

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

£1

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Issue No.12 - May 1993

Solidarity Price £2

**Yugoslavia:
Should the
West
Intervene?**

**Europe in
Recession**

Trade Unions



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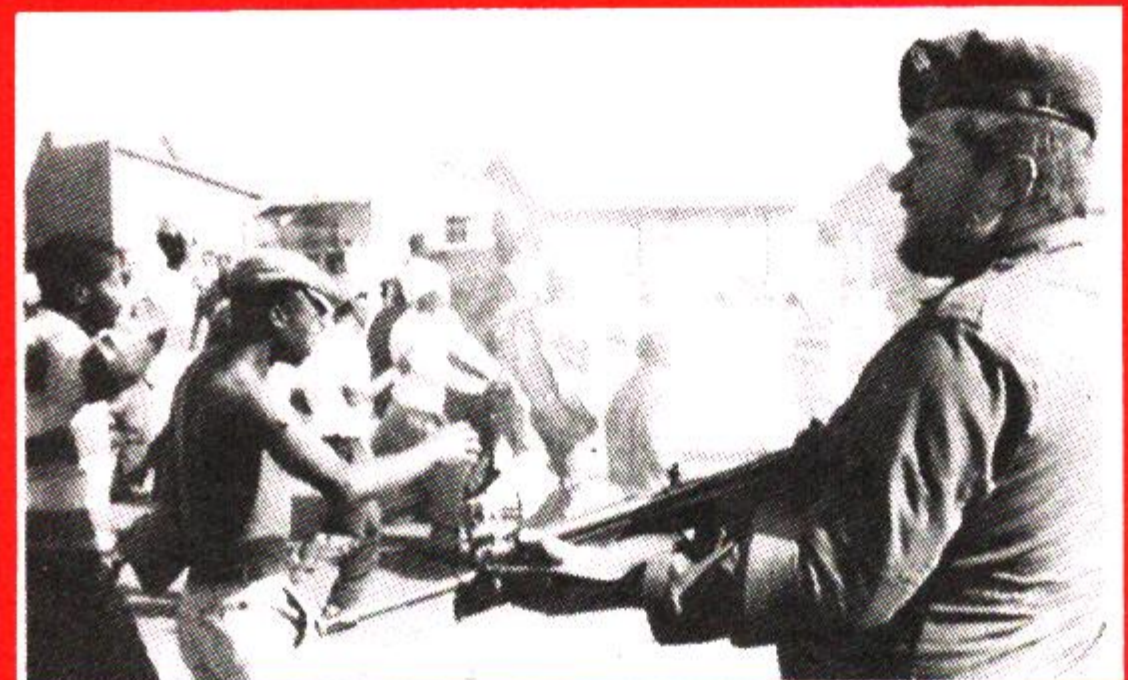
Crossroads

Mai '68



France: 25 Years After the General Strike

**South Africa in Turmoil:
Eyewitness Report**



Yeltsin's Stalemate



The results of the Russian referendum have been hailed as an outstanding achievement for President Yeltsin by the capitalist press of the West. It has been described as a personal triumph against the forces of the 'Old Order', and a decisive step towards the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union. In reality the result has solved nothing.

The larger than expected turnout of 65.7% was a reflection of the desperate hope of a large section of the population that the worst was over and that Yeltsin offered some future. In the build up to the referendum he demagogically offered workers and pensioners bribes in the form of increased allowances and a rise in the minimum wage. As the *'Independent'* explained: "in a ploy to curry favour with voters, Mr Yeltsin approved large budget hand-outs for the poor and vast subsidies for the bottomless pits of state-run industry and agriculture." The effects of this will be to drive up inflation way beyond the present 2,600%.

The struggle that has opened up between the President and the Parliament represents a struggle between two wings of the bureaucracy. Yeltsin, who is a puppet of Western imperialism, represents the interests of the nascent Russian capitalists: this is largely composed of speculators, spivs, crooks and mafiosi. The Congress on the other hand represents the old Military Industrial Complex, of factory managers, army officers and so on. The Yeltsinites want a rapid drive towards capitalist restora-

tion, which will mean the whole sale bankruptcy of industry and an unemployment rate of 25 to 50 million. The Congress, on the other hand, which has no clear programme, but are afraid of a social explosion, want a far slower move to capitalism under their control. A layer, alarmed by the disintegration of society, are even looking to re-establish some kind of central control. Rutskoi, the Vice-President, has recently voiced support for this. "In practice," states the *Financial Times*, "this alternative route will either lead back towards a command economy, or to chaos, or to possibly both at once."

Yeltsin Blocked

The Congress has continually blocked Yeltsin and even forced him to sack his prime minister Gaidar. Plans to create a market economy have stalled, with privatisation reduced to a snail's pace. Land privatisation has become a non starter. The economy has lurched into deep crisis, with a third of the population living below the official poverty line; the removal of subsidies pushed prices up by 25 times last year and continue to rocket; the rouble has lost more than three-quarters of its value in a year, and since January has lost 90% of its value against the dollar; violent crime has risen sharply, and unemployment threatens to explode. As the *'Financial Times'* (28.4.93) admitted, "it is far too early for anyone to breathe easily about the future of Russian reform. On the contrary, the most painful and urgently needed decisions are yet to come." Under the pressure of the Western Powers, Yeltsin has staked everything on this referendum to break the power of the Congress. To bolster his position Clinton

agreed to a US-Russian summit at which he announced a \$1.6 billion US aid package, and pushed the Group of Seven powers to announce a \$28 billion package 10 days later. Although much of this is cosmetic, its intention was to give backing to Yeltsin in the referendum. Although he won a vote of confidence, 53% supported his economic programme, the proposal for new elections was rejected.

Khasbulatov's Challenge

Immediately Khasbulatov, chairman of the Congress, said "this referendum has brought no losers or winners". Rutskoi dismissed the result. "There are 105 million eligible voters," he said, "Some-where around 32 million supported the President and his course. So between 71 and 72 million were either against or did not go to the referendum... There can be no talk of overall popular support." The situation is in stalemate. The battle is far from over. In the words of the Vice President, "By October the situation with the economy and finances will be catastrophic."

If Yeltsin attempts to use his 'victory' to change the Constitution, neuter the Congress, and increase his Presidential powers, he will face the determined opposition of the majority of the 1,000 deputies. Khasbulatov will re-call the full Congress of Peoples' Deputies who stepped back from impeaching the President by only 72 votes. They will be determined to block him this time. Under these circumstances, the army could intervene. That could have far reaching consequences, raising the possibility of a restoration of Stalinist dictatorship.

Unfortunately, the Russian workers have been thrown back and because of confusion do not know which direction to turn. They are not an active factor in the situation as yet. They remain passive at the present time. The workers have recoiled from their terrible experience under Stalinism, but have no perspective out of the current impasse. The attempt to introduce capitalism has led to catastrophe, but the workers are completely disorientated.

Only through the creation of a genuine mass Marxist tendency can explain the experience of Stalinism and offer a way out from the nightmare of capitalist restoration. Through their own experience, the mass of workers will again turn to the ideas of real Socialism and workers' democracy and prepare the way for the complete overthrow of Stalinism and capitalism and the re-establishment of a healthy workers' state.

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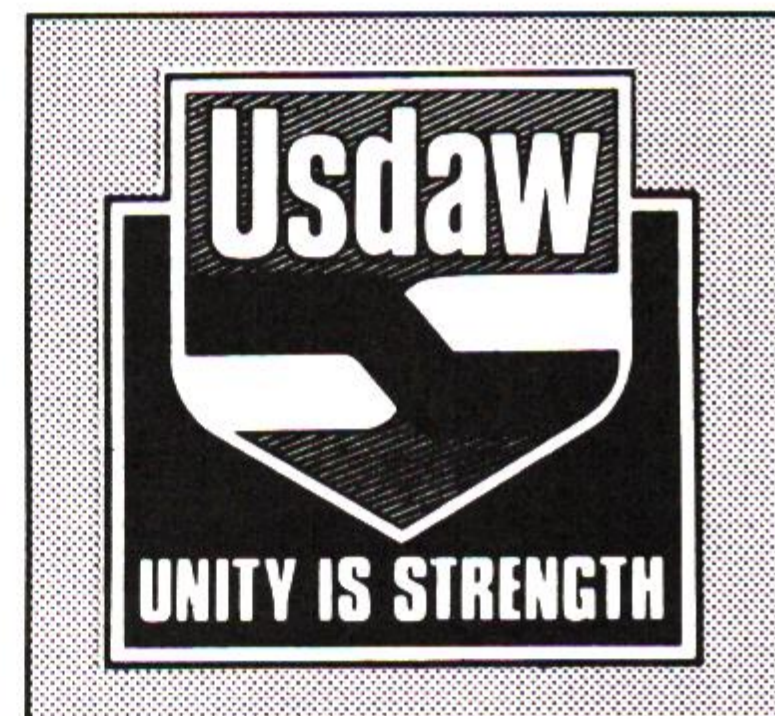
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USDAW Conference

Usdaw Votes to Keep the Labour-Union Link



USDAW, the sixth largest trade union affiliate to the Labour Party, has rejected right wing proposals to disenfranchise trade unions from the selection and reselection of MPs.

At its Annual Delegate Meeting in Blackpool, delegates rejected General Secretary, Garfield Davies' call for "one member one vote."

He said, "We want a Labour Party which is acceptable to the British people. We want to see one member, one vote, with more trade unionists as members of constituency parties. If you want to be a member of the Labour Party and you are working, you are obliged to be a member of a trade union."

But delegates correctly saw these words as a mask for Davies' real desire, along

with the rest of the right, to ditch Labour's historic links with the trade unions.

The conference rejected the NEC's proposal for one member, one vote by 100,000 votes to 89,000. Instead they supported the call, from the Fallowfield branch, for, "the representation of trade union members, cooperative parties and other affiliates at every stage in the selection of Parliamentary candidates by CLPs." The resolution was passed by 105,000 votes to 102,000. This is a clear knock back for John Smith and the rights plans to "reform" the party. Just at the beginning of this years trade union conference season, this will give the right wing food for thought!

Ray Hardman, Portsmouth (Co-op) Usdaw

Socialist Appeal Tolpuddle Weekend Camp

Friday 16th - Sunday 18th July

Camp, Socialist Appeal rally, pub, swimming pool, social and Tolpuddle Martyrs Commemoration march

Ring 071-354-3164 for further details

Scarborough hospital workers reject "insulting" offer



Health workers have borne the brunt of Tory attacks. Now health workers in Scarborough are being forced to fight.

We Can't Afford Not to Fight!

Health workers at Scarborough and North-East Yorkshire Health Care NHS Trust are set to ballot for industrial action after unanimously rejecting management's latest pay and conditions offer for the hospital's health care assistants (HCAs). A Cohse activist at the hospital explained the background to the dispute:

"Health Care Assistants were recently introduced on to the wards and now they have become an integral part of the hospital's operation. They are taking on extra responsibilities and duties for which they should receive due payment. We've got 37 employed here, many of whom are experienced nursing auxiliaries, and we have recruited them to the union. We went to management to discuss their pay and conditions and management made a derisory offer which was rejected by 92% in a ballot. **We invoked the Section 33 disputes procedure and suggested arbitration but management turned round and said they would not recognise Cohse and Nupe for local pay bargaining and therefore they don't recognise the dispute and therefore there is no case for arbitration.** Under the Tory NHS reforms Trusts are given autonomy for HCAs pay and conditions, they are not covered by the Whitley agreements.

Management came back with a slightly amended offer giving three choices - all of which are unacceptable. When we asked them where the reward for taking on extra duties was the director of personnel just mouthed, "job satisfaction".

Vote for Action

We took the case back to the members and said we believed the "new" offer was "an insulting amendment" and that two choices faced us - to accept or struggle. In the ballot 100% rejected the pay offer and 98% said that unless Cohse and Nupe were formally recognised in all areas for negotiating pay and conditions we should move to a ballot on industrial action. We sent the results to management but have had no reply. Instead, management wrote to every HCA with a form for them to tick their choice of the same three offered previously. **We immediately put out a bulletin urging union members not to return the letters to management but to send them to the union who would return them blank, en masse. Management have not had one letter back!** We are in a strong position. The Trust is petrified of bad publicity, even threatening to withdraw recognition from the Cohse and Nupe stewards for sending out press releases about the dispute and HCAs have a lot of clout because they have become so integral to the operation of the hospital. Management's plans, which would also scrap our existing unsocial hours payments and replace them with a lump sum payment, will result in some staff being more than £6 a week worse off. We cannot afford to let them get away with it."

Pay as you earn?

While public sector workers are offered 1.5% by the Tories, some of their City friends are doing very nicely thank you. Labour MP Harry Cohen recently wrote to the prime minister objecting to the golden handshakes received by executives leaving City firms, including the former BP chairman who received a pay-off of £1.5 million. Of course when company profits rise we are told that executives pay rises in line with performance and that they "earned every penny." Not so for Rodney Galpin, chairman of Standard Chartered who saw pre-tax profits fall but his pay rise by a tasty 30%.

Skipton Building Society's profits fell by 50% in 1992 but they have rewarded their chief executive with a £49,000 a year pay rise and Lord Sterling, whose P&O donates £100,000 to the Tories saw his pay rise to £426,000.

Harry Cohen summed up the feelings of many when he slammed the rises. "It is disgraceful that these executives should be so obviously overpaid, when so many people are living below the poverty line."

Stop Social Services Sell-Off

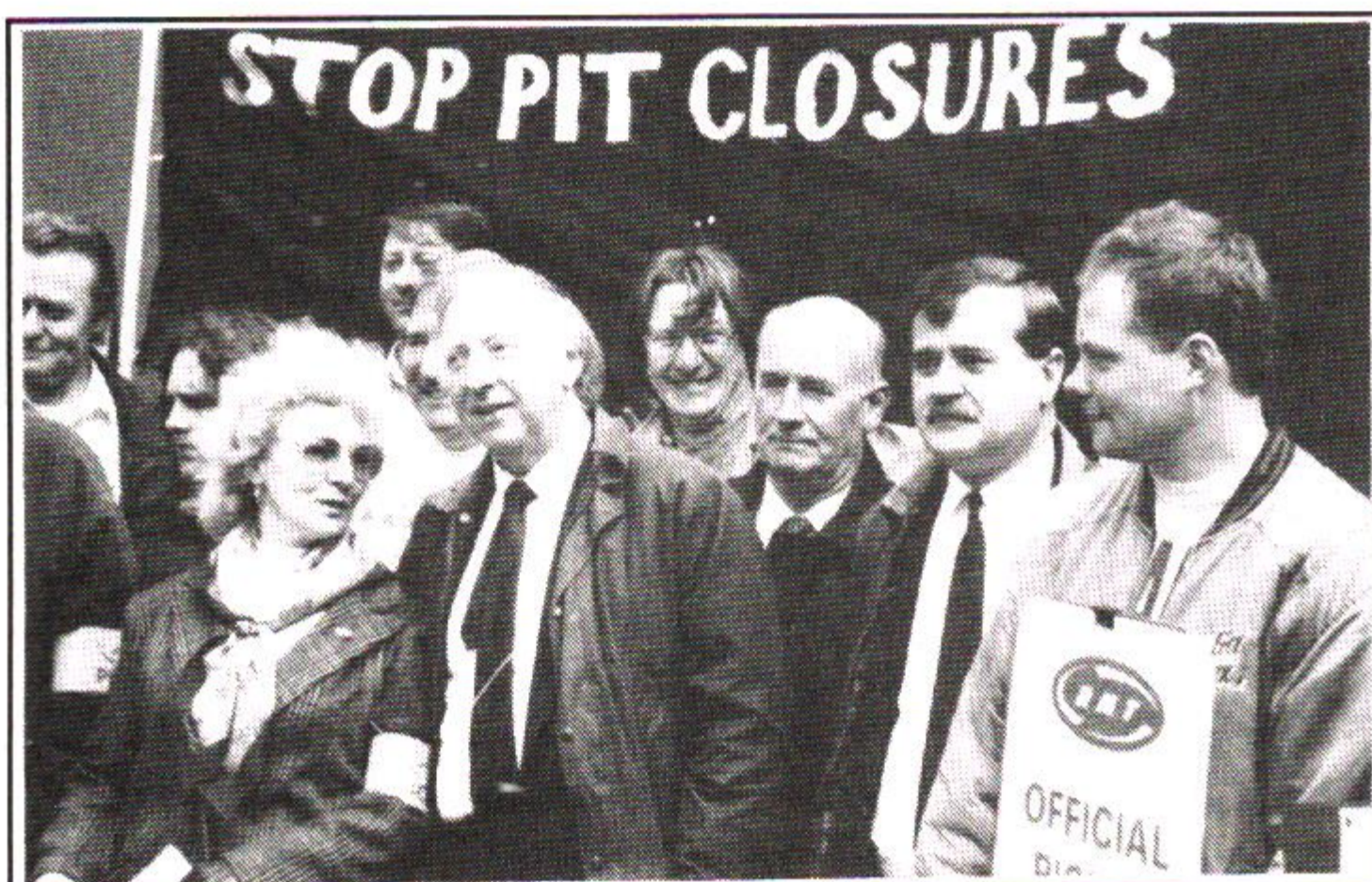
Westminster Council is planning to hive off up to £15 million worth of social services, including day nurseries and meals on wheels. The council claims, in a confidential memo, that the services are an "investment opportunity".

Private companies are set to bid to run the day nurseries and the council itself admits that private companies, interested only in making profit, will want to restrict places to those children with affluent parents. No provision has so far been made for the 230 children in need who currently do not have places at day nurseries.

The council admits the private companies may opt for segregated places, a scheme dubbed by Labour councillors as "infant apartheid." And one of the companies being considered admits it has no "direct experience of managing and operating local authority nurseries." In addition three old people's homes will be sold off, lock, stock and...residents! Not only have Labour councillors pledged to fight the proposals, which they claim will lead to worse services and no real savings for the council but local health groups have also attacked the plans as potentially "traumatic" for the home's current residents.

Pits Battle

TUC and Labour must back miners' action



Railways

Economy of Truth!

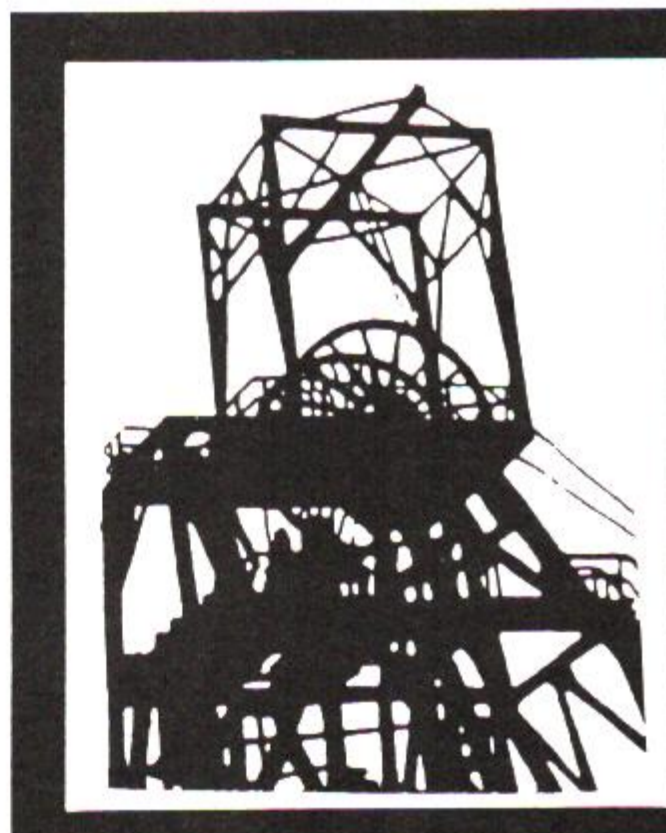
Transport Secretary John MacGregor's proposals for privatising the railways have been shot (further) full of holes with the release of two new reports.

Talk about being economical with the truth! Remember, when the Railways (Privatisation) Bill was introduced we were told no lines would be axed, safety would not suffer and major improvements would be made?

Well, the reality is that one new report reveals that franchisees will not have to provide a comparable service, which means it is likely Network South East lines will not operate on Sundays or late evenings. Passengers are likely to be transferred by bus. How fortunate then that many of the potential franchisees are major bus operators. The "tough line closure procedures" announced by McGregor now also appear to be not so tough. The procedures will only be applied when it is proposed to end all train services over a line. This means franchisees can run a service down to just one train, cutting demand and therefore qualifying within the "procedures" to close the line altogether! The reports also draw attention to the fact that private operators are unlikely to invest in the automatic train protection system which stops trains breaking red lights, thus compromising worker and passenger safety. In preparation

Regional Railways have already taken "a maintenance holiday" - a euphemism for not carrying out safety work, allowing the company to sack hundreds of workers and "prove" to potential private operators it doesn't take many staff to carry out maintenance work!

Rail workers and passengers can only lose from privatisation. The recent rail strikes were overwhelmingly supported. Now it is imperative that instead of cosy deals with BR, both RMT and ASLEF draw up a joint strategy to protect jobs, services and safety. The TSSA conference is likely to recommend a ballot. All three unions should be balloted alongside each other for a series of strikes which send a clear message to the Tories - jobs and safety are not for sale!



More than 250 people marched through the centre of North Shields behind banners from the North East area NUM.

After halting briefly outside the offices of Tyne and Wear's lonely and only Tory MP Neville Trotter the march ended with a rally addressed by speakers from the Labour Party, trades council, Women Against Pit Closures and the NUM.

Organised by the Coalfield Communities Campaign, the mood of the rally was sober. The fighting spirit of the miners was much in evidence, but both Ian Lavery, secretary of Ellington Lodge and Dave Hopper, general secretary of the North East Area NUM, drew attention to the lack of support from the TUC general council and the Labour Party leadership. **Ian argued that instead of placing faith in the Tory Coal Group led by Winston Churchill, who had surrendered before a shot was fired, the TUC and Labour Party should throw their weight behind the NUM campaign.**

Instead of discussing breaking the trade union links with the Labour Party, the Labour leaders should support miners' calls for sympathetic industrial action to win the campaign.

Dave Hopper explained that despite press claims to the contrary not one piece of coal had been mined in the North-East coalfield on either of the two

strike days. British Coal's claims of the number of miners crossing picket lines were outrageously exaggerated.

The Labour Party leaders were also criticised for recommending arbitration in the coal and rail disputes which could inevitably only lead to redundancies and privatisation.

The miners had won the economic, social and moral arguments but it is only the power of organised labour which could ultimately defeat the Tories, NUM speakers made clear.

Thanking the Labour Party and trade union activists present Dave called on them to return to their wards, constituencies and union branches to demand support for the miners' fight. The battle for coal and rail jobs gives the labour movement a real opportunity to defeat the Tories and bring in a Labour government.

Demonstrations like this in Tory marginal seats may have some impact, but as Socialist Appeal has explained throughout the campaign, the only way to defeat privatisation and closure plans is for the TUC to mobilise the support of millions of workers in defence of the mines and jobs. A 24-hour general strike, combined with mass rallies and marches throughout the country would shake the Tories and provide a real launchpad for a campaign to force them out of office.

The Coalfield Communities Campaign found in a 1988 study that following the closure of two pits in Yorkshire less than 50% of miners had found a job after 18 months on the dole. If the closures go ahead unemployment in coalfield areas will rise by 14.3%, making it 32% above the national average. Income in these areas will fall by over £800m a year with the loss of a further 12,000 jobs at least.

Source: NUM

Strikers Win Fair Deal

Private Hire taxi drivers in North Shields recently won significant concessions from Rank Taxis in the first strike action to hit the company in 30 years. Socialist Appeal spoke to one of the strikers, Alan Beershill:

"All of the drivers are self employed. We pay £60 a week to Rank to operate the office through which all our calls are routed. Unlike Hackney Carriage drivers we are not legally allowed to pick people up at ranks - they must book at the office.

The boss claimed not enough cars were turning out each night and told us he was going to take on an extra 10 drivers to cover the work. At a stroke he would raise an extra £600 a week while our earnings would fall by about one third.

There had been ill-feeling for months. Drivers were only entitled to 2 weeks holiday per year and Rank demanded that we didn't charge the higher tariff for work between 10pm and 6am. In addition we were paying out £60 a week to the firm while they did nothing except pocket it.

Elected Reps

We had discussed the idea of proposing an elected committee to run the office, 4 weeks holiday per year, stricter measures against drivers breaking rules and a reduction in the number of cars.

When the boss announced he was taking more on, the day shift walked out. The bosses' response was, "I've got loads of money. I'll close the office and you lot will be on the dole."

A strike meeting was held 4pm on the Friday the walkout happened. The day shift and half the night shift turned up despite not being properly informed.

I was elected spokesperson and chair of the meeting. We asked if everyone was prepared to stand by collective decisions which they had voted for. The response was unanimous. The meeting drew up a list of eight demands:

Only 25 cars per shift

Higher tariff to be charged 10pm - 6am and bank holidays

Four weeks holiday per year

No favouritism in allocating work

An elected committee to run the office in conjunction with the boss

Drivers to draw up their own rosters

Flexible starting hours for the day shift

Management and drivers to co-operate

At 5pm I went to the office to see the managing director. The office was effectively closed. The receptionists were told to tell customers that the office was closed due to industrial action and that the matter would be resolved as soon as possible. So I went round to the managing

director's home and read out the list. This received a very hostile response! He wanted all the work covered, he said and he wanted to see all drivers individually and that there would be no negotiations without a return to work. After a lengthy discussion his position remained unchanged.

At 6pm I returned to a prearranged meeting and said there had been no agreement. Both shifts decided to continue the action.

Everyone got the chance to speak and after three hours he gave in to every demand! By the end he was saying this sort of discussion was not before time - we'd won!

I rang the managing director and told him. His attitude had changed somewhat. He agreed that the night shift could go in if they wanted. The reason behind this was that some had bills to pay and needed money for the weekend. But this only served to make the strike solid. The drivers agreed to start the strike at 7am.

At 8am on Saturday, the managing director

knocked on my door. I made him a coffee and we talked. "What's the problem, there's been no argument in the past. I'll close the company down," he said.

I found out later he'd spent the morning visiting other drivers, claiming that everyone else was going to work, except them. This didn't work.

At 12 noon the drivers had another meeting and 45 out of 50 turned up. We agreed that if anyone was sacked after the strike we'd all walk out. We again ratified the eight demands. We knew that if the strike continued we stood to lose £7,500 worth of contracts so the boss would be worried. The managing director was invited to the meeting.

Everyone got a chance to speak and after three hours he gave in to every demand! By the end he was saying that this sort of discussion was not before time - we'd won!"

The taxi drivers strike demonstrates that a determined struggle can win benefits for workers. It highlights the importance of workers' democracy for the trade unions. There were no cosy deals or agreements behind workers' backs. It also demonstrates the process by which previously unorganised layers of the working class are forced to use the methods of the labour movement to preserve their rights and conditions. Inevitably drivers at other firms will look to the success of the Rank drivers - an example has been set.

London Bus Strikes **Step Up the Action!**

London busworkers have taken part in a series of one-day strikes against the imposition of pay cuts, longer schedules and the erosion of pension rights, in the run up to privatisation of London bus services.

Every action has been generally very solid, with some garages even improving their on their previous turnouts. At my garage, Plumstead in South East London, the response has been 100%.

The management have underestimated the determination and mood of London's busworkers. The discussion at many picket-lines across the Capital has been one of how to take the strike forward. Since our ballot for strike action in February, the experience of the new conditions (as well as further proposals for future pay and conditions) has provoked an angry response from the majority of workers. As a result of the new schedules and increased pressure of work, absenteeism has rocketed. In my garage it has risen from 3% to 19% of the platform staff. In some other areas it is even higher. Locally, management have

**By Mark Langabeer, TGWU
branch committee, Plumstead
Garage, S.E.London.**

Grim But Determined

It was a grim conference for the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). A member killed in the Bishopsgate blast, more members sacked at the *Mirror*, the *Observer* under threat of closure, and derecognition announced at the *Yorkshire Post*.

All this took place while the NUJ met at Kings Cross for its Annual Delegate Meeting to draw up strategies to defend its members.

The wave of derecognition of NUJ Chapels (office branches) of the past - bravely fought in lengthy disputes at Aberdeen Journals, Essex Chronicle, Pergamon, VNU and Rotherham - has now turned into an avalanche. Spurred on by their success, media bosses are

now turning on the NUJ's better organised Chapels. They are confident, given the lack of national leadership in past disputes, they can derecognise the NUJ, destroying the right of journalists to union representation.

Mirror Scandal

Paul Foot catalogued new *Mirror* boss Montgomery's ruthless purge at Mirror Group Newspapers, detailing how the former Murdoch man is "Wappingizing" MGN, sacking union activists, which can only threaten the *Mirror*'s former "left" stance.

As if to emphasise these comments, on Saturday the chair of the MGN Chapel addressed the conference, having been sacked hours earlier and physically removed from the premises (after having been asked to come in to work early to cover the Bishopsgate bomb!)

The *Observer* Chapel had found out about the threatened closure of the paper from a report in the *Standard*! Paul Routledge from the *Observer* Chapel told ADM that despite the talk of closure, they had a Chapel that "was willing to fight." If the *Independent* takes over the *Observer* up to 100 jobs would be lost with the closure of the title, if the *Guardian* takes over around 40 jobs would be lost and the title kept. The NUJ must demand no redundancies and no closure!

The biggest threat to the NUJ at present comes from Reed-Elsevier. UK publishers Reed and Dutch publishers Elsevier have merged to form one of the world's largest publishing conglomerates, employing 25,000 workers - 11,000 of them in the UK. Now the UK staff are being denied their trade union rights. These rights are protected by law for their Dutch counterparts, but not in Tory Britain.

But all these attacks can be fought. The NUJ has largely resolved its former internal wrangles of the past two years and a certain new mood of unity to defeat the employer's attacks is evident. And there was also a mood of defiance - on Friday the whole conference rose as one behind the union banner and marched (without informing the police, much to their annoyance!) to the *Daily Mirror* for an impromptu protest against the latest sackings.

Fighting Back

But this militancy must be transposed to the editorial and news rooms, to rebuild the Chapels that have fallen by the wayside following the bosses' battering and the NUJ's disorganisation at the top of the past few years. Despite an increase in membership, the union remains weak at rank and file level. The front line for the defence of jobs and conditions must come from below - the NUJ must turn its resources to rebuilding Chapel strength. Several motions calling for united and co-ordinated industrial action were passed overwhelmingly (some unanimously) but **the NUJ leadership must now turn words into action** and give its full backing to those Chapels currently fighting derecognition and job cuts and be prepared to spread industrial action when it is needed.

Equally urgent in the current climate is the need for one media union. This appears to be drifting from the agenda of the union tops: yet it is precisely because the media unions were not united in the past that the bosses were able to break the power of the printers at Wapping - now they are coming for the NUJ. And amalgamation is not just something that the union leaderships should be left to deal with in cosy, high level chats - it can be built from below with joint workplace meetings of all media workers and the construction of federated Chapels.

The union member killed in the Bishopsgate bomb blast was Edward Henty, a freelance photographer with the *News of the World* who had been a member of the NUJ for 10 years. That same evening, a bomb planted in a taxi hijacked by the IRA exploded in Judd Street outside the NUJ's conference venue. Delegates were all at the venue for an evening social when the bomb went off.



Reed journalists protesting over derecognition

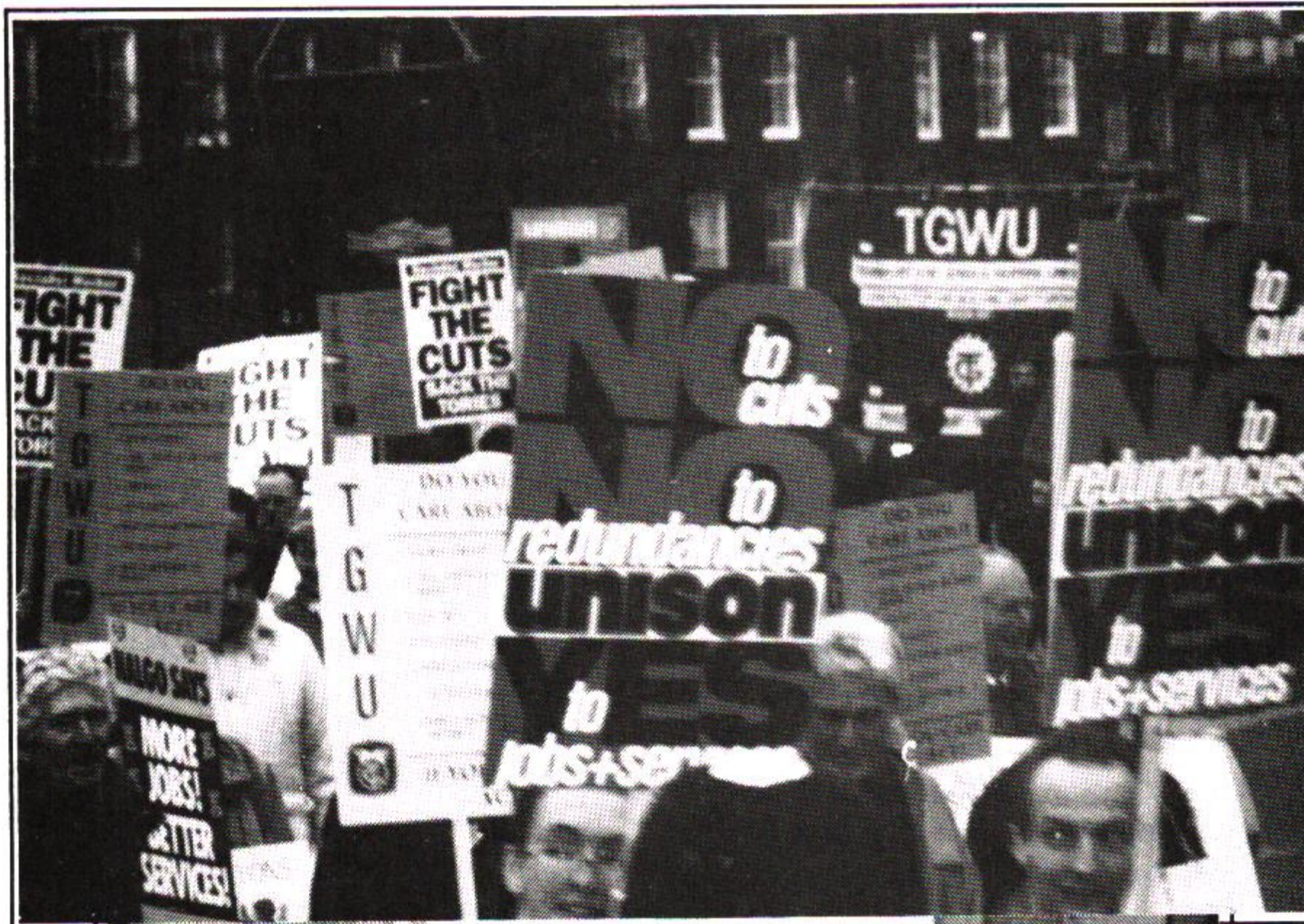
approached the staff reps to enquire what was happening with all this absenteeism? Under the circumstances what does management expect? As our union rep said: "These people are living on a different planet!"

It is becoming clearer that the strategy of calling one-day protest stoppages are not sufficient to force the employers into "meaningful negotiations". The cavalier attitude of London Buses' management ("the Board") in unilaterally imposing their new regime on the workforce shows a contempt for bus workers and their union. The "war of attrition" or "rolling action" that we are engaged in, has to date failed to budge the employers. We need to take things further. If management persist in refusing to open negotiations, then we have no alternative but to

step up the action. After the next one day strike on 10th May, the London bus sections should organise a new ballot for all out action. The ballot should be linked to a union campaign of meetings, leaflets, etc to explain the case for an all-out strike. The only way we can get management to accede to our demands is to bit them where it hurts, ie. in their pockets. We know the one day strikes have hurt them to a certain degree. An all-out strike would certainly bring things to a head. That is the road to victory for London's busworkers.



Unions at the Crossroads



At the opening of the trade union conference season, many trade union activists will be raising the question: what has been achieved and what are the prospects for future struggles?

Unions will be meeting at a time of a sustained onslaught by the employers and attacks on pay and conditions. The Government has instituted a 1.5% wage limit on the public sector, which includes many of the lowest paid, as an example to the private sector. Wage Councils are being abolished. Already since last August one in three companies are enforcing a wage freeze. Pay deals have fallen to their lowest level for 13 years. London bus workers, despite continuing industrial action, have faced a £60 a week cut in wages and new working conditions.

Threat of Unemployment

The employers have used the threat of mass unemployment - 4 million strong - to keep down wages and conditions. Since the beginning of the recession, industry after industry has been hit by a wave of redundancies.

The introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering has been used as a stick to beat down the pay and standards of local authority workers. Across the board, 'flexibility' has been on the order of the day. At Hoover, in Cambuslang, to secure the plant at the expense of their sister factory in Dijon, the workforce accepted pay cuts, two year temporary contracts, and no pension rights. So international capital was able to play off one section of workers against another. Incredibly, Jimmy Airlie leading official of the AEEU, declared it a 'good deal under the circumstances'. At the same time, another firm, Nestles, moved from Glasgow to Dijon!

British capitalism is beginning to emerge gradually from the longest post war recession. However, although the devaluation of the pound last September has assisted exports, the de-industrialisation over the past decade or more has undermined the ability of the economy to produce the necessary goods during an upturn.

In the recession the current account deficit was roughly £12 billion. As the economy improves it will draw in more imports from abroad and see a massive worsening of the balance of payments. The manufacturing deficit with the main powers (OECD countries) has increased from nearly £4 billion in 1979 to over £10 billion in 1991. This is set to rise even further.

This represents a fall in competitiveness arising from a failure to invest and modernise British industry. British bosses are

By Ted Grant

attempting to compete by driving wage rates down. They are already 18% lower than France, 30% lower than the Netherlands, and 42% lower than Germany. The British worker works longer hours and has less holidays or job security than their European counterparts. But still British capitalism falls further behind. According to the OECD, Britain is twelfth in the league table of competitiveness.

Instead of using the competitive edge that devaluation has temporarily given, they prefer to jack up prices and make a quick profit. "City observers expressed some concern", states the *Independent* (24.4.93), "that exporters appeared to be using the boost to competitiveness from the pound's devaluation more to raise prices and profits than capture new markets. The volume of finished manufactures rose 3% in the past three months, compared with a 7% rise in prices."

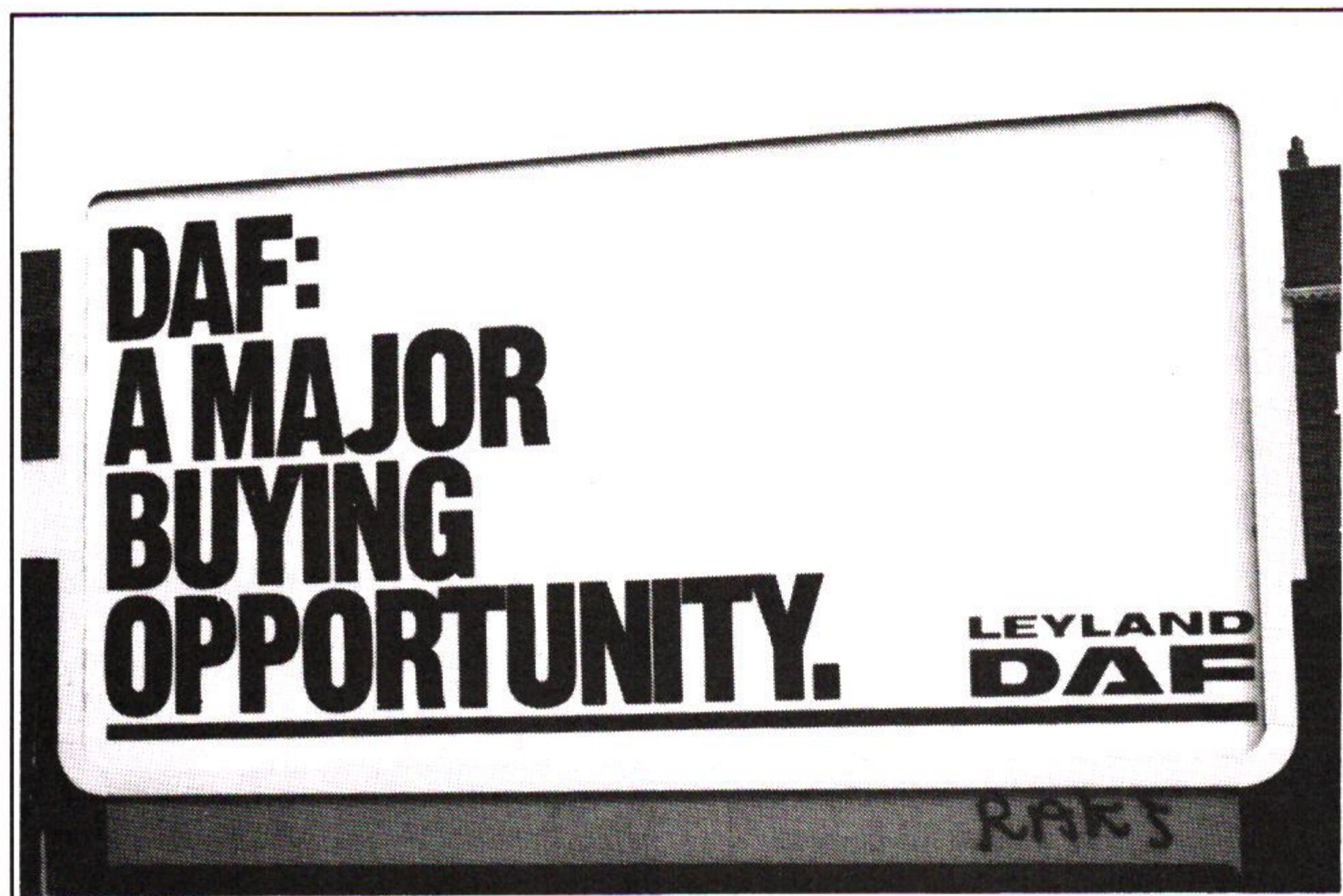
Cheap Labour

The attempt to defeat competitors through cheap labour will not succeed. History shows that cheap labour will always be defeated by economies relying on modern machinery and technique to increase productivity and output. The unit costs will be less. The deficit in foreign trade is projected to rise from £12 billion last year to £20 billion in 1994. Under these conditions, a balance of payments crisis could provoke a run on the pound and force the government to raise interest rates.

Although strikes are at an all-time low, this has been due in the past to employers granting wage increases above inflation, the dramatic rise in unemployment, the defeat of

There is a need for co-ordinated industrial action rather than isolated struggles in the face of a determined government

key sections and the role of the trade union leaders. These factors, particularly since the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984/85, have served to sap the confidence of the workers. However, under the surface has been an accumulation of frustration, anger and resentment at the way the employers have



A major opportunity for the capitalists, but thousands lost their jobs

squeezed every ounce of profit out of the workers through speed-ups, flexibility agreements and personal performance related pay. It is this pressure of work that has provoked the teachers to boycott national testing imposed by the government.

Anti-Union Laws

In the hope of further intimidating the trade unions, the Tories are continuing to build up their arsenal of anti-trade union legislation. An additional clause is being added to the Employment Bill to make it unlawful for trade unionists to take industrial action "clearly designed to frustrate the carrying out of a specific statutory duty." It is not only aimed at the teachers' boycott, but could include railway workers, health workers, local authority staff and civil servants, as the legislation is a catch-all clause open to interpretation by the judges. Thatcher wanted to make public sector strikes illegal, and this could be the means to do so. The attempt to use such legislation, which would not be seen as legitimate by workers generally, could lead to an explosive situation. In 1972 five dockers were arrested for defying the courts but were released before the TUC could implement a 24 hour general strike. Despite the law being used by the Tories since then, the TUC has held back fearing sequestration of their funds. But the Tories can go too far, as they did last October, and provoke a spontaneous reaction from the workers.

The announcement last October of the closure of 31 pits that could lead to 100,000 redundancies provoked a colossal anti-Tory movement, culminating in the 300,000 TUC demonstration. Unfortunately the TUC leadership abdicated its responsibility and allowed the mood to subside. The announce-

ment of redundancies on the railways, brought the rail unions into the battle. There have been a series of one day strikes involving miners, railworkers and also London busworkers. This reflects the need for co-ordinated industrial action, rather than isolated struggles in face of a determined government. But the TUC has failed to back up this action, preferring to call half-hearted protests instead. ASLEF have reached a settlement with British Rail management. The RMT have suspended industrial action until a ballot result on management's offer on 14 May. This is a risky strategy that could lose the momentum behind the action. The actions to date have been by necessity defensive struggles. This has also been the case in the one day strikes of council workers in Birmingham, Newcastle, Leicester, London and other cities. The threat of mass redundancies in the local authorities has increased the worry and anxiety amongst sections noted for security of employment in the past. Many have taken action for the first time. BIFU, the bankworkers' union, organised a successful strike at the Trustee Savings Bank. In the last year they have lost 5,000 jobs and a further 1,000 were threatened with redundancy. These white-collar sections have said 'enough is enough'.

Illusions Shattered

Illusions in a prosperous future have been shattered by these events. They have seen the repulsive face of capitalism in the raw. The brutal nature of the bosses was clearly demonstrated by the example of the American company Timex in Dundee, where they imposed a wage freeze and new harsher working conditions. These were rejected by the 320 strong workforce who were then subjected to a lock-out. The bosses then

recruited an entire scab workforce to carry on production. The scenes at the picket line are reminiscent of the Grunwick dispute of the late Seventies. If the dispute is to be won, then the full weight of the movement will be needed to blockade the plant and halt all production.

As the inevitable economic recovery takes place, these bitter defensive struggles to safeguard jobs and conditions will be succeeded by offensive struggles on the part of the workers. Either a fall in unemployment, or an expanding order book can increase the confidence of workers to take action.

Again the recent example of Yarrows Ship Yard in Govan, which had not experienced a pay strike for 20 years, shows that workers are prepared to strike over wages (97% in favour in the ballot), despite the advice of their union officials, when the yard had a £700 million order book.

As John Dolan, GMB convener, commented "you don't get a vote like that unless there's a great deal of frustration." Even now, resistance has been developing in other sections. Twenty of the biggest printing firms who tried to limit wage rises to 1.5% were forced to retreat in face of threatened strike action.

Changing Mood

Similar processes will be inevitable in the engineering industry and will be used as an example by other sections. Rolls Royce has introduced a wage freeze, but the union convener, John Edwards, made it clear, "As soon as there was an upturn the workers would seek to share in it." However in British Airways, there has been a vote of 909 to 111 of TGWU workers, and 202 to 15 of GMB workers against acceptance of pay cuts.

In Fords, the threat of compulsory redundancies was defeated by a ballot for industrial action. The one day strikes by white collar sections also forced Ford to withdraw its attempt to introduce compulsory redundancies into these sections. This was partially to prevent industrial action as sales began to pick up.

The attempt by the government to introduce its 1.5% pay rise across the board has been rejected by the Fire Brigades Union, which has threatened industrial action. Its annual conference will debate the issue and is expected to authorise a strike ballot. "We are not going back to poverty pay, which we endured before our national strike." It was the firefighters that broke through the pay policy of the Callaghan government in 1977/78, and won the present agreement which expires in the autumn. It will not be given up without a bitter fight.

One of the prime reasons why a generalised movement has not taken place around the

action of the miners and railworkers is the abdication of leadership by the TUC. Throughout the latter part of the 1980's it has moved sharply to the right, embracing the philosophy of 'new realism', or class collaboration. The last TUC Congress was addressed by John Davies, head of the CBI. Gavin Laird, AEEU leader, called this a great step forward and hoped to see Norman Willis speaking to the next CBI Conference.

Class Collaboration

These ideas are nothing new. They are a throw back to the class collaboration ideas of the Mond-Turner agreements of the 1930's. Such views end up in wage cuts, flexibility agreements, and the type of deal struck at Hoovers in Cambuslang. The class interests of the worker and employer are fundamentally opposed, as profit comes from the unpaid labour of the working class. This is the very root of the class struggle itself. When Scargill called for a day of action involving the 8 million trade unionists, he was attacked by right-winger Bill Jordan as a "throw back to the bad old days". For Jordan, solidarity action, which built the labour movement (including the AEEU), is a thing of the past.

Presumably, 'sweet-heart' deals, like in Nissan, are the thing of today? The employer will ride roughshod over such an approach, as can be seen already in Timex and other instances.

If the trade union leaders fail to articulate the feelings of the rank and file, then unofficial action will take place, as was the case on the London Underground in the past. However, with the economic revival pressure will

mount from below on the trade union leaders to take action. They will begin to express this feeling in order to maintain control of the situation. One official all-out strike over jobs or pay can act to break the log-jam on the industrial front.

The next period will see a dramatic change in the situation. The stage has been set for big battles in the coming period. On the basis of the continuing crisis the employers will not be able to afford big wage increases. But the workers will push to make up for the sacrifices of the last few years. This is a recipe for conflict between the classes.

Trade War

British capitalism faces colossal problems in competing effectively on the world market. With the likely break-down of the GATT talks, and the intense rivalry between the major blocs of Fortress Europe, Japan and the United States, a new trade war will plunge the world economy into a new deep recession.

Trade wars and recession threaten a downward spiral into a global slump and political disintegration, warned John Smith recently. This will have catastrophic implications for the working class of Britain and Europe. Only by rearming the labour and trade union movement with a clear socialist programme will the crisis be solved in the interests of the working class and the nightmare of capitalism be ended. The organised trade union movement, transformed from top to bottom, has a vital role to play in this historic aim.



Bus workers and miners march alongside each other - now the disputes need to be co-ordinated

The Thin End of the Wedge

From 1st May, all Rover workers (called 'Associates' by management) are being subject to a new Code of Conduct. The aim of this company Code, according to the bosses, is to improve 'our business performance'. In reality it is an attempt by Rover to introduce further Japanese Toyota system working practises and boost profitability at the expense of the workforce. If the management think we are going to take these attacks laying down, they've got another think coming.

At Cowley, Oxford, in 1979, we had a workforce of 26,000 - after Rover was sold off to British Aerospace with a £40 million 'sweetener'. At present the car plant has been reduced to 3,500 workers. It has suffered one of the biggest run-downs in Europe. In 1989, 7,000 workers were building four models; this is now carried out by half that number of workers.

Flexibility Agreements

Last year management brought in 'flexibility' agreements copied from Japan - to boost productivity/profitability. These measures squeezed extra labour out of the workers. In the mid-80's we were producing 7 cars per man per year. By 1992 this had increased to 18 cars per man per year. And by 1996 the bosses want us to increase it to 39 cars!

Management want to achieve all this through total flexibility of labour, and a smaller workforce. Their aim is to push through the same conditions at the "green field" sites into established plants. Already they have begun contracting out various jobs and sections: cleaning, canteen, stores, delivery, etc. They have introduced 'team leaders' to run the different areas, to take up problems and oversee the work, which has served to undermine the power of the shop stewards. The bosses have just announced the closure of the press shop (which is moving to Swindon) and 300 jobs are to go. At the same time, last year we reluctantly

accepted a pay freeze, after being recommended by the Joint Negotiating Committee. (Rover said it couldn't afford an increase!)

The bosses have been riding rough-shod over working agreements when it suits them. The unions, which were very powerful at one stage, have been gradually whittled down, thanks largely to the inactivity of the leadership. However, they remain potentially powerful, with still 100% union membership in the plant (even the temporary labour).

Management are tightening up all round, but especially over absenteeism with their new Code of Conduct. They are set to introduce an 'Attendance Improvement Procedure' which even penalises certificated absences! With the intense pressure of work, the track is only suitable for younger workers.

Stress and Strain

The constant stresses and strains inevitably lead to absenteeism, which is more than 10% in some parts of the plant. The pressures of work on the track leads not only to physical illness but depression as well. The bosses push for compulsory over-time when they want it, but are determined to cut absenteeism to 1%.

"It is essential", writes John Towers, the Group Managing Director, in a recent letter to all 'associates', "that we all make significant efforts to reduce the current level of absenteeism towards 'UK Best Practice' which is below 3%. This target represents a 1993 milestone in our Quality Strategy."

The mood in the plant is bitterly opposed to this grinding pressure. The bosses are turning the screws, but they could face an explosion if they persist. There has been an upturn in the market for cars and our order books are growing. This will bring renewed confidence to the workers who have been pushed from pillar to post over the years. The time is rapidly approaching when they will say 'enough is enough'. Watch this space.

TGWU Shop Steward, Rover, Cowley.



'Yes, the new machinery is important but we are becoming its slave. At the very time workers should be treated with understanding, management is depersonalised. Production is all. We are merely an adjunct to the machine.'

Production worker at the Cowley Plant.

"He (the worker) becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him... Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organised like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants. Not only are they slaves of the bourgeois class, and the bourgeois state; they are daily and hourly enslaved by the machine..."

**Marx & Engels,
The Communist Manifesto**



Japanese workers prepare for the day - Working practices which may be coming to a factory near you!

Ownership Must Be Key to Industry Policy

This year's MSF conference agenda is the usual mixed bag, with plenty of resolutions - but many issues side-stepped.

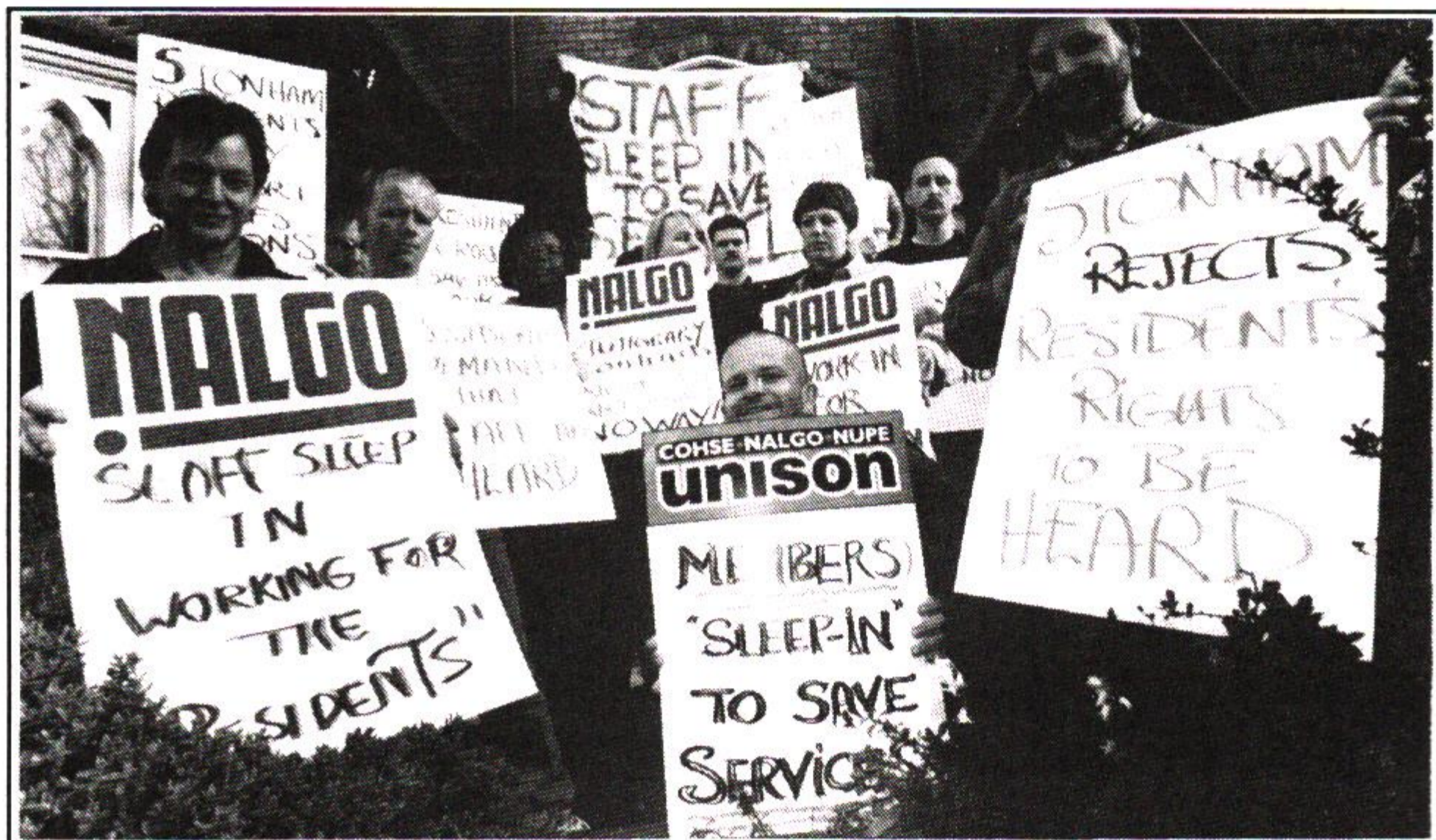
In particular, the section on manufacturing industry and economic policy does not address the root of the problem. The lengthy NEC resolution quite correctly calls for a "full employment economy" but how is this to be achieved? The Tory government has wrought devastation on manufacturing industry and has consistently pursued a policy which benefits the wealthy elite who run the large public companies and multinationals. In particular privatisation has created large unaccountable monopolies. How many more Tory ministers are we going to see on the boards of newly privatised industries before we make a clear and unequivocal commitment to renationalisation?

You cannot compel the self serving profiteers to reinvest and rebuild industry by tinkering with "tax allowances and incentives" - this will only pander to their worst nature. Nor is the NEC's vague references to "incentives and mechanisms" going to help.

The resolution does call for a bigger role for public sector investment and "an immediate boost through public sector orders to the construction industry." However, we should avoid the mistakes of the past and not hand out lucrative government contracts for private industry to make large profits - as happened in the '60s housing boom. The only solution is to renationalise Telecom, Gas etc. and to take public control of the big industries in the UK. Furthermore, the only way to ensure accountability is to have proper democratic control of industries involving employees, unions, consumers groups and government. We must go further than "worker participation" which has often meant that workers do little more than participate in developing better ways of exploiting their own labour. We should support the NEC resolution as far as it goes - but unfortunately none of the other resolutions deals with the issues of ownership, control and renationalisation. The current system of prioritisation of resolutions has virtually guaranteed that this important part of conference will not see any real alternatives put forward.

On a more positive note it seems clear there is widespread support for maintaining the Labour-union link. All resolutions condemn attempts to weaken the link and call for more involvement in the party at all levels.

Julian Gollop, Harlow MSF



Support Nalگو Occupation

Six voluntary sector Nalگو members in Birmingham are occupying their workplace in a dispute over discrimination, bad employment practices and trade union recognition.

The six began an indefinite occupation on April 21st and are determined to win.

The Stonham 6, as they have become known, began their occupation after years of simmering discontent were brought to a head by Stonham Housing Association's blatant discrimination against a female member of staff. A ballot for action was held and the occupation began.

The strikers are also in dispute over recognition of Nalگو and the use of temporary contracts. In one instance a monthly contract was used to employ someone for 18 months thus depriving them of holiday and sick pay rights.

The 11 residents of the project have unanimously backed the occupation and have elected representatives on the support group.

London-based Stonham Housing Association has threatened strikers with the sack if they do not return to work. The six desperately need the help and support of other trade unionists.

You can help by:

Inviting a speaker to your Labour Party or union meeting

Making a donation to Stonham Support Fund, c/o Nalگو, 3rd Floor Mercury House, Cornwall Street, Birmingham

Take a collection sheet around your workplace

Send messages of support

Don't let the strikers be starved into submission!

UCW Conference

Fight For 35-Hour Week

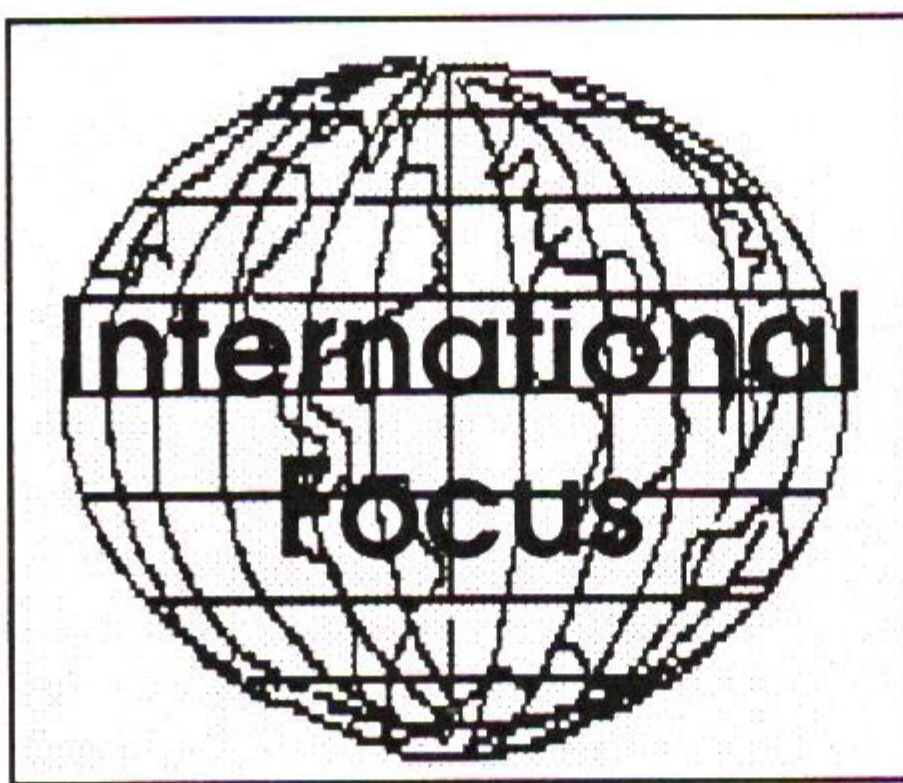
The 1993 Annual Conference of the UCW takes place with its members facing the prospect of massive job losses due partly to technology but more so to the closure of many major sorting offices throughout the country with London being the hardest hit. Because of this threat to jobs impatience is growing with the lack of progress on the union's long-standing policy of a shorter working week. A series of proposals call for a 35 hour week to be phased in, if necessary, but there is widespread belief that the union has to make its move on the issue this year if no agreement is reached.

Privatisation is the other threat to the future which looms before us. While the government has some difficulties with privatising parts of the Post Office, particularly the Royal Mail, and some Tory MPs have begun to realise that

it is their rural areas which could stand to lose most, it will not lightly give up the idea. The union cannot simply rely on the sound judgement of Conservative MPs to win this battle, particularly with top Post Office managers, undoubtedly hoping to get their hands on extra loot, in favour of the Post Office being privatised - albeit as one entity rather than split up.

The merger of the UCW and NCU should be coming closer following the conferences of both unions this year. While this has not progressed as fast as many of us would have liked, it is important to keep it moving and not allow those who, mainly through self-interest, do not really want the merger to go ahead, to start to throw obstacles in its path.

Phil Waker, secretary, UCW London 7 Branch (personal capacity)



South Africa Erupts After Hani's Murder

from a correspondent in South Africa

CAPE TOWN: *Have you heard?*" said my friend on the phone, her voice strained. *"Chris Hani has been assassinated."* A split second earlier life had seemed normal'. The political future had been full of uncertainties. It is true, and sharp turns were to be expected, yet there had been a certain logic to events, a definable range of possibilities, providing some understanding of where we were going and what stage we were at. Now the whole world seemed to reel; the future was a whirlpool of uncertainty! Events were spinning out of control.

The eerie feeling passed and we started trying to make sense of what had happened. Massive anger would be unleashed; that was clear. But what then? The leaders of the government and the ANC would be drawn even more closely together in their efforts to save the negotiations. But would they succeed?

Even if they did could this mark the beginning of a downward spiral - chronic instability and violence, a final blow to investor confidence, deepening economic stagnation, intensified frustration among black youth and growing racial phobia among whites? Events in the next few days helped to answer some of the questions. The intensity of the anger that erupted among black youth sent shock waves through the country. The fact that De Klerk and the security forces did not seem to be directly involved made not the slightest difference. Hani had been a hero to millions. His murder was the last straw - a result of continuing white rule. Hatred of the system and of whites in general flooded to the surface.

After Wednesday 14 April the press, and not the capitalist-owned press alone, was filled with denunciations of the violence and looting by groups of black marchers in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Pietermaritzburg and Durban. A reporter on the scene said the mood was "maniacal". Once again city streets echoed to the firing of police shot-guns. Nelson Mandela, calling for restraint, was booed on the Witwatersrand while PAC leader Clarence Makwethu, identified with Apla's "armed struggle" was cheered. ANC youth fraternised with PAC and Azapo supporters, chanting "one settler, one bullet". Harry Gwala, militant ANC leader

from Natal who only weeks ago announced his impending retirement from politics, was back in the headlines demanding an end to negotiations.

Under this pressure it was impossible for the ANC and Cosatu leaders to avoid the call for renewed mass action and equally inevitable that the government would denounce it. De Klerk too is under increased pressure to "restore law and order" and challenged for the first time by a right wing within the National Party headed by police minister Hennis Kriel.

But despite their belligerent talk the leaders on both sides are trying to contain the crisis. There are elements in the state who mistrust negotiations and would welcome the chance of a military showdown. But for De Klerk and the capitalist class internationally the negotiations option has not yet been exhausted. A breakdown at this stage, with the masses on the move, could be disastrous for them.

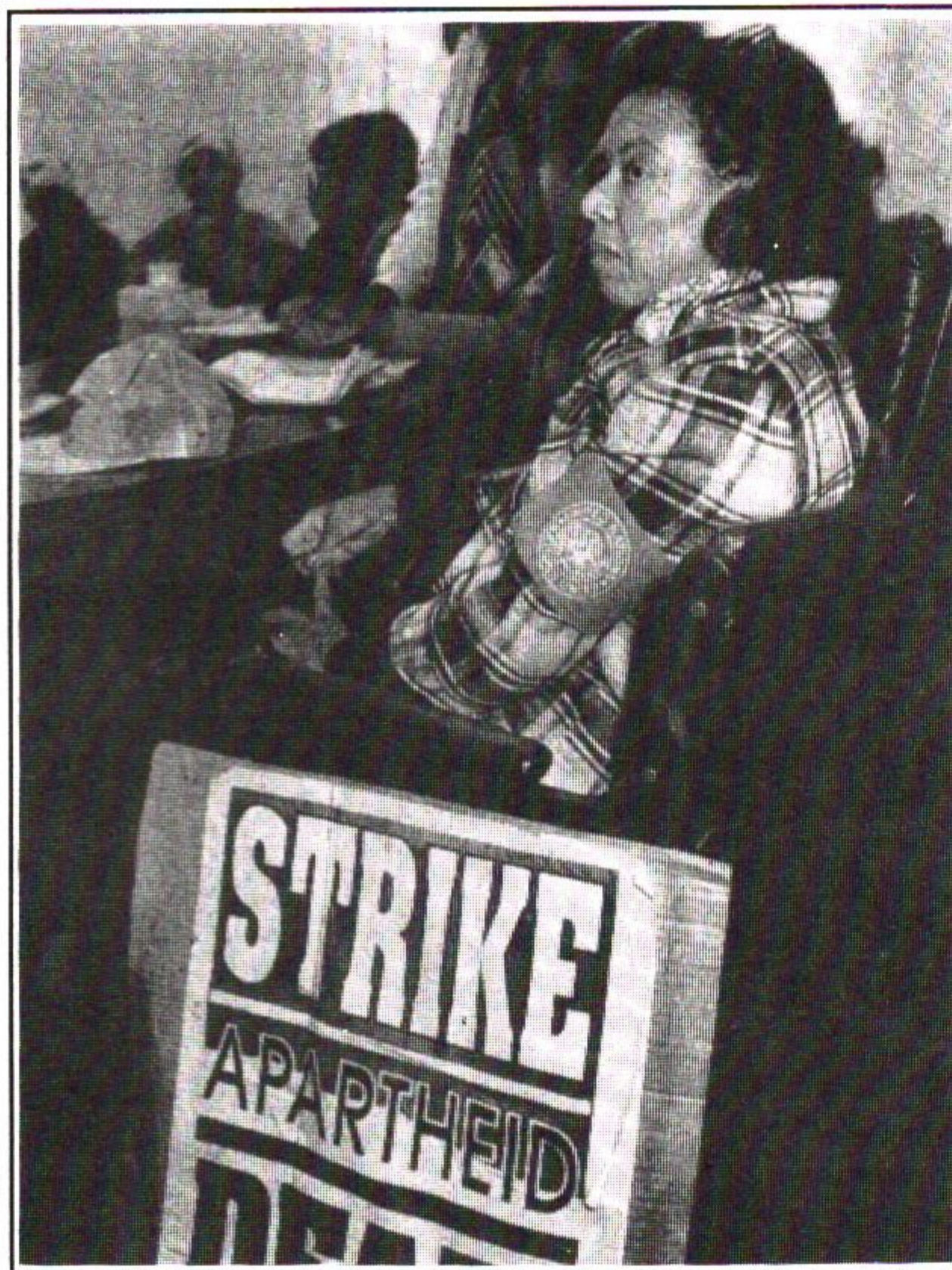
The crisis is reflected in a series of ironies, some grim, some amusing. Never before, perhaps, has the murder of a Communist leader been greeted with more genuine dismay in Washington and Whitehall. A Professor of economics at an Afrikaans university called it a "catastrophe"; the hammer and sickle flew over a Dutch Reformed church where a memorial service to Chris Hani was held.

Uncompromising Struggle

ANC leaders have worked closely with the police in trying to keep tensions from boiling over. A police colonel declared that the ANC's Jeff Radebe and the SACP's Dennis Nkosi gave the police "nothing but co-operation". Even militant ANC leaders like Tokyo Sexwale, while calling for uncompromising struggle to install an interim government, stressed that the struggle must be peaceful.

Only time will tell if the leaders can hold the line. The situation is tense in the extreme.

Black townships have become no-go areas for whites. Delivery trucks are attacked. The black community is deeply traumatised. A woman told me, almost in tears: "It's terrible. They attack the trains. If we go to work we must hide in the toilets. If my son goes to school they will kill him." "They" are the youth - unemployed and with nothing to lose, dismissive of negotiations calling for armed struggle and desperately seeking a way of carrying it forward. A comrade in a township says: "They are out of control. They want to fight. They have the illusion that with one big push the regime can be overthrown." "No more peace, no more peace!" chanted some on the huge march in Cape Town on 14 April. Only a minority went on the rampage yet it



Negotiations cannot bring about an end to white rule

left a trail of destruction and outrage through the city. One example: a "coloured" market stall keeper was attacked and robbed of all her money. Then they poured petrol over her fruit and vegetables and set it all on fire. "If they had taken it to give it to hungry people I wouldn't have minded," she said. "Some people call them animals, some call them hooligans. I won't call them animals. Animals have more respect."

It is not enough for socialists to say that they do not condone violence of this nature. Force may be unavoidable at times. But as the founder of the Soviet Army, Leon Trotsky warned: "*Methods of compulsion and terrorisation advantage in an infinitely higher degree the cause of reaction ... than they do the cause of historical progress, as represented by the proletariat.*"

On the other hand, merely condemning mob violence will not help while the causes continue to fester, an unequal, unjust social system guarantees ongoing atrocities - state repression combined with outbursts of rage by the oppressed. They have given up hope of reform, they have nothing to lose; they want to tear the system down.

Revolutionary Situation

In this sense the situation in South Africa is profoundly revolutionary. The youth are expressing the accumulated frustration of the black population as a whole. Their demands for democracy, jobs, homes and decent education are impossible to satisfy on a capitalist basis. Massive reforms would mean massive inflation unless the economy booms; but there is no hope of economic recovery until the political crisis is resolved. In the meantime, state spending must be cut in accordance with IMF directives. Continued struggle is inherent in the situation. Repression, bloodshed and excesses cannot be avoided. Every worker would undoubtedly prefer to change society by means of civilised negotiations. But as Trotsky pointed out:

"A peaceful, parliamentary change over to a new social structure would undoubtedly offer highly important advantages from the standpoint of the interests of culture and therefore of socialism. But in politics nothing is more dangerous than to mistake what we wish for what is possible."

Those who complain about the excesses of the masses in a revolution, he commented miss the point that revolution itself is an excess of history. It develops because the existing system provides the masses with no ready-made channels for solving their problems in a peaceful orderly way.

In South Africa, with white reaction deeply entrenched in a powerful state apparatus, the improbability of a peaceful, parliamentary change over to a new social structure is particularly glaring. This accounts for the spirit of insurrection and the demands for

revolutionary change.

But the indispensable condition for a successful revolution is absent and that is a mass leadership with a viable alternative to capitalism. Even the most radical leaders of the ANC, CP and Cosatu regard the overthrow of capitalism as a future goal which is not yet on the agenda. Mass action is seen, not as a means of mobilising and preparing workers to take the management of society into their own hands, but to put pressure on the government and speed up a settlement. This strategy is fraught with contradictions. The ANC is hoping to implement a classical social-democratic programme of reforms within the limits of capitalism. Left leaders are resigned to this perspective but warn that mass action will remain necessary to protect the interests of the masses even in a black governed capitalist nation.

Defensive struggles of this nature, however, do not in themselves point the way to a solution. Instead, the ANC would be left with the worst of all worlds, Even under pressure of mass action it would be impossible to satisfy the working class and youth. At the same time, ongoing mass action combined with concessions under pressure would add up to "bad government" in capitalist eyes driving away investment and limiting the scope for reform even further. The crisis of policy in the ANC alliance is a fundamental obstacle to the conquest of power by the ANC and the democratic transformation of South Africa. Although the leadership have accepted capitalist policies, capitalism has no confidence in the ability of a black government to rule efficiently and

insists on a form of power-sharing to ensure that the levers of economic power remain in reliable hands. This requires the ANC leaders to compromise on democratic as well as economic demands, causing disquiet among organised workers and driving the youth to acts of desperation.

Whites, on the other hand, see little in the ANC's policy to attract them and much to frighten them. Not only do they expect to be impoverished; they fear an uncontrolled tide of violence spreading from the townships. White rule and white-led security forces appear as their only defence.

It is these conflicting pressures which have bogged the negotiations down for three years and laid the basis for the present flare-up. Though the government and the ANC leaders both need a settlement more urgently than ever, it is by no means certain that they will be able to achieve it. They have no agreement yet on the fundamental questions of state power. Pulled in opposite directions by their supporters it is not yet clear how they will close the gap between the minimum that the black masses would accept and the maximum that the whites would concede.

Political commentators are viewing the situation with some foreboding. There is a fear that South Africa might have passed the point of no return. The spectre which is stalking the country is not the spectre of communism - it is that of a slide into anarchy and economic disaster.

The ANC, SACP and Cosatu leaders are acutely aware of the danger of losing control over the townships but are prisoners of their



Police attack demonstrators in Cape Town

own policy. Although the present campaign of mass action will no doubt be supported by millions, no new demands have been raised. It is part of a desperate effort to speed up a settlement and defuse the crisis.

Difficult questions are posed from a Marxist point of view. The fury of the black youth against whites is fuelling the white backlash to a point where racial violence is becoming the dominant issue in the minds of millions. With large sections of the Asian and "coloured" minorities recoiling towards the devil they know there is a danger that the country may become irretrievably polarised between Africans and non-Africans. This would split the working class and lay the basis for even more destructive conflict in the future.

The key to the situation is a programme of social transformation that could capture the imagination of the youth, unite the workers movement with a renewed sense of purpose and convince white workers that it would offer them a future.

Viable Alternative

The challenge is enormous. With the prestige of socialism at an all-time low following the collapse of Stalinism, it will require a massive political campaign, not only in South Africa but internationally, to re-establish the confidence among workers and their leaders that a viable alternative to capitalism can be created through struggle. Marxism will need to break out of its long isolation. It cannot do this by pretending to have finished recipes of utopia. It represents the conscious striving of working people collectively to find thorough and lasting solutions to the practical problems of capitalist society.

History has taught us certain lessons - above all, the need for the working class to gain control over the means of production in order to apply them in the interests of society as a whole. These basic lessons need to be relearned, debated and explained at every level of the labour movement and in every forum where opinion is shaped - from union broadsheets to scientific journals, from shop stewards meetings to universities. Above all they must be implemented. Marxism is a guide to action, setting out to show in practice how the power of organised labour can become a force to change society. But the time in which to achieve this is short.

Sooner or later the same crisis will re-emerge. Socialists and activists should advocate the central questions with urgency. Measures should be taken to get to the root of our economic and social problems. Strategies and tactics should be followed which mobilise working people to implement these measures.

Funeral Crowd Hears of Hani's... Legacy of Militancy

The murder of Chris Hani has set off a time bomb in the path of negotiations. Once again the masses are intervening and setting the pace for the ANC/SACP/Cosatu alliance. Once again, as after the Boipatong massacre, they are showing their distrust of the ruling class in the language of mass action.

The assassination has changed the vocabulary of the struggle from negotiations and peace to struggle and socialism. **The ANC leadership had no choice but to respond to the anger from below.** Now we see Cyril Ramaphosa and Jay Naidoo calling for "unprecedented mass action" until our demands are met. Elections now, a constituent assembly and eradication of white majority rule have become the war cries of our leaders.

However, the key question is: what will happen to the negotiations? Immediately after the assassination of comrade Chris Hani, Mandela stated that the negotiations

should not be called off but should be accelerated as comrade Hani had stood for peace and democracy.

The SABC, the mouthpiece of the ruling class, wasted no time in giving Mandela virtually a free rein.

His numerous addresses to the shocked masses were dominated by calls for calm, order and discipline. It was clearly not necessary for De Klerk to control the masses; Mandela was doing it on his behalf.

But comrade Mandela's stature as "president in waiting" was clearly not enough to calm the masses.

Spontaneous actions the day after the assassination shoved Mandela out of the way. In Cape Town the tens of thousands of marchers outnumbered even the crowds who welcomed the release of comrade Mandela in February 1990.

The African youth dominated the scene. As usual, the pace of the toyi-toying determined the militancy of the marchers. This time the toyi-toying was a fast sprint which only the youth could keep up.

Marchers streamed into the centre of town from all directions.

As they entered the city, their anger and militancy burst at the seams in explosions of spontaneous destruction.

The demonstration was marred by the smashing of cars and shop windows. The criminal element took advantage of the situation and proceeded to loot.

It can safely be said that much of the violence could have prevented but for the marked absence of leadership. Marshalling of the crowds was almost non-existent. While it was announced on radio and repeated in the press that the venue for the commemoration service would be St George's Cathedral, on arrival the marchers were turned back and sent to the Grand Parade.

In the meantime certain dignitaries and important people were being addressed in the Cathedral. The people then had to wait in the blazing sun for their leaders to arrive, including Muhammed Ali. After a long wait only the sound system arrived. By this time the people's patience had worn away to a

point where a national ANC leader, Trevor Manuel, was assaulted by members of the crowd when he called for peace and order.

In Soweto on the same day Mandela was booed when he called for negotiations with the National Party to continue - an event without precedent. The day in Cape Town ended on a flat and demoralised note after two deaths and 34 assaults, predominantly by the police, and the incidents of violence robbed the masses of the elation normally felt after a powerful show of solidarity.

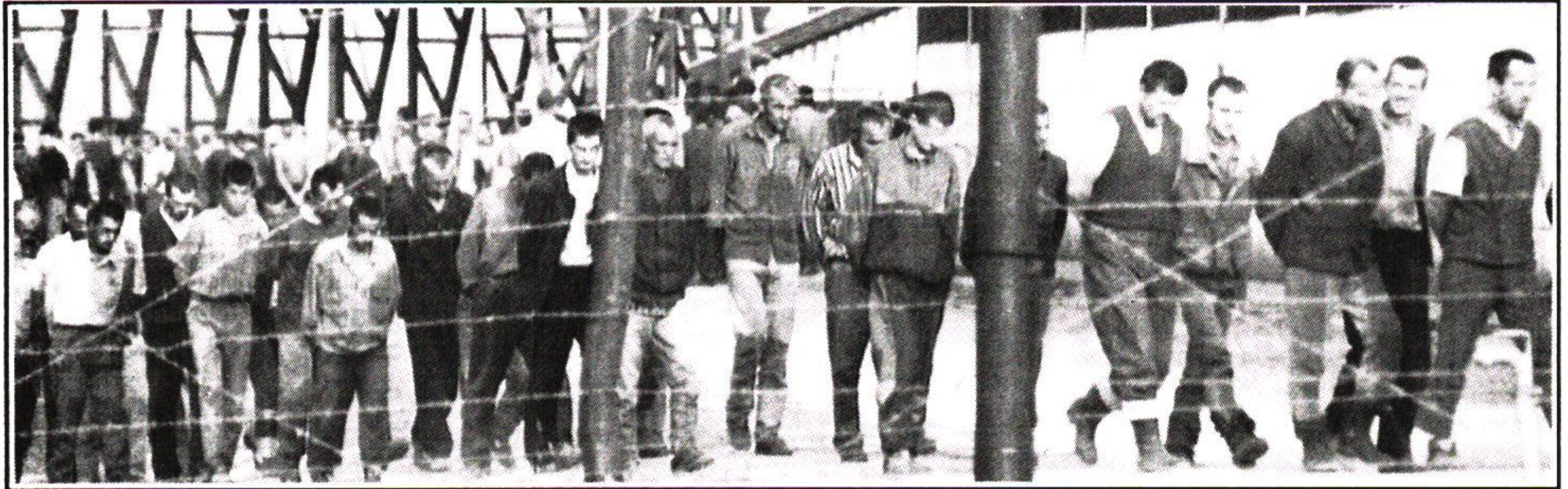
However, this set-back would only be temporary. In the Eastern Cape, the region which normally shows the way, attacks on police stations and municipal buildings were demonstrating to the working class that when they "vote with their feet" they must follow a certain path - the path to power. The real weakness of the day was the failure of the leadership to channel the action in this direction.

Postscript: the action in Cape Town saw PAC supporters with ANC supporters, waving their banners and flags. ANC leaders Yengeni (Western Cape) and Gwala (Natal) called for withdrawal from the negotiations.

This was contradicted by Mandela and Boesak, who called for an acceleration of the negotiation process.

Eyewitness Report

Between Intervention and Caution: The Yugoslav Inferno Continues



“US poised to bomb Serbs,” scream the newspaper headlines as a section of the ruling class demand a military “solution” to the crisis in Bosnia. Bill Clinton and his US military advisers are busy considering plans to begin the bombing of Bosnian Serb targets. US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher will visit London, Paris, Bonn and Rome to discuss allied action.

But for every “strategist” calling for military intervention there is another advising “caution”. The imperialists policy is balanced by a fear of military intervention and its consequences and the terror of an escalation of the situation into a full blown Balkans war. Whatever their policy, it is not driven by any humanitarian feelings. The intervention of imperialism is based on their own economic and strategic needs. Hard on the heels of the new United Nations resolution laying down tougher sanctions against Serbia, any air strikes would represent a real escalation in the situation. They are likely to achieve little of strategic importance for the “United Nations” or the “peace keeping” process. Like the previous US policy of humanitarian air drops, it would not solve any of the problems. The situation will be inflamed - the UN “humanitarian” troops, mainly British and French, will become military targets for the Bosnian Serbs. They will either have to be withdrawn or take on a combat role. In fact, with the inevitable failure of the air strikes to break the deadlock it seems likely that the US would mount pressure on the Europeans to commit more troops for a full scale military intervention. Rather than helping the “peace process” or get the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen Plan, this insane

policy would lead to a bigger blood bath than already exists.

An opinion poll in the US showed that 62% of Americans were opposed to air strikes against Serbia, with only 30% in favour. This is why Warren Christopher has stated that a military option needed to meet four criteria: a clear goal “understood” by the American people, the likelihood that force would be successful, an “exit strategy”, and the sustained support of the American people. On all four counts military intervention would not be an option. But despite all the problems, according to the Independent (28.4.93), “one diplomatic source said the ‘logic’ of the US position was to decide in favour of air strikes.”

The Bosnian Muslims have talked about the need for a UN military presence for 25 years. But when the body bags are sent back to Britain and France, as they inevitably would, the demand for withdrawal would be unstoppable. The situation would be worse than before! Field marshal Sir Richard Vincent, chairman of the NATO military committee and former British Chief of Staff, stated “The military out there are a means to an end, they’re not an end in themselves. If we go out on the basis that we’re an end in ourselves, we’ll be there halfway into the next century.”

What is going on in Bosnia is a civil war. Despite the media focus on the siege of Srebrenica and the crimes of the Bosnian Serbs the war is three sided. As Conor Cruise O’Brien wrote in the Independent (23.3.93), “It should now be clear that ethnic cleansing is not just a Serbian idea. It is a fancy recent label for standard practice in a Balkan civil war. Croats and Muslims were hard at it this week, and not for the first time (though never before with such

publicity).” The recent uncovering of the slaughter of Muslim civilians by Croats in the villages around Vitez in Central Bosnia highlights the reality of the situation. Muslims too, are carrying out a siege of the area around Jablanica, trying to “cleanse” the area of Croats.

The media has attempted to demonise the Serbs. They are portrayed as the aggressor. Yet Croats have also seized large parts of Bosnia, declaring their own state, Hercegovina. Rather than being asked to give up any of these areas, the Croats have been rewarded in the Vance-Owen plan by being bequeathed all their conquered territory and more - that is why they were first to sign it! The Vance-Owen plan, if implemented, would be a disaster. It has nothing to do with “peace.” The creation of 10 “ethnic” cantons would mean a further redivision of Bosnia. Owen’s “peace broking” is no more a solution for workers in Bosnia than a military “solution”.

Thatcher, getting the full glare of media publicity, has called for the arming of the Muslims, she wants the arms embargo lifted. Clinton is also reported to be leaning in this direction. In O’Brien’s article in the Independent he states bluntly what this would mean: “The Muslims would then step up their own contribution to ethnic cleansing, from its present relatively modest proportions in central Bosnia. The Germans would then see that the Croats received an increase in arms also, the Russians would do the same for the Serbs, and the civil war would become worse.”

Scandalously, the Labour leaders have taken to sabre-rattling - even criticising Major’s caution. If military intervention does come then they will shoulder large responsibility for the situation. They have

chased the coat tails of the imperialists rather than raise the real issues facing Bosnia. What we need is a proper class analysis of the situation - and a solution in the interests of the working class.

Worse than this, some so-called "lefts" have come out in support of Thatcher. "Margaret Thatcher is right," declared the editorial in Tribune (16.4.93). It went on, "Tribune has argued consistently that the international community should be defending Bosnia by force of arms and that the failure to do so has been a political capitulation to militarist expansionism unprecedented since the thirties." It concludes, "it is essential that the embargo on arms sales to Bosnia is lifted at once." A week later their editorial goes even further, condemning Jack Cunningham for merely calling for an air strike, they state, "The lifting of the arms embargo and military intervention by ground forces in defence of Bosnia are both essential if the country is to survive," (23.4.93). Of course, no explanation is given as how arms are to be got to the Bosnian Muslims - through the Croat or Serb front lines, or maybe dropped from the air like the US earlier failed attempts to deliver food and medical aid.

What Tribune fails to see is that this is a civil war between three sections of the Bosnian people. This war began the day the EC recognised the declaration of Bosnian independence from the Yugoslav federation. It was the economic expansionism of imperialism, particularly Germany, which led directly to this situation. Germany pressurised Britain and France, its junior economic partners, into recognising first Croatian and Slovenian, and then Bosnian, independence. Their aim was the break-up of Yugoslavia and the economic domination of the area.

In fact the main territorial expansion in the recent period has been by the Bosnian Croats. They are attempting to unilaterally implement the Vance-Owen Plan by "cleansing" areas designated to them. They have declared their own independent state with its capital the old Muslim city of Mostar. "While Serb forces have expelled or killed hundreds of thousands of Moslems in eastern Bosnia, their Croat counterparts have done the same on a smaller scale in the west," said the Financial Times (20.4.93), "supported by the armies of their neighbouring patron states, they are pitted against the Moslems in an intention to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Despite a "cease-fire" being signed between Croats and Muslims the fighting between them has continued. In fact Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, who signed the cease-fire and the Vance-Owen plan, has little power or authority outside of

Sarajevo. The cities of Tuzla and Zenica are the real powerbases of the Bosnian Muslims, and in Zenica the Muslim leadership has declared Bosnian Croats to be "Illegal immigrants."

While one section of the ruling class contemplates lifting the arms embargo, air strikes or even full scale military intervention, another wants to maintain the role of "peace broker" while carrying out sanctions and giving "humanitarian aid." Neither strategy provides a solution.

Ironically, the tighter sanctions against Serbia have forced Milosevic to try and persuade the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Vance-Owen plan. Industrial production in Serbia has been halved in just one year, inflation is around 230 per cent a month. But Milosevic's envoy was sent packing from the Bosnian Serb "parliament." Rather than bringing a solution nearer the sanctions are polarising the situation. Implementation of the Plan, if it is ever accepted, would be a disaster. "The war has already caused huge migrations of people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The next big wave could follow an agreement on the provinces boundaries, because the map simply does not match the situation on the ground," (Guardian 6.3.93). For instance, Brcko in the north of Bosnia would be divided under the Vance-Owen plan between the Croat Odzak and the Serb Bijelina province. Yet this mainly Muslim area is firmly under the control of the 108th

Brigade of the
Bosnian
(Muslim)
army.

It is clear that the capitalists have no solution - neither militarily or as "peace brokers." Under Tito the national questions that had always dogged the Balkans were partially resolved. Serbs, Croats and Muslims lived side by side, with a large degree of integration, for decades. But Yugoslavia was not a genuine socialist society, although production was nationalised, society was run by a massive bureaucracy. A crisis was inevitable and the resurgence of nationalism spread through the whole federation. Firstly fuelled by the bureaucrats themselves, who whipped up nationalism to give them some sort of base, and then with the intervention of imperialism looking for new client states.

There is no way forward on the capitalist road. Economic prosperity and proper democratic rights for all nationalities would begin to resolve the nightmare that now exists. These things are only possible on the basis of a genuine socialist federation of all the former republics of Yugoslavia. The bureaucrats, warlords and imperialists have brought only war and destruction.

The programme of
Yugoslav workers
must be class
unity and
workers
democracy.



The "Miracle" is Over: Now The Struggle Must Begin

The alleged miracle of the Spanish economy is over. The boom of the 80's, stronger than in most European countries, gave way to a serious slowdown of the economy by the end of 1991 that has become a recession in the last quarter of 1992.

1992, presented as the "Year of Marvels", with the Barcelona Olympic Games, the high-speed train from Madrid to the Seville World Exhibition and all the other massive related public works, was meant to push Spain towards a convergence with the more developed economies of the EC, ended in an economic nightmare.

This, in turn, has led to a political crisis when for the first time since 1982 it is far from certain that the Socialist Party (PSOE) will win the coming elections on June 6th. Felipe Gonzalez, the Spanish Prime minister and PSOE leader, at first tried to avoid early elections before the summer. One of the reasons for that was the fear of the effects that a collapse of the French Socialist Party

vote could have in Spain. This was not however the main consideration, because whatever the final outcome of the elections, a French scenario is for the time being ruled out for Spain.

The 40 years of dictatorship under Franco are still fresh in the minds of the Spanish working class. The coming to power of the Partido Popular (Peoples Party, PP) would be seen as his heirs in office with a democratic facade.

Renewed Confidence

There are many indications that layers of the middle class and some backward layers of workers are moving to support the PP. However, this threat will serve to rally many workers behind PSOE, in the vain hope that the "good days" of the 80's will come back. At the same time, the mood amongst important sections of the working class, with renewed confidence in their own forces following the 1988 December 14th General Strike, could translate the discontent with Gonzalez into increased support for the IU (United Left - the Communist party-led

alliance), something that did not happen in France.

The hope Felipe had was for a recovery of the economy later this year. However, every day that goes by, new facts and figures released illustrate the gloomy picture for Spanish capitalism, which still remains one of the weakest and more parasitic of Europe. If in 1992 GDP growth was just 1%, 1993 could end with a 0% growth, or even a negative one. Inflation, despite the recession, remains at 4% and it is even higher (5.9%) if we exclude the price of fuel.

Unemployment Soars

Registered unemployment has reached 2,529,595 (16.6% of the active population), again higher according to other official statistics that acknowledge more than 3 million unemployed. That means 1 in 5 Spanish workers are now jobless.

A lot has been said about jobs created during the boom, but the reality is now emerging. Long-term jobs have been substituted by casual, short-time contracts which have now reached 40% of the workforce in the private sector, while the EC equivalent is only 13%. According to the unions, 608,000 long-term jobs have been destroyed in the last 6 years. As a result of this, the first workers to be fired are the casuals, leading to a dramatic increase of unemployment by 400,000 from August 1992 to March 1993. The car industry alone now has 50,000 workers on short time working or temporarily laid off, and the outlook is black with a 35% fall in sales in the first quarter and problems in the export market. The construction boom is now over. Steel industry jobs are now under threat: 50% of the proposed overall cuts in rolled flat steel in the EC, if implemented, will be in Spain which only accounts for 6% of the output, directly destroying another 10,000 jobs.

The peseta, artificially one of the strongest currencies in the last few



New strike waves will hit Spain when workers are made to pay for the economic crisis

years, plummeted with the EMS September crisis, suffering two devaluations so far. This helped the exports a little bit, while imports fell as a result of the depressed internal market. The desperate attempt to defend the peseta has reduced the reserves from \$71,259 million in August 1992 to just over \$20,000 million now, according to Financial Times estimates (29.4.93). Pressure for a new devaluation grows, and it is difficult to imagine how the government could avoid it before the elections. Even if they did this, the value of the peseta will soon be forced to face the reality of the crisis of the economy; you cannot have a "strong" currency with an economy in tatters.

PSOE Crisis

But the trigger for the early elections was the crisis at the top of PSOE which came to the surface with the exposure of corruption and the illegal funding of the Party. The PSOE extreme right wing, known as the "renovators", saw their chance for an all out clash with the apparatus of the Party, personified by Alfonso Guerra. The latter is reluctant to engage the PSOE in a policy of cuts and attacks on workers rights, namely the right to strike, which the "renovators", consistent defenders of the capitalist system and with open links with the Spanish bourgeois, are arguing for. Finally, it seems a compromise was reached to go to the elections united, but it is common knowledge that a split in the PSOE is on the agenda for after the elections. In fact, the relations the union leaders are building up with the Guerra section are an indication of what could happen tomorrow. As an editorial of El Pais, the main bourgeois paper and on good terms with the government, said, "*the division in the tops of the PSOE has become a risky factor that weakens institutional stability*" (13.4.93). At the moment, the hairline crack between Gonzalez and his ex-lieutenant Guerra has little or no political content, but this could change very quickly under the pressure of

We are entering a period of instability, against a background of economic crisis that will force the next government to attack workers' jobs and conditions



Steelworkers have already shown their fighting spirit - it will be needed again

the working class in a background of economic crisis, especially if the PSOE loses its majority.

The union leaders, both the UGT and the CC.OO, are suffering from contradictory pressures from the Government and the bosses in favour of a social contract, on the one hand, and from the workers, aware of their power and willing to defend their jobs and wages, on the other. The combativity of the Spanish working class has been proved again in the last few years, when in 1991 was just second to Australia on a world level in the number of days lost as a result of strikes and lock-outs in manufacturing industry.

Recession Bites

The present recession is hitting a working class which has not suffered serious defeats in the last few years and conscious of their power and the need to generalise the strikes, shown in a whole series of local and regional actions and in a half day general strike in May 1992. This atmosphere makes it difficult for a social contract to be reached, together with the lack of any concession or reform on the part of the government or the employers. However, it cannot be ruled out that some kind of deal may be stitched up, but it would not be long lasting, and would rapidly break down, ushering in a new period of class conflict.

The election prospects are unclear, but for one thing, the overall majority the PSOE has had for three consecutive general elections is finished. We are entering a new period of instability, against a background of economic crisis that will force the next government to attack workers jobs and conditions. This is the only way a weak Spanish capitalism can compete, basing itself on very low wages and bad conditions, and on the overexploitation of the working class. The PSOE will still have the support of millions of workers, but this time without the

illusions of the past decade. The right-wing Party PP's vote could well come near that of the PSOE, something the polls forecast. The IU (CP-led alliance) could go from its present 17 MPs to almost 30, expressing the will for a more left policy. However, it looks likely that the government will be decided on the basis of the stand of the Basque and Catalan bourgeois nationalists, either if they go for a coalition with the PP or for one with PSOE, as seems more likely at the moment. Marxists in Spain argue for a IU-PSOE government with a socialist programme, which should nationalise the banks, the monopolies and the commanding heights of the economy, with compensation only in the case of proven need, to plan them under the control and the check of the working class. This is the only way a job and decent living conditions could be guaranteed for workers and their families. A Socialist Federation of Spain would also be a springboard for the workers in Europe fighting for a Socialist Federation, that would change the whole

The Spanish Revolution

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The end of the economic recession in the advanced capitalist countries is still some way off. This year, real world output may grow only 1%, which is about the same as the recession year of 1992.

However, the overall growth rate hides the wide variation of output expansion among the different national economies. The so-called Anglo-Saxon economies of North America, the UK, Scandinavia and Australasia were the first to enter recession in the summer of 1990, while continental Europe (especially Germany) and Japan continued to

capitalist lines. that transfer of resources has still not been enough to turn the eastern states around, and even more important, the West German economy has not been able to afford it. Despite the advice of the German Bundesbank, the German government refused to raise taxes to pay for spending in the East. Instead they borrowed the money, which drove up interest rates in Germany just when they needed to fall in order to keep up the manufacturing profits. High interest rates meant that

fallen out of the ERM and devalued their currencies and so lowered their export prices can expect to see a recovery in growth (around 1.5% in the UK this year), albeit sluggish and unsteady.

This situation cannot last much longer. Unless the Germans lower their interest rates, the ERM will break up, as France, Spain and Italy are forced to lower their interest rates and devalue. Otherwise unemployment, already officially 17 million, or over 10% in western Europe, will rise to new heights.

Europe's Downturn

By Michael Roberts

grow steadily for another year. Now the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are recovering. This year the US economy, the largest by far, is likely to expand 3%, thus presaging a slow boom in 1994.

However, in Europe the recession is deepening with an absolute fall in European real GDP likely this year. This downturn is led by Germany, whose output is likely to decline by over 1%.

The mighty German industrial machine appears to be entering the worst economic slump it has suffered since the 1940s.

Industrial output has fallen 7% in the past twelve months. The reason for this crisis is twofold. First, the decision to absorb the former Stalinist eastern Germany into West Germany has been massively expensive. Every year the capitalist western states of Germany have had to transfer up to 6% of their total output to the East in order to raise living standards of East German workers and try to rebuild a shattered economy on

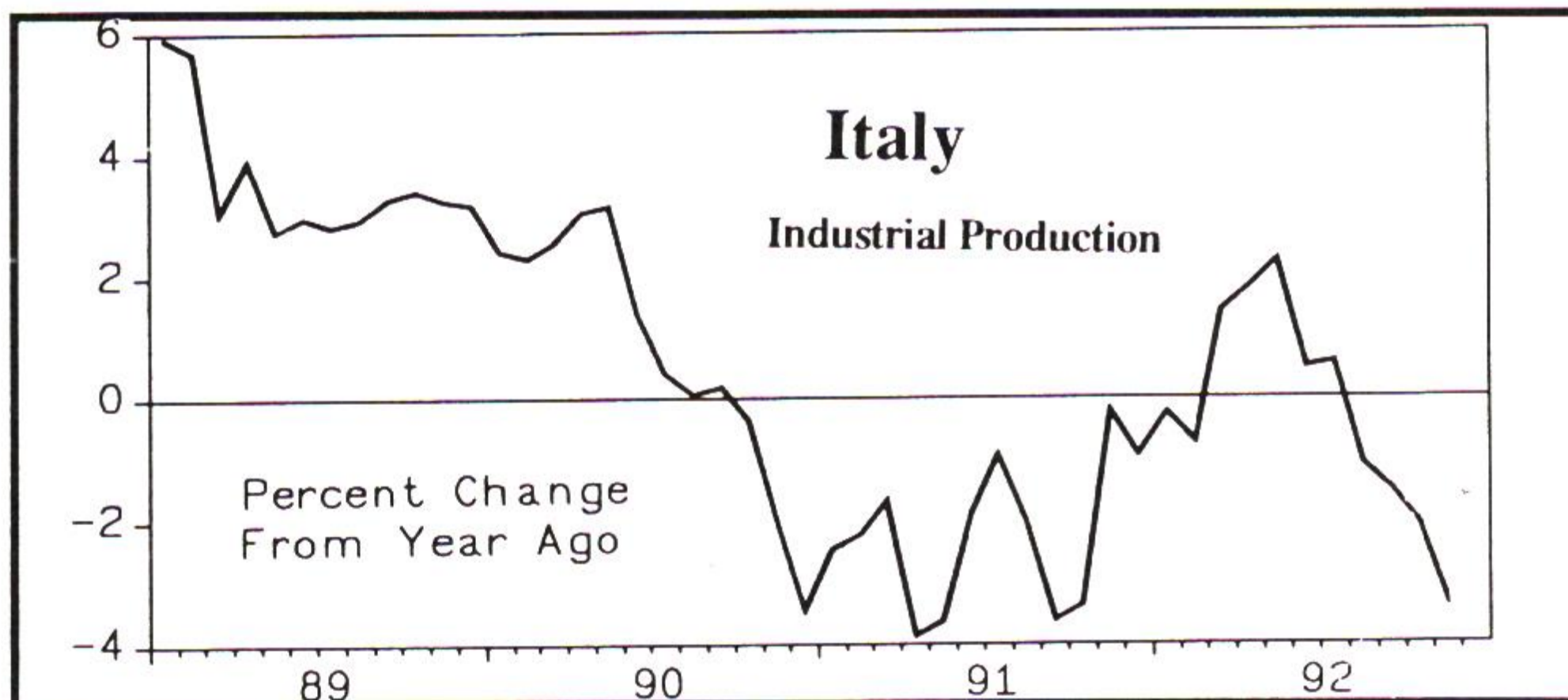
German industry faced falling demand for its goods and higher costs for investment. Also higher interest rates meant that the German mark was attractive to hold for foreign investors, so the mark increased in value against other European currencies, making German exports even more expensive. Under the terms of the ERM other European governments must keep the value of their currencies within range of the mark. They could only do this by raising their interest rates as well. So, in effect, they were paying for German unification too. The whole of western Europe has been driven into a lengthy recession by this policy. Now German industrial goods are too expensive in world markets and the slump in Germany is dragging down all those European economies tied to its high interest rates and falling markets through the ERM. France is likely to stagnate, while Italy and Spain enter recession.

Only Britain, Norway and Finland, having

Even now the recession in Europe is taking its toll on those governments that have presided over it. The French socialists suffered a crushing defeat in the recent parliamentary elections. The Italian ruling parties have been humiliated by the Mafia and corruption scandals and the former Communist Party could enter the government for the first time in over 40 years. In Spain, the socialists face defeat by a capitalist party that advocates a break with the ERM.

In such a situation whether Maastricht is approved or not by Denmark and Britain is irrelevant, because few economies will be able to meet the terms for reducing the differences between the EC states, while Europe remains deep in recession. On the contrary, there are growing forces for a break with European unity, for greater protection of home markets against imports. The fish war in the Channel Islands, the lamb war in Normandy are just harbingers. The new French government is hinting that it will not honour the EC deal on reducing subsidies to agriculture and there is little hope of a GATT deal with the US this year. Also, there are growing conflicts with Eastern Europe as the EC puts up yet more hurdles and excuses to stop imports from the former Stalinist states.

And what solutions to the recession can the governments of western Europe offer? At last month's meeting of EC finance ministers, they agreed to provide £24 billion extra funds from their national budgets to boost output and jobs in the EC. If it materialises it



could add 0.6% to the growth rate in Europe and help it come out of the recession. However, even this figure would only fund another 500,000 jobs at most, at a time when Europe's unemployed figure is heading towards 20 million.

And there is no guarantee that all the fine words of the ministers will lead to any extra money at the end of the day. These ministers cannot deliver without taking resources away from domestic demands; will Germany pay extra to help Spain when it is in recession itself?

It is likely that the expansion in the US and Canada, along with the UK will eventually drag Europe and Japan out of recession in 1994 and there will be a small boom then, although there are many pitfalls in the way: further splits in Europe's economic unity; the breakout of trade war among the big three trading blocs; and chaos in Russia affecting the west. Even if there is full recovery in 1994, it will be no consolation for the nearly 40 million unemployed in the advanced capitalist economies who can expect little or no increase in employment opportunities while output growth remains so low.



European Communities No. 12 (1986)

Single European Act

between the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Hellenic Republic, the Kingdom of Spain, the French Republic, Ireland, the Italian Republic, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Portuguese Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

and

German Workers Take Action

Workers in eastern Germany have voted to take strike action by a thumping majority over the employers' cancellation of pay contracts. It heralds the first official strikes there for more than 60 years, and reflects the new stormy period that Germany has entered.

To the union's surprise, more than 86% of workers in the steel, metal, engineering and electrical industries voted for action - far more than the 75% needed under union rules. The IG Metall union president Franz Steinkuehler said it showed that "all dreams had died that IG Metal might not be prepared to fight in east Germany". Barring a last minute compromise, east Germany could be engulfed in a prolonged battle over living standards.

After rejecting Stalinism, workers were originally promised that the unification of Germany would mean the uprating of wages on a par with those of West Germany. Eastern German wages are about 70% of western levels. The employers - the Gesamtmetall - have reneged and refused to pay the promised 26% rise from 1st April. They want a new contract on the

basis of a 9% increase this year. This is the first time in post-war Germany that employers have cancelled a pay contract. Since unification rents and prices have rocketed, and unemployment has shot up to 35%.

According to Steinkuehler, "We did not vote for reunification just in order to allow the employers to turn east Germany into a cheap-wage economy." He continued: "Before our members change from a party dictatorship to a dictatorship of the employers, they are standing up and saying 'Not with us'."

The illusions in unification and the market economy have evaporated under the blow of events. "We were taken for a ride under communism for 40 years, and we are now being duped again," said an electrical worker from east Berlin. "We are ready to vote for another revolution", said another. There is a bitter determination to see the strike through. Backs have been against the wall for a long time. "Our workers feel if they don't strike now, they'll still be here in 10 years on 50% of western pay," said Manfred Foede, a union official. It is likely that either selective or all-out action will be called shortly.



Flashback to the public sector strikes which rocked Germany last year

By our German Correspondent

Revolution Betrayed

The movements of workers in 1968 shook capitalism and Stalinism to their very foundations, after many years in which "official society" had poured scorn on the ideas of Marxism and revolution. Yet within a few weeks, the contradictions riddling French society had erupted to the surface, so that all the conditions for a peaceful socialist transformation of society existed, except for one - a leadership capable of understanding events, explaining their implications and guiding the French workers to taking power into their own hands.

In 1958, President Charles De Gaulle came to power posing as the saviour of France, promising to cure France's economic ills and win the war against the Algerian independence movement.

Claiming to stand "between capitalism and communism" as a "third way", De Gaulle, in reality, instituted a form of "parliamentary bonapartism" - lacking any real social base he balanced between the classes.

Using state intervention in industry to benefit big business at the expense of the petty bourgeois, imposing strict censorship of the press and media, disregarding parliament and ruling by decree, he sought to save France for capitalism.

The post war boom had been delayed in France, not least by the conscious policy of French capitalism to hold back the development of a strong working class. Nevertheless, the economy had developed significantly under De Gaulle. The working class had recovered from the defeats of the pre-war and immediate post-war periods. But economic growth had exacted a tremendous price. Unemployment had risen to 700,000 by 1968. VAT, the deregulation of rents and a 45% rise in prices over the previous decade had eroded living standards. Low wages and an average 45-hour week imposed further strains, while three million lived in slums. The Economist described the interior of the Renault Billancourt Plant as "a sight from hell." Capitalist "progress" meant intense pressures on the minds, sinews and nerves of workers.

This year sees the 25th anniversary of the May events of France 1968, which culminated in the biggest general strike in history, involving more than 10 million workers. TV programmes and newspaper columns will mark the occasion but few, if any, will give a real reflection of the role played by the main actors and actresses, the working class. Terry McPartlan reviews the events and lessons of May '68.



French workers and students march in Paris

Likewise, in the universities, the conditions faced by students were growing intolerable. A fourfold increase in student numbers over the previous 20 years, coupled with repressive college regimes resulted in 75% of students failing to complete their courses. **The social base on which De Gaulle's regime rested was weak, indeed, the social base for capitalism was growing rickety.** The evidence for this was first demonstrated in the movement of the students - the "gilded youth".

Brutal Clampdown

1968 saw student movements throughout the world. What tipped the balance in France, detonating the general strike was the brutal response of De Gaulle. In early 1968 demonstrations against the outdated and restrictive education system resulted in the authorities calling in police and riot squads (the notorious CRS) to "put down" the discontent.

In early May, a number of students from Nanterre University were to be tried for "disruptive behaviour" in the University Courts. On May 2nd, the University director closed the faculty, expecting trouble. **The following day, a peaceful demonstration outside was attacked by the CRS.** Lectures were suspended at other Paris universities fearing a repeat. As the temperature rose the university teachers' union called a strike

which was banned by the Education Minister, Peyrefitte.

On May 5th students arrested on previous demonstrations were jailed and fined. The strike in the universities spread to secondary schools. **Each attempt to smash the movement by repression resulted in more anger and wider participation.**

The next day a 60,000 strong demonstration through the Latin Quarter was brutally attacked by the CRS. Students were forced to set up barricades. Not since the rising of Parisian workers against the German army in 1944 had these defences been seen on the capital's streets. The actions of the CRS provoked widespread anger, and support for the students. That night, 739 lay injured in Paris hospitals, while hundreds more found refuge in local residents homes.

The unease of the middle classes was reflected in the press. Polls showed 80% support for the students. Peyrefitte blamed a "handful of troublemakers". The Communist Party (CP), the biggest workers party at that time, denounced "groupuscules, Trotskyists, anarchists and CIA agents" in a disgraceful show of mimicry.

The next few days saw demonstrations, street fighting and more barricades. Young workers began to mingle with the growing student numbers. The CP leaders were taunted by demonstrators and banners demanded "police out of the Latin Quarter",

“reopen the universities”, “free our comrades” and “students and workers solidarity”.

The Communist Party leaders expounded the theory that socialism was impossible in France until the living standards of workers in Stalinist Russia rose to the levels of Western Europe.

On the night on May 10th, the “Night of the Barricades”, 60 or more were built. Students tore up the cobbles assisted by workers with pneumatic drills. The demonstrators were met with tear gas, CS gas and smoke bombs. Angry residents poured buckets of water out their windows so the students could wash their stinging eyes and skin. Gas seeped into the Metro, affecting passengers. In the aftermath, angry doctors demanded the police be prosecuted. A wave of revulsion and disgust pressured the leaders of the workers parties and the unions to call a one-day general strike for May 13th. Prime minister Pompidou’s announcement of the reopening of the Sorbonne University and withdrawal of the police couldn’t stem the tide. The scene was set.

It is vital to understand that the one-day general strike and the titanic movement which followed did not drop from the sky, but was rooted in the conditions pertaining

The trade union leaders hoped to dissipate workers' anger and called the one day general strike to let off steam. But instead of heading off the movement it crystallised the workers' anger

in French society. Although the initial response of French workers to the students’ call for support had been muted, deep discontent flowed through the working class. During late 1967, early 1968, strikes and lock-outs had occurred in engineering, the car plants, steel industry, shipbuilding and the public sector.. An estimated 80% of workers involved were outside of the trade union movement.

At the Renault Billancourt factory, there had been 80 cases of trade union action between

March and May '68. On Mayday, 100,000 had marched through Paris. A tense mood gripped the factories.

During the first week of May a printers strike threatened, Paris bus workers struck, sugar factory workers walked out, Taxi and post office workers planned strike action. By May 7th the police trade unions were drawing up a list of demands, air traffic controllers threatened action, a 24-hour strike took place at the Berliot lorry factory over bonus payments. Workers at the weather centre discussed taking action, striking iron ore miners blocked the Route Nationale motorway for an hour and occupations took place at a foundry and clothing company.

Mounting Pressure

Mounting pressure from the workers’ movement and widespread disgust with the activities of the police and CRS in trying to suppress the students had forced the workers leaders to shift their position. The CP leaders, who days previously had sniped at “groupuscules”, were forced on May 11th, to call a 24-hour general strike around the demand for an end to repression.

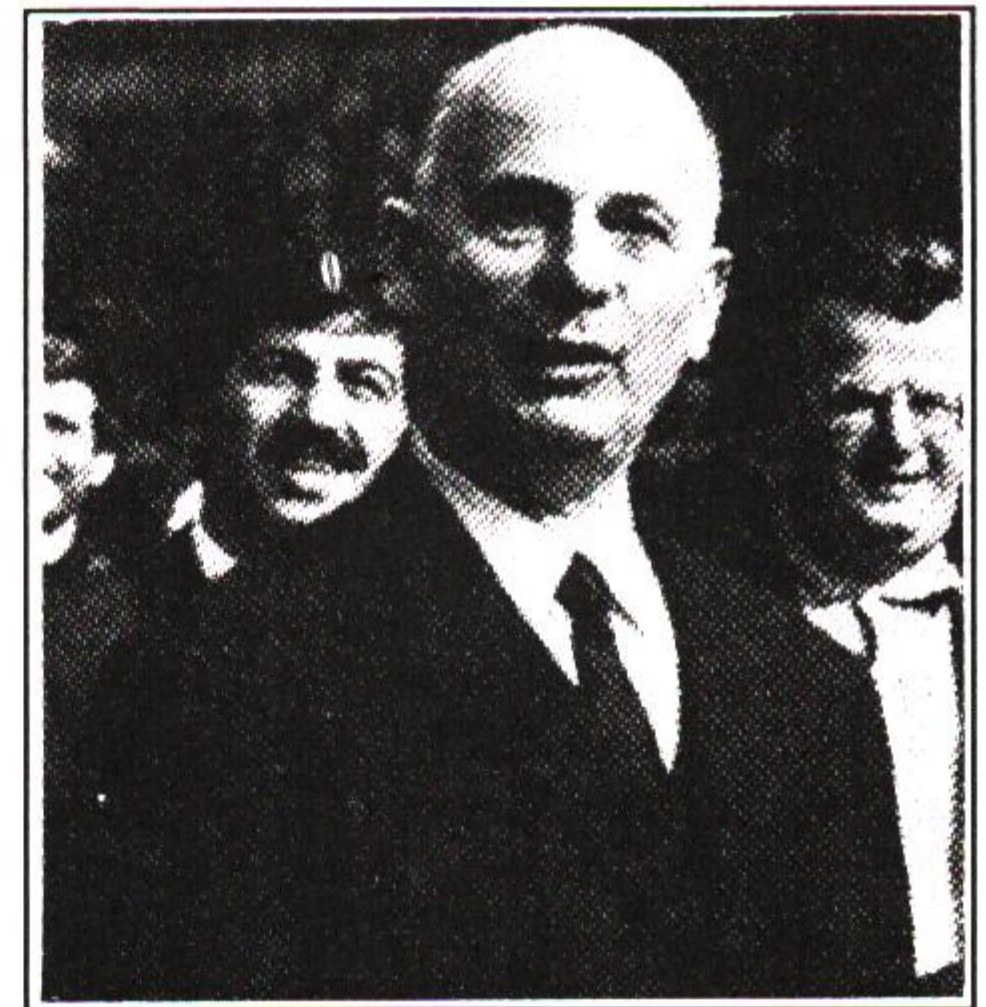
Mitterand, then president of the left federation, after initially offering half-hearted support for the students was calling for the creation of a provisional government by the end of May. **The trade union leaders hoped to dissipate workers anger and called the one day general strike to let-off steam.**

But the general strike of May 13th, instead of heading-off the movement, crystallised the workers’ anger and carried the struggle forward onto a higher level. One million marched through Paris with 20,000 stewards around the march from the CGT alone. 50,000 demonstrated in Marseilles, 60,000 in Lyons, 40,000 in Toulouse and 50,000 in Bordeaux. Yet only 4 million were organised in the trade unions. In Paris, the police stood aside, there was no rioting, no looting just a tide of angry workers, becoming aware of their power. The students left the march and occupied the Sorbonne and the Censier annexe. The doors were flung open to workers, a no-holds barred discussion developed. A huge experiment in democracy began. Endless debates ensued, numerous committees sprang up. Soon most French universities were occupied. The students began to feel a sense of power, that they were leading a revolution. But in reality, real power lay in the movement of the working class, the decisive force in society.

The day after the general strike, 200 workers were on strike. Five days later on May 19th, two million were out. By May 21st, strike movements encompassed 10 million workers. Young workers at the Sud Aviation

plant provided the spark. After a long running dispute with management they became infected with the mood of the students struggle and the spectacle of the Paris demonstration. Beginning by spreading the strike to other parts of the factory they then moved on to call for other factories support. Twenty managers were locked in their offices at the plant as loudspeakers played them the Internationale, so they might learn how to sing it!

On the 18th, strikes and occupations spread to Renault, the shipyards, the national theatres and the hospitals. The day after, all 60,000 Renault workers had downed tools and the six factories were occupied, guarded by mass pickets - with 3,000 at one plant.



CP Secretary-General Waldeck Rochet

Marseilles and Le Havre ports were closed and 3,500 were attending daily strike meetings at Orly-Nord airport.

Despite the trade union leaders not calling a general strike, it grew like wildfire, touching every sector of industry and every corner of France, even to the women of the Folies Bergere.

The CGT leaders began to realise what was going on. 300,000 extra copies of L’Humanite had been printed for the demonstration of May 13th. Now the official leaders tried to impose their own strike committees over the heads of the radicalised workers and youth. On May 17th, L’Humanite saluted “the workers who have followed our call.” But they had made no call to action. A clear attempt was being made to steer the movement into a “safe” direction and pour cold water on the strike. Attempts were even made at strike-breaking. **The CGT leaders talked of the movement as a “great tranquil force” arguing that “any talk of insurrection would change the character of the strike”, which amounted to a recognition of the seismic shifts in society taking place.**

Meanwhile the government hung suspended in mid-air. De Gaulle, on a state visit to Romania, was taunted as “leading a govern-

ment in exile." The virus had even begun to infect the CRS whose representatives warned they may not be able to prevent industrial action.

The CP was in turmoil, reflecting the pressure of workers on the party which had traditionally been seen as the main workers party. 55,000 new members joined in 1968. **Paradoxically, at a time when a genuine Marxist tendency could have developed rapidly in the CP and particularly in the Young Communist League, the so-called Trotskyists around Ernest Mandel had recently walked out of the YCL and set up their own little organisations, the PCI and JCR, in competition to the CP.**

The programme of the CP revolved around the call for democracy, harking back to the Popular Front policies of 1936. "Democracy first, socialism in the far distant future." Probably the most rigid, most Stalinist CP in Western Europe, the French CP had nothing in common with the Bolshevik Party of 1917. Decades of reformist degeneration stilted the leaders at a time when a decisive revolutionary leadership was vital. The pressure from below was manifested in an uncharacteristic call from CP general secretary Waldeck Rochet for the "*nationalisation of the big banks and monopolies*", but no perspective or programme of campaign as to how this might be achieved was presented.

Marxist Tendency

Under such conditions, a genuine Marxist tendency in the CP would have aimed all of its material towards communist workers, showing the way forward at each stage and making demands of the leadership to develop a revolutionary strategy.

As the workers movement escalated, layers of the middle classes began to follow their lead. Theology students, magistrates, lawyers, museum curators and many others demonstrated, threatened strikes and began to question their role in society. The action committees in the factories, offices and neighbourhoods began to link together. In Nantes, the strikers ran the city and introduced price and other reforms. Elements of "dual power" developed. On one side the government and state apparatus, on the other the action committees led by the workers. The defenders of the old system against the workers struggling to find a way to the new, and forced to begin to reorganise society to meet their needs. Scandalously, the CP and CGT leaders refused to call for national co-ordination of these committees. De Gaulle arrived back from Romania demanding action. In discussion with the police chief he called for the police to take the universities back from the students, but was warned sharply of the dangers of this action. "*Blood will flow*" was the reply.



Demonstrators fight back against the CRS

French capitalism was looking into the abyss. Three of the four conditions outlined by Lenin for a successful revolution existed. The ruling class was split, unable to govern by the old methods and divided as to what policy to adopt. The working class was demonstrating a tremendous capacity to struggle. The strike grew day by day drawing in wider and wider layers and thirdly, the middle classes were beginning to move behind the workers and could not be relied on as a social base for the regime or indeed capitalism. The fourth condition however was lacking - a revolutionary leadership of the working class, capable of explaining the tasks that the workers movement required to transform society.

De Gaulle's Referendum

The leadership of the workers movement was hopelessly out of touch. The Wall Street Journal commented that "they were all part of the establishment, faced with a popular tide they had cause to fear." Whilst they sought an "acceptable solution", the Cannes Film Festival was stopped by strike action as were horse, motor racing and even golf competitions. The news was partly under the control of radio and TV journalists. All that was required in France '68 was a Marxist leadership with a clear understanding of the way forward.

In true Bonapartist fashion De Gaulle called for a referendum on "participation". After narrowly surviving a censure motion in the French parliament two days before De Gaulle faced a split party, sections of which demanded his resignation.

Then the government gave the order to storm the barricades. The night of May 24th was the most violent yet. 800 were arrested, 1500 injured. With this backdrop the trade union

leaders entered tripartite talks with the employers and government. In reality, the trade union leaders were negotiating with ghosts. Power lay in the lap of the workers' leaders, whose hands were shackled to the old society.

The union leaders emerged delighted at their success. All workers would receive a minimum 7% pay rise. The statutory minimum wage was raised 33%. Some shop workers received 72% increases. Strikers were even given 50% of their salary for the periods they were occupying the factories. But when the leaders went to the factories they were booed and jeered. The movement had gone beyond merely economic demands - the question now was, who ran society. The workers understood the situation far better than their leaders.

The CP leaders argued the movement was a struggle for wages, that the workers were not "ready for socialism." They called instead for a popular front, an alliance of workers parties and "progressive" bourgeois parties. Yet even still they had to pay lip service to a programme of nationalisation.

Army Intervenes

De Gaulle understood the situation. On May 29th, fleeing Paris he said, "*the future depends not on us but on God.*" The strong man of France sought out the army commanders at Baden-Baden and demanded their support. At the same time half a million workers demonstrated in Paris, many carrying placards calling for a "people's government".

On May 30th De Gaulle returned having been comforted by the army commanders. He called a general election for the 3rd week in June around the slogan, "me or chaos". A demonstration in his support was organised

in Paris bringing contingents from all over France, the composition of which was overwhelmingly middle class and elderly, representing all the reactionary elements of French society. A bourgeois commentator wrote however, that, despite this demonstration, the balance of forces lay decisively in favour of the workers' movement. Tanks and lorry loads of soldiers descended on the outskirts of Paris. De Gaulle had demanded army support for a rival government in the event of a revolution. But the events of the previous period had not left the army untouched. Conscription still existed and was not abolished until Mitterand's election in 1981. A *Times* editorial asked, "can De Gaulle use the army?" The answer was yes, "but only once". Even this was not guaranteed since there are many examples of an army crumbling in the face of revolution. De Gaulle had a gamble on his hands. By May 31st even the *London Evening Standard* was forced to recognise the CP had "all the levers of power in its hands" but lacked the intention to take power. A revolutionary situation does not last forever and the tide was beginning to turn.

Election Campaign

De Gaulle entered the election campaign leaving behind him a trail of sacked ministers and using the "red scare". On their part the CP leaders argued workers should return to work and negotiate with management. Their election platform failed to give a socialist position and amid disillusion with their role they lost 605,000 votes, the left federation of Mitterand lost 570,000 whilst De Gaulle gained 1,200,000. Despite the gerrymandering of electoral boundaries, which played a role in the defeat of the lefts, the major reason for their defeat was their political position. The CP even claimed the clothes of De Gaulle, portraying themselves as the "party of law and order". Many workers remained out on strike until the end of June but by then the movement was subsiding. A tremendous opportunity had been missed. Victory in France and the development of a healthy workers' state would have been a shining example to the workers of the Stalinist and capitalist countries. The movement sent ripples internationally. Students throughout the world watched the events in France, sparking protests in Britain, Argentina and Italy among others. In France, the employers attempted over a period of time to turn the screw back down on the workers. Victimisations and reprisals resulted in thousands of workers being sacked. But for De Gaulle, victory was hollow. Wounded by the strike movement, he was eventually defeated in his referendum on "participation" and regional government

and resigned less than a year later. The defeat of the movement had a marked effect on the French labour movement. Not until 1981 was Mitterand elected as president with a majority socialist government. The Socialist Party, formed shortly after the great strike, failed to carry through a fundamental change in French society despite an ostensibly left programme on assuming office.

New Period

The recent election of the right wing National Assembly heralds a new period in French politics. Faced with an economic crisis and social tensions, the new RPR/UDF government is assured of a bumpy ride. Criticism of the SP leaders was manifested in Rocard's attempted anti-left coup in early April. Sections of the workers will be driven to question the policies of the leadership laying the ground for the development of Marxist ideas in the workers' parties. **It is one of the major lessons of May '68 that workers will turn time and time again to their traditional parties in the hope of changing society.** The development of a mass Marxist current in the workers' parties would have provided the lever for the socialist transformation of society in 1968. Today, the post war boom is dead and the world has entered a volatile new period. Once again various "theoreticians" are attempting to discredit Marxist ideas. The superiority of Marxist ideas has been demonstrated in the past in explaining and predicting events, not as a dry academic argument, but by drawing on the lessons and experiences of the workers' movement in

The events of May 1968 demonstrated the colossal potential power of the working class and the potential which exists on a world scale for the construction of a society freed from capitalism

Britain and internationally. As such it is not sufficient to "celebrate" the events of 1968 but to learn from them in preparation for the movements of workers which will spring forth from the decay of capitalism on a world scale.

The events of May 1968 demonstrated the colossal power of the working class and the potential which exists on a world scale for the construction of a society freed from capitalism, in which hunger, poverty and inequality could be abolished.



Mass meetings like those at Renault Billancourt were a feature of the revolution's democratic nature

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Many new sales have come in as a result of the local elections and also at the May Day rallies and events up and down the country. Our sellers sold 12 at NUJ conference,

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Just as we need extra sales, then so we also need cash to develop the resources of Socialist Appeal. The excellent donations received over the last year have helped us to buy much of the technical equipment needed to produce the journal. Most recently we have purchased a new top of the range photocopier. But we need more cash if we are to improve the journal further and intervene in the unfolding struggles. Over the last period we have received a number of excellent donations including £15 from two readers in Birmingham, £15 from a Southampton reader, £10 from a supporter in Oxford, £20 from Andy Viner (Aslef), £90 from Ray Hardman (USDAW) and substantial donations from readers in Merseyside, Scotland, Wales and elsewhere, including £62.85 raised at a meeting in Wakefield and over £100 raised at a Southampton meeting. Readers renewing their subscriptions have also kept the bank busy. Thank you to all who have made a donation this month. Keep it coming in, every penny is welcome, and vital, in the struggle for socialism.

Steve Jones, Journal manager

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Illusions of Triumph

by Mohamed Heikel

(Fontana £7.99)

Illusions of Triumph is subtitled, *An Arab view of the Gulf war* - a reference to control of the media reporting of the war by the west in general and the USA in particular.

This book seeks to challenge the simplistic view touted by the capitalist leaders that the Gulf war was, as they put it, a great victory for democracy and international law against a mad dictator.

The first part of the book deals with the historical background to the war and shows the divisions that have developed between the various Arab leaders and also the widening gap between them and the growing Arab proletariat, whose aspirations have been left increasingly unfulfilled.

This part also deals with the way in which the west have "protected their interests" (such as oil) - regimes are toppled, puppet leaders installed and divisions actively encouraged. For example, the west gave indirect backing to both Iraq and Iran to help ensure that neither side could gain an upper hand in the Iran-Iraq war. Indeed, Iraq was seen as the major bulwark by the west, alongside Kuwait and Saudi Arabia against the threat of "militant Islam". Needless to say, such double dealing had to be done with care to avoid inflaming the Arab masses. The author sums up the situation when

talking about the Saudi leadership.: "It has been said that the first responsibility of a Saudi monarch is to keep intimate relations with Washington, and the second is to do all he can to hide it."

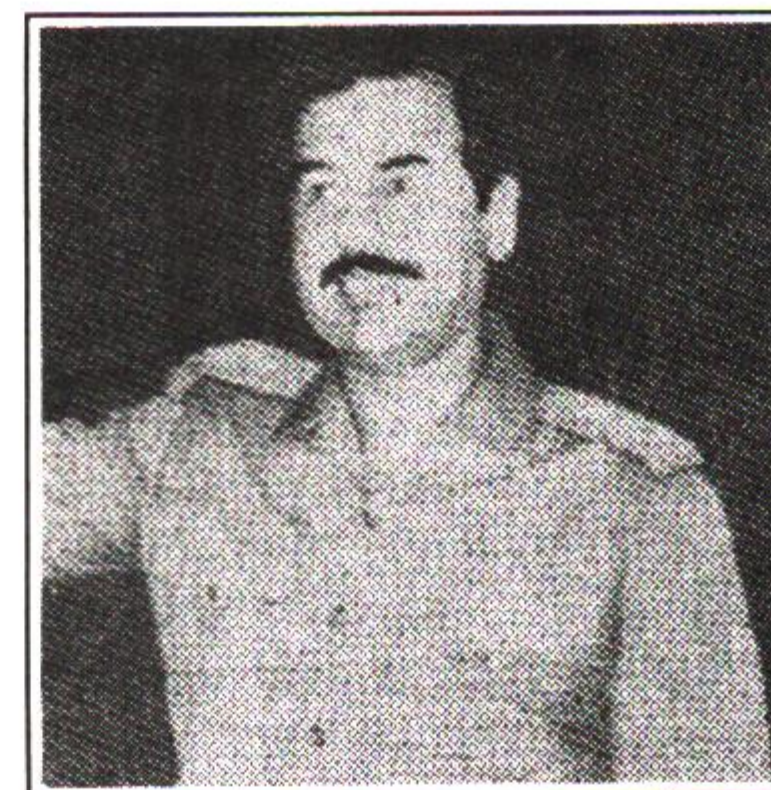
This was to be seen most clearly in the Gulf war itself.

The second part of the book deals with the conduct of the war itself and examines the processes that developed during it. Having failed to foresee the invasion of Kuwait (despite several clear indications) the USA took the decision early on to go to war to "liberate" Kuwait - and its oil of course - and destroy Iraq as a force in the Middle East. As such the negotiations which the Arab leaders - and some of the west and USSR - put so much faith in were doomed to failure before they began. Arab countries were roped in to the international "coalition" as cover for US interests and the dominant US forces to avoid the threat of divisions developing amongst the Arab leaders as a result of the growing opposition from the Arab masses who trusted neither the west nor their own leaders, especially not the Kuwaiti royal family.

The US was supposed to be acting under the "authority" of the UN but in reality it was the other way around. America also feared

that Israel - a creation of the west after WW2 - could be used by Iraq to fuel opposition inside other Arab states. The author provides an excellent example to show this when describing, "the reaction of a group of Egyptian and Syrian soldiers...when they heard the news on 18 January, 1991 that Iraq had launched its first Scud missile attack on Israel. "Allah Akbar" (God is great) they shouted, only to remember an instant later they were supposed to be against Iraq!" Finally the author tackles the question of just how much of a victory it was for the west and the way forward for the Arab world. The author correctly notes that although the US showed their enormous military forces they failed to remove Saddam Hussein (as Bush had wanted to) and their presence in the region will be one of continued conflict and tension.

However, although he discusses the question, the author is unable to resolve the key



question of which way forward for the people of the Arab world. Lacking a socialist perspective - he was an advisor of President Sadat until they disagreed following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war - he can present no solution. Only a socialist federation of the Middle East can unite the region's masses and remove the artificial divisions that mark the region and solve the enormous economic and social problems that are faced by the workers as against the great wealth of their rulers.

Such a solution could remove the basis of the Arab-Israeli conflict and other regional conflicts which the west have encouraged to divide the region.

Despite this book's failure to arrive at a clear solution it is highly recommended to all socialists to read and study and gain a greater understanding of what really happened in the Gulf war and the forces behind the conflict.

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Fight the Causes of Racism

The vicious murder of Stephen Lawrence last Thursday night (22nd April), in Eltham, was the stabbing of an 18-year old black youth, who was doing nothing more than walking home with a friend. This is the fourth racist murder in about two years in the South-East London area. In February 1991, Rolan Adams was stabbed to death in similarly horrific circumstances.

Stephen was with a school friend when they were attacked by six white youths, who were hurling racial abuse. This was a completely unprovoked attack. Can't Afro-caribbean or Asian people walk the streets without facing this kind of terror? Apparently not.

Without the problems of society being resolved, ethnic minorities in this country will be confronted with increases in discrimination, and violent physical attacks. Even the police have admitted that this latest murder was racially-motivated. In addition to attacks by racist youths, we also have a

situation where moronic neo-fascist groups are stirring up prejudice and ignorance.

The presence of the British National Party's headquarters in Welling undoubtedly further encourages these deadly assaults; they are like maggots eating away at the rotten beams of society. Their HQ should be closed down. Even the local Tory MP has advised the Bexley Council to do this under its planning powers!

This whole situation will not end through the pious wringing of hands by those in authority, whether in local or national government. As well as supporting organised defence against racist violence, the labour and trade union organisations should campaign against the social and economic problems which are providing fertile ground for racism.

Labour Party member, South London.

The Real Cost of Capitalism

Dear Comrades,

I was somewhat bemused by a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture to my father, who owns a small holding. Mr Gummer had sent subsidy claim forms, and although my father does not currently have any stock or crops, he was told that if he did he could be subsidised by the government to leave his land fallow! This is so that prices can be kept at their current level, despite the fact that people in both this country, and abroad, go hungry. Meanwhile we can buy food from Ethiopia, but in Ethiopia starving people are unable to use the surplus food which will be allowed to rot in order to serve the capitalist god of profit. I wonder how much longer this anarchic, ridiculous world order can survive - I hope not

much longer
fraternally

Ruth Fallon, Halifax

Different Electoral System But Still The Same Bosses

Dear comrades,

I was interested to read the article in last month's *Socialist Appeal* on the Italian corruption scandal and the referendum which has now, as predicted, resulted in a vote for a "first past the post" electoral system.

As the left in Britain gear up to oppose the proposals of Labour's Plant commission which has just come out in favour of a system of proportional representation, it may have come as a surprise to see Marxists and the left in Italy supporting PR and campaigning against "first past the post."

Within the British labour movement we have always pointed out the advantage of a clear 'majority' system which lays the choice of voters plainly as a class choice.

The election of majority Tory or Labour governments lays bare the choice of a government which represents either big business or workers. In particular it gives the left

in the Labour Party a better opportunity to pressurise a Labour government into actually carrying out policies in favour of working people who elected them.

We have seen in the past how minority Labour governments and the disastrous Lib-Lab pact during the 74-79 Labour government have given the Labour leaders the excuse of having to be 'moderate' and 'compromise' its programme.

Why then do Marxists in Italy take a seemingly opposite view?

As we know capitalism operates under many different political forms - fascism, dictatorship, constitutional monarchy, and various forms of parliamentary democracy.

The political system generally corresponds to what is necessary to maintain the profit system whilst keeping the working class in check. Likewise socialists must take their political

stance from what best meets the needs of the working class at any given stage and what best exposes the class nature of capitalism. No political system under capitalism is really 'democratic' - they all exist in order to keep the system going. **The ruling class and the right wing leadership of the labour movement seek changes in electoral systems for their own reactionary interests.** In Italy the new electoral system is an attempt by the capitalists to clean up their image whilst maintaining their economic and political control. Italian socialists correctly point out that corruption is an inherent part of the capitalist system.

If only the leaders of the labour movement in Britain and Italy cared less about electoral systems and more for representing their class, corruption could be ended for ever.

Veronica Patterson, Hackney

The 1880's was a watershed in the history of trade unionism. This arose from the change in the position of British capitalism, from having a monopoly on the world market for her industries, she now faced intense competition from Germany and the US.

Her world supremacy had allowed the capitalists to grant certain concessions to the skilled layer of the working class, which had fostered an 'aristocracy of labour'. It was this privileged section that saw its interests reflected in the 'defence not defiance' amalgamated unions of the previous 30 years. That situation was increasingly untenable. In the face of prolonged economic stagnation and grinding poverty of the Great Depression, the old amalgamated unions had become, in the words of the Webbs, "*nothing more than a somewhat stagnant department of the Friendly Society movement.*"

Epoch of Upheaval

The dominant trade union leaders - the 'old gang' as they came to be called - abdicated any leadership responsibility. Applegarth and Co were replaced by similar men like Henry Broadhurst (secretary of the TUC), John Burnett (Engineers), J.D.Prior (Carpenters), and George Shipton (London Trades Council). Their whole policy could be summed up as "*contemptuous inactivity*" (Webb). The 1880's, which heralded an epoch of upheaval for British capitalism, also experienced a new reemergence of socialist ideas not seen since before the Chartists.

In 1881 a new party was formed, the Social Democratic Federation led by the pseudo-Marxist Henry Hyndman. Two years later, as a counter to Hyndman's Marxism, the Fabian Society was established to promote the ideas of gradual reform and enlightenment. Ironically, neither were interested in trade unions. The SDF concentrated on abstract socialist propaganda and work amongst the unemployed, whilst the Fabians moved in middle class circles. Nevertheless,



Match Girl strikers march on Parliament

it was from the ranks of the socialists, primarily the SDF, that the struggle against the 'old gang' and for new revolutionary trade unionism emerged.

Even here there was a marked difference of approach. Whereas Hyndman took a very sectarian negative approach to the unions ("*... in fact, the trade unions... stand in the way of a genuine organisation of the proletariat.*"), which simply antagonised the trade unions and failed to win any real number to a socialist position, the new SDF trade unionists took a different line.

TUC Conflict

Men like Tom Mann, John Burn and Will Thorne saw the need to fight to transform the unions and win the workers to their ideas. "*To Trade Unionists,*" wrote Tom Mann in a pamphlet called '*What a Compulsory Eight-Hour Working Day Means to the Workers*' (1886), "*I desire to make a special appeal. How long, how long will you be content with the present half-hearted policy of your unions? readily grant that good work has been done in the past by the unions, but, in heaven's name, what good purpose are they serving now?*"

The following year, the conflict burst onto the floor of the TUC conference, when a young miners' delegate from Ayreshire, Keir

Hardie, launched an all-out attack on Broadhurst and the 'old gang'. He was answered by the full weight of the trade union bureaucracy.

Broadhurst denounced Hardie: "*those who spread dissension in the unions and seek to destroy unionism by vehemently attacking its prominent representatives... Their emissaries enter our camp in the guise of friends, in order that they may the better sow the seeds of disruption. Let the workers beware of them!*" and concluded with the comradely refrain "*hound these creatures from our midst.*"

Engels, from the early days of the First International, had kept in touch with a number of trade union activists in London. This link gave him the opportunity to put forward his views when the London Trades Council launched a newspaper in early 1881, called the '*Labour Standard*', and asked him to write a series of articles. These writings represent a penetrating analysis of the economic situation of the time, the problems of trade unionism and the need for independent political action.

"*The fact cannot be any longer shirked that England's industrial monopoly is fast on the wane*", he wrote on 18th June 1881, "*...it will do one great thing; it will break the last link which binds the English working class to the English middle class. This link was their commonworking of a national monopoly. That monopoly once destroyed, the British working class will be compelled to*

In the Cause of Labour: The New Unionism

take in hand its own interests, its own salvation, and to make an end of the wages system."

On 4th June, he remarked, "There is no power in the world which could for a day resist the British working class."

By the end of the decade, new forces were on the move in the East End of London. In July 1888, after the exposure in the socialist press of the harsh conditions endured by women workers employed at the Bryant & May match factory, a strike broke out led by two socialists, Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows. The historic victory of these seven hundred women, who formed a union out of the strike, was a harbinger of what was to come. As Henry Pelling explained, "The assistance provided by Socialist leaders both in publicity and in organisation was to be a feature of the foundation of the new unions." (*A History of British Trade Unionism*, p 97).

Gas Workers Union

The Match Girl Strike was described by Engels as the "light jostle needed for the entire avalanche to move". It was followed by the gas workers. In early 1889, the young Marxist Will Thorne began to organise a union at the Beckton Gas Works in East Ham. He was closely assisted by Marx's youngest daughter Eleanor, her husband Edward Aveling, and other SDF members Tom Mann, John Burns and Ben Tillett. The union spread rapidly given the unrest amongst the workforce - within four months 20,000 had joined. Strike notices were given in demanding an eight-hour shift, a twelve day fortnight, and a shilling (5p) a shift increase in wages. The Company, fearing a strike, conceded all the demands, except that the wage rise was sixpence instead of one shilling. This was the victory which, stated Tom Mann, "put older and larger trade unions to shame". Will Thorne, a life-long Marxist, became the first general secretary of the 60,000 strong National Union of Gasworkers & General Workers (today's

GMB) and Eleanor Marx was unanimously elected to its Executive Committee, drew up its rules, and became secretary of the first women's branch of the union. It has been repeatedly said by many reformists that "the Labour Movement owes more to Methodism than Marxism", but the experiences of these years show the vital contribution Marxist activists were to make in building the movement.

Dockers' Tanner

The links between the gasworkers and dockers were always very close. Within a short time, the dockers, largely unskilled workers, were on the move. Ben Tillett was besieged by men demanding action. He drew in Tom Mann, John Burns, Tom McCartney of the Stevedores, and Eleanor Marx (who became the secretary of the strike committee). They launched a union drive, and a strike for a wage rise of sixpence an hour (the dockers' tanner), with meetings and processions throughout east London. Faced with blackleg labour, on Mann's initiative, they decided to call for a general strike of all London trades.

Suddenly assistance came from Australian dockers who sent aid amounting to £30,000, which served to strengthen the strike and brought the employers to their knees. Their main demands were conceded and the union was established on a permanent basis, with Tillett as the secretary and Mann as its president. By the end of November it claimed 30,000 members, and became the fore-runner of today's 1,125,000 strong TGWU.

Their success resulted in the biggest upsurge in trade union organisation since the pioneering days of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trade Union. The Dockers' Union spread to other provincial ports. The Gas-Workers organised general labourers throughout the provinces. New unions were formed on the railways: the General Railway Workers' Union (later the NUR, then the RMT), which passed a resolution at its first

conference, "that the union shall remain a fighting one, and shall not be encumbered with any sick or accident fund". The Miners' Federation, formed in 1888 with 36,000 members, had mushroomed by 1893 to over 200,000. In the printing industry, the labourers formed their own union that became NATSOPA (later the GPMU). Given the growth of trade unionism, between 1889-1891 over 60 new Trades Councils were established.

This movement, born out of the "stagnant pool" of London's East End, was "far more important... even than the actual progress Socialism has made in England generally", wrote Engels, for "the new Unions were founded at a time when the faith in the eternity of the wages system was severely shaken; their founders and promoters were Socialists, either consciously or by feeling; the masses, whose adherence gave them strength, were rough, neglected, looked down upon by the working-class aristocracy; but they had this immense advantage, that their minds were virgin soil, entirely free from the inherited respectable bourgeois prejudices which hampered the brains of the better situated 'old' Unionists. And thus we see now these Unions taking the lead of the working class movement generally, and more and more taking in tow the rich and proud 'old' Unions.... And for all the faults committed in past, present and future, the revival of East End of London remains one of the greatest and most fruitful facts of this fin de siecle, and glad and proud I am to have lived to see it."

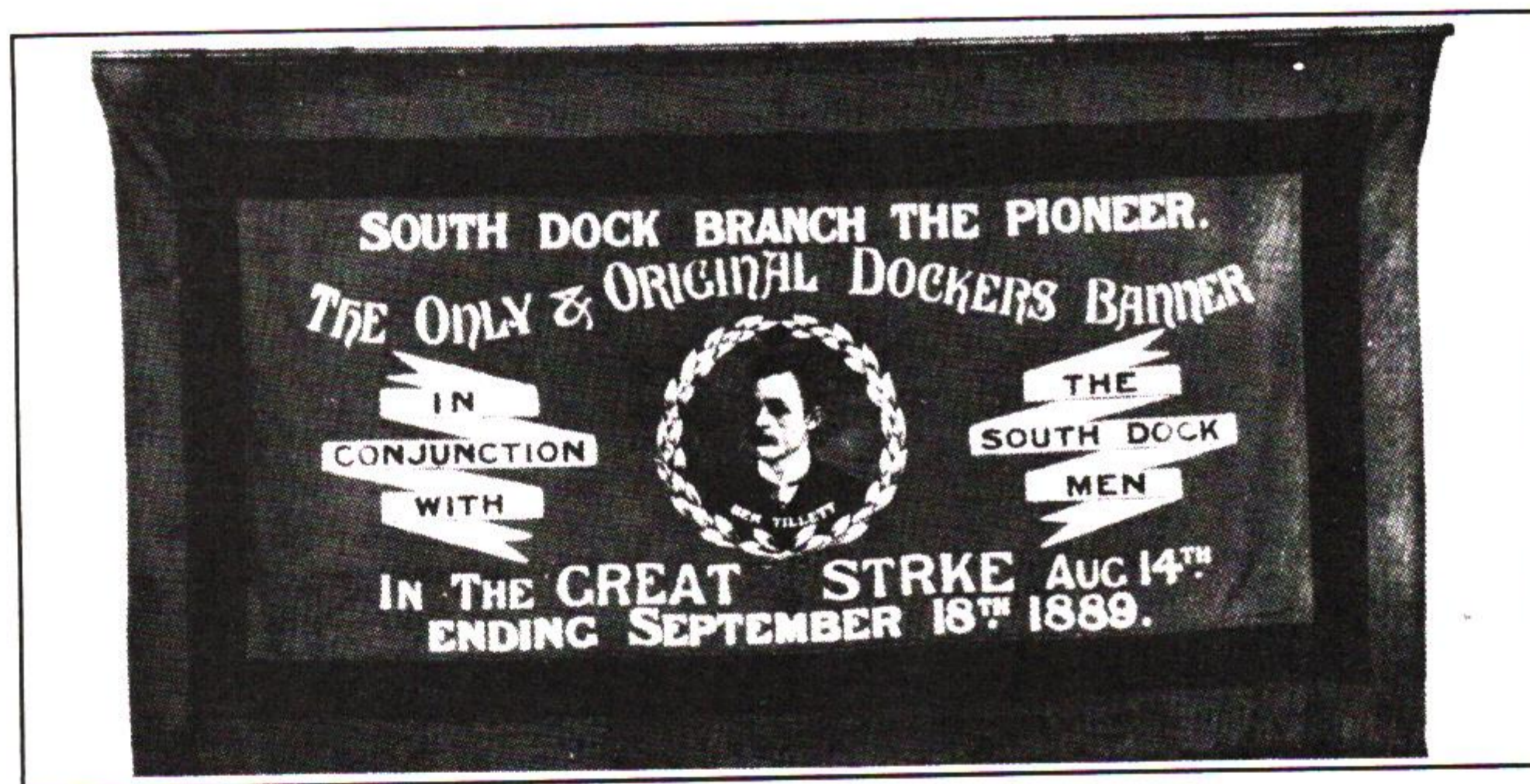
New Unionism Under Attack

The rise of New Unionism was attacked by the 'old gang', who feared the challenge to their authority. This surfaced in the June 1890 issue of Murray's Magazine by George Shipton, secretary of the London Trades Council and member of 'the Junta'. He attacked their moves to a close shop, a refusal to work with non-unionists, fermenting strikes, demanding from employers more money for less work, and being run by 'outsiders'.

Tillett and Mann immediately replied: "East End labourers are not in George Shipton's line. Picnics to the Channel Tunnel, Sandringham, and deputations in connection with various semi-politic and patriotic and demi-semi-trade unionist and pseudo-philanthropic movements... are much more agreeable."

He had been guilty of indifference to the Dock Strike, and denounced the New Unions in a London newspaper as 'mushroom' growths, doomed to an early end. As for general workers, he considered them incapable of organisation!

The 1890 TUC was a battle ground where the 'old gang' attempted to defend them-



One of the banners struck to commemorate the successful dock strike

"Our" Norman Retires!



Annie Besant

selves by shouting down radical delegates. However, the resolution from Burns and Mann for the eight hour day was passed 193 votes to 155, which prompted Broadhurst to resign as TUC secretary. The two following Congresses confirmed the Socialists' victory. The birth of New Unionism was soon tested by a series of counter blows by the employers. A new dockers' strike in 1893 was defeated. Two big miners' strikes in the Federated area (1893) and the South Wales coalfield (1898) resulted in troops being called in. The 1893 lock-out lasted 5 months and was regarded as one of the most bitter struggles in the history of the miners. The 25% cut in wages demanded by the owners was successfully resisted. In Lancashire "*Men, women and children of the working classes in the districts affected*", wrote the secretary of the Lancashire Federation, "*joined the miners in their rejoicing, with singing, dancing, shouting, laughing and crying for joy, and in several districts the church bells were set ringing to celebrate the event.*" The 1898 strike resulted in the formation of the South Wales Miners' Federation. The old craft unions became affected with the new mood and opened up their ranks to the unskilled workers, including its old proto-type the A.S.E. It represented the triumph of New Unionism. However new defeats and problems were to force the trade union movement onto the political road. Further events, despite the resistance of the old guard, propelled them to establish an independent party.

Norman 'Bulldog' Willis has announced his early retirement from the class struggle after nine years at the head of Britain's trade union movement. Renowned for his lack-lustre style as TUC General Secretary, he was the victim of a right wing plot to oust him. Until very recently, they were terrified he would delay his 'voluntary' departure.

His exit from the trade union scene will not mean the end of an era, as some pundits have proclaimed. Norman, a one-time TGWU official, took up the pinnacle of his career in 1984, after a ten year apprenticeship as 'assistant general secretary'. Through a traditional, tried and tested method - Buggin's Turn - he managed to pull the plum £50,000 a year job. Coming from a right-wing stable, Norman personified the 'New

Realism' of the 1980's, of an attempt to develop a cosy relationship with the employers. Taking up his position during the year-long miners' strike, he was incapable of galvanising industrial action in support of the miner's cause. Instead he went to South Wales and denounced picket-line violence. He presided over the Wapping dispute where 6000 workers were sacked and trade unions were banned at GCHQ. Under his leadership the TUC developed closer links with the bosses. Last year, in an unprecedented step, it invited Howard Davies, the director general of the CBI, to address the annual Congress. Some right wingers were

eager to get reciprocal invites from the bosses' organisation. With the removal of Scargill, the TUC is the most right wing in its history.

His rejection of militancy and his refusal to back Scargill's call for a 24 hour general strike to defend jobs, has left the miners partially isolated. The potential power of 8 million trade unionists could force the Tories from office. For many workers, the TUC has abdicated its responsibility. Unfortunately for Norman, his lack of profile and doleful approach antagonised his right-wing supporters, who yearned after a more slick professional representative. "Sometimes it felt as if I've been nine days in the job," he said. "Sometimes it seems like 90 years." Those who

stabbed him in the back concurred with the latter. They all wished Norman well. But who will be his successor? Although many names have been floated from Brenda Dean to John Edmunds, the right caucus appear to have plumbed for 'Buggin's Turn' again. Mr Monks, your ever so 'umble deputy general



secretary, seems to fit the bill. So don't forget, all nominations for Arthur Scargill need to be in by July. In a rather predictable end to a career, our champion received a personal telephone call from Gillian Shephard, the Tory employment secretary, expressing her good wishes towards him. In a farewell letter Mrs Shephard wrote: "Over the last nine years, you have brought considerable qualities to the difficult job of general secretary. Both I and previous secretaries of state have benefited from your clear advocacy of TUC policies." It is a fitting end to a right-wing career as the head of Britain's trade union movement.

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Time to Fight The Real Enemy

**Jon Rubidge, Branch Secretary,
DE West Glamorgan & Dyfed (personal capacity)**

1500 CPSA activists will gather in Brighton in May for the union's annual conference against a background of yet another year of government attacks on the living and working conditions of low-paid civil servants.



In an act of absolute cowardliness, CPSA's right wing National Executive, headed by witch-hunting general secretary Barry Reamsbottom, and President Marion Chambers, last month balloted members on a 1% pay offer (lower even than the 1.5% ceiling on public sector increases) with a recommendation that no industrial action could be organised capable of winning an improved offer.

CPSA members were predictably outraged at the derisory offer, but, faced with no prospect of a lead from the NEC, reluctantly voted to accept. Members saw the alternative of sending back into negotiations, an executive which had no faith in the union's ability to fight, as no choice at all. The union's activists are overwhelmingly inclined towards the left, a fact acknowledged by even Barry Reamsbottom, who describes the union's sovereign body as an "unrepresentative, Trot-dominated" conference. But the mis-named National Moderate Group, with several Tories among its leaders, has held a large majority on the NEC for 7 of the last eight years. This unrepresentative grouping, elected with the support of a small minority of members, has no answers to the Tories' attacks except, in the words of Reamsbottom, that "it is not the job of the union to try to thwart the political

will of a democratically elected government. The "moderates" have profited mainly out of the division of the union's left wing which has persisted since the Broad Left '84 (BL84) group split away from the CPSA National Broad Left at its 1984 conference. Neither BL84 nor the Broad Left has gained anything from this situation, with neither group succeeding in gaining and holding power independently, resulting in confusion and demoralisation among many members who abstain in elections, with the membership as a whole being the losers.

Left Unity

However, in the past year, the prospect of unity on the left has opened up, with the two left groups supporting a joint slate including one Broad Left (BL), one BL84 and one independent candidate for the Presidential and vice-Presidential positions under the banner of "Unity in CPSA". The move was prompted by the refusal of the NEC to accept an overwhelming decision of the union's 1992 conference to reject last year's pay offer, which brought home to activists the harsh lessons of a divided left. The joint slate was not unanimously welcomed by all in either the BL or BL84, with renegade candidates from both sides standing against the Unity slate. But these few individuals are out of touch with the mood of most activists, who favour a cautious unity as a step towards defeating the right wing. Whilst no decision of the BL should be binding on any individual or group, the minority who opposed the Unity slate will only have given succour to the

Inside:

**Trade Unions at
the Crossroads.
Yugoslavia: Should the
West Intervene?**

Moderates and added to the confusion among members. Their actions are just as destructive as those of the right-wing of BL84 which prefers an accommodation with the Moderates than unity with the left. But a temporary unity based solely around the need to defeat the right-wing, and a joint slate which addresses only some positions, leaving 52 BL and BL84 candidates standing for the 26 NEC seats can not be lasting.

Programme for Action

A road must be found to end the split on the left, but this must be on the basis of a programme for action once the Moderates have been ousted. Any failure to address this from the outset could too easily lead to a repetition of the disaster of 1984. The Unity slate for this year's elections was generally welcomed in the branches as a step forward and this year's conference offers an excellent opportunity to widen the debate and build on what has already been achieved. **With a united left in action, a left NEC would be almost guaranteed. Armed with a socialist leadership, CPSA could take its rightful place on the left of the trade union movement and join the real fight to defeat the Tory government.**



Drive the Tories Out!