

CUTTING TO THE BONE

continued from page 1

A whole series of measures have been introduced in recent years to try and resolve this in a way which reduces expenditure, whilst making the Local Authorities (particularly high spending Labour ones) carry the political can for its effects. These include:

- 'Opting Out' for schools to provide tighter central control of finance in the long run.
 - Compulsory competitive tendering of services, cutting jobs and services.
 - Self-financing of housing repairs and administration, leading to higher rents and pushing Councils to sell more property.
 - Central control of Business rates.
- and last but not least the dreaded Poll Tax.

THE POLL TAX FIX.

The Poll Tax, by placing a local charge on everyone regardless of their income, was meant to ensure that Local Authorities, under pressure from local voters, would be forced to cut expenditure, in order to stop the level of tax going through the roof. To a large extent it has worked, although 'capping' has still been brought in as a last resort.

Politically the scheme has backfired, since most people, whilst not absolving Labour Councils from responsibility for enforcing the tax, still put the main blame on the Tories.

'NON-PAYMENT'

Millions of people, 'on principle' or simply because they can't afford it, have refused to pay up. Unpaid taxes this last year amounted to a huge £1.6 billion.

Obviously this has added to the headaches of Local Authority treasurers trying to balance their budgets. The Tories and Labour have tried to blame 'non-payers' for many of this years cuts because of this. But as we have tried to show, it is the Poll Tax system itself, alongside the other measures listed, together with massive reductions in central government funding, which is the root cause of the cuts.

It is ONLY the sheer impossibility of efficiently administering and collecting the tax which has FORCED all the political parties to agree to abolishing the Poll



Tax. The strength of the anti-poll tax movement has been a warning to government that we are not prepared to pay through the nose for an ever decreasing service. The Government was obliged to take account of that strength in its recent budget proposals.

The weakness of the movement has been its concentration on the tactic of 'non-payment'. In the coming period there is an urgent need for the movement, made up of service users, to link up with workers fighting cuts and job losses.

UNIONS AND WORKERS

Which leads us on to the workers response. Already various Unions have been making loud noises and threats of action against the latest round of cuts. There have been a few token one day strikes in places like Liverpool and Lambeth.

But beware! These are the same Unions that have co-operated with Local Councils for the last FOUR YEARS in the implementation of cuts and job losses, not to mention full co-operation with competitive tendering AND collection of the hated Poll Tax!



Much of this co-operation has been sold to workers on the basis of avoiding compulsory redundancies. Well compulsory redundancies now seem almost inevitable. The Unions so-called "bottom line" has been reached despite all the sacrifices previously made.

The small Fire Brigades Union is committed (much to the consternation of its leaders), to national strike action in its sector, if there is even one compulsory redundancy. This is a hopeful sign, but to decisively beat off the cuts affecting all Local

CUTTING TO THE BONE

Authority workers, requires national action by ALL Local Authority workers, irrespective of which Authority, which sector or which Union they are in.

Past experience suggests that the Unions will do their best to keep action limited to as small a section of workers as they can get away with.

OUR JOB NOW

We must persuade our fellow workers that after 4 years of massive cuts, now is the time to stand up and fight - to put OUR needs before the needs of profit. To REVERSE the cuts before we are weakened any further as a collective force.

This is not a matter of "forcing our leaders to fight" and getting bogged down in internal and intra union squabbles, as the Left would have us believe.

There WILL be a fight back. It will start in those areas most immediately and heavily

THE TRAFALGAR SQUARE DEFENDANTS' CAMPAIGN (TSDC)

Legal support and self defence are the responsibilities of all who call protests. Our operation today aims to scrutinise and therefore inhibit the police. The TSDC was set up by defendants and supporters following the brutal police attacks and 650 arrests on last year's two anti-Poll Tax demonstrations in London. Trials continue. We organise unconditional support for all defendants and prisoners (20 now, some doing *three years*). Your support is essential.

We need: 1. Your group's affiliations and donation;

2. Your support for any local defendant; 3) Your involvement.

TSDC: Rm 205, 38 Mt. Pleasant, WC1 - 071-833-8958. The Campaign meets Weds, 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. WC1



APPEAL:

Today's legal costs £4,500

Ongoing defence £50,000

Defend the right to demonstrate. Drop the charges & free the prisoners. Pay no Poll Tax.

THE POLL TAX



affected by job losses. The important need is for that action to be joined and co-ordinated with others on strike and spread directly by the workers involved to others in the firing line. It means striking workers taking control of their own action with directly elected strike committees, representing ALL those involved irrespective of union membership, and extending to the users of services as well.

GREAT POTENTIAL

Such a movement would have an enormous potential to challenge all the set-backs our class has faced over recent years and build the confidence needed to go on the offensive against the whole system of profit before need.

LET'S GET MOVING!

MEETINGS

We hold regular meetings in the Manchester area, usually in conjunction with Manchester Class War. For details, write to our address of telephone 061 226 1293 (Class War).

Publications

Class War on the Home Front. Revolutionary opposition to the Second World War. Price £1.50 (inc p&p).

The State and Capital in Japan. Explains why Japan isn't the triumph for free competition that the Tories claim it is. £1.20 (inc p&p).

Notes on the Class Struggle in Japan Price 70p (inc p&p).

Back Issues. We have some copies of issues 1, 3 and 5 available. No. 1 features the Poll Tax and Eastern Europe, No. 3 Nelson Mandela, German Unity and Council Workers, No. 5 Ireland, Poll Tax and Gulf War. They are all free, but please send a first class stamp.

Anti-Exchange and Mart. A long article about Unions and the state. Free, but send a stamp.

LETTER

Dear Subversion,
Cheers for your back copies of Subversion. I was really impressed by the article on Northern Ireland in your latest copy - I'm pretty much in agreement with it and it's about time that many "class struggle" organisations' pro IRA stance was challenged. They may come from working class communities, but so does a lot of support for the NF!
Yours, Richie (Birmingham)

PROFIT AND HUNGER

KEPT HUNGRY

Remember Bob Geldof, Band Aid and "Feed The World"? Well, brace yourself for another bunch of musical has-beens looking to revive their flagging careers on the back of other people's misery. The spectre of mass starvation is stalking Africa again, and every prediction is that the scale of the crisis this time will be far greater than the 1984-5 famine in the Horn of Africa. Relief agencies say that up to 20 million people face starvation and that more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as much food aid will be needed this year than has been sent in each of the past 3 years.

DROUGHT, CASH CROPS AND DEBT

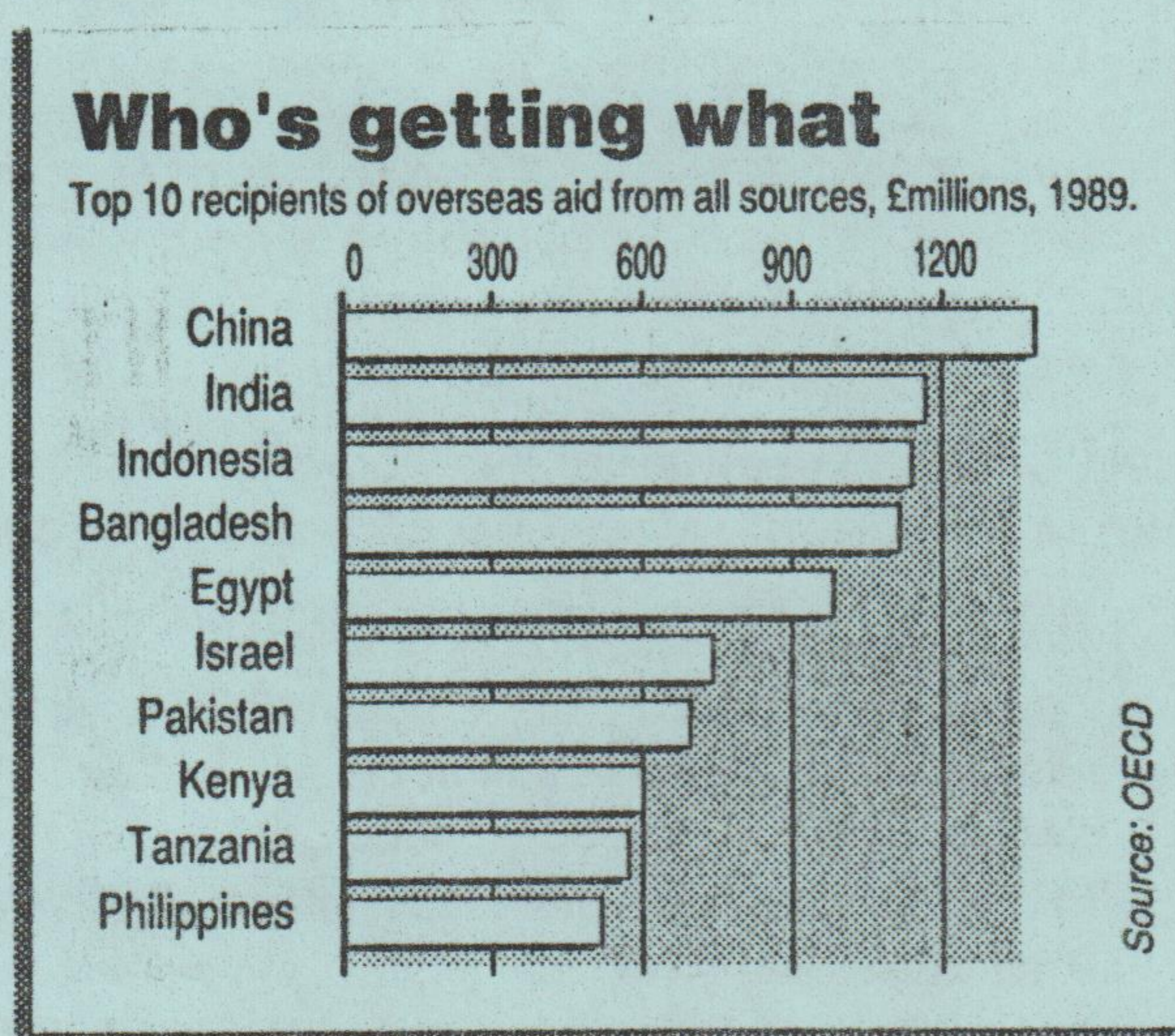
Since the 1970s there has been virtually uninterrupted drought in the Sahelian countries south of the Sahara desert (Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Burkina Faso, etc.). Not a single year of the last 20 has yielded a higher rainfall than the century's average. This encourages the belief that famine is a "natural disaster", which we can do nothing about other than responding to appeals from charities whenever the latest crisis occurs. In fact, there is nothing "natural" about the poverty in which millions of Africans are condemned to live.

Droughts do not automatically lead to famine. More than rain is needed to make crops grow. Agriculture, like every other industry, needs investment: in mechanisation, soil conservation, irrigation, storage facilities, and so on. Throughout Africa, however, and in most other underdeveloped countries, governments have systematically diverted resources away from the production of basic foods, towards profitable cash crops for export.

The income from these cash crops is used to pay for imported industrial technology, oil, armaments, and to support the luxurious life-styles of the ruling elites. It is also used to repay debts owed to banks in the developed countries. As world market prices for the raw materials produced by underdeveloped countries declined steadily during the 1980s, many of these countries found themselves unable to repay even the interest on these loans. In 1985, African countries received 3000 million dollars in emergency aid, but had to pay back twice that amount in debts to Western banks.

AID

If you study a list of the countries which receive the most in overseas aid, you certainly aren't looking at a list of the poorest countries in the world. What you do see is that overseas aid has very little to do with saving hungry people from starvation, and a very great deal to do with propping up regimes which can serve the political, economic, military and strategic interests of the donors.



A large proportion of aid is given in the form of 'tied' aid, which means that it must be spent on goods and services produced in the donor countries. Last year British capitalists earned contracts worth £760 million from this type of aid to underdeveloped countries. Aid donors have also been keen to fund large-scale projects which have the potential to produce profits, such as massive dams to form water reservoirs and produce hydro-electricity. As you'd expect, little heed is paid to the interests of the peasants whose villages will as a result disappear in flooded valleys, let alone to any ecological consequences.

WAR

The countries said to be facing the worst of the present threatened famine are Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique and Sudan. A significant factor in all of these countries' problems has been the years of civil war they have all endured, during which the local warring factions have struggled endlessly for power with the backing of one or other of the two superpowers or of lesser regional powers like South Africa or Libya.

Even though the USA and the Soviet Union now seem to be "disengaging" from these conflicts, the effects of their interventions remain.

In LIBERIA the brutal regime headed by Samuel Doe survived numerous coup attempts throughout the 1980s with the backing of 1 billion dollars of aid from the USA. Doe's luck finally ran out last September when he was captured and executed by a faction of the Libyan-backed National Patriotic Front. The USA evacuated its nationals but didn't lift a finger to save Doe.

A "peace-keeping" force sent by 5 other West African states has been in Liberia since August but the rebel leaders and some of Doe's former henchmen are still fighting it out to see who will take power. Meanwhile the food supplies reaching the capital Monrovia amount to less than half of what is needed and 20 children die of starvation in the city's hospitals every day.

In SUDAN the military-Islamic regime of President el Bashir is fostering close links with Libya, while fighting the Sudan People's Liberation Army based in the non-Muslim south of the country.

Like Liberia, Sudan has been declared a "non-cooperative" debtor by the IMF, and will get no more loans from any source until it adopts the policies of economic austerity which the IMF has successfully imposed on many other African states.

The regime is promoting the ideology of national self-sufficiency through the slogan: "We eat what we grow, we wear what we make". In 1989 the rulers were so desperate to get foreign currency that they sold abroad half the grain stockpiled from the 1988 harvest. With famine now looming, a more truthful slogan for the regime to place before the Sudanese people would be: "We eat what you grow, you don't eat at all".

President Mengistu's regime in ETHIOPIA recently lost its backing from the Soviet Union, but is still waging a civil war against rebels from the provinces of Tigre and Eritrea. The present Eritrean fight for independence has lasted for nearly 30 years now at a cost of 500000 lives out of an Eritrean population of 4 million. Aid channelled through the Ethiopian Government has frequently been deliberately withheld from the rebel-held areas where it is most needed, and there have been many difficulties in distributing aid throughout the war zones.

Civil wars have been going on in both ANGOLA and MOZAMBIQUE since the end of colonial rule 15 years ago. In Angola, the Soviet Union and Cuba are both withdrawing material support from the MPLA government, while the USA is no longer sending support to the UNITA rebels through Zaire.

The same is happening in Mozambique, where the Soviet Union, the USA and South Africa have pulled out from supporting the Frelimo government and the Renamo rebels. Peace talks have recently been going on between the two sides in both conflicts, but in neither country has a lasting ceasefire been achieved. In both countries many millions of people face starvation.



HELPING OURSELVES

People like us constantly have it drummed into us that we wouldn't have a clue what to do if we didn't have bosses, politicians, priests and other leaders constantly ordering us around. In fact, it's the person who actually works on a job who invariably has the best idea of what really makes things tick, and things usually work out a whole lot better when people can cooperate as equals without 'leaders' constantly sticking their oar in.

We don't doubt that, given free access to whatever equipment and expertise is needed, and left in peace to get on with the job, the peasants of Africa could grow enough food to feed themselves through good years and bad and produce a surplus to send elsewhere in the world. Indeed, the few overseas aid programmes which have met with success have been the small-scale projects which develop schemes initiated by the poorest peasants themselves.

It's not that Africa is poor and always will be. Africans are kept in poverty by the

EASTERN EUROPE

FROM BAD TO WORSE

"Glasnost lies wounded...Perestroika is a stretcher case", declared The Economist on 19 January. A fortnight later the obituary of economic reform in the Soviet Union was finally rolled out: "perestroika is as good as dead" (The Economist 2.2.91).

During Gorbachev's six-year spell as President numerous plans for economic reform have been proposed (at least 9 in the last 2 years alone), but none have been implemented. One by one the economic advisers who drew up these plans have all resigned, including Stanislav Shatalin, author of the notorious plan for a 500-Day transition to a free market economy.

Their places within Gorbachev's inner circle have been filled by opponents of drastic economic reform such as the new Soviet Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov, who defended the Government's sudden confiscation of high-denomination rouble notes in February by stating that if it had not acted, "supporters of a crash privatisation programme would have come to power".

THE SOVIET ECONOMY

Meanwhile the economy continues to plunge further into chaos. A group of economists who visited the Soviet Union in October to draw up a joint report for the World Bank, OECD and IMF predicted that if Gorbachev persisted with his current economic policies, by the end of 1991 output would have shrunk by 5%, unemployment would have trebled, and inflation would have risen to over 50%. In fact, these predictions have been surpassed already, never mind by the end of the year.

With well over a third of last year's bumper 240 million tonne grain harvest rotting away in railway sidings and poor storage, the first Western emergency food aid to be sent to the Soviet Union since 1945 was mobilised at the end of November, amid scenes of panic buying and widespread fears of a winter famine. Ironically, this food aid included the strategic reserves once held by Germany in case of another Russian blockade of West Berlin.

Various rationing schemes are in force in most cities of the Soviet Union, and are nothing more than an attempt to make yet further cuts in working class living

standards. In the Ukraine, for example, all goods purchased with roubles must be matched by an equivalent amount in coupons issued by the Ukrainian government. But workers are issued with coupons to the value of only 70% of their rouble wages. Result: an instant 30% cut in pay.



Searching for food at Iksha municipal dump, north of Moscow

THE REPUBLICS

The endless delays in economic reform and the deepening crisis in the Soviet economy are fuelling the enthusiasm for economic and political independence among the 13 out of 15 Soviet Republics which have so far passed declarations of sovereignty. This places Gorbachev in a dilemma.

In his new year's message Gorbachev spoke of preservation of the USSR as a "sacred cause", and the blood of the Lithuanian and Latvian demonstrators shot dead in January on the hands of last year's Nobel Peace prize winner is a mark of his intentions. Yet if Gorbachev does somehow manage to keep the Soviet Union intact by strong-arm measures, this is likely to drive the final nail into the coffin of economic reform, since the only elements he can rely on to keep the Republics in the Union by force - the military, the Party and the KGB - are the strongest opponents of perestroika. Gorbachev would have solved one problem - though probably only temporarily - only at the cost of making another one worse.

EASTERN EUROPE

Elsewhere in the former Soviet empire of Eastern Europe the economic crisis and the difficulties in implementing reforms are just the same as in the Soviet Union itself.

In eastern Germany the agency in charge of privatising 8000 former state-owned enterprises is set to liquidate at least a third of them and by the end of 1990 had managed to sell off only 400 firms to Western investors. According to optimistic forecasts some DM 50 billion will have been invested in eastern Germany by Western companies by the end of 1991. This is about one-twentieth of what most experts judge is needed to raise eastern Germany's decrepit economy to Western levels of profitability!

Shortages of basic goods, rising prices, factories closing for lack of raw materials and buyers for their products, workers being made redundant or put on to short-time working - this is now the picture being painted right across Eastern Europe. But across the region also there are heartening signs that the working class is not taking all this lying down.

Walesa jeered

More than 2,000 Polish miners shouted abuse at President Lech Walesa outside his official residence yesterday as they demanded higher pay. "You betrayed us. You are the same bastard as they were," they shouted. — Reuter.

WORKERS FIGHT BACK

In March, miners in Kazakhstan, the Donbass region of the Ukraine, and the Kuzbass region in western Siberia staged 24-hour stoppages (with the promise of more prolonged strikes to come), demanding wage increases to make up for inflation, better working conditions, and earlier retirement. It's less than 2 years since these very same workers struck for exactly the same demands, but the agreements which ended the 1989 strikes have not been honoured.

The Ukrainian government, which has been in charge of the Donbass mines since January, opposes the miners' demands. Its Prime Minister, Vitold Fokin, warned that the "economic chaos" caused by strike action harms the Ukraine's aspirations to independence, and stated: "everyone should first of all be a citizen of his homeland, a real patriot". This shows clearly that the Ukrainian working class would face just as tough a struggle against the rulers of

an independent Ukrainian Republic as it currently does within the Soviet Union.

In eastern Germany, where unemployment reached 757000 in February (a 540% increase since June 1990), and where 1.8 million other workers are now on short-time working, strikes, factory occupations and street protests have been occurring almost non-stop since German economic union took place on 1st July 1990. Last July striking metalworkers won twelve-month guarantees against redundancies. This concession will soon run out, and metalworkers took to the streets in protest against the threat of unemployment again at the end of February.

Determined action could win a further temporary reprieve - it was no coincidence that on the very same day as the recent strikes the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl announced a DM 17 billion package of aid to cushion the impact of job losses - but the economic axe will have to fall eventually. Workers in eastern Germany and elsewhere in Eastern Europe are learning the hard way that nothing can be gained in the long term by running very hard just to remain in the same spot.



FAMINE

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inescapable pressures imposed by a world economic system in which food is produced not to feed hungry people but to be sold for profit, and by a political system which has used many of the world's poorest countries as battlefields for wars waged between the superpowers and their proxies.

We can get rid of this wretched system once and for all, or we can keep on dipping into our pockets whenever the collecting tins are rattled, year after year after year.... It's up to us: which will it be?

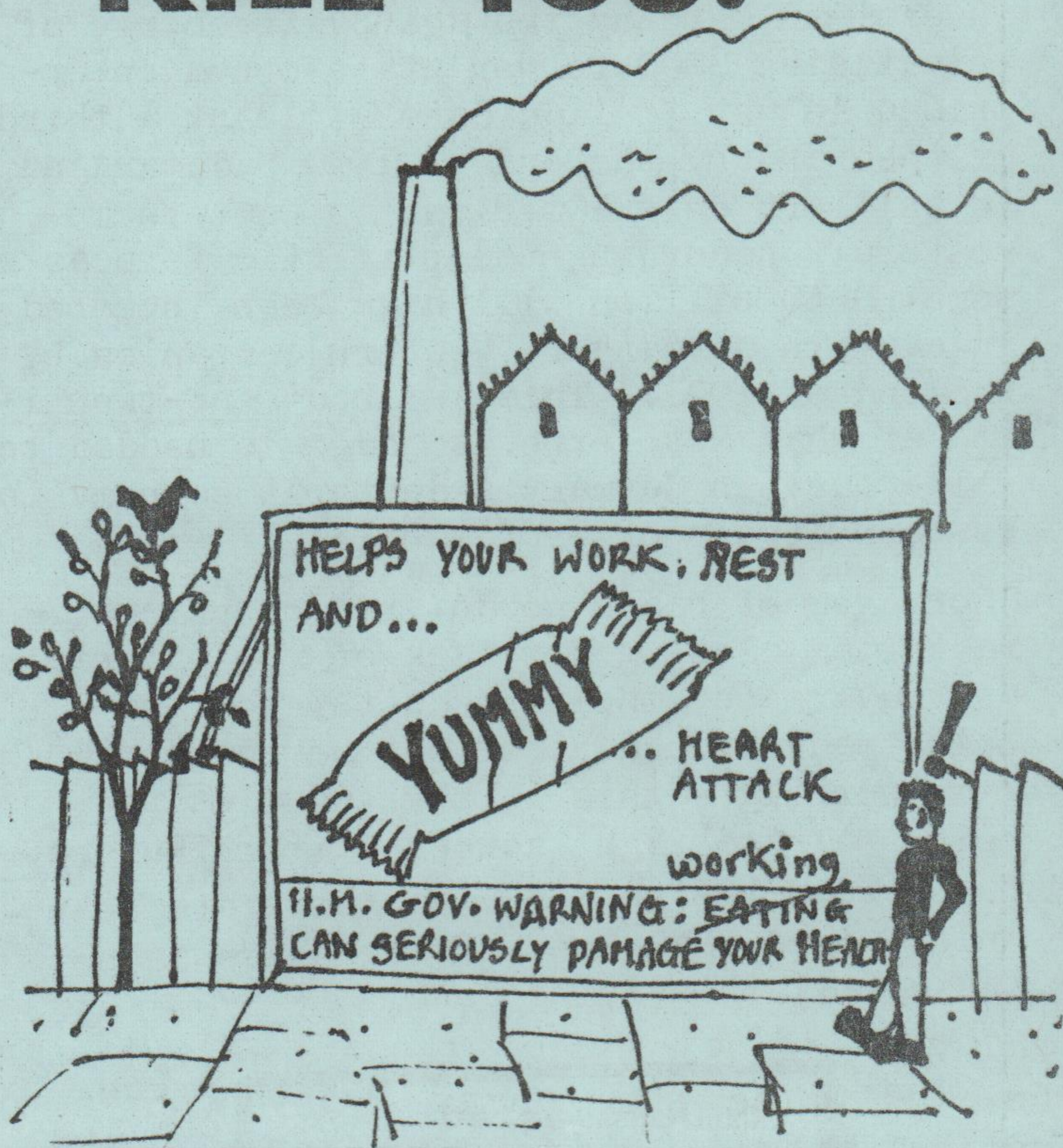
WHAT WE STAND FOR

SUBVERSION!

We meet regularly for political discussion and to organise our activities, which include public meetings and the publication of this bulletin and other leaflets. The following is a brief summary of our basic political principles:

- We are against all forms of capitalism; private, state and self-managed.
- We are for communism, which is a classless society in which all goods are distributed according to needs and desires.
- We are actively opposed to all ideologies which divide the working class, such as religion, sexism and racism.
- We are against all expressions of nationalism, including "national liberation" movements such as the IRA.
- The working class (wage labourers, the unemployed, housewives, etc), is the revolutionary class; only its struggle can liberate humanity from scarcity, war and economic crisis.
- Trade unions are part of the capitalist system, selling our labour power to the bosses and sabotaging our struggles. We support independent working class struggle, in all areas of life under capitalism, outside the control of the trade unions and all political parties.
- We totally oppose all capitalist parties, including the Labour Party and other organisations of the capitalist left. We are against participation in fronts with these organisations.
- We are against participation in parliamentary elections; we are for the smashing of the capitalist state by the working class and the establishment of organisations of working class power.
- We are against sectarianism, and support principled co-operation among revolutionaries.
- We exist to actively participate in escalating the class war towards communism.

Boredom can KILL You!



Boring, repetitive work can kill you. This is not a message likely to be at the forefront of the government's latest public health campaign, but a recent Channel 4 programme 'Affairs of the Heart' spelt out the link between boredom, and in particular a lack of control over the work you're doing, and a more likely chance of having a heart attack. Despite the popular myths about the stressed businessman, heart attacks are highest amongst 'blue collar' workers. In a controlled experiment, car workers who did boring, monotonous work produced larger amounts of fibrinogen in their blood: the clotting protein which can lead to a blocking of the coronary artery. Although the links, in general terms, between alienating work and bad health have been known for years, this is the first time a definite physiological connection has been found.

At a time when diet has had an ascendant role in health education, with particular emphasis on cholesterol, can we expect to see an equally vociferous public campaign against boring work in the future? Or is it easier to blame the victim ("northerners eat too few vegetables") rather than get rid of the system which makes work under capitalism so dull, monotonous and soul-destroying?

BRING THE WAR HOME

continued from back page

Every year hundreds of workers are killed at work - because safety costs money and eats into profits. Disregard for safety led to Piper Alpha.

Every year 1,000,000 people die in automobile accidents the world over (in Britain it's about 6,000). They die because it is more profitable to build shoddy cars, not maintain roads and close down railways, than it is to build a safe travel network.

The search for a quick buck caused the Herald of Free Enterprise to sink. Skimping on essential maintenance led to the Clapham rail disaster.

At work, on the way to work, at play and on holiday, capitalism kills workers.

THE CLASS WAR

What is it that most working class people want? We want decent homes, decent food, decent clothing, safety at home and work and the time and energy to enjoy our lives. Ask any worker anywhere in the world and she or he will agree with you. Ask any boss or politician and they will say we're lazy and need to work harder, that some have to be poor so that enterprise can be rewarded. Crap!

Workers in Britain, the USA, Iraq, the USSR and anywhere else have the same needs and interests. We all face the same enemies - rich, powerful people who control the State

and industry and want us to work for long hours and low wages.

It's the war against these parasites that needs fighting. The class war to get rid of this rotten system that causes such untold death, destruction, poverty, boredom and misery.

want to help?

If you agree broadly with our politics, there are a number of ways you can help **SUBVERSION**.

Take extra copies to distribute in your area.

Write to us. We would welcome short articles (not more than 400 words), or the kind of information we could use to put into articles of our own.

Send some money. Although we distribute **SUBVERSION** free it still costs quite a lot to produce - so all contributions are welcome.

Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to R.Knight.

OBSERVER SUNDAY 10 FEBRUARY 1991

NEWS

Cold deaths: Britain worst in Europe

Tim Miles
Social Affairs Correspondent

BRITAIN's winter death rate is twice as bad as that of other Western countries. In January, it rises twice as fast. In February, the differential is only slightly less marked.

The record is equally bad compared with countries such as Norway and Sweden, used to coping with harsh winters, or countries with climates such as France and the Netherlands.

Research demonstrates an appalling rise in deaths today by on Cold Home charities. Ch Wicks said already of people they cannot themselves we should the number.

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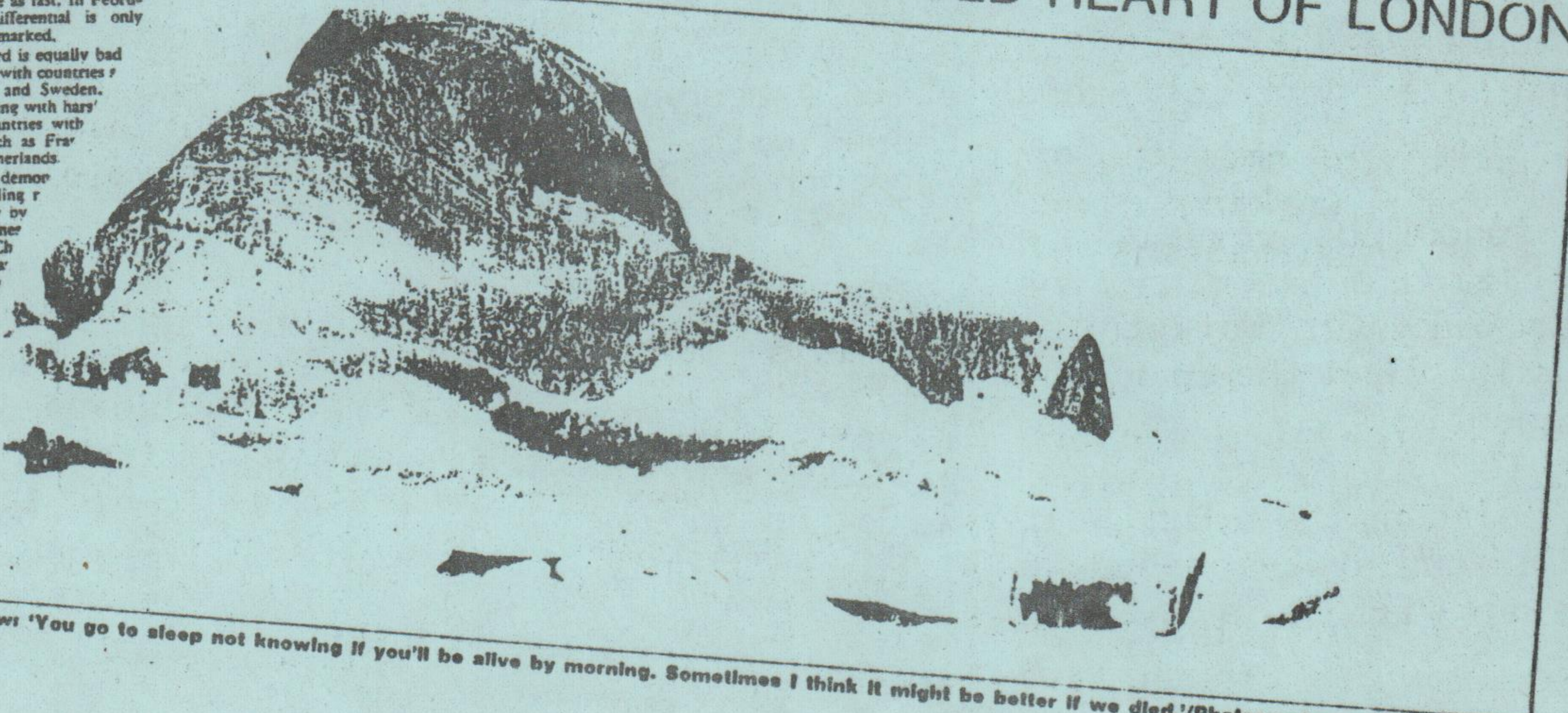
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disabled people and single parents had already been triggered at freezing or

average increase is also 10 per cent. In England and Wales, the increase is as high as 17 per cent.

Government has been aware of the evidence for many years that the main contributors to higher mortality among elderly people are the quality of diet and income.

A MAN AWAKES IN THE COLD HEART OF LONDON



... snow: 'You go to sleep not knowing if you'll be alive by morning. Sometimes I think it might be better if we died.' Photographs by Gavin Smith.

po box 145
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ol4 4ww

SUBVERSION!

BRING THE WAR HOME

The defeat of Iraq at the hands of the "Coalition" was as brutal as it was final. Tens of thousands lie dead, famine, disease and chaos now stalk the Gulf region. All the powers involved are shown in their true colours - the Americans and British massacring fleeing enemies, the Iraqi's torturing and killing Kuwaitis, the Kuwaitis persecuting Palestinians and refusing non-citizens the right to return home.

This was the war that should "never have happened". The end of the Cold War and the beginning of the "New World Order" was supposed to bring us all lasting peace.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

There was nothing unusual about this war. Since 1945 (the year the Second World War ended), over 20 million people have died in 105 wars. More than 60 million have been wounded or forced to flee their homes.

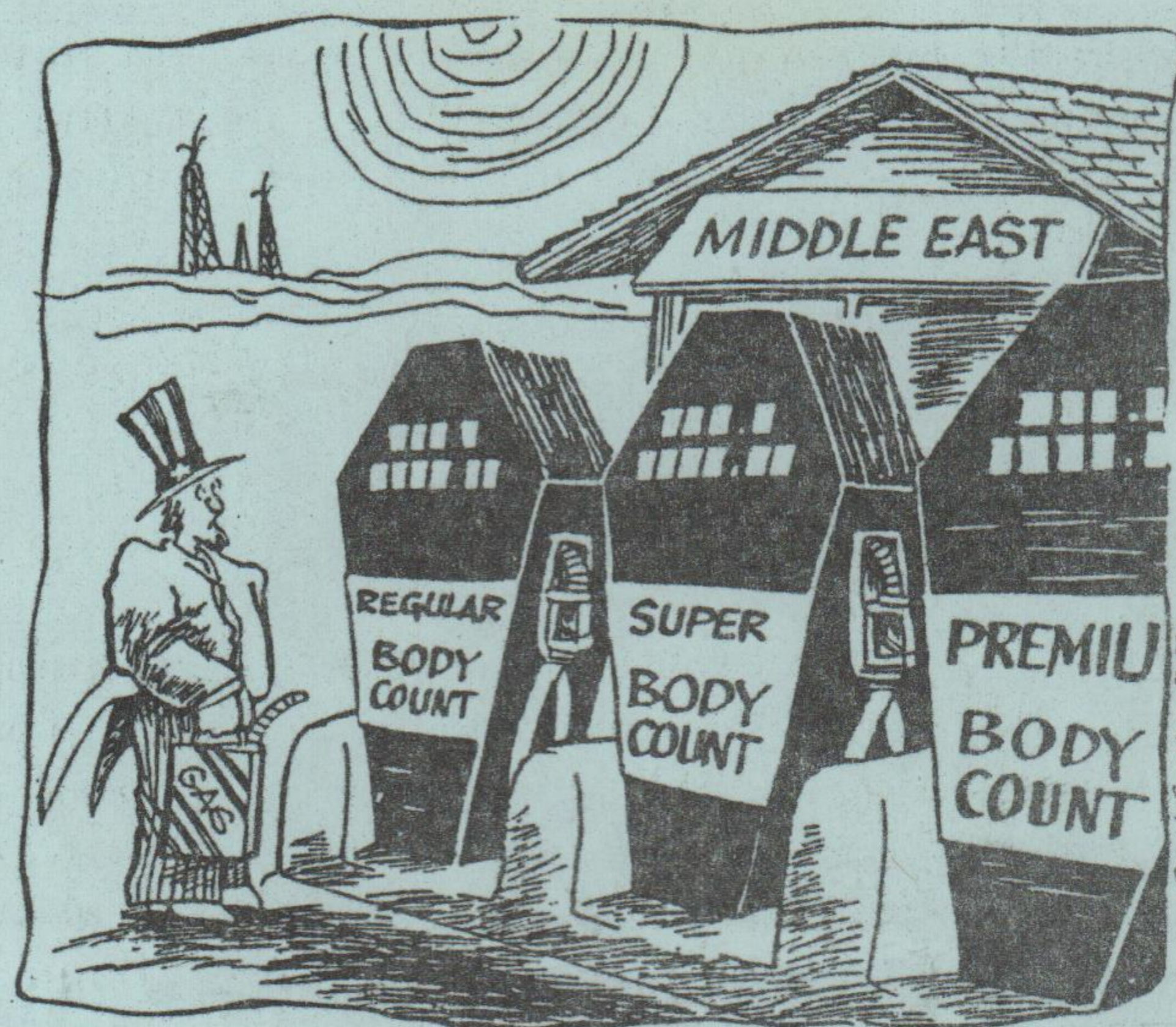
A staggering 90% of casualties in recent conflicts in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Angola and Ethiopia were civilians.

In Afghanistan some 1.5 million people are now disabled!

The death and destruction caused by the Gulf War and its aftermath are part of this pattern.

Capitalism has never brought us peace. As long as there is competition between nations for raw materials (like oil) for markets or for domination over rivals, then the prospect of war will be ever present.

We have no reason to believe that the Gulf War was the last such war and every reason to believe that the next war will be even more ferocious.



THE OTHER WAR

Even when capitalism is at "peace" it is at war with the working class.

Unemployment is rising, even on the government's phoney figures, it is set to reach 3 million by the end of the year.

Thousands sleep rough in our cities because they cannot afford a roof over their heads.

In Britain, the winter death rate is twice as high as elsewhere in Europe. Last winter's cold spell killed 2,000 old folk - people too poor to be able to heat their homes. The state's much-vaunted £6 handout was denied to those with savings of more than £1000 - 320,000 people.

Thrown on the scrapheap, these workers were simply left to die. It's all part of the other war - the class war. It's a war between the bosses - out to make large profits and the working class - forced to work for wages. And it's a war that kills. It doesn't only kill the old and homeless.

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