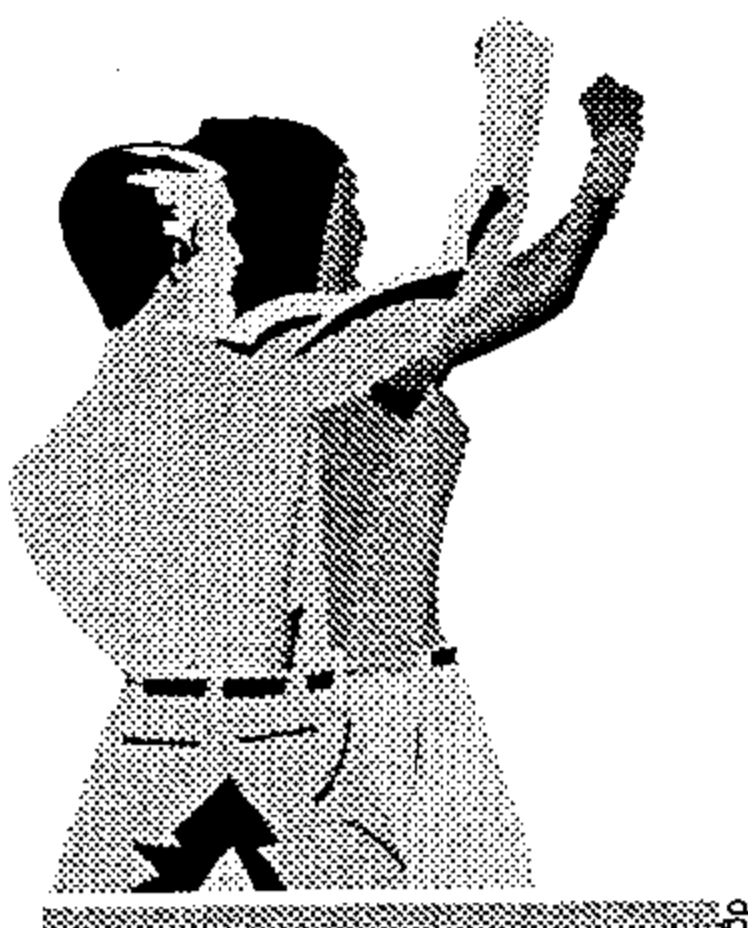
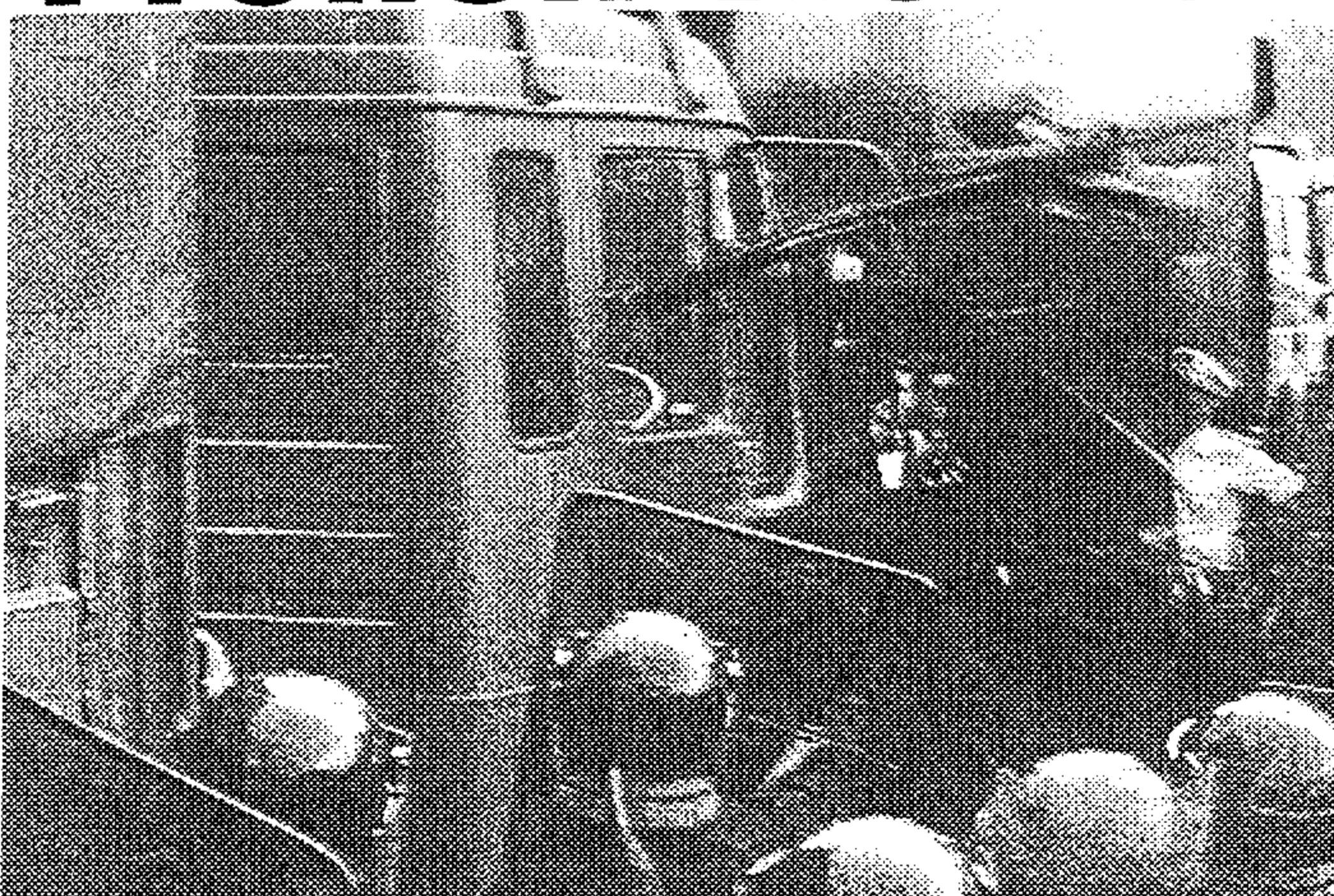


# Socialist VOICE



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## French Workers' Fight



**S**triking French lorry drivers, whilst dismantling their road-blocks, vowed that next time their organisation had to be improved to beat the riot police. While they were being fed by local populations the unions were telling them to go back to work. As the union leaders, who did not represent many of these men, were trying to end their fight, the riot police were smashing windows, pulling lorry drivers from their cabs, spraying them with CS gas and even beating up women supporters.

Why did the French government order in tanks and the riot police when it was apparently merely a matter of adjusting a new law? The French government faces a very hostile working class and having been drawn into the dispute they could not afford to back down. Had other sections of workers gone on

the offensive at the same time then the government's very life would have been at stake.

The lorry drivers showed that the struggle of the working class has returned to the streets of Europe. The general strikes of 1991 in Spain and Italy were not isolated incidents of the workers' movement, on the contrary there are increasing mobilisations of workers in all the major centres on the continent.

Our headline in the Socialist Voice of December 1991 said that "Socialism Lives". Even the conservative French papers likened the Lorry drivers strike to "Paris 68". By that they mean the revolutionary movement of May to June in 1968, when 10 million workers and students came out onto the streets. For once we agreed with the

*Continues on back page*

### EDUCATION SPECIAL

Privatising FE  
*page 3*

Poly Course  
Sham  
*pages 4&5*

### CAMPAIGN-WRITE OFF THE 3RD WORLD DEBT

*"More for the  
banks means  
less for the  
starving"*

TURN TO PAGES 6 & 7

**RAE HUNTER SPECIAL + POLAND p10&11  
PLUS KURDS/SOUTH AFRICA/BRAZIL**

# **socialist** **VOICE**



Monthly Paper  
of the  
International  
Socialist  
League

British Section  
of the  
International  
Workers'  
League  
[4th International]

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Peter Money  
Martin Ralph

*signed articles do not  
necessarily reflect  
the views of the ISL*

Contributions  
We welcome articles, news,  
photographs etc.  
from readers-  
please send them to the  
above address.

## Collyhurst People Should Decide

Bob Mullane is a resident on the Manchester estate

Andy Shannon's candidature in the local elections as Independent Labour has highlighted the severe problems of the Collyhurst-Harpurhey area. Issues such as housing repairs and the condition of the estate have come to the fore. Even though there was a tenants association, nothing was being done. Now the local tenants know there is a strong voice, action can be taken about housing problems like leaking sinks and rubbish which would have taken weeks, months or even years to solve. Now because of the involvement of the local Independent Labour, the council is acting a lot quicker. The tenants have a lot of confidence in the people within Independent Labour.

We are so powerful that the tenants association group have asked for us to join their meetings. When we did attend one, they questioned why we were taking all the "glory" from them, as they had been working for the last eight years with some success in resolving some complaints. They have been upset by tenants congratulating Andy Shannon, who is seen as having resolved some problems very quickly.

The councils answer to the problems of litter has to been to demand that tenants

clean up the estate, despite the cut-backs on refuse collection, and only allocating a limited number of bin liners. If bin men give out more bags than people are supposed to have then someone else goes without.

The council has no answer to the problems of refuse, instead it issues notices to quit on some tenants. Tenants have said they do not want families evicted with small children, they would prefer to help the people with eviction notices and help clean up the place.

We know there are problems, but we think that serving eviction notices is not the answer - tenants should not fight each other. We as tenants can overcome our problems only by discussing with each other and organising tenants meetings. If we had public meetings on the estate it would ensure that decisions about our lives are not made by a minority.

The housing manager keeps going on about budgets. But problems that are left today will cost more money in the future.

We want the tenants of Collyhurst to decide on the issues which affect them. It is not what the councillors and officials tell us we can have, it is what people of Collyhurst want that should count. That's real democracy.

## Andy Shannon Writes...

**Reader's  
Letter**

**THE IRRESPONSIBLE, mind-over-matter policies of Manchester City Council runs true to form; they don't mind and you don't matter. Once again they have shown their inability to cope with the financial crisis by taking the simple way out.**

In 1987, the council campaigned to stop the take-over of their housing stock by private speculators. Their battle cry was, "a home for life, protecting jobs and services". Today, the council leader and his subordinate councillors are preparing to sell off 22,000 homes, cut services and lose 7,500 jobs. This treachery violates the Right to Secure Tenure and their 'home for life' battle cry.

The council appeases the government and attacks those who trusted and voted them into power. The tenants of this city are the rightful landlords, the council are the administrators. They have no right without consulting the tenants to make deals with the government or private landlords.

In 1985, Graham Stringer's open government policy was a welcome change, it got rid of the mystery that shrouded council policy, it supported the Socialist policy of peoples rights. Now it chooses to bury its head in the sand; it has failed to uphold those rights.

The council's actions must be challenged, people must fight now for what is their right. They must organise public meetings and demand consultation. There are groups already preparing for consultation, trade unions must support the people, their fight is our fight. It is true to say that Jesus was born in a stable, could it have been that Bethlehem Council had sold off all the houses?

### **THIS MONTHS SOCIALIST VOICE**

This issue of Socialist Voice is a little different than usual, and we don't just mean the price has gone up! Following last month's special on Rae Hunter we have included an eight page special about Rae Hunter. More readers and fighters are writing for the paper than ever before and we hope that this trend continues - it is up to you. Please note this edition of the paper is for July and August.

# The Market Comes To Further Education

NICK MARSH

A HUGE sector of education in Britain that rarely gets in the national media, Further Education, is about to undergo massive changes. These changes have been brought about by a government which, by its every word and deed, has sought to destroy a system of education which, whilst imperfect, has begun to address many of the inequalities in our society.

Further Education is being privatised. The Education Reform Act of 1988 which caused so much devastation in our schools and separated polytechnics from Local Education Authorities began the process of privatisation. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 completes it. On the 1st April 1993 all Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges will become independent corporations. There will no longer be any link with Local Education Authorities. The new corporations will be run by 'governing bodies' made up in the main of unelected 'industrialists'. Their principals will become, in effect, chief executives. Their funding will come from an unelected Further Education Funding Council. The level of funding they receive will be based on how many students they can attract. It is common knowledge that this council will set the level of funding at about 90% of what is needed to force the new corporation to be more competitive and entrepreneurial.

All existing staff will transfer on the 1st April 1993 to the newly incorporated colleges on their present terms and conditions with no loss or continuity of employment. This sounds fairly reasonable in the post Thatcherite employment jungle but we need to step behind the gloss and look at the reality.

First of all this massive change is to be accomplished with very little extra money. The government set aside £26 million for the transition period (30th September 1992 to 1st April 1993). Given that there are over 500 colleges in the sector £26M would not have gone very far. However, the FEFC has informed colleges that the real figure available is only £15M, because they have set aside or spent £11 million employing consultants such as Touche, Ross and Coopers, Lybrand, Deloitte to tell us what we knew already - that colleges need payroll systems,

cash accounting and better management information systems. A large college in Manchester will receive about £26,000 to cover this transition period - not even enough to pay for a payroll system.

Because the funding council controls the purse strings they will decide which colleges survive. It is expected that a quarter of

*"It is expected that a quarter of all colleges will go to the wall by the year 2000"*

colleges will go to the wall by the year 2000. The scenario is very simple. If the funding council pulls the plug on a college, it will cease to exist. What we are probably going to see are mergers and "rationalisation" with the consequent loss of jobs and courses. The only way colleges will be able to survive will be to boost student numbers and cut staffing costs. This has already happened in polytechnics.

Although staff transfer to the new colleges on their existing terms and conditions, collective agreements do not transfer with them unless such agreements are part of their personal contracts. In fact the Act makes no mention of collective bargaining the inference being that individuals negotiate their own terms and conditions. There is nothing to stop the new governing bodies from sacking everyone on the 2nd April 1993 and re-employing them (or those they want) on new, and significantly worse, terms and conditions. Again, the experience in the polytechnics is that new contracts have been introduced which are significantly worse than those previously in place. Equally, senior staff in polytechnics have awarded themselves massive wage increases and various other perks the old, old story - the bosses get fat at the expense of the workers and the customers (the students) can go to hell.

However it's not all doom and gloom. A fight is beginning, it's not being helped to any great extent by the national leaderships of the various unions involved, but there are activists on the ground who are prepared to take on the new bosses. Links are being made between unions. The traditional "superiority" of the lecturers' union, NATFHE, is being called into question not least by its own members. There is a realisation that we are all in this together - we can only win if we stick together; the bosses can't beat us if we are united.

Nick Marsh is a further education lecturer in Manchester

## ECONOMY

PETER WINDELER

BRITAIN AND the rest of the world is entering a much more serious economic crisis by the day. Recession is being replaced by slump which in turn is creating social chaos from the villages of rural England to the streets of Los Angeles.

### Under Threat

As capitalism cannot make profits from manufacturing, the working class are being made to pay by having living standards slashed. Many of the social advances of this century such as unemployment benefit, free health care and equal access to education are now directly under threat. In France the whole unemployment benefit system is on the verge of collapse. The US, Sweden, Spain and Germany all have similar problems.

The crisis in Britain is revealed in the record figures for companies going into liquidation - 30,722 in the first six months of the year. As the Germans move towards increasing interest rates again to reduce inflation, sterling is now almost at the bottom of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

The London Business School (LBS) in its recent survey of the British economy concluded that it will "remain in severe recession" with unemployment rising to 3 million by mid-1993.

The danger is that the government will be forced to increase British rates to protect the pound - a prospect the Financial Times described as the "nuclear option".

Already the 'city' is worried by the prospect of reduced dividends from companies as the slump takes hold. Now the "long-dated gilts" - the government's own debt - are the only things worth investing in.

The prospects are that the government will have to keep selling these securities to raise the money or be faced with slashing even further public spending.

### Fraud

Another feature of the economy is the amount of fraud prevalent, whether it is by our own press barons or the brokers on the Indian Stock Exchange. As profits from legitimate business become harder to make fraud is always a ready option for the capitalist class.

But fraud cannot be more than a transitory solution to capitalist crisis. Its only real option is to decimate the living standards of workers. The LBS is advising the Russian government to increase unemployment to over 10 million and no doubt similar advice is being given to the British government.

# VICTIMISED STUDENTS

Alan Rote reports on Manchester Polytechnic's treatment of students on a social work course

Manchester Polytechnic's new Diploma in Social Work course, at its Department of Applied Community Studies, has come under fierce attack for denying students basic rights and for inadequate and inconsistent training of Social Workers and Probation Officers. Oppressive and discriminatory actions by the polytechnic towards the students have heightened the controversy around the already problematic course.

The diploma is being phased in as a replacement for the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) following the ritual abuse scandals in the Orkneys, Rochdale and Cleveland, and is intended to give newly qualified Social Workers more practical experience on placements than the CQSW. To this end, 50% of the time spent training on the new diploma is spent on placement, with the availability of good quality placements at a premium..

## Placements

Last year, the final year of the CQSW at the polytechnic, there were 45 Social Work students. In joint staff-student meetings this year lecturers/tutors have admitted that there are only around 40 decent placements available for students on the course, and yet financial pressures have forced the polytechnic to take on 85 students for the new diploma.

Many students on placement are receiving poor training as a result, often being used as cleaners, caretakers or cooks, and with many receiving no experience in any kind of case-work or counselling, despite the fact that such experience is crucial both to the students future competency as a Social Worker



*"...some students are almost bound to fail, not through their own inadequacies, but because they aren't receiving the necessary training to pass".*

and to their chances of passing coursework assignments based upon their 'practice'.

The policy of taking on more students than they can adequately train in order to gain more money for the department has meant that some students are almost bound to fail, not through their own inadequacies, but because they aren't receiving the necessary training to pass. Also, the lecturers themselves have indicated that the diploma's 'core competencies', which all students are required to pass, are not worth the paper they are written on as they are vague and therefore impossible to assess with any consistency.

Mass student meetings have slammed the polytechnic for not only giving insufficient

support to students, but also for causing them to fail. Course tutors have met placement tutors behind the backs of students, deciding on extra work for students without any negotiation or agreement. Students have been denied the right to have a fellow student representative in with them in meetings with their tutors or placement tutors. Cases have emerged of students believing that they were doing well on their placements only to be told two weeks before the end that they would be failed, giving them no time to improve their standard of work to pass level.

## Discrimination

Despite great play made early on in the course around issues of 'power, oppression and discrimination', placement tutors reports are being accepted as valid, even when they highlight obvious discriminatory practices and opinions directed at the students by practice placement tutors themselves. In one instance a black person was denied access to work with the black community, despite repeated requests for this, and was further denied access to black agencies and support groups despite this having been negotiated in the student's 'pre-placement agreement'. Moreover, because of the support the student received on placement from the only other black worker there, support which the placement tutor objected to as she was critical of the student's work, she banned the student from having any contact with other members of staff regarding the student's caseload, with the specific expressed intention of blocking contact between the only two black workers.

In another case a deaf student had to work

# SLAM POLYTECHNIC

He exposes the sham that education is becoming and looks at the students fight-back

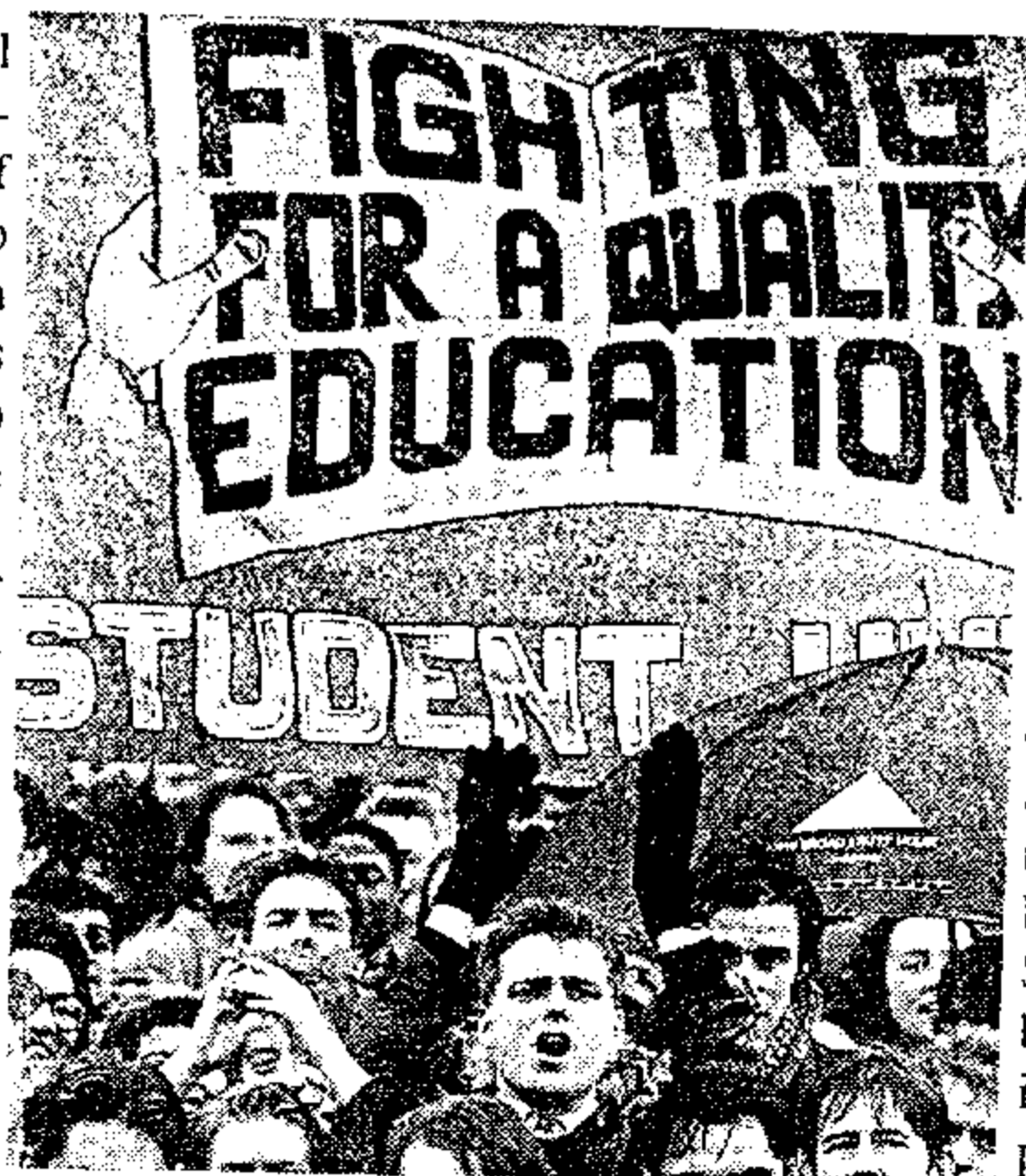
with blind clients, who show little facial expression and are therefore difficult to lip-read, and a stroke patient. It is beyond belief to seriously expect deaf students to be able to lip-read and communicate effectively with stroke patients. As a result of such practices this student was considered to be unable to pass the placement, even though it was the placement which was at fault. When this student went to discuss this with the head of the department, he was told that no further discussion could take place until he had paid back the money for the 'minicom' and other deaf aids provided to deaf students by the Polytechnic. The students receive money to pay for these from the Local Education Authority, but they are extremely slow at coughing up the money. As a result this student had to go into debt merely so that his head of department would talk to him about his course!!

As far as most students are concerned, therefore, it is becoming increasingly apparent that some students are being deliberately set up to fail.

## Failure

For students who are recommended to fail or do another placement, their rights to fair treatment are also being ignored. The 'practice panel sub-committee' which interviews students with a fail or borderline pass/fail recommendation from their placement, is extremely partial and inquisitorial in its approach. The panel is made up of course tutors and practice placement tutors, all of whom are extremely loath to criticise each others work. The neutrality and objectivity of such a set up has been called into question. As one student put it: "Its rather like having Heinrich Himmler sitting on the jury at the war crimes trials."

In one case a 'neutral observer', drafted in by the polytechnic to interview the student, course tutor and placement tutor prior to overseeing the panel proceedings, was barred from the panel meeting by the chairperson who was one of the course tutors. Not only that, but the placement and course tutors, although around to give 'evidence' before the panel, refused to be interviewed by the neutral observer as they had "prior commitments", indeed this was given as the excuse for not allowing the neutral observer into the



*"It has become apparent that the Poly has deliberately taken on more students than it can train in order to receive more grant as a result"*

panel meeting.

In the panel meeting itself, which had already been primed by reading the biased and negative reports on the student and interviewing the course and placement tutors first, the student faced a barrage of hostile and aggressive questioning based upon the placement report which was itself highly contradictory and replete with falsehoods and subtle negative innuendo. In this meeting the student was not allowed to bring up the point by point rebuttal of the report which he had prepared together with his chosen student representative as there was "not enough time", and the student representative was denied the right to speak except as a "prompt" to the student. Indeed, when the student representative tried to speak, he was told that "We are here to hear what X has to say. The fact that you are speaking in his stead will be duly noted", implying that the student was incapable of speaking for himself, which was grossly untrue.

It has become increasingly apparent that

the polytechnic has deliberately taken on more students than it can train, in order to receive more grant as a result. Having obtained the money based on the numbers of "bums on seats", they are deliberately trying to get rid of students as they know they haven't the number of good placements to adequately train them. This is being done in two ways. Firstly through natural wastage, as students realise that their poor level of training will not allow them to pass, and they drop out of their own accord. Secondly, through accepting anything and everything that placements, good or bad, say about the students. Lecturers, some of whom have never been Social Workers and most of whom have not been 'in the field' for 10-15 years, are backing to the hilt 'fail' recommendations from placements, even where it is the placement that has failed the student and not the student the placement. In this way even outrageously discriminatory and prejudiced practices by poor placements and untrained and unqualified placement tutors are overlooked in the interests of cutting down student numbers.

## Furious

The students, needless to say, are absolutely furious. There is unanimous support for victimised students in the mass meetings, as each student knows that next year they could be given a hopeless placement and be left to sink or swim with no support from the course tutors or polytechnic machinery. The students know that they cannot afford to allow themselves to be picked off one by one, and that unity in the face of a common threat is paramount.

In the event of students being failed over the summer, students are talking of taking action when they return in October. Legal action for unfair and discriminatory practices is being considered, as are boycotts of the most appalling lecturers, boycotts on handing in assignments, contacting the press/media, conducting pickets, protests, and if none of the above get the necessary response, strikes and occupations.

**The ball is firmly in the Polytechnics court, and they must know that if they continue to treat these mature students like naughty school-kids, then they are in for a rude awakening.** ■

# The Third World

**"A CHILD dies every hour in just one country, the Philippines, to pay the banks that make the profits".**

In the past ten years no issue, other than war itself, has so dominated the work of the leading aid agencies, as much as the 'third world debt crises'. In country after country, the problems faced by the people, are profoundly influenced by the economic crises. Whether their government is imposing harsh austerity measures in an attempt to keep up the debt payments, or limiting debt payments, and facing the united hostility of the creditors, the results are very similar. Children are dying (half a million a year according to UNICEF), tropical rainforests are laid waste (fifty acres a second according to Friends of the Earth), and charities like Oxfam and the World Development Movement are forced to fund basic services that are not covered by government provision.

So how did the Third World's massive debt happen? Back in the 1970's when the oil rich countries vastly increased the price of oil, they deposited their new found wealth in western banks. The banks in turn, were desperate to re-invest it. They reckoned that the best way to loan it safely was to Third World countries. Companies may fold and disappear, but countries would always be there to safeguard the investment. So scores of people, were sent around the world offering enormous loans, often to despots and military governments who had no intention of spending the money to help the poor. In fact on many occasions corrupt politicians in concert with the banks actually redeposited large amounts of this money in their own names, with the very same banks who had loaned the money in the first place. President Marcos in the Philippines was a classic example. He deposited billions around the world by taking this loan money for himself - and there were many others. But still the banks carried on, because, for them, it was good business. The money was loaned to these countries at variable interest rates. As those

rates have gone up and the countries incomes have failed to keep pace, so they had to spend a larger and larger proportion of their national income on repaying debt.

To pay back the interest on the loans the poorest countries in the world grow cash crops on land that could be growing food for their own people. That's why Sudan was still exporting food whilst its own people faced starvation. That's why 400,000 children are estimated to die in Brazil every year from hunger related diseases when Brazil is one of the biggest exporters of food in the world. According to Oxfam, well over half the children in Ghana are malnourished while over half that country's foreign exchange is spent in paying loans. This has meant cuts in health care, education, and even water supplies.

And perhaps the most stunning fact of all: Whilst all those children grow hungry in Ghana, half their farming land is not growing food for the malnourished, but instead it is used to grow

cocoa to make western chocolate bars!

Forty per cent of the food growing land in Senegal is growing peanuts for western margarine. In Columbia, where malnutrition is common, fertile land is used to grow cut flowers for the rich in the west. During the great drought in the Sahel, the production of peanuts for export increased whilst tens of thousands starved. The World Health Organisation estimates that 15 million children, under five years of age, die each year from preventable causes. While the direct causes are many, one clearly stands out: 'Third world debt'. Richard Jolly, Deputy Director of UNICEF estimates that at least 500,000 died in 1989 as a result of 'third world debt'. Indirect deaths (due to lack of funds) include:-

- 3 million from measles, tetanus, diphtheria, polio, whooping cough and tuberculosis. Vaccination against these costs 6p per child
- 4 million from pneumonia, a cure for which costs 2.5p per child

*"Over half the children in Ghana are malnourished-over half the country's foreign exchange is spent paying off loans"*

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Within The Banking, Insurance and Finance Union an attempt is being made to develop a campaign in support of a complete write-off of all Third World debt owed to British banks.

There is a struggle within the union to adopt a radical policy which would not find favour with the banks.

The banks themselves continue to rake in vast profits from the poorer nations.

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- 4 million from diarrhoea, a cure for which costs 7p per dose

But the countries they live in can't afford even those meagre costs. OECD figures show that the debt burdened nations are reimbursing their loans at \$3 billion a week. Even more astonishing, they have sustained this rate of payment for a decade. Since the debt crises erupted in 1982, Latin America has sent an average of \$4 billion northward every one of those 108 months. Even dirt poor sub-Saharan Africa is somehow scraping together a billion dollars a month in loan repayments. And each year the debt grows because that vast sum doesn't even cover the amount of interest owed.

The Crises is Killing our Environment

Third world Debt and environmental destruction are indissolubly wedded.

The first wave of loans in the 70's, which didn't disappear into the black hole of foreign bank accounts, were used to finance monumental projects that turned into ecological disasters. Huge dams were built which apart from displacing hundreds of thousands of people, flooded vast forested areas, caused infertility and soil salinisation, destroyed wildlife and spread water borne diseases - without even supplying the promised output of electricity. Other loans financed internal colonisation schemes - such as those of Brazil and Indonesia - which drew

# Debt Means Death

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John Hall, a Bifur member and a supporter of the campaign, told us that he wants other Bifur members and the public to realise the hypocrisy of the banks and the true cost, in human terms, of insisting that third world debt is repaid. Here is his explanation to his fellow union members of the issues involved.

The problem is one that has to be addressed by the whole labour movement.

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thousands of involuntary settlers into pristine forests.

Ill-conceived industrialisation based on obsolete technology brought little development but pollution. Foreign money fertilised "green revolution-style" agriculture, which required heavy doses of chemicals and wiped out local seed strains in favour of imported varieties.

Those loans which were so irresponsibly lent and spent are now due, and nature is once again paying the price. Resources are "mined" more than they are managed. Smallholders are expelled from their land (to make way for export crops) and then try to cultivate easily eroded hillsides or forest soils. At the same time countries are running themselves ragged on the export treadmill, the World Bank and the IMF exhorting them to make deep cuts in public expenditure. Environmental protection budgets are slashed, with the consequence that no one is paid to watch or put out forest fires, stop poachers, or curb the drug economy. Coca production has already devastated over 700,000 hectares of Amazonian rain forest, and processing the coca into cocaine dumps into rivers thousands of gallons of sulphuric acid, ether, kerosene, acetone and ammonia. Debt's most serious ecological consequence is the massive deforestation it has encouraged. Forests are felled to provide for furniture, window frames,

chopsticks, and even throw away shuttering on construction projects. Sometimes they are simply burnt-down and turned into pasture for cattle whose meat will end up in western fast-food restaurants.

Levels of debt correlate almost perfectly with the extent and the speed of forest destruction, the higher the debt, the better the prospects for the chain-saws and the bulldozers. Deforestation in the debtor countries accounts for roughly one fifth of all greenhouse gas emissions and thus contributes to global warming. As the forests are laid to waste to pay back loans, so does bio-diversity; the myriad lifeforms which are the bases of our future foods and medicines are wiped out. We cannot slice the planet in half: Environment destruction is one debt boomerang that will sooner or later strike us all.

The question is: What is the West doing to alleviate the crises they cause?

When these countries got into desperate trouble and could not repay their colossal debts to western banks and governments, in came the International Monetary Fund, the IMF. This is the system's police force, dominated by America and other rich countries like Britain, which makes sure everyone plays by the right rules - theirs! They go into a country and tell them that they must cut public spending and increase exports, whatever the cost to the inhabitants. The few rich people in the country must be allowed to get richer so there can be a "trickledown", but subsidies for the poor must be cut and so must spending on health care and education. This has led to a new term in the third world, "the IMF riot". These riots occur when people, already hungry, are told that food subsidies are being reduced. The IMF also demands increased production of cash crops to raise more money and stimulate "growth".

Instead of writing the debt off, they have made provisions for it. Making provisions means that they have assumed in their accounts that the money will never be repaid.

This allows them to claim a tax deduction while at the same time continuing to claim money from the borrower. It allows the banks to have their cake and eat it.

The difference between a provision and a write off is that with a provision, the debt is still current as far as the person who owes it is concerned. In this case the debtors are starving third world countries. And the banks, and other creditors, are still actively extracting as much as possible in interest payments from them.

Provisions have not helped the third world who still owe just as much as they did before the provisions were made. But they have helped the banks and their shareholders by enabling them to claim back hundreds of millions of pounds in tax rebates. What has

happened is that the British tax-payer has paid the banks, but the banks have not let the third world see one penny of it. The banks effectively take back everything the British

tax-payer sends in foreign aid, and in charity, to help starving people in poor countries. ■

*"Countries are running themselves ragged-the World Bank and IMF are exhorting them to make deep cuts in public expenditure"*

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## STOP PRESS

**The National Committee of the Banking, Insurance and Finance Union, have just voted to support the campaign**

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## SEND YOUR SUPPORT

**The campaign needs letters of support. If readers send them to us, we will pass them onto the Campaign.**

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**Socialist Voice interviewed Shigeza a long standing member of the African National Congress**

*What is the situation facing Black people in South Africa?*

"Life is intolerable for Blacks. People who live in Soweto and work in Johannesburg are threatened with being hacked to death every time they get on a train to work. Families cannot go outside their homes after 6pm. They are being massacred by Inkatha, or accused of being an Inkatha spy.

"The conditions for Black workers have declined over the last three years and it is worse than it has been for a long time, even though much of Apartheid has been abolished. They face the brunt of the recession and suffer ever worsening conditions.

"Most people living outside South Africa do not realise how much white people hate the Blacks. White people think of them as sub-human. As far as they are concerned they are still Kaffirs or bastards".

*What did the ANC get out of the recent negotiations?*

"Most people do not realise the depth of the crisis that besieged the National Party. They were praying that the ANC would agree to negotiations. If the ANC had held out a bit longer and had not dived into the negotiations we could have brought down the South African government and we could have got one-person, one-vote.

"The truest thing I will say here is that the South African government merely wants to swap a monopoly of power for a veto of power. It has absolutely no intention of giving up power. A famous statement made by a prominent Afrikaner businessman indicated their line: "*We Afrikaners must find a secret way of sharing power without losing control*". That was and is the agenda. The whole idea behind negotiations was to con the world that they had changed, while retaining the power, and the ANC fell right into it. Consequently, the ANC has made no progress.

"The National Party is not going to negotiate away power, all the statements about the scraping of Apartheid being irreversible are complete nonsense. That has been proven by the stalemate in Codesa (the title given to the negotiations)".

*What lead up to the negotiations?*

"The important thing to understand is why the National Party jumped towards negotiations. The National Party was under tremendous pressure so it was forced to take the action it took.

"What made De Klerk jump? It was a variety of things. Primarily it was the economic situation in South Africa. Apartheid had become a fetter on capitalism. The country from 1950 till 1970 achieved massive economic growth but from 1975 to 1985 it experienced economic decline. This was a political problem.

"There was a massive flight of capital in 1985.

Countries would not maintain loans for political reasons rather than economic reasons. The South African economy had massive debt repayments. Its total debt was £22 billion.

"So, economically, the country was heading for disaster. The whole system faced collapse. That started the dismantling of Apartheid.

"Inside the country mass action developed which forced P. W. Botha to unban the unions. In five years the unions grew massively and were very militant. They played a very significant role in P. W. Botha being forced to resign and F. W. de Klerk taking over.

Also in 1988 at Cuito Cuanavale (where Cuban, Angolan and SWAPO fighters trapped thousands of South African troops and forced the retreat of the SA army from Angola) they lost a battle that changed the balance of forces in the region. They realised

## For a World Campaign A

The International Secretariat of the Intern

**IN THE** early morning of Wednesday 17 June forty two people, including children and women, were massacred in Boipatong, a black ghetto near Johannesburg by members of the Zulu tribe Inkatha. The assassins were transported by police cars.

Three days later, three more people were killed by the security forces accompanying President de Klerk, who cynically visited the area where the killings had occurred.

These facts made Mandela and the ANC break off negotiations with the white government.

This fact demonstrates with absolute clarity that Apartheid has not been destroyed in South Africa. This also demonstrates that the negotiations maintained the life of the racist regime and cost the lives of hundreds of black people and shows that the hopes of Mandela were completely false.

The white government has no intention of permitting an end to their dictatorial and fascist regime. They would only allow some members of other races

**DOWN WITH THE RACIST GOVERNMENT  
FOR A GOVERNMENT**

they had to make some kind of agreement unless they were going to take a hiding. That battle was crucial. Up to that point they thought of themselves as invincible, the defeat destroyed that myth and was instrumental in forcing Botha's resignation.

"After Cuito Cuanavale they could not impose order from above but the popular masses could not seize power from below. This unstable equilibrium was broken by the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC (Pan African Congress) and the SACP (South African Communist Party) in February 1990.

"The unbanning began the dual strategy of the National Party of negotiations with and repression of the ANC and COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). They wanted to impose a social contract on COSATU involving restraining the struggle around immediate economic objectives in exchange for productivity/wages deals. Un-



# ONE VOTE

**SOUTH AFRICA**

*interview*

## Against South African Apartheid

International Workers' League issued this statement on 1st July

into the government. Only mass mobilisations against the odious crimes and injustices of Apartheid can break them.

To develop the mass movement it is necessary to end immediately and definitively the negotiations. This government cannot be negotiated with, it can only be destroyed by the unity of all the black organisations. The general strike called for 3rd August by the ANC and COSATU should be supported by all the organisations.

Only a genuine black government, a government of the vast majority of the people, which has the respect of the people, can solve the problems of South Africa.

The International Workers League (Fourth International) calls on all the workers organisations to fully support a campaign of solidarity for the black majority of South Africa and to increase the mobilisations in all the world to end Apartheid once and for all.

**The IWL (FI) calls especially to the Trotskyist organisations of the world to start a campaign to defend the right of the South African black people to govern their own land.**

**DOWN WITH SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID  
GOVERNMENT OF THE MAJORITY**

fortunately, the COSATU leadership fell into this trap. Similarly, the National Party was very relieved when the ANC agreed to talks".

### *What are the demands?*

"The objective of the vast majority of the people in South Africa is to achieve one-person one vote in a unitary state.

"The primary demands which Blacks want is to improve their quality of life. People are becoming disillusioned with politics in general and they are forming "Civic Societies" in the townships where they discuss local issues. The people in the Civics say there is not enough energy in the old ideas, it is no good trying to obtain the unobtainable if you neglect the obtainable.

"What the Civics are concerned about is employment, health, education - no matter what the government is. They are helping

you can achieve Socialism in South Africa, is by a revolution and by understanding the pressures which forced the NP to negotiate in the first place. My personal belief is that you cannot reform capitalism. You have got to scrap it. The history from the 1970s is evidence of that.

"The whole concept of reform, social contract or social partnership has failed miserably. The unions have to push mass action. Which they are beginning to do.

"The trade union movement in South Africa is new but is split. There is the populist movement and the workerist movement. The populist movement, which supported the idea of a social contract was gaining ground over the last few years. In COSATU they had the control and occupied prominent positions.

"The unions have seen that fail and are now going back to mass action.

"They must totally crush the National Party

old people travel around in groups, organising night watches, defence groups for those travelling on trains etc.

This is the goal of most South Africans. They believe that if they get universal suffrage they will get an ANC government and that the ANC government will deliver on these things".

### *How can these demands be achieved?*

"The only way that you can get one-person one-vote, the only way

it is not going to negotiate itself out of power. The Blacks are not interested in minority rights they want one-person one-vote. The police force and the army will not allow the government to negotiate power away. They would not allow one-person one-vote. The police force and the army is not willing to concede power to the ANC. The only way for the ANC is to take it from them. I am not sure it is capable of doing that. There will be blood in South Africa.

"When the negotiations stop, the real war begins. There will be an increase in strikes and an increase in repression. The situation will get a lot worse. If the National Party had agreed to one-person one-vote we would have seen a coup d'état and a return to old style Apartheid. You are dealing with fanatics.

"If we are to have democracy in South Africa the police force and the army must be broken.

Up to six weeks ago the question was Socialism or social contract and the SACP and the ANC were sure the way forward was the social contract.

"What blew the negotiations apart was Boipatong.

"We are back to 1989 and unstable unequilibrium. The ANC and COSATU are pulling out of negotiations. But in some ways they have become superfluous. New workers organisations are growing and developing, which will fight whatever government is in power - even an ANC government.

"Even a constituent Assembly is not universal suffrage. I do not think it is a big demand now, people would see it as just another next step and they have had a lot of those".

### *What can workers in other countries do?*

"In order to support the South African struggle we should be speaking to the shop stewards, to the Civics, to the comrades in the townships - to the activists. There are a lot of people disillusioned with the leadership in the SACP, in the ANC and in the trade union movement. The question is how do we talk to them?" Mass action is developing again and it will manifest itself in strikes. Things are moving very rapidly, there have been more strikes over the past three months than in the past two years in South Africa and a general strike is planned for 3rd August".

# The Day of the

ON THE very day of the third anniversary of the famous elections when "the first anti-Communist government of Poland" came to power, the government of Premier Olszewski fell. He had been Poland's third premier since those elections. His place was taken, on Walesa's special request, by Waldemar Pawlak, a member of the PSL, the peasants party which, together with another organisation - the SRI - was the organisation that had led large numbers of peasants struggles until the peasants became fed up with their treacherous leadership and created the new self-defence organisations.

For many weeks it had been quite clear that the old government had little life left: They could not establish a budget; there were constant strikes and protests; coalitions came about and fell apart before one could characterise them; a never ending murmur of anger came from the citizens expressed by whatever means they could; the scandal of what was known as the Parys Case when the Minister of Defence, Parys, accused members of the presidency of trying to "obtain the backing of some officers of the armed forces in order to cut short the young Polish democracy", all this created a climate of absolute instability. But the "drop that overflowed the cup" was what happened on the day known ever since as the "Day of the Folders".

It is true that ever since the "campaign of de-communisation" started there has been a lot of talk about the opening of the "secret folders" which, it was said, contained the names of all those who had been agents of the UB and the SB (secret police of the Stalinist regime). But not many gave a second thought to it because, on the one hand everybody knew that in those last years there had been a lot of "cleaning" of the files, and on the other hand it was well known that the secret police in the last years of the deposed regime had been very corrupt and that they often presented lists of co-operators who never



existed, in order to collect money meant to pay the informers.

The origins of what happened on the night between the 4th and 5th of June are connected to the day when Parys publicly announced that people close to the president had been getting in touch with officers in the army in order to obtain their assistance in overturning the government. Walesa's first reaction was to call for the minister to be sacked. This the prime minister refused to do and instead complained that the president was interfering in the cabinet. As a result of this there is a prolonged war of who is competent to do what. Finally the minister lost his job, but did not give up political life as several "Committees for the Defence of Parys" appeared.

It is in the midst of this kind of atmosphere that some brown paper envelopes marked "confidential" were given to the MPs. They contained the names of the supposed collaborators of the UB and the SB who, at the time, occupied post of high responsibility in public life. At the same time another set of envelopes was handed to members of the government and to the president and there was a rumour that there was another list that included 900 of the most prominent members of Solidarity who had collaborated with the Stalinist regime. It soon became known that among those accused there were such names as Walesa and Moczulski, the leader of the KPN (Right Nationalist), and many other famous "anti-Communists". The only names missing were of those closest to the prime minister.

Gazeta Wyborcza reported: "It was enough to look at the faces of the MPs to know who had found his own name on the list...I can see two people belonging to traditionally opposed clubs, both of whom had enthusiastically voted in favour of the de-communisation. Now both of them have found their names on the list. 'What do you mean to do?', asks one of them, and the other answers: 'I don't know. It's all a madhouse!' The parliament session began in pandemonium. It lasted for 16 hours. It ended when the government was dissolved by 273 votes against 119 with 33 abstentions. Among the abstentions was Solidarity which later explained: "what has happened here is an insult to the dignity of the president, of the government and of the parliament. But it would not be wise to overthrow one government when there is no other that can take its place." The alternative appeared a few hours later in the form of a note to the parliament.

The note said: "I request that Waldemar Pawlak should be named the new prime minister." Signed, Lech Walesa. This request was voted with 261 votes in favour, 149 against with 7 abstentions. Those who voted in favour were: UD (Mazowiecki's Party), SLD (the alliance of former Stalinist parties), KPN (Right Nationalists), PSL (Pawlak's party), SP (Social Democrats of Solidarity origin). Among those who voted against was Solidarity, which immediately started a campaign saying that: "The age of Walesa has imposed on us a Communist government". On the same day parliament voted in favour of the budget of the outgoing government.

As the days went by and the inaccuracies of the folders became evident, Walesa had to face a double trial when he had to explain how he could have appeared on such a list and receive a storm of abuse when he visited the fourth congress of Solidarity. But contradictorily he came out of it better than anyone else.

The man in the street saw him "as the only person who did not lose his head". This improved image is not destined to last long. It can be best expressed in the words of a bus driver who said: "He's a clever son of a bitch. If we don't kick him out, he will never go".

**Warsaw tells of the day the government fell**

# Folders



Among the evident losers were the Christian Nationals, for as people put it "they meant to set the woods on fire and all they did was to get burnt".

In other words they appear not only as evil, but what is worse, as fools. The parliament itself did not come out of it any better, and it was not mainly because its prominent members appeared on the lists, but essentially because it was parliament which had voted for the "Resolution of Illustration", that is to say the opening of the files, and they did it "so stupidly, that now it is clear that they are all there only to collect those big salaries".

There is a lot of truth in what is said: The resolution was passed by an absolute majority of 186, which means that a lot of MPs were just absent. There was no second reading, the discussion was very matter of fact and there was no discussion on how to carry it out. The above facts confirm what we have known for quite a while: From the objective point of view the situation is highly revolutionary, for those in power not only cannot do what they want for fear of the anger of those

from below, they merely trip over each other and make a miserable spectacle of themselves. But below there is no revolutionary party capable of leading all this anger and indignation to victory. There is no party at all and the Trade Union leaders are openly pro-capitalist.

The vanguards that crop up now and again (like 'self-defence') have been so far nothing but flashes in the midst of the night. I think that the one who has best put it is the leader of a factory commission of a steel factory. He said: "Before things were all wrong, but at least we knew whom to blame for it. We were told: We have to kick out the commies, and we kicked them out. But to-day, for Christ's sake will somebody tell me whom I must kick out? Whom shall I send screaming to the bloody hospital?"

As he spoke I eyed him respectfully. The day he discovers whom he must "send screaming to the hospital", I will be very happy not to be on the receiving end of his boots! ■

**POLAND**

## 10,000 PROTEST

On 20th May there were protests organised by "Solidarity 80" in the cities of Szczecin, Nowa Huta and Katowice. A teachers protest gathered 3,000 furious teachers in Warsaw on 23rd May. 10,000 took part in the railway workers' demonstration organised by all the trade unions of the branch, including Solidarity. On 2nd June several thousand marched through Lodz, in a demonstration called by the OPZZ and SID.

Each one of those events show the growing displeasure and the will to fight of the workers. The fact that the traditional divisions in the trade unions are being breached, as much among the manual workers as among the intellectual workers, gives us a hope that the future struggles will be more unitarian. In the case of the teachers the best example was the joint action of "Solidarity" and OPZZ (former Communist trade union block) in the city of Lodz in which over 3,000 took part.

There has been a great turn in the minds of the workers who show their displeasure in the face of the different "governments of crisis and de-employment" and in the face of the "umbrellas" - a disparaging term used by workers referring to 'Socialist' and trade union leaders who have sold out to the capitalist restorationists. (From an article by Bratkowski in Magazyn Antyrzadowy, No. 29/30)

(In the 2nd Congress of Solidarity the logo was an umbrella in national colours which meant that the trade union was going to shield "our government". Since then the umbrella has become a symbol of a trade union that protects the government more than the workers.)

# PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO EAT



**SINCE APRIL** more than 2000 people have pillaged over thirty supermarkets, bakeries, butchers and groceries in Rio de Janeiro. Governor Brizola, from the State of Rio, sent in the police to severely repress the people involved, but did nothing to combat the real reasons for the pillage - their hunger.

The people came from the poorest boroughs of Rio de Janeiro such as Jabour, Senador Camara, Vila Kenedy, Vaz Lobo, Irajá, Mariópolis and Higienópolis to pillage the supermarkets, large bakeries and other food centres. They were joined by others from the shanty towns such as Coreia, Mangueira, Faz Quem Quer and Rato Molhado.

Now, as in September 1983 (which saw the biggest wave of pillaging in the city of Rio), the country has been through a profound recession, with a high level of unemployment and inflation, which are products of the government's economic policy.

The unemployment figure today is officially 6.36%, similar to 1983, but with the population increase it means many more people have no job. At that time, the inflation had fallen to 13% per month. But for a long time now it has been rising at 20% a month. The minimum wage, which was equivalent to \$126 in May 1983 fell to \$70 in September of that year and in April 1992 it dropped to the appallingly low level of \$48.

This is the situation of misery, starvation

This piece was written by Guilherme Haeser-a Workers' Party councillor in Rio de Janeiro and a member of Convergencia Socialista-the Brazillian section of the International Workers' League.

wages, unemployment and hunger that caused thousands of people to raid the supermarkets.

The governor, Leonel Brizola, as in 1983 "suspects a plot and did not discard the possibility of a movement orchestrated by paramilitary groups against the interests of the city of Rio". The governor ordered the Justice and Police Civil's Secretary to take special action to investigate and jail the rioters - carefully ordering arrests to be made for "invasion of residence" because according to the Penal Code, to take food in case of "absolute necessity" is not a crime.

The governor accuses the drug dealers of being behind the organization of the riots. However, if today the drug dealers have this power, it's because the state doesn't help the poor sectors of society, ignoring their irresponsibility towards these people.

The same argument used by Brizola to explain the food riots is being used by Collor, by the Justice Minister and by the Army Minister. To all of them, the wave of rioting is just a problem of "criminality", and to combat it 220 men from the Military Police and more than 500 recruits were mobilised.

However, as one of the people that had raided a supermarket said, "*if our governors can take public money, why I can't take a bag of beans from the supermarket in order to kill my hunger? For me this is not stealing*".

**Convergencia Socialista** the Brazilian section of our International put forward these points in their paper

**The Answer is:**

**A Workers'**

**Alternative**

**Economic Plan**

**WE REPUDIATE** the repression of the hungry people, although we don't agree with the riot as a method to fight the hunger, since the food pillaged today will be eaten tomorrow and the hunger will still be there.

The answer for the workers is to organize and mobilize to get rid of this government responsible for the hunger, the government of Collor de Mello. Only this way can we change the economic policy of squeeze, unemployment, recession and the hand over of the country to international capital.

It is up to the organizations claiming to be representatives of the working class, especially the CUT (trade unions) and the Workers' Party, to organize and mobilize the people to fight for one alternative workers' programme that puts an end to the governments hunger plans.

This plan includes the non-payment of the external debt, breaking the agreements with the IMF and the Paris Club- using this money in a public work's programme - education, health, housing, etc. - putting an end to unemployment by a sliding scale of hours of work and wages, beginning with the minimum wage declared by the Dieese (a workers research centre) and monthly re-adjustments of wages according to inflation.

From the non-payment of the external debt, we shall be able to carry out the land reform, encouraging, with resources, the production of food - so making it cheaper.

Only through the expropriation of the big monopolies and national and international companies, defending the state companies putting them under the control of workers, and nationalizing the external commerce, shall we end the pillage in our country.

However, to combat and soften this situation of poverty, the government should already have suspended the payment of taxes and property rates by the unemployed, and guaranteed free transport and a basic basket of food in the Constitution.

## ANTI-DEPORTATION CAMPAIGN

# Defend William Weekes' Right to Stay

**WILLIAM WEEKES is under threat of deportation from Britain. He was born in the British Dependent Territory of Montserrat, West Indies and has lived in Britain for 14 years, currently in Moss Side, Manchester.**

William came to this country in 1978 in order to visit his two brothers who have been settled in Britain for a very long time. He then married a British citizen and applied to remain here on the basis of marriage.

He was given permission to remain here by the Home Office for one year until February 1985. The one year is an initial period given to husbands to show that the marriage is going to last for at least that long. William's marriage, in fact, lasted until 1989 but he did not realise that he should have sent his passport back to the Home Office in February 1985 to get a permanent stay in Britain.

In September 1989 he was arrested by the police for a driving offence. The police contacted Manchester Airport Immigration Department, who then interviewed him. The Home Office have now decided to deport him because his marriage broke up before he was interviewed. He was issued with a deportation notice in July 1990 and has appealed against the decision. He will be sent back to Montserrat if the appeal fails.

He is being deported because, according to the Home Office, he has been in Britain without permission since 1985 and because his marriage has broken up since then.

The Home Office have ignored the facts

**You can contact the campaign to defend William Weekes' right to stay  
c/o South Manchester Law Centre 584 Stockport Road Longsight Manchester M13 0RQ**

that:- All his friends are in this country and William considers this to be his home.

He has spent fourteen years in Manchester and has never been back to Montserrat since then. Therefore, he is being deported to a country with which he has had no contact for a considerable time.

His marriage lasted for six years and that he would have been given the right to remain here permanently in 1985 if he had sent his passport to them.

William is being deported because he is black. The Home Office would never consider deporting someone white in this way.

### Things That You Can Do

Tell people about William's case and sign a petition.

Raise William's case at meetings of your union, tenants' association, or other political groups.

Write to:- The Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke c/o 50 Queen Anne's Gate London SW1H 9AT (Always quote William's Home Office reference number W140499). Please send a copy of the letter to the campaign.

Write to your MP and to William's MP:- Tony Lloyd, c/o House of Commons London SW1A 0AA asking support for William.

Come along to William's campaign meetings every Wednesday at 7.30pm at the West Indian Community Centre, Westwood Street, Moss Side, Manchester.

Contact the campaign if you want a speaker at your meeting

Send a donation to the campaign.

## SISTER OF THE LONG MARCH

**JABUNDLOVU became well known to a large number of people in Britain as the most senior of the 'Sisters of The Long March', which toured Britain in December 1988 in support of the sacked BTR-Sarmcol workers. Jabu, a shop steward at the Prestige factory in Pietermaritzburg, played a key role in training and organising the rest of the sisters. Shortly after her return to South Africa she was murdered, together with her husband and one of her daughters, in a fire bomb attack by Inkatha vigilantes on her house in the Imbali township.**

Jabu was a remarkable woman. Triply oppressed, particularly through her work as a trade unionist, she was an inspiration to many others, in her country and ours. A three-day general strike took place throughout Natal in response to her savage murder.

The Natal Workers History Project at the University of Natal has written a biography of Jabu. The book has been produced in close consultation with her union, NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), and her family and friends. All profits from the sales from the book will go into a trust fund for Jabu's remaining children.

The book aims to inspire other women to take up community struggles in South Africa, and has been produced in both Zulu and English.

Price £4.95 Postage and packing 1 copy £1 2 copies £1.50 3 copies £1.65  
BTR Workers' Support Network PO Box 328 Cambridge CB1 2RQ

## KURDS KILLED

On 11 June 1992 contra-guerrillas cut the road in a mountainous stretch of Turkish held Kurdistan, stopping a minibus returning from home to Kokarsu village from Hizan after a shopping trip on the eve of the Kurban Bayram (Sacrifice) holiday. The thirteen passengers on board were all shot dead.

Immediately afterwards, the Turkish authorities and Regional Governor's Office - the contra-guerrillas-headquarters - put out a statement that the PKK (Workers Party of Kurdistan) were responsible for this operation. Such events typify the latest tactics of the contra-guerrillas who wish to bring a civilian element into the 'special war' in Kurdistan. Those murdered were all Kurdish patriots and the Refah Party's Provincial Cabinet member who was on board was sympathetic to our struggle. Press statements, put out by the regional governor and the Turkish press, especially emphasised the killing of Hikmetullah Diksin in an attempt to turn the Muslim's against our party in the region. The attack was a deliberate act of incitement falling on the eve of Kurban Bayram.

A correspondent for Yeni Ulke and Yeni Gundem Hafiz Akdemir was murdered by contra-guerrillas in Diyarbakir. Immediately afterwards the prime minister's assistant, Using Inonu stated: "The PKK are behind this" as a clear indication that the special war is entering the civilian sphere.

By slaughtering civilians during Newroz (the New Year Holiday), and publicising it, they first tested this new tactic. By killing the people with new methods and blaming it on the guerillas they hope to give the guerrillas a bad name and break popular support. They claim that innocent civilians have been killed by the guerillas to undermine the goals of the 'National Liberation' war.

On 12 June 1992 a train carrying passengers on the Iran-Elazig line was attacked by contra-guerrillas as it came into a station. Seven civilians were wounded and a six year old child killed. The attack was deliberately carried out by the contra-guerrillas to turn Iran against our war of 'National Liberation', another new tactic of the 'special war'.

The Turkish republic which has for the last nine years failed in all its attempts of 'special war' against our people intends to bring civilians into the conflict by employing these new strategies. We call upon our people and the international community to recognise this and condemn the Turkish republic's hideous methods of slaughter.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION WRITE TO:  
11 Portland Gardens London N4 1HU  
Tel: 081-8801759 Fax: 081-802 9963

# Poll Tax Prosecutions Stopped

## **CHAOS IN LAMBETH CASES WITHDRAWN**

**Martin Mitchell, from Lambeth Against the Poll Tax, reports on the latest dose of chaos from everyone's favourite London Borough**

ON JUNE 25th, the Magistrates at Camberwell Green Court refused to hear any poll tax cases until Lambeth Council installed a new computer programme for issuing its bills and summonses. By July 12th the magistrates had dismissed 11,055 cases.

On 27th June, there was a procession of people appearing before the magistrates with a catalogue of complaints against the council - summonses for the wrong amount, one woman who had

sent fifteen applications for a rebate and had still yet to receive one. The magistrate became more and more irritated with Lambeth. By the afternoon, he was urged to say: *"Either hundreds of people are coming in off the street to lie to me, or there is something wrong with Lambeth Council's computer programme"*.

Two summonses in particular pushed the magistrate over the brink. A solicitor appeared on behalf of someone living in Belgium to contest their case. He explained how he had written letters to Gary Moss, Lambeth's head of finance, who as usual, did not reply. The magistrate said that if the council could show such contempt for professional people, they were obviously treating the ordinary people of the borough with utter contempt. At one point, he even ordered Gary Moss to appear before him by 4pm that afternoon, to explain himself. By agreeing that the case be adjourned and paying £300 to the solicitor, Lambeth were allowed to let Moss stay in his office.

The other case that finally convinced the magistrate that it was the council and not the people who were doing the lying, was that of a Mr. Evans. He was billed for £448.97 for the year 1991/92, but the poll tax charge for that year was only £424.89. The magistrate retired and examined the summons for ten minutes. When he returned he did not conceal his anger when telling the council's representative: *"If you have persuaded me to issue one liability order wrongly, you have corrupted my system"*. He then ordered that all the liability orders issued that day be quashed and gave Lambeth seven days to send out an apology to the 4,000 people concerned. He refused the council's appeal to have the cases adjourned, calling Mr Evan's summons *"dishonest"* and calling the programming of the computer *"dishonest"*. He concluded by refusing to hear any more cases from the council until it

installed new software and asked others to do the same.

On 2nd July, anti-poll tax campaigners talked to the first person on the courts list. Her summons claimed one years poll tax to be over £600! The council, who had turned up in

force with a barrister, decided the first case was totally indefensible and conceded defeat immediately. *"With the utmost dignity I can muster"* the barrister asked that the summonses be withdrawn as they were not for the correct

amounts and he did not want to waste the courts time.

The court closed for the day after less than a minute. Hundreds of people who had turned up for the hearings cheered, and rushed to shake the hand of the 'McKenzies' Friend' who had won the victory.

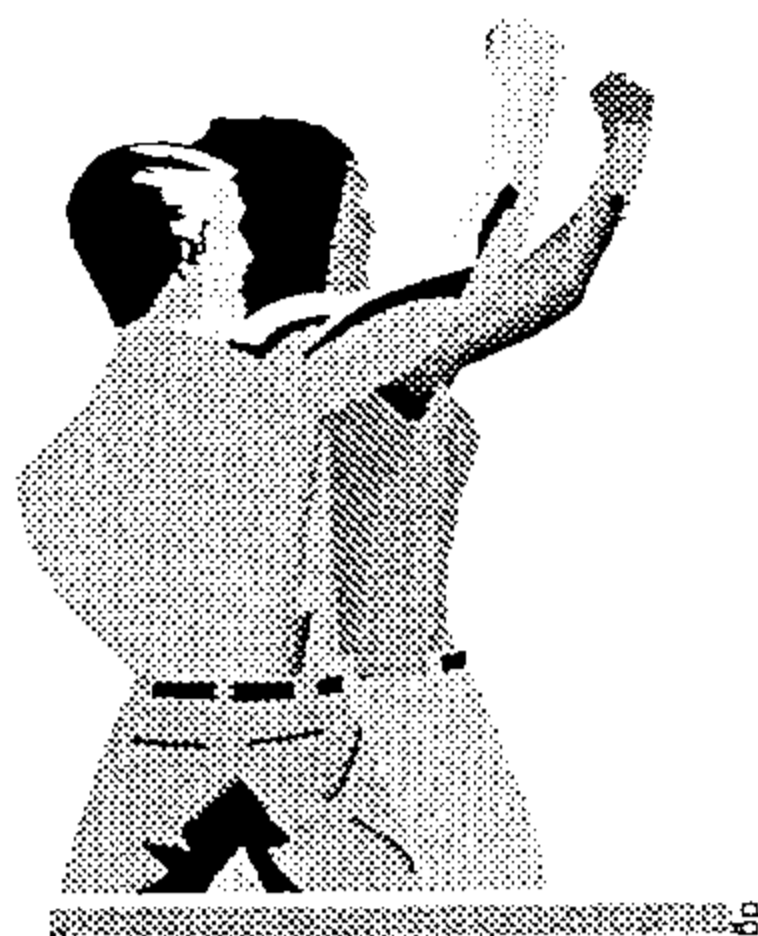
According to a highly placed poll tax official in Lambeth, 60% of authorities in Britain use software identical to Lambeth's which is called "Comcis". This opens up the possibility of challenges to summonses in courts all over Britain. The year on year totals produced in the summonses are wrong. Any payment made towards the poll tax, for whatever year, is taken off the first years bill. So, more and more people are being summonsed. If you made some payment for 1991/92, but still have amounts outstanding for 1990/91, you will still be summonsed for 1991/92, even if you think you have paid it all. Again, payments being made for 1992/93 will be deducted for any outstanding previous years, and then you will be summonsed again for 1992/93. To add to the confusion, amounts owing for one year are being added to the next year and lumped together, hence summonses for £600 for one years tax. As the magistrate at Camberwell says, these are dishonest summonses.

It looks like there will be no cases brought in Lambeth for the foreseeable future, but the council always has and always will, continue to seek to use the courts as an intimidating method of poll tax collection. Meanwhile chaos reigns and non-payment continues on a massive scale in Lambeth. On 18th June £59.4 million was still outstanding.

Justin Philips, the magistrate concerned, said *"Maybe there is someone in this court who can bring this before parliament"*. Is there anyone who can help, reading this? Get in touch with us if you want more details. ■

Lambeth Against the Poll Tax, Anti-Poll Tax Hot-line 081 671 5318 or ring Martin on 081 674 0406

# VOICER socialist



Monthly Journal of the  
International Socialist League  
British Section of the  
International Workers' League (FI)

Lambeth Against the Poll Tax know they can rely on our paper to give their campaign a wider audience in this country and abroad. In this issue we have also published material from the Kurdish Information Centre, an anti-deportation campaign and helped a move against third world debt. If you are involved in a strike, campaign or struggle, let us know the details and we will do our best to support you.

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## French Workers Struggle For Socialism

French press. They obviously felt that the lorry drivers could detonate a general strike of millions of workers.

Undoubtedly the ability of the lorry drivers to organise nationwide, the support they got from the taxi drivers, the farmers and the public, surprised Mitterand and the French government. One day Mitterand was a "hero" in Sarajevo trying to find an imperialist solution to an explosive crisis, the next he was a man on the minority side of a dispute where 60% of the population gave support to the drivers.

This is the face of European democracy and the meaning of Maastricht. The only problem that European governments have with the way the French government handled the crisis is that they did not go in soon enough. The EC (European common Market) is now demanding that the French government compensate European business for the loss of business.

What European governments or labour organisations are protesting about the violence? The answer is none. They are not turning a blind eye, rather the governments of Europe are trying to build a European force which can help individual governments repress their workers. The divisions in Europe are becoming clearer, they are not fundamentally between countries they are between classes.

That is why the British press moved immediately into action, instinctively hating the strike action and sensing the need to drive a wedge between British workers and the French. In the first day of the strike they started calling the French men "frogs" who did not care about people's lives. Racism poured out of the press including the "quality" press such as 'The Observer' which tried to give a picture of English lorry drivers racing for home, crashing through the barricades with the battle shout of "Cry God for England". They managed to find one driver who risked his own life by driving over the back roads of the Alps from Italy. This just goes to show the callous hypocrisy of the press barons, despite their crocodile tears and artificial concern for protecting lives.

The refusal to accept the new driving laws in France has not developed because of a callous attitude to deaths on the roads. The six point system the government wants to introduce covers many incidents, which, whilst contravening the new law, do not necessarily cause accidents. The lorry drivers are not against a rational system but, they want recognition for the problems of their work.

The pressures they face come directly from the economic crisis in France and Europe: "*The recession has led to a shortage of business and customers are imposing conditions and schedules that require speed limits to be broken.*" ('The Observer' 5 July.)

The French government is not interested in penalising businesses which set such conditions. Like the French farmers who are having their livelihoods destroyed by the EC and the policies of their government, the French lorry drivers did not have a choice, they were compelled into struggle. If the government implements the new system their jobs will be at the whim of the police.

This strike comes out of the harsh conditions of Europe and the drive towards new forms of imperialist domination. Recently the French government used riot police and tear gas against nurses occupying a hospital.

Mitterand and the rest tried to fool workers into believing that they were bringing "democracy" to the East but now it is beginning to be driven home by the class struggle that, as Lenin said: "*If we are not to mock at common sense and history, it is obvious that we cannot speak of "pure democracy" as long as different classes exist; we can*

*only speak of class democracy.*"

Of course those like Mitterand and Major like to talk about pure democracy as if such a thing exists. But they cannot deal with the strike in a "democratic way". Either the democracy of big business, which wants the right to do with individual workers as it pleases, will prevail or 'workers democracy' which protects the interests of the majority of the population will make an advance.

Like the dockers in England these workers are faced with extending their organisation and mobilisation if they wish to win. They have to organise internationally, they should build links with the French railway workers, the lorry drivers in other European countries (there are already rumours that the Danish drivers are in support of their action). They should immediately discuss with the factory workers and find ways to make a common struggle.

The struggle of Western European workers is scaring all these "democratic" governments. Capitalism has failed to dismantle all the gains of the revolution of 1917 in Russia and has yet to build a stable capitalist government in any of the countries which were workers states.

Capitalism does not have much time before the renewed struggles of the Western workers has an effect on the workers of the East.

"*At the end of the thirties, Trotsky drew the conclusion that the political revolution would need the development of revolutionary upsurges in the West to give it an impulse.*" (Bill Hunter, 'Towards Capitalism or Socialism? The Soviet Union and the Political Revolution'.)

Trotsky was writing at a time when the Stalinist bureaucracy was still intact and appeared very strong. Now there is no Stalinist bureaucracy but the new governments are weak. One great difference between 1968 and now is the weakening of the French Communist Party which was the main party of the industrial working class.

That party tried with all its might to hold back the working class. For example they never issued a call for a general strike in 1968 even at the height of the strike wave, with millions in struggle. A strong impulse of workers' struggles from the West which achieves some victories would create an explosive situation throughout Europe. It would have a direct impact on the millions of workers facing poverty and misery in Russia and Poland etc... and show that the main question (without denying national rights) is uniting and fighting not on national lines but on class lines. The only road out for workers from starvation is the Socialist road.

The French working class had the power and opportunity to make mighty advances in 1945, in 1954, 1956, in the miners strike of 1963. But each time these movement were blocked by the Communist Party and by the reformists.

The explosions of 1989 and 1990 in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has blown that great obstacle away.

History is giving the European working class the opportunity to pay its dues to the workers who smashed Stalinism in the East and at the same time show to those workers that only their strength and organisation can change things. It clearly illuminates the road ahead. Only the class struggle and a workers' solution both East and West, only a joint fight against capitalism and bureaucratic leaders can take us out of the great decline and pose the big question: What type of Europe - a united capitalist Europe or a workers Europe, a united Socialist Europe?

**That is why we say that Socialism lives in the struggle of the lorry drivers.**