



Worldwide trade unionists' meeting in London

REBUILD WORKERS' INTERNATIONALISM

HOW is the trade union movement to be rebuilt internationally?

This will be the key question before a conference of trade unionists and other activists in the international workers' movement to be held in London over the weekend of 8 and 9 June (details below).

Organised jointly by the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign and ALISC, the African Liberation Solidarity Campaign, it will consider three vital principles:

■ The establishment of trades unions independent of the state.

■ The re-establishment of democracy within the unions.

■ The forging of solidarity between trade unionists of different countries.

Countries

Workers from Bangladesh, Nigeria, Bosnia, Hungary, South Africa and Namibia will attend the conference. The organisers were also expecting trade unionists from other countries — including Russia, Greece, the United States — to be present.

The British movement will be represented by members from various trades councils including Tower Hamlets, Hull and North Tyneside. The Merseyside Port Shop Stewards' Committee, who have

BY THE EDITOR

been in the leadership of a eight-month-long strike, have been invited.

Members of the local government workers' union Unison, the Transport and General Workers' Union, the general union GMB, the AEEU, NUT, Natfhe, MSF, NUM, the printworkers' union GPMU, and the offshore oil workers' union OILC will be present.

Important

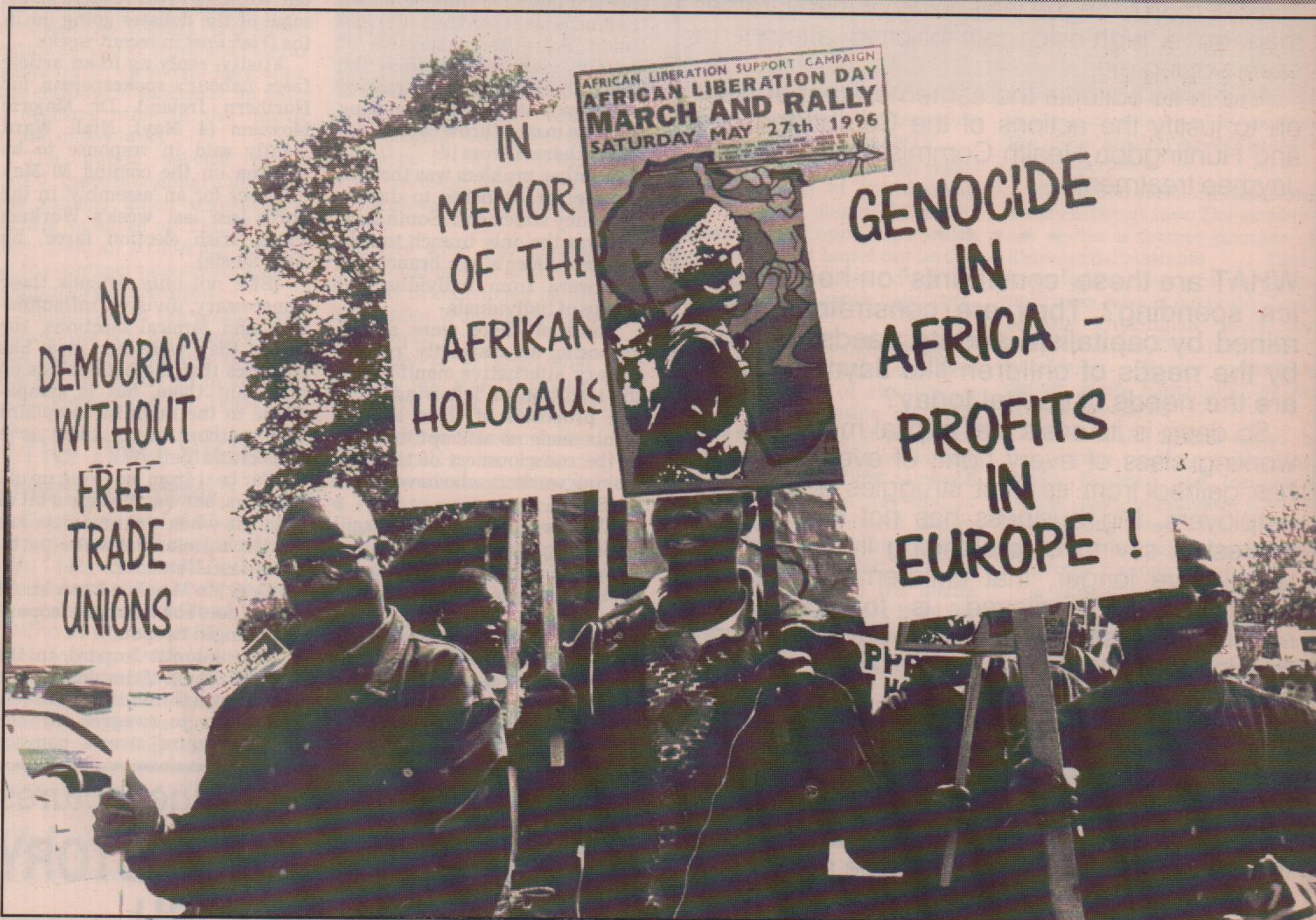
An important role will be played by members of refugee organisations based in Britain. The Kashmiri International Forum, the Iranian Refugee Workers' Association, the Sudanese Trade Union Alliance, the Bengali Workers' Action Group and the Pakistani Trade Union Defence Campaign will all have members present.

All trade unionists and other labour movement activists who are sympathetic to the conference's aims are cordially invited to participate.

Funds to help with air fares and conference arrangements are still urgently needed. Trade union branches, trades councils and other bodies, as well as individuals, are asked to donate whatever they can to these costs.

■ Please send any money as soon as possible to, Keith Standing, Conference organiser, PO Box 18, Epsom, KT 18 7YR, Britain. Tel/fax: +441372 721 550.

African Liberation Day



This year's African Liberation Day march and rally of more than 150 people began in Brixton, went through Camberwell, Walworth Road and the Elephant and Castle to end up at the Shell Centre in Waterloo. The Shell Centre was chosen in memory of Ken SaroWiwa. Many of the speeches stressed the role of capitalism in the repression of Africa. See centre pages for speech by International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign organiser Keith Standing

Photo: Marg Nicol

Support Bosnian miners' strikes — see page 3

Funds needed: send money now!

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International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign — African Liberation Support Campaign
Conference address: PO Box 18, Epsom, KT18 7YR, Britain. Tel/Fax: +441372 721 550

AN INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' CONFERENCE

- Trade unions independent of the state and the employers
- Democracy in the trade unions ● Workers' internationalism

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Saturday–Sunday 8–9 June, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Near Holborn. Start 10.30am Saturday, 10am Sunday.

This important conference is convened jointly by the ITUSC and ALISC. It will follow the 'Africa Month' here in Britain. We will be discussing and deciding how to take forward workers' international solidarity in the coming struggles. Delegates will be travelling from Africa, India, Bangladesh, South America, Russia, Ukraine and eastern Europe.

Therefore, rather than have a set attendance fee we are asking you to give whatever you can towards the cost of the conference and the fares of those delegates. A draft resolution will be sent to you, and we ask you to keep in touch during the preparation of the conference and let us have any resolutions and/or written material on the issues you wish to be discussed.

Inside left

WP Discouraged

Good news for Bosnian miners! Not did their four-day strike action but in them winning their rise, but *Socialist Worker* (25 May) thinks it is 'encouraging'.
Real peace will come only when workers unite in struggle across ethnic lines against the rulers who have whipped up nationalist hatred on all sides, it says. 'It is encouraging that there are signs of struggle.' It mentions the strike of 20,000 workers at the southern Serbia, as well as the miners' action.

Socialist Worker was halfway through about supporting workers' struggle in ex-Yugoslavia, it could have covered events like the recent march to Britain of Bosnian miners. It would have learnt that the miners had already united 'across ethnic lines', had fought to remain so, and had to re-establish links across the UN-patrolled battle-lines too.

The paper that stands 'for workers' power and international socialism' would have encouraged its readers to support these workers, and support appeals for help. But its sermons intended to comfort Socialist Workers Party (SWP) supporters, to continue avoiding solidarity with the Bosnian working class.

SWP members in the Anti-Nazi League responded to racist attacks in London the way their paper has done: 'ethnic cleansing' and war in Bosnia they would have to denounce 'on all sides'; preach from afar 'what you need is socialism'; deny workers the right to defend themselves; then give workers a pat on the back, on disingenuously saying they can organise in trade unions. But that would expose the paper to ridicule and contempt.

Rascal

ERT Meltzer, who died aged 76, in May, was described by Emma Goldman in 1937 as 'a rascal who knows nothing of anarchism or syndicalism'. But Meltzer, whose autobiography *I Couldn't Paint Golden Days* appeared last year, became a major influence among anarchists in this country; author of an erudite and entertaining *Little Red Quiz*; and a bitter, lifelong enemy of the Trotskyist movement.

Meltzer denounced 'Trots' in his *Black Flag*, with a venom that has hardened Stalinists with envy. When he concentrated his fire on Trotskyists' alleged 'sabotage' in Spain, one wondered where this came from.

When Viraj Mendis was sheltering from racist immigration laws in a Chester church, Meltzer's *Black Flag* editorial echoed the Home Office and Tory press, claiming Mendis would be in no danger if he went back to Sri Lanka, and adding that, as 'a Trot', he didn't deserve port.

Mendis was actually a *Fight Racism - Fight Imperialism!* supporter. WRP comrades had worked him on issues like Apartheid, and had no reason to think he inclined towards Trotskyism. So what? Workpress supported the campaign against his deportation, as did others opposed to Tory racism. Anarchists in the North West who took part in Mendis's defence protested to *Black Flag* about its attitude.

Just recently some comrades were working about a nasty article in *Southwark UCATT* concerning Tony O'Brian, and the Convention Safety Campaign. When I thought it was in *Black Flag*, I thought it maintained a certain tradition. They say you shouldn't speak ill of the recently dead, but what the

ITUSC/ALISC conference, 8 and 9 June, Conway Hall, London

Below is an abridged version of a more comprehensive and detailed discussion document for the International Workers' Conference next weekend (8 and 9 June), called by the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign and the African Liberation Support Campaign. The conference will also receive and discuss national and regional reports and resolutions presented by activists from more than 25 countries.

Also on this page is the editorial from the latest International Trade Unionist *Bulletin* (bottom) on the conference and (right) the speech made by ITUSC organiser Keith Standing at this year's African Liberation Day march and rally last Saturday from outside the Shell Centre in London.

TRADE UNIONS are the oldest, most basic, elementary organisations that the working class has built up historically in its struggle against the employers.

The task of building and rebuilding the trade union movement therefore constitutes one of the most decisive tasks facing the working class today. To discuss this rebuilding, how it is to be achieved, is the central task of the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign conference.

This task is an *international* one. If the 'workingman has no country' (Marx) nor has capital: it knows no national boundaries. It roams the world looking for labour to exploit and profit to be made.

It is in the dramatic internationalisation of the recent past — the growth of multinationals, the globalisation of finance, the consequent playing off of workers from one country against those from another — that the real basis for the establishment of international trade union solidarity lies.

The *common problems* faced today by the working class in the struggle for effective trade unionism are:

- **Anti-trade-union laws.**
- **The loss of control by the members of their own unions.**
- **Privatisation of nationalised production, facilities and services.**
- **The casualisation of services.**

All these trends arise not because of *policy options* decided by the employers or the governments that are implementing them on behalf of capital. Nor is the complete absence, or in other cases the severe erosion, of democracy in the unions the result of 'bad individuals' who today lead the unions. Each of these four developments represent an *international trend* that expresses the inner needs of capital today.

Under pressure of an intensifying world crisis of capitalism, the employers must today strip away every semblance of defence that the working class has built up in the past against the employers.

Capital must establish direct, naked relations with the working

class, unmediated by effective trade unions, by controls over working hours, by the establishment of minimum wages, by safety conditions, etc.

Casualisation aims to step up enormously the *rate of exploitation* of labour, to cut down on the labour-time necessary for production, to impose, reimpose, or strengthen the most primitive forms of the exploitation of labour by capital.

Privatisation is likewise aimed at breaking up trade unionism in the state sector as well as bringing every facet of life under the control of 'the market', that is, the naked rule of capital.

These trends mean that the *unions are drawn ever closer to the state.*

Increasingly the only unions capital will tolerate are those subordinated to its immediate needs. This is the source of the continuing erosion, or in many cases the complete absence, of *internal democracy* in the trade union movement.

The fight for the rebuilding and regeneration of the trade unions involves the fight for the control of the unions by their own members.

In all these developments, the employers resort more and more openly to the capitalist state to spearhead their attacks on the trade unions. That is why today there can be no purely 'industrial' struggles.

A successful fight against the employers today demands the elaboration of a *political-industrial* strategy against the employers and the state.

The conditions now exist for overcoming the old division (especially marked in the older capitalist countries such as Britain) between the 'political' and the 'industrial' struggle.

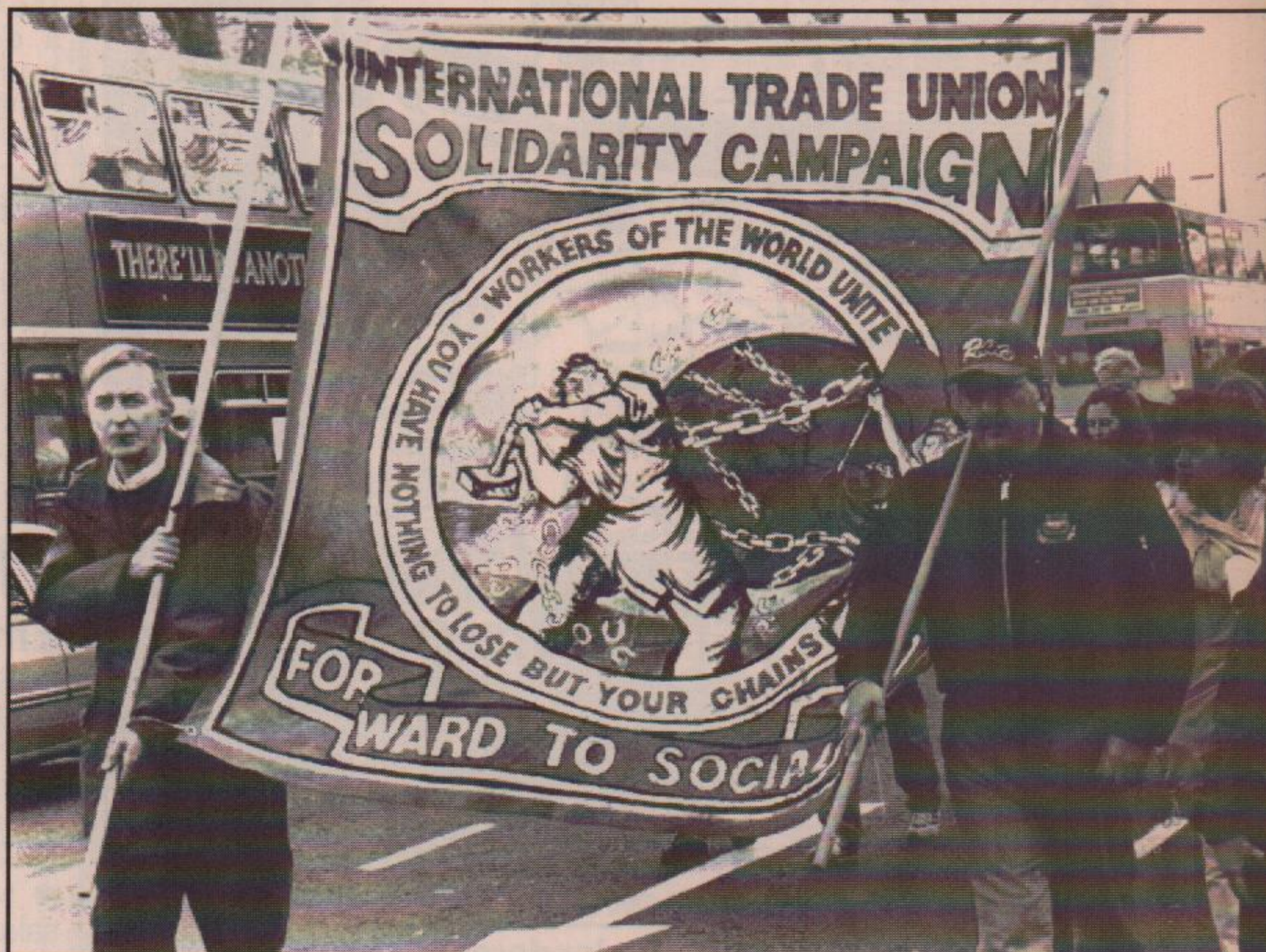
The above trends are a sign of the *weakness* of capital — more specifically, its decay.

The fact that it is driven to reimpose, even in the advanced capitalist countries, the most barbarous, brutal methods of exploitation and control reminiscent of the last century, is an indication *not* of its strength, but its weakness.

This is the basis for a successful fight against these trends. The working class is on the offensive in its fight for the rebuilding and building of trade unionism.

Our conference must discuss how to build on this offensive.

Rebuilt international



Group photo (top) of the founding conference of the International Trade Union Solidarity Campaign, 13 and 14 April 1991; and (below) ITUSC banner on the march

'May Day' warning to i

WORKERS across the world have just celebrated May Day — international workers' day. Wherever these events have taken place, workers have registered their knowledge that there are two mutually antagonistic classes. They have by word and deed expressed their optimism in the strength of their own class — the working class — to ultimately defeat imperialism in all its forms.

'May Day' is the universal call-sign which indicates someone is in danger. May Day 1996 certainly warned imperialism and its agents that they are threatened by ignominious defeat at the hands of the class they exploit and rule.

Those matters which will be at the heart of the International Workers' Conference on 8 and 9 June are identified in the discus-

sion document for this conference (see this page). Many activists in the workers' movement have indicated their intention to participate in that conference. The fight is now on to ensure that all those wishing to attend can do so, and that means raising the funds for fares. We appeal for your help.

This conference can and must mark a decisive stage in mobilising workers internationally. We need to consolidate our gains and construct an effective, international force which unites all workers' struggles worldwide.

We must seek to improve and expand our monthly bulletin and we must publish it in other languages so that we have the widest possible circulation among the poorest workers in every country.

When the Liverpool dockwork-

International Trade Unionist Bulletin

Available from ITUSC, PO Box 18, Epsom KT18 7YR. Tel: 01372 817 778. Rate for 12 issues: Britain £5; Europe/Near East £8; Africa/Americas/India £10; Australia/E. Asia £12

