

For starters (WS45)

Workers Solidarity Movement

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THE DUBLIN GOVERNMENT has finally agreed to pay outstanding social welfare money owed to 70,000 married women. An average £3,900 is to be paid to each woman, 75% to be paid in August & December with the remainder over the following eighteen months.

A European Community directive ordered that discrimination in social welfare be ended by December 1984. Up to then unemployed married women got almost £5 less than men and their benefit ran out three months earlier. Married women were also completely barred from claiming Unemployment Assistance.

The Womens Dole Campaign was set up to oppose this inequality. More recently 'Married Women for Equality' and the Free Legal Advice Centres carried on the fight. More than a decade later the government says it is going to pay its debts. [Imagine if you tried to put off paying the rent or mortgage for over 10 years!]

Mexican protest

The saga of the Zapatistas took a new turn when a major international bank called on the Mexican government to wipe out the rebels before any more loans are given. "The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy". This was the advice of Chase Manhattan Bank on January 13th.

Countries, such as Mexico, which depend on the International Monetary Fund and international bank loans, are continually being dictated to about their public spending policies. But it is rare to find such clear evidence about the control that is exerted.

Within two weeks the government had launched an offensive against the EZLN rebels. It failed. All it 'achieved' was a massive devaluation of the peso, meaning a lower standard of living for the working class and the poor.

News came from Mexico that suspects were being tortured. Amnesty International reported that it had "documented widespread human rights violations in the context of this conflict, including summary execution of prisoners, extensive use of torture, and 'disappearances' perpetrated by the Mexican army". Despite this widespread use of torture, the Group of Seven (G7) most powerful countries in the world approved loans to Mexico of \$47.8 billion last February.

All over the world protests were organised against Chase Bank. In Dublin they have a branch in that haven for tax evaders, the Financial Services Centre. The local WSM organised an ad-hoc 'Stop the Torture in Mexico Committee' to provide a neutral banner under which a protest could be organised. A lunchtime picket was placed on Chase and staff were leafletted about their employers support for repression.

Murder in Chechnya

In January Workers Solidarity Movement members also responded to calls to protest against the assault on Chechnya, when they got together with other socialists and placed a picket on the Russian embassy in Dublin's Orwell Road. About 25 braved the rain to leave the Russian government's representatives in no doubt about the way their invasion of Chechnya and bombing attacks on civilians are viewed here.

The Moscow regime's lies had been exposed when they claimed only "military targets" were being hit. Reporters in Grozny described and filmed massive civilian fatalities. A letter handed in to the ambassador accused the Russian army of "indiscriminate slaughter of the civilian population" and expressed our solidarity with the Russian army conscripts who are refusing to fight and are deserting from the army.

We give no support to the former Chechen government (a collection of gangsters every bit as bad as Yeltsin's lot). Our support goes to the ordinary people who have a burning desire to be free of occupation forces, poverty and the horrors of war.

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