Tiananmen Square

Reviewed by Louise Holloway

The Road to Tiananmen Square claims to be 'not yet another history of China in the twentieth century but rather a socialist explanation of that history' – a difficult task in less than 150 pages.

Nonetheless, the strength of this book lies in its excellent and accessible accounts of working class struggles from 1925-27, and since 1979. Especially good is the highlighting of the autonomous workers' movement's role in the 1989 uprising, so absent in the mainstream press.

However, the book fails to look at what was distinctive about Maoism, as a variant of Stalinism, and why it still holds sway among many third world revolutionaries. Indeed, the book argues that all socialist illusions in Maoism have been shattered – a very Western-centric view.

Distinctive

What was distinctive about Maoism? It was contradictory. Firstly, it was born out of the worker's defeat in the second 1925-1927 revolution, due largely to the disastrous role of the Stalinist Comintern. However, it also represented the theorising of a reaction to Stalin's ultra-left posturings after that defeat.

Maoism promoted the peasantry to fundamental importance in the

revolution. Mao's strategy was that of protracted peasant-backed guerilla war, culminating in the countryside encircling the cities. Alongside this though, he continued to use Stalinist bureaucratic methods of organisation and leadership.

Against this, Charlie Hore claims 'the civil war was not fought as a guerilla war, but as a set piece battle against two regular armies, with the mass of the population as mere spectators'. I find little evidence for such a claim.

While the Red Army was built on a few fragments of the working class, it was mainly a peasant army. It won the peasants' active support through assisting in the redistribution of land and through being the only force fighting against the Japanese invasion. These struggles were a vital component in the success of the CCP.

Again Hore exaggerates when he deals with Mao's theory of the United Front. This too had contradictions.

In one sense it operated like a typical popular front so that during the war against Japan even the landowning classes and the pro-British/US comprador bourgeoisie were included in it.

However, because Mao's strategy subordinated other forces to the revolutionary party, Hore overstates the moderation the front imposed on CCP policies in North China. Indeed in many places once the land reform had begun it was difficult to put the brakes on.

Also, it is equally wrong to say, as Hore does that because Mao prioritised the revolutionary party this

means that the 'CCP stood above all classes, acting in their own interest as a future ruling class.' Hore – a member of the Socialist Workers Party and echoing its 'state capitalist' analysis – claims the CCP became a ruling class after the 1949 revolution dissolves. Yet, as we have already seen, what marked out Maoism was its linkage to peasant struggles. He says nothing about the change in property relations that the revolution brought about. Still less is said about the poverty of the CCP cadre.

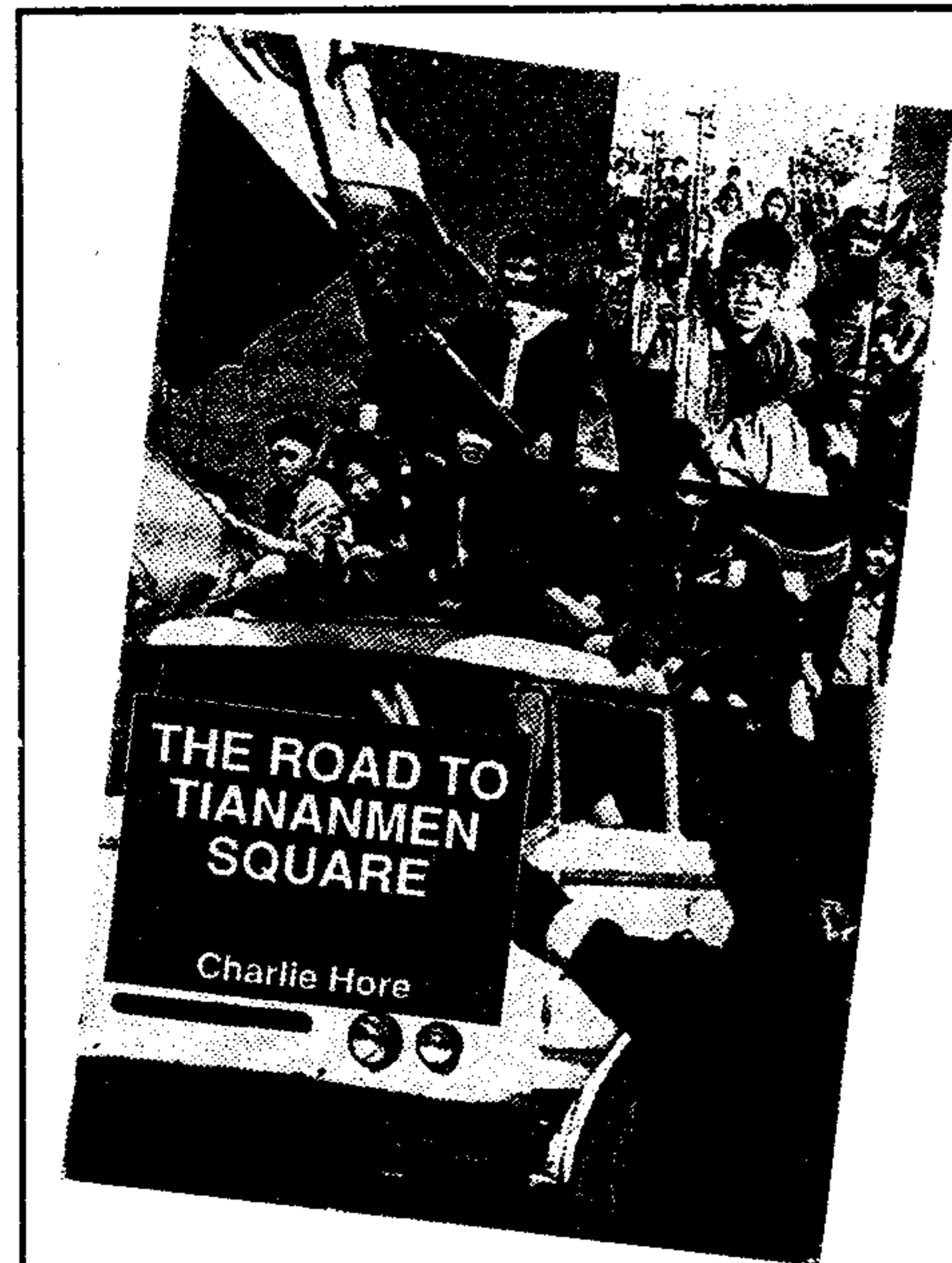
Indeed one wonders whether Hore sees the revolution in a positive light. He states 'the elimination of the landlords, moneylenders, warlords and all the other parasites of the old order made possible the more efficient exploitation of the workers and peasants' by the CCP!

What can be said is that the Chinese revolution inflicted a world historic defeat on the imperialist system.

Stalinist

However, it underwent rapid bureaucratisation. China followed the Stalinist conception of socialism in one country and subordinated the interests of world revolutionary struggle to the interests of its own bureaucracy.

This can be most clearly seen in its foreign policy. For example it supported unreservedly the collaboration with the bourgeoisie that led to the tragic defeat of the Indonesian CP. It refused to criticise Pinochet and gave only limited aid to the Vietnamese Communist Party. Also, it violently suppressed Tibetan action



for self-determination.

Power struggle

Moving on, Hore correctly characterises the cultural revolution as 'a vicious and bloody power struggle' in which millions were jailed and thousands died. But this again shows the Maoist method of leadership had more links with the masses than other models of Stalinism.

China, a backward country which had survived a civil war, needed the active support of the masses, especially the peasants. Yet mass mobilisations were used in the interests of the internal factions of the Chinese bureaucracy. Once such mobilisations got out of control, for example when youth began acting on their own in the cultural revolution, severe repression followed.

Hore gives good coverage of more recent economic reforms from 1979. He makes the important point that women's liberation in the countryside has taken a step backwards, with the family once again becoming the unit

of production.

Equally, many have argued that Tiananmen Square occurred because China had undergone Perestroika without Glasnost. Hore, rightly, points out that democracy is not a requirement for a successful market.

As for the opposition to the regime since 1979, the account is generally excellent. However, it is rather too much to equate Chris Harman's analysis of western students 'thrown into intellectual turmoil' in the 1960s, with the Chinese students opposing

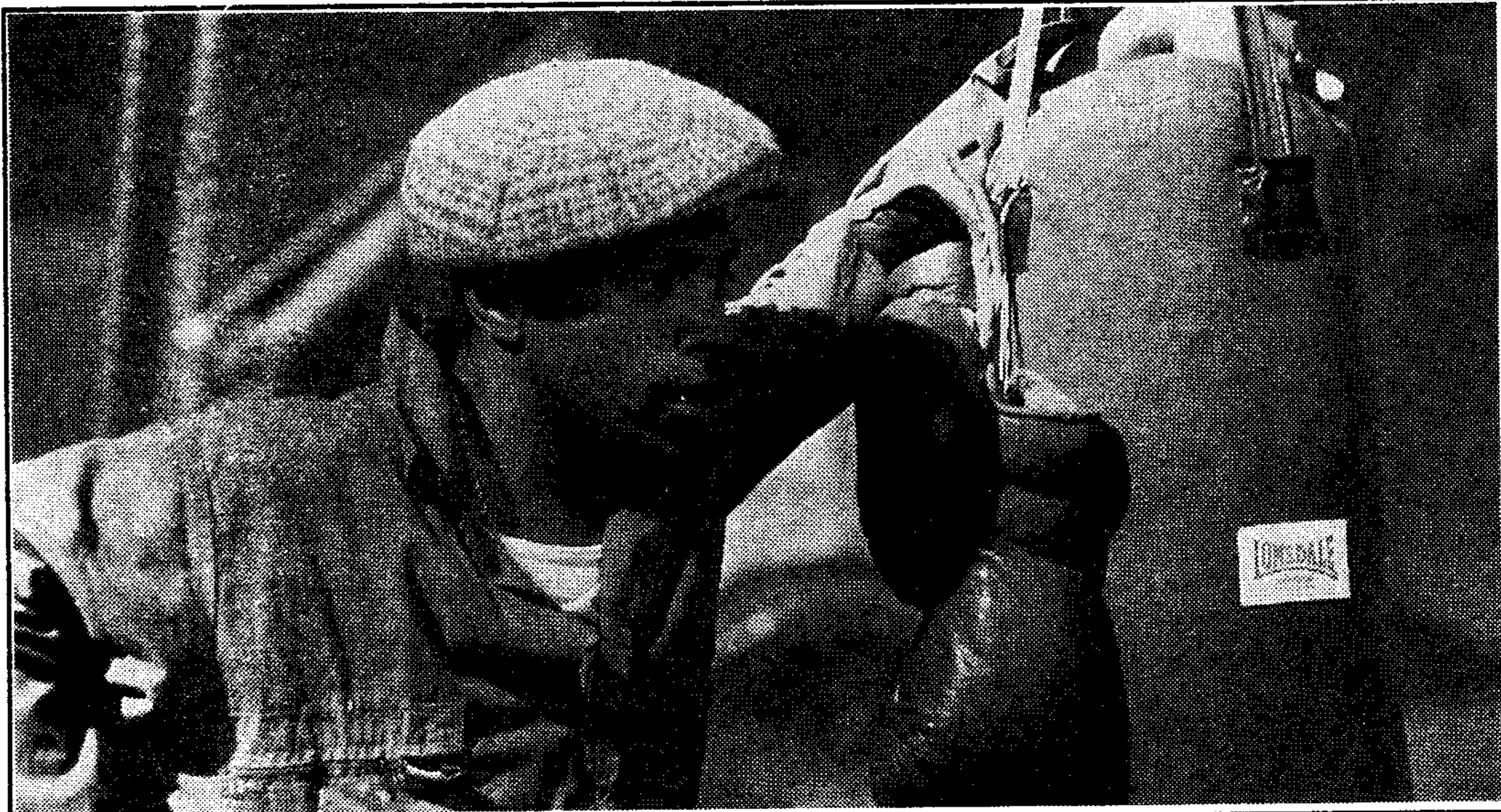
bureaucracy and corruption in the 1980s.

Workers

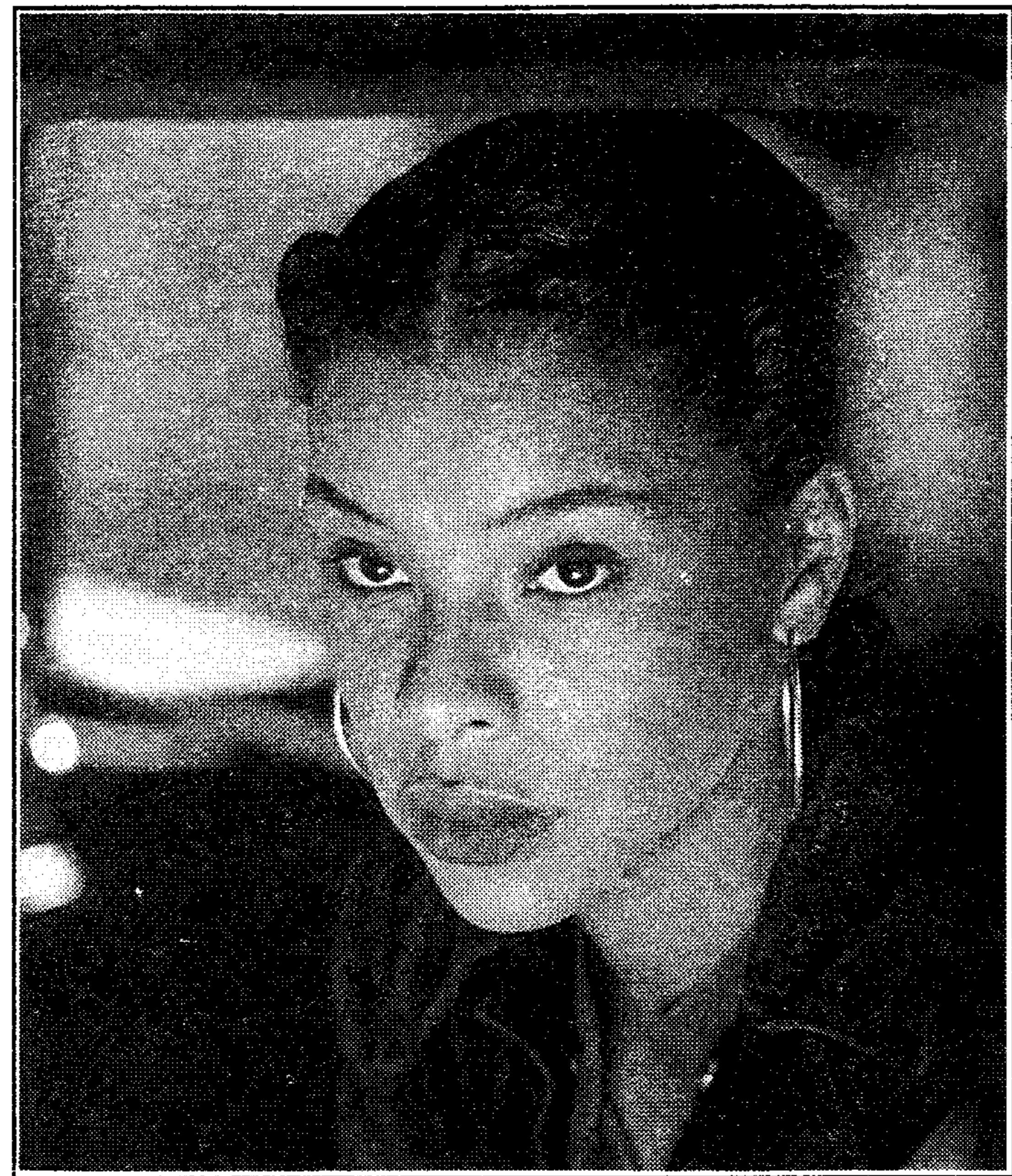
Nonetheless, Hore's book is a valuable account of the action of workers in this period, and the need for the independent organisation of workers federations. Students sought workers' support but mainly to swell numbers on the streets – not to use collective industrial power.

Despite this, all across China, workers marched and went on strike. Railway workers allowed students to travel free of charge in Beijing. Clearly the authorities were more worried by the action of the workers, as can be seen in the far longer sentences given to those organising strike action.

Also, it is here that hope for political revolution remains. The workers' independent organisations have survived in some form even in the face of severe repression. Indeed, this summer has seen a new wave of strike action.



Issac Julien's 'Young Soul Rebels' gives a Black and gay youth perspective to 1977 and the era of punk.



FILMS

Funking the Jubilee

Young Soul Rebels

Reviewed by Sam Inman

If, like me, your recollections of the 1977 Silver Jubilee are of painting countless Union Jacks to brighten up the drab London Brick Company walls of the housing estate where you lived, then this is the film to see.

Issac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels* sings a different song. There're not too many commercial films that combine a murder story with an exploration of Black youth culture in the era of punk, Black gay mens' sexuality, the SWP and the Anti-Nazi League, all against the backdrop of a patriotic red, white and blue London Borough of Hackney council estate. The ambition alone is reason enough to pay the cinema a visit.

Sexuality

Chris (Valentine Nonyela) and Caz (Mo Sesay) are two 17 year old Black soul DJs, who run a pirate soul radio station, 'Soul Patrol'. Chris is straight, Caz is gay. Throughout the film Caz's sexuality is dealt with wholly positively (Julien himself is a Black gay man) and certainly not seen by Chris as a barrier to their friendship.

The murder that the film is set around is that of another Black gay man, T.J., at the local cottage. (For the uninitiated, cottages are areas that gay men frequent for casual sex). T.J.'s murder is seen differently through different eyes.

The murder of a Black man is seen as a racist attack on the Black community as a whole, at a time of feverish British nationalism. For the gay men who hang out at the cottage, there is the feeling that it could have been any one of them - yet another example of murderous homophobia. The police are fairly accurately presented as

treating the murder in a totally racist, homophobic and dismissive way.

Tensions

Chris and Caz become entangled in the search to find the killer. This is at the same time as they are frantically preparing for their alternative to the nationalistic celebrations - a 'Funk the Jubilee' special pirate broadcast. The tensions abound and their friendship is stretched by Chris's individualism and Caz's love affair with a rather naive white punk SWP member.

Whilst the film can be praised for dealing with issues not normally explored in the cinema (although the film does not have, predictably, mass distribution), there were weaknesses.

The female characters in the film are, by and large, restricted to Chris's mum, his sister, and the woman who later becomes his girlfriend, Tracy (Sophie Okonedo). All, including Tracy - the main woman character - are presented in a way that makes them subordinate to 'the boys'.

Lesbians

There was also not a lesbian in sight! Even if there was no central lesbian character in the script, surely in the mixed club scenes (where gay men were seen kissing), there could have been room for some positive images of lesbians.

On a more positive note though, through looking at the issues of racism and homophobia largely within a youth culture context, the film does well to contrast the hope that was very much in evidence in the Black soul scene, with the nihilistic, almost self-destructive, largely white punk generation.

One final point. I hope that Julien's next feature film will avoid the pitfall of naff, cutie-pie endings. A bit more oomph please!

GBH and the Prolekult

In the last issue Steven Taylor accused Socialist Outlook and the left in general of over-hasty condemnation of Alan Bleasdale's *GBH* television series, and of a too-narrow political assessment of art in general. Here PAUL CLARKE replies.

Steve Taylor thought our article on *GBH* was too severe; I thought it was soft. In the series Bleasdale does portray state intelligence forces and some right wingers as sinister; but *GBH* was full of caricatured venom for the socialist left.

The supporters of the thinly-disguised Derek Hutton character are pictured as moronic thugs, ready to resort routinely to violence. They intimidate schoolchildren and beat up blacks to provoke street violence. Is that what the Militant tendency or the rest of the far-left really does? Do me a favour.

Bleasdale's hero is the

school teacher played by Michael Palin. He stands up to the left bully-boys, and mobilises normal 'decent' working class people against them. In a crucial speech he tells the militants - 'the problem with you is that you've only read one book'. (Marx's *Capital*).

The message is clear. The far left are loud-mouthed ignoramuses, their heads filled with half-baked dogmas. Ordinary working class people will sort them out and see them off.

Can anyone doubt that this is the Neil Kinnock-Eric Hammond view of socialism and the working class? Steve's argument that *GBH* was condemned on a couple of episodes is beside the point; a lot of people only saw one or two episodes, and the rest of the episodes were just as bad.

Steve's accusation that pointing these things out amounts to a neo-Stalinist view, or more generally that the left has a view of culture and art similar to that of Stalinism during the *Prolekult* era is far-fetched. The view that art is either politically 'correct' or rubbish is totally discredited on the left. Of course art is a 'highly

mediated' product which cannot be simply assessed in terms of political correctness. Steve doesn't have to lecture anybody about that.

But neither can any political criteria be discarded when assessing artistic products. British drama is highly political. Is it impermissible, an example of Stalinist dogmatism, to think that *Rambo* is reactionary drivel? Or that the book and movie on the Greek civil war, *Eleni*, while having many merits, gives a one-sided picture of ELAS and the Greek Communists? Or that *Hidden Agenda* has political as well as artistic merits? Or that the work of Madonna or Arnold Schwarzenegger has some political implications? What's the problem of including political assessments in an overall account of artistic production?

A piece of drama can be politically right-on and appallingly done. Or artistically clever and politically drivel. *GBH* was very slick. Its overall political message was utter poison, not just in its portrayal of the far left but its patronising view of the working class. To be accused of neo-Stalinism for pointing this out is ridiculous.

Financial crisis grips Tories' opted-out NHS Trusts

Geoff Ryan (former Charge Nurse, Central Manchester Health Authority)

WHEN Kenneth Clarke gave the go-ahead to the first wave of NHS Trusts it was claimed that they would provide value for money.

In the forefront of the mad scramble to 'opt out' was Central Manchester Health Authority which was so enthusiastic about the Tory plans that it 'opted out' every single service it controlled. A few months later a balance sheet can be drawn.

In the first three months of its existence the Central Manchester Trust managed to lose an incredible £1.25 million

- from a supposed position of financial stability in April of this year.

Of course the managers responsible for this mess are still in their jobs - apart, of course, from those who have been promoted. It is the patients and staff of Central Manchester who are having to pay.

Measures taken to reduce the deficit include a ban on the use of Agency nurses or Bank nurses - leading to increased staff shortages on the wards. A freeze on all posts, again exacerbating staff shortages.

Student nurses

Student nurses, who had only recently won the right to be treated as 'supernumerary' on wards were once again to be classed as part of the available work-force. (The only excep-

tions were those nurses training under Project 2000, who have to be considered 'supernumerary'). Two entire intakes of Psychiatric students have been cancelled.

In addition 20 or so nurses who work in the Manchester Clinic have been made redundant. While the Manchester Clinic is the private patient wing of Manchester Royal Infirmary and should be closed down, the staff made redundant were all NHS employees.

In the Department of Psychiatry Gaskell House was closed down and patients transferred. Management promised that if staff agreed to this closure they would not freeze posts. Immediately the closure was carried out they went back on their word.

The result of these cuts (which are only the tip of the

iceberg) is that patients and staff are suffering. Services which previously provided very high levels of care can no longer do so.

No care at all

Others, particularly community based services are sometimes unable to give any care at all and have established 'waiting lists'.

The cuts by the local council - both in its own provision of services and in its grants to the voluntary sector - mean there are people who are urgently in need of care who are literally receiving none, or are having to be cared for by already stressed relatives.

The financial crisis in Central Manchester is a direct result of the unleashing of 'market forces' on the NHS.

Whilst some of the £1.25 million deficit can be blamed on incompetence in drawing up budgets (forgetting to include items of major expenditure, for example) part of the problem also stems from the loss of a major contract with Clwyd Health authority.

But fighting over such contracts - with inevitable winners and losers - is precisely what the Tories' health policies are all about.

Central Manchester has so far managed to lose £1.25 million even though they are currently cushioned from the full effects of 'market forces'.

After next April, when the market is given free rein, the present financial plight of Central Manchester will probably appear relatively attractive.



The Ambulance workers' strike showed that mass popular support exists for the NHS

Defending jobs, improving services?

Jeff Lowe

With United at the top of the First Division (at least at the time of writing) and the Hacienda finally reprieved all could be thought to be well in Manchester.

Matters are a little different, however, both for those who provide Manchester City Council's services and those who make use of them.

It certainly requires an extremely distorted logic to see how closing Northfields, Hayhead View and Briarfields Elderly Persons' Homes can be equated with the City Council's boast of Defending Services. Similarly with turning Hillside, Weylands and Woodville EPHs into day centres. Some of the residents have lived in these homes for over 20 years.

Community centres

In addition four Community Centres are threatened with closure: Aquarius, Colony Centre, Paget St. and Ladybarn.

Nor is it only elderly who are being hit. The Dommatt St centre for disabled young people and the Raglan day centre (for mentally disabled young people) are also under threat whilst another centre for mentally disabled young people (Ross Place) is subject to review.

With only a very few exceptions all funding from the

Council to voluntary agencies is to be cut. While the average reduction is 5-15% some groups will lose their entire council funds.

There is a certain irony in some of the cuts. Briarfields EPH and the Aquarius Centre are both in Hulme, which has just won a 'competition' for increased funds from central government.

Battle

Whether this money will help reduce the long-running battle between the Council and the well-organised Hulme tenants' movement remains to be seen.

It is more likely that the cash will be used to continue 'yuppiefying' Hulme at the expense of the local residents. What is clear is that elderly people have no place in this scheme.

How about Defending Jobs, the other half of the Council's slogan? The Council is currently looking for about 200 redundancies in its Direct Works department and the City architects are also wanting to shed jobs.

The Council funded GM Buses has threatened 500 job losses. Over the last few months there have been disputes with staff in Socials services, Housing, Leisure Services and Libraries - at the very least.

Filofax

The Council leaders have, however, managed to find enough cash to provide every councillor with a leather

bound Filofax. No doubt this is to ensure they don't forget when they next have to cut services to the elderly, close swimming baths and libraries or call for redundancies.

To make sure opposition to its policies is limited to the 'left' Council leadership is carrying out a purge of all those councillors who refuse to implement Tory policies.

Seven councillors have already been removed from all posts in Council committees and banned from representing the City in any capacity - (no chance of them being invited along when the Council leaders go of on their next expenses paid junket in a further fruitless bid to hold the Olympic Games in Manchester!)

Two of the seven are facing expulsion because they attended an anti-Poll Tax picket in Liverpool at the same time as Lesley Mahmood.

Final warning

By the same logic everyone who attended Eric Heffer's funeral at the same time as Lesley Mahmood could be open to expulsion. A further five councillors are on their 'final warning'.

Briarfields EPH stands on the site of a house at one time inhabited by Charlotte Bronte. Whilst Hulme may not provide the bleak and magnificent scenery of Haworth Moor that inspired Wuthering Heights the goings on of Manchester's 'left' councillors would surely have urged Charlotte to create another literary master-piece.

Campaign against witch hunt is launched

The national Campaign Against the Witch Hunt was launched at a successful meeting in Manchester on Saturday 21st September.

There were over 70 people in attendance. The meeting agreed that the campaign should be based on the broadest possible unity amongst those wishing to fight against the witch hunt, and to build links between local campaigns fighting the witch hunt in their area. They agreed a resolution calling for a unitary non-sectarian campaign against all witch hunts and for democracy in the Labour Party's internal affairs.

For further information about the campaign or to affiliate at a cost of £10 please write c/o 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Estate, London, SW9

Fight on in Post Office

by a UCW postal worker
The leadership of the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) has finally begun to respond to attacks on its membership by the Post Office management.

The reorganisation of administrative centres will mean the loss of clerical jobs through the introduction of tests for all clerical staff.

The UCW executive council has been slow to respond, but when the Post Office refused further discussions, the council agreed to instruct members to boycott the tests. In the Parcels sector nearly three months of pay talks have failed to produce an acceptable offer - just 4% over 18 months. The council has decided to put the offer to the membership with a recommendation of rejection.

With other sectional talks in crisis, the three main sections of the UCW membership could be heading for confrontation with the Post Office.

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Health workers strike back

By Harry Sloan
MILITANCY among health workers is rising as the Tories' health 'reforms' run into ever-growing crisis.

In London, a successful ballot for a one-day token strike against ward closures and job losses at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women was followed by solid action from COHSE and NUPE members.

Around 50 people joined the picket line at lunch time, while leaflets warning of the threat to the very existence of the hospital, as Bloomsbury and Islington health authority searches frantically for cash savings.

NUPE and COHSE are calling for women and labour movement organisations throughout London to help in the fight to save the capital's last surviving specialist women's hospital.

Contractors

A strong response from nursing staff in South Wales against the threat to standards posed by private contractors helped win a substantial victory over cleaning firm HCS, which has just taken over the domestic contract at Cardiff's Ely Hospital.

350 nursing staff voted in a ballot to take industrial action if necessary to challenge the appalling standards and inadequate staffing levels of the contractors.

This followed an earlier fightback by cleaning staff and nurses which had forced the firm to reinstate a supervisor sacked for complaining at having to work an unscheduled 14-hour shift.

The threat of industrial action, and the likelihood that it could spread to other hospitals covered by the firm led to a rapid climbdown by the firm's management, who have brought in numbers of extra staff and provided the cleaning materials which were lacking when they began the contract.

In South London, solid strike action from domestic staff employed by contractors RCO at the Maudsley Hospital secured substantial pay and conditions improvements.

Way forward

COHSE, which organised the strike, argues that this shows the way for other low-paid contractors' staff working in many hospitals at below even NHS pay rates.

Meanwhile it is becoming ever more obvious that the Tories' 'internal market' system in the NHS is leaving not only opted-out Trust hospitals, but many other units desperately short of money.

As managers hold back on announcing cuts and closures to spare government blushes in the event of an early election, they are storing up even bigger cutbacks to come in the winter as they face the need to balance their books by next April.

Already it seems clear that Health Secretary William Waldegrave will have to intervene to restrict the full implementation of the internal market next year if he is not to trigger a huge cash crisis and bankruptcies in well-known London hospitals.

The next issue of Socialist Outlook will carry a full analysis of the looming crisis in the NHS.

Greens lurch to the right

by Sam Inman
Sara Parkin and Jonathon Porritt are now effectively the first individual leaders in the history of the British Green Party.

They were elected as the party's national speakers after the 'professionalist-centralist' Green 2000 motion won the day at the party's AGM in Wolverhampton.

The Green 2000 current, as reported in SO7, campaigned hard to win a large number of proxy votes. This included publishing an impressive list of supporters. The 'big names' not commonly associated with the party itself included David Gee (director of *Friends of the Earth*), Edward Goldsmith (editor, *The Ecologist*), and Satish Kumar (editor, *Resurgence*).

Now that the Green 2000 current have won control of the party, they face the awesome project of transforming it into a viable electoral concern with politics virtually indistinguishable from the Liberal Democrats.

The left in the party put up a spirited, if unorganised, fight. They warned that if passed, Green 2000 would result in the active base of the party dropping out of party work. It is this layer that has held the party together over crisis-ridden recent months.

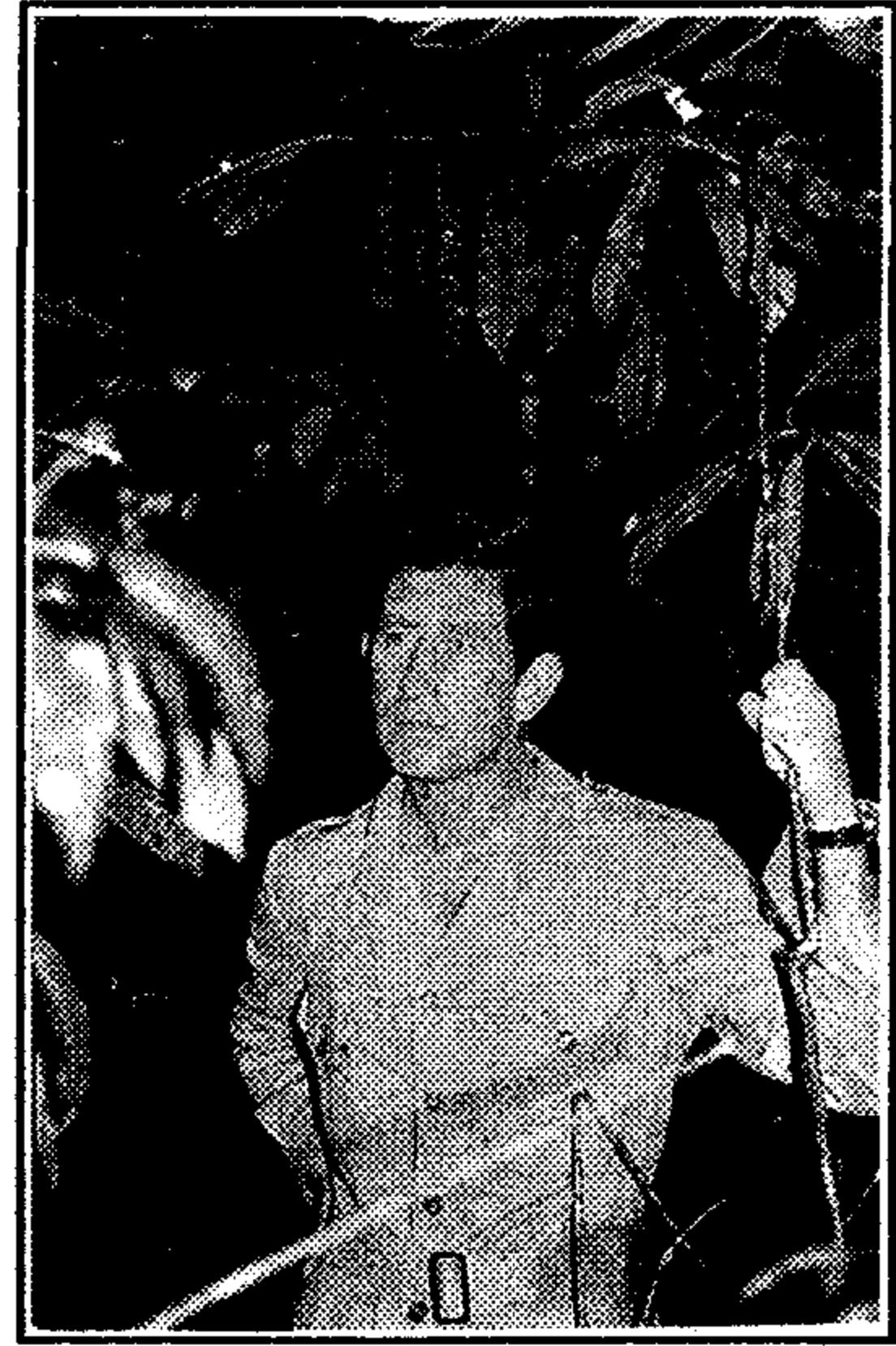
The lurch to the right was also seen in the most acrimonious debate at the AGM, outside of Green 2000, around Workers' Rights. Developed by trade unionists in the Green Party, the motion would be pretty uncontroversial in left circles, but the right-wing hated it. They didn't like the way it posed the relationship between the boss and the worker as a disharmonious one!

The AGM also voted down a resolution calling for a minimum wage. Opponents argued that the present Green Party policy, a Basic Income Scheme (BIS), did away with the need for such a safety net by guaranteeing a basic income for all, regardless of work status. Supporters argued that since no-one had adequately explained the transition to the BIS, a minimum wage had to be enforced.

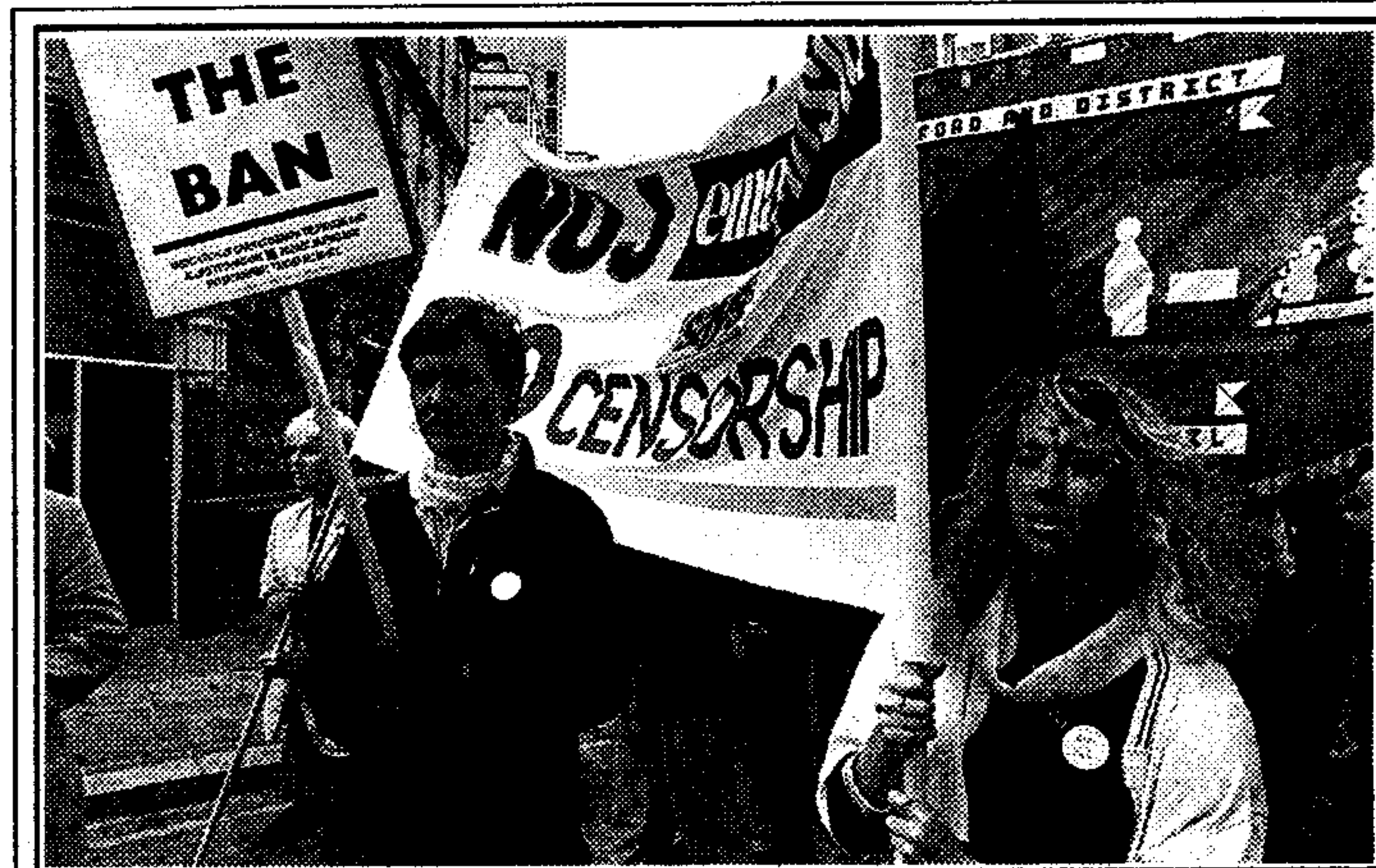
Despite the fact that the Green Party has obviously swung rightwards, there remains a small number of com-

mitted socialists inside. Socialists in the Labour Party and in the Socialist Movement should be discussing with them ways in which we can work together.

Women for Socialism is attempting to do that, and this year held a fringe meeting for the first time at the AGM. There was general and frank discussion about the problems that socialist feminists face as women in working class politics. There was also agreement that we needed to do more in terms of working together, particularly drawing on the positive experiences of the anti-Gulf War movement. Interestingly, the problems that women in the Green Party face are by no means dissimilar to those of us elsewhere.



Prince Charles: friends in high places for the Greens



Journalists fight anti-union offensive and censorship

by Patrick Baker, NUJ London Magazine

Journalists in the magazine and book sector are preparing for a national day of action on September 27. The action is aimed at strengthening the fightback against the employers' derecognition offensive.

The day of action will be organised on a chapel level, with groups of journalists pressing claims for union recognition against individual employers. The action, organised by the NUJ Magazine and Book Industrial Council, is long overdue - the last year has seen

numerous attacks on union rights in this sector.

Where there are too few union members, or the chapel is too weak, journalists should support the lunchtime picket of Marshall Cavendish on Wardour Street, a long-running struggle against derecognition.

NUJ activists should also try to get involved in the Censors and Secrets conference on October 19. The delegate conference has been organised on the third anniversary of the broadcasting ban against Sinn Fein.

The conference should be a useful opportunity to organise media workers to campaign around issues of state censorship.

Censors and Secrets

Delegate Conference against Censorship

Saturday OCTOBER 19, 10am - 6pm

Britannia Street Conference Centre

Kings Cross, London WC1

Delegates £10 Individuals £5

Booking forms from

Tim Gopsill (NUJ) 071-278-7916

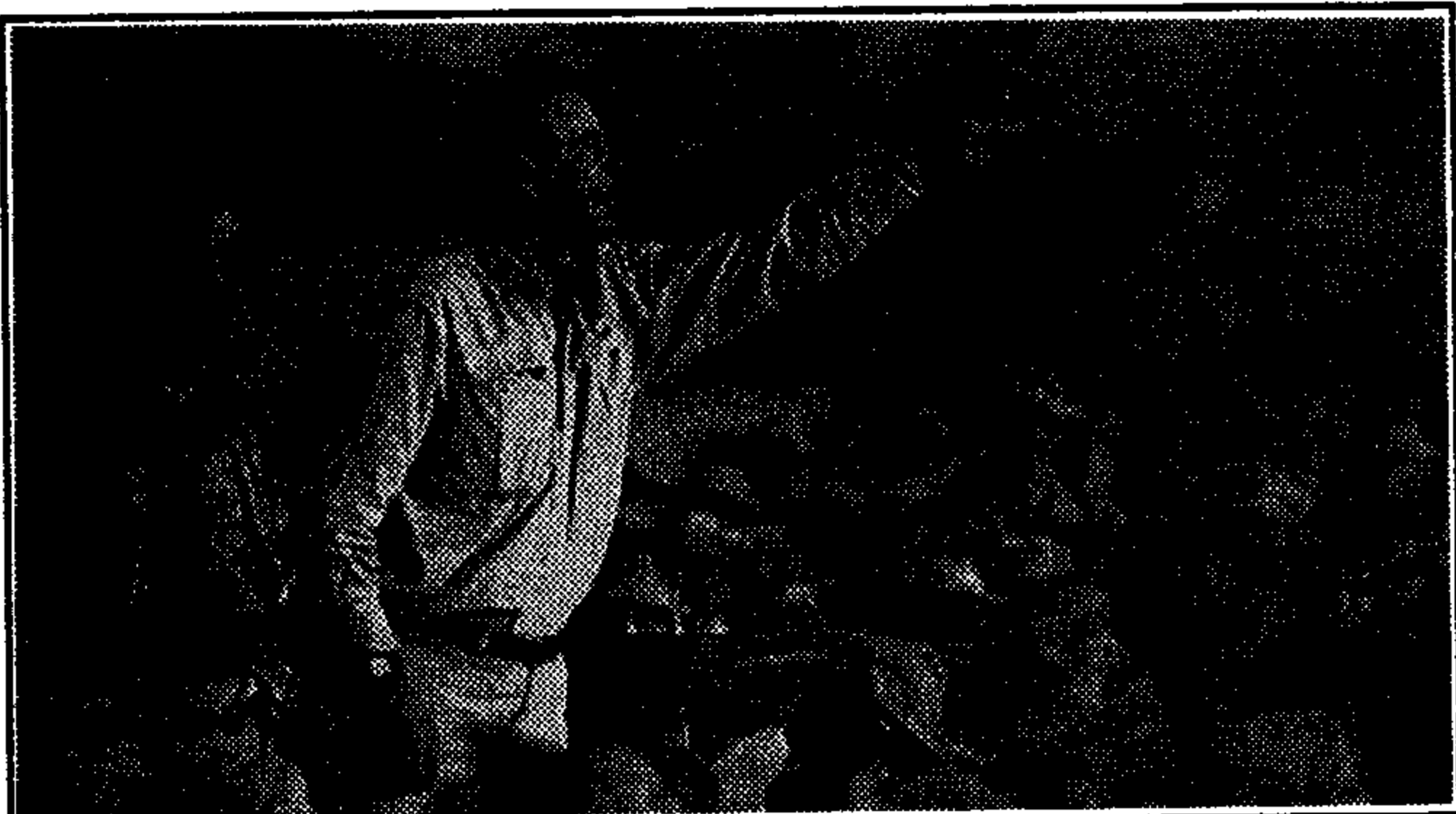
socialist
OUTLOOK Rally November 29, 7.30pm

Socialism in the new world crisis

Ernest Mandel (United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

Janette Habel (author of 'Cuba')

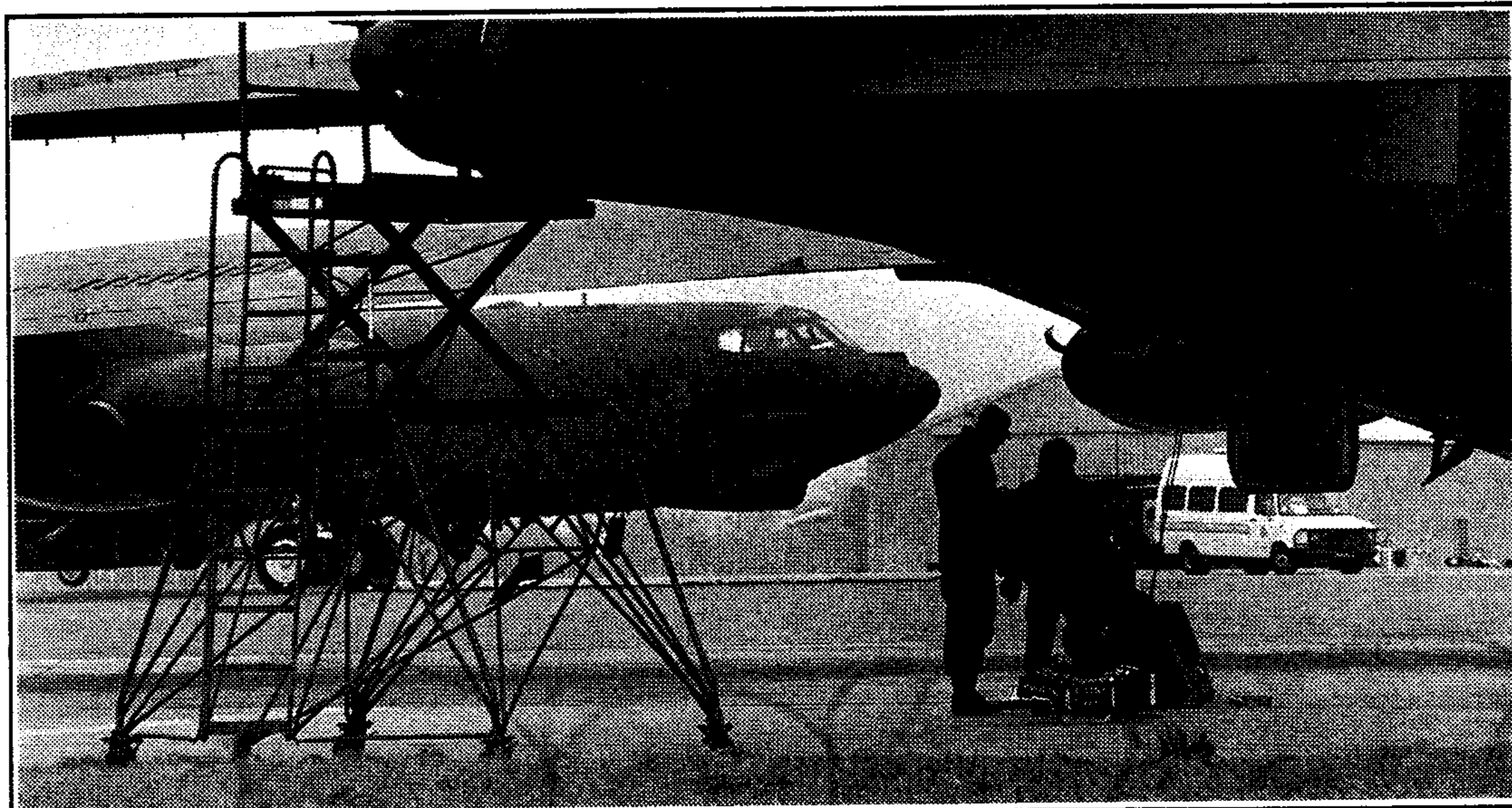
Kingsway Princeton College, Grays Inn Road, London WC1



A new threat of genocide as Bush readies the bombers

New US threat to Iraq

PHOTO: John Harris



Loading up the B52s for air-raids during the Gulf War

GEORGE Bush's threat to dispatch fighters to Saudi Arabia marks an escalation in the US proxy-war aimed at the peoples of the Middle East.

Though Bush has claimed 'There are no threats, that's not what this is about', the claim lacked something in

credibility. Taken with the already substantial US naval forces in the Gulf and eastern Mediterranean, these add up to a substantial military arsenal on Iraq's doorstep. It is a new threat to the Iraqi people - those that suffered most in the Gulf war - to add to the economic war of starvation waged since formal war ended.

And socialists should not be fooled by the US administration's 'UN rhetoric'. First, the use of fighters and bombers to 'take out selected nuclear sites' could wreak a level of destruction through fallout that would make Chernobyl pale into insignificance.

Second, the record of the US administration in preventing

nuclear proliferation is hardly a proud one. In fact, preventing proliferation as such has not interested them. Their interest has always been in restricting possession of nuclear weapons to their client states - which is why they have never shown any great interest in the nuclear programmes pursued by Israel, South Africa, Pakistan and others.

US fighters and Patriot missiles have no part to play in guaranteeing peace in the Middle East. The greatest step forward for peace in the region would be to allow Iraq to sell its oil, giving it the revenue to buy the food and medicines necessary to stop the cholera, dysentery and other disease that is now spreading through the population.

socialist a new left paper is born

By Davy Jones
socialist - the fortnightly paper of the Socialist Movement - was launched on 25th September. And it's available in newsagents across the nation(s), including WH Smiths and Menzies.

It's a tremendous gamble to launch such a paper at a time of decline of the Left and of economic recession. The decision to proceed reflects a determination to try to take the political initiative in the new international situation

and for the post-election period in Britain.

socialist aims to stimulate and co-ordinate a wide layer of the Left who remain committed to a socialist perspective but are currently unorganised by any one current

The paper will have three main components: news and information not readily available elsewhere which Left activists need for their campaigns and activities; debate and discussion on the major underlying issues which socialists need to address; and a culture and living section which deals with day to day

issues of interest to activists from a left perspective.

socialist has a breadth of backing and sponsorship unique on the Left - from Tony Benn and Dawn Primarolo to Marjorie Thompson and John Pilger.

Broad alliance

It is not a revolutionary paper. But it does bring together a broad alliance of those prepared to side with the oppressed and exploited, and who support a serious attempt to redefine a socialist project for the 90s and beyond.



socialist arises from two years of discussion and preparation within the Socialist Movement.

Frustrated by its inability to realise its full potential or to really develop the network of local groups and political campaigning the Movement decided to launch its own political paper.

The sectoral organisations which the Movement helped to found - Women for Socialism, the Trade Union Committee, the Red/Green Network and Labour Party Socialists - faced similar difficulties of consolidating their influence without a higher profile.

At the same time the space on the Left for a new paper steadily grew as Tribune, Marxism Today, New Socialist and New Statesman steadily moved to the Right.

socialist's potential readership thus numbers tens of thousands - most of whom have probably never heard of the Socialist Movement or its sister organisations.

Potential

The launch issue shows the potential for socialist to take the political initiative, with the

launch of a campaign for an 80% reduction of the defence budget to fund a massive programme of public services.

Such a high profile political campaign would have been qualitatively harder for the Socialist Movement to launch without its new paper.

It would be foolish to pretend that there are no problems with the project. During the two years of discussion and the various pilot issues the balance between the paper's political and journalistic emphasis has not always been right.

It has made mistakes and disappointed some potential supporters. The Socialist Movement itself is an alliance of the Labour left, revolutionaries and libertarian socialists. Therein lies its strength and its weakness - inevitably reflected in the paper.

Preparations

But just as Socialist Outlook has systematically supported the Socialist Movement project since its outset, so we have been involved in the preparations for its paper, socialist. Its launch is the best opportunity for the development of an organised alternative on the Left to the dead-end perspectives of the SWP or Militant.

It has the capacity to bring together the best forces from the Labour Left with those campaigning currents outside the Labour Party especially as we approach a potentially new political situation opened up by an election.

Socialist Outlook supporters are encouraged to do everything they can to make the project a major success.

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