Britain, Germany, France: the growing scandal of Racist Europe

Special features pages 2, 3 and 4
Neo-Nazis target alienated youth

by Hans-Jürgen Schulz

Jorge Comondi was killed in Dresden at the beginning of April, as part of an 'open hunting season' on foreigners. Since then, no night has passed in the 'new, democratic and peace-loving Germany' without an assault or a fire-bombing.

Nonetheless, German police recently announced that no action could be taken against neo-Nazi organisations, because 'there is no evidence of any organised involvement'.

But recent polls show a worrying rise in support for the racist right in Germany. More than a third of west Germans, and nearly a quarter of east Germans consider themselves sympathetic. One in ten would vote for them.

The neo-Nazis are gaining support among young people. There may be only 1,500 organised in far right groups in east Germany; but in 20 consider themselves fascists.

But the wave of fascist attacks is not entirely a reflection of a new phenomenon. In June 1989, Margot Honecker, the ex-President of East Germany's wife, proclaimed that 'the seeds that the educationalists of our country have sown have borne fruit'. By 1991, 6% of east German youth identified with the radical right. Rather than education, it is the reality of authoritarian east Germany that has borne fruit.

Now no hostel for asylum-seekers, foreigners or immigrants is safe from assault or harassment. Before it was frequent - now it is constant. The wave of arson and murder may fade away - but it will be back.

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Special Feature

Bitter fruits of Stalinism: East German fascist youth

The fascist threat cannot be beaten back solely through the protests and legal measures so dear to the hearts of the liberals and reformist left. What we need is a lasting, broad mass movement against the fascists.

This issue was abridged from 'Avantis', journal of the Revolutionary Socialist Group (GRS), supporters of the Fourth International in east Germany.

Picket the German Embassy!
11 November
4 to 6pm, Belgrave Square, SW1

[Note: The text continues with additional content unrelated to the main article.]
As EC politicians fiddle

Racist fires sweep Europe

By Sam Iman

PEOPLE once again fear pogroms in Germany's Bavaria. In an announcement on 8 October from leading Ger-

man Security Councils, con-

demning the upsurge in vi-

cious neo-Nazi attacks ag-

ainst the country's Black, red, and Jewish com-

munities.

In the previous three weeks there had already been nearly 300 attacks, leaving one African dead, two Jewish children critically burned, and many more injured.

Germany's Christian Democratic government has responded by agreeing to clampdowns on the number of asylum-seekers with the country's 16 regional states.

They also agree with the opposition parties on transforming former army bases into refugee camps. Tens of thousands of refugees will be housed in 200 camps across the country.

Lawyers have suggested that the new measures breach the German constitution, and anti-

racist campaigners have con-

demned them as an incitement to further neo-Nazi attacks.

The German situation is one of the worst in a common pattern developing across the whole of Europe. Far right and racist parties are rapidly gaining popularity, violent racist attacks are mushrooming, in both their frequency and ferocity, and all manner of nationalisms are bubbling above and beneath the surface. The mainstream es-

tablishment parties - right, centre and social democratic - are falling over themselves to prove their iron resolve to combat the 'problem of immigration'.

In France, former premier Ja-

ques Chirac has said that French people are being driven 'crazy' by the 'noise and smell' of im-

igrants in the country. Former interior minister, Michel Poniatowska, has compared France's immigrant community to the Nazi occupation of the country. Le Pen's National Front has gained massively in popularity. One in five voters now support the NF and Front National has called for a right-wing coalition with the National Front.

The ruling Socialists Party's response has been predictably shameful. At the same time as denouncing racism, they have proclaimed a new crackdown on immigration and are prepar-

ing to organise mass deporta-

tions.

In Austria the neo-Nazi Freedom Party has trebled its vote to 18 percent in provincial elections, and may bring about the collapse of the country's ruling coalition government.

In Sweden the six-month-old New Democracy Party got 7 percent of the vote in September's general election on the back of a populist anti-immigration campaign. Fascist paramilitary groups are also growing, despite the arrest in August of four leaders of the Storm Network, the black economic and racial National Liberation movement in the UK.

In Switzerland there has been a wave of racist firings, bombings and attacks on refugees. A recent opinion poll showed 60 percent of Swiss people are in favour of using the army to prevent the entry of refugees. The fascist Swiss Democrats are collecting signatures to call for a referendum on halting immi-

gration.

in Britain, with the strictest immigration laws in Europe, racist attacks are on the increase. More people are being denied asylum status. The fac-

ist British National Party has been estimated at having some 1500 cadres now, and they are becoming more confident in their ability to gain support from white working class communities.

The social and economic crisis in Europe makes it wide open to a new surge of racism. Not only recession in the west, but the collapse of Communism, have created waves of un-

employment and economic migrants.

With all this economic and political uncertainty in the world, and with the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the right wing in Europe needs a new enemy.

This new enemy has been used by the right wing many times before - the new 15 million strong Black or Third World communities in Europe who have been settled for more than two generations, or who have come as migrant workers or refugees.

But the scale of attacks on Europe's Black and refugee communities is escalating sharply. A strong number of Eastern European people are beginning to realize, desperate to escape the enormous economic deprivation and hostilities to national minorities.

FORTRESS EUROPE

At the same time, European governments have been internally working out methods of creating a "Fortress Europe" to keep out third and second world immigrants and asylum-seekers. This is what John Major meant when he demanded a "perimeter fence" for Europe at Jose's EC summit. Since then, all over Europe, politicians have stepped up the use of the racist card.

How to fight the fascists

By Julian Wool

THE FASCISTS are on the march. How can we fight them? What type of organisation should we use?

Probably the largest anti-fascist organisation in Britain at this mo-

ment is Anti Fascist Action (AFA).

It has traditionally had a policy of what it calls "implementation of No Platform" by which it means using whatever means necessary to prevent a fascist group being able to meet. The necessary means have included to include sticks, boots and guns, given that fascists tend to be impervious to reasoned argument.

It also describes itself as a united front organisation but in reality operates as a political party.

But we need a much broader campaign than this to be effective. The first thing to do must be a huge campaign against the ideas of the fascists.

The fascists, going into the estates and the workplaces, anywhere people gather.

From these we have to get people into activities against the fascists - marches, festivals, and so on. And we have to organise an organisation against the fascists, where the community protects those who are the targets of fascist attacks.

It is at that stage, where we have a strong movement against the fas-

cists, that we are in a position to take the fight to them.

The mobilisation of white tenants against a recent black march against racial attacks in South Lon-

don, the BNP taking 25 percent of the white vote in Tower Hamlets, and the resurgence of fascism in Europe - east and west - mean it has become a major priority for socialists to take up the question.

But if we can build on the workplaces and estates the strength of our view of how to build will be proven.

The fascists plan on standing in 60 seats in the coming general elec-

tion; we need a national anti-fascist campaign against that. There will be national anti-fascist marches and mobilisations in that campaign.

If we can mobilise against the fas-

cists the numbers that we could, during the days of the Anti-Nazi League (1977 to 1979) then physical control to stop the fascists will be back on the agenda, this time backed by the strength of a movement.
French right lines up with fascists

by Patrick Baker

FOR THE FIRST TIME since its 1987 defeat, the French 'orthodox' right has launched a full-scale offensive against France's black population.

For President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and ex-Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, large sections of the French right are now trying to oust the fascist Front National (FN).

Pierre Mauroy, general secretary of the Parti Socialiste (PS), said of the current unity offensive towards the extreme right: 'Until recently, divisions in the right have just made me smile; now their constant attempts to oust each other make me shudder.' And with good reason. The 'orthodox' right has a history of vicious attacks on France's black community.

In 1986, the joint RPR/UDF election manifesto proposed to abolish the right of children born in France of immigrant parents to naturalisation; and to restrict that right for those marrying a Frenchwoman. In addition, it proposed that all children would have to swear 'to be loyal to the French Republic, its laws and constitution'.

This move towards the FN prompted a wave of outrages, and was beaten back by the massive student mobilisations that swept France some months later.

For the students were not only against the right's attacks on education, but also identified with the anti-racist movement SOS Racisme.

Tens of the French chanting slogans denouncing black people's rights on the streets; a demonstration; and joined a massive demonstration against racism a few months later in March '86.

And when Dany, the education minister, was forced to withdraw the education reforms, the reforms to the national code went with them in retreat by Prime Minister Jacques Chirac.

Now Giscard d'Estaing, supported by Chirac, is once again on the offensive. And there is nothing subtle about the new proposal: their aim is to 'send back' hundreds of thousands of black people each year.

This is a vicious circle from which immigrants cannot escape. If you are denied a work permit, then expelled for working without one. And despite the government's capitulation to this slide towards the racist right, the anti-racist movement to defend France's black community has never been launched.

In response to the annual fascist 'red, white and blue' get-together, the 'Appeal of 200' called a 'black, white, arab' counter-mobilisation. Launched on the slogan 'Enough of the Front', the appeal has pledged to 'counter the National Front wherever necessary.'

Numerous local groups have already been formed. A national forum of local mayors has also been formed to counter the racist threat, with the aim of 'struggling against all forms of exclusion, violence, racism and xenophobia.' But so far, the response has not been enough. An alliance between sections of the UDF and RPR with the fascists, already one of the most powerful parties of the far-right in Europe, would provide a powerful threat to the whole European workers movement, as well as black people.

The answer is clear. The response to the racist right must be the same as in 1987 - to mobilise tens of thousands on the streets, bringing together the black community, the unions and the left to defeat the fascist menace.

This is the way to defeat the right - and like those fascist in the French state racism

by Geoff Ryan

THE RISE OF RACISM in France today has led to a spate of attacks on North Africans. These attacks are nothing new. Thirty years ago this month the Algerian community was brutally attacked by French police and dozens were killed. This massacre has almost been written out of history.

On 17 October 1961, 50,000 Algerians marched in Paris to protest against the racist curfew in force. They were not allowed on the streets after 8pm. Calls broadcast by French Muslims had to broadcast at 7pm.

At the Pont de Neuilly the police opened fire, killing a 15 year old youth. The shooting went on for a further hour. At Metro stations, Algerians were attacked as soon as they came onto the streets. When protesters tried to block roads, police encouraged motorists to drive into them. In Nantes the demonstrators were led by women carrying small children - but they too were viciously attacked.

Thousands were arrested and held in parks and stadiums, where they were savagely beaten. Twenty years later the Nazis had detained the Jewish community in the same place.

Censored

Despite the brutality of the police attacks, virtually only the revolutionary left's reports were heavily censored. The few who raised some concerns were more concerned that the violence happened on the streets of Paris;

Savage attacks on the Algerians were everyday occurrences. As long as the attacks were confined to the ghettos, French 'liberal' opinion was not unduly troubled.

Yet 50 years later, nobody knows how many were killed. The official police figure is three deaths (including a Frenchman on his bicycle in the Notre Dame Paris). Yet three weeks after the demonstration, over 60 bodies had been recovered from the river and Seine, many with their hands tied.

The real number killed - shot, drowned, hanged from trees or battered to death - is almost certain 200 plus, yet no police were ever charged. Nor was there any attempt to find out what happened to perhaps another 200 'missing' Algerians. To ensure the truth never emerged, tens of thousands were depatriated.

Six months later, despite the OAS victory, Algeria became independent. The generals who had led the coup revolt were largely forgiven, OAS supporters fleeing the country welcomed in France.

Despite the thousands of OAS murders, only seven members were ever executed - and two of those were non-French nationals in the Foreign Legion. The 200 or more Algerians who died on October 17 were quickly forgotten and written out of French history.

The general chief, Maurice Papon, is now facing charges of 'crimes against humanity' for his role in the deportation of Jews from Bordeaux during world war II. But in 1961, De Gaulle defended his role in the mass murder on the streets of Algiers.

We owe it to those who died in Paris and Algeria to fight against racism in France and throughout Europe. In France this bloody anniversary was commemorated by a demonstration organised by a broad coalition of anti-racist and immigrant groups, trade unions and political parties.

Among them was the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French Section of the Fourth International, virtually the only current in the French workers' movement which can proudly recall its consistent support for the Algerian revolution.
Tories fail to squash fears over NHS
YES! It really is privatisation!

By Harry Sloan

NO, we believe a rumour until it is officially denied.

The more John Major's government, stung by Labour's unexpected offensive, insists that it does not want to privatise the NHS, the more suspicious people should become.

This is a view we share when we see how the Tories are pressing home their Thatcherite NHS reforms which have already marked down the service and set up opt-out trusts as self-contained businesses.

Of course the Tories are not actually proposing a full-blown US-style style health care system: the US has four times more than double the share of national wealth compared to the NHS, and leaves 40 million people without health cover.

Ruinous

Even American employers, stung by the ruinous cost of private medical cover for their employees, are no longer in favour of their system. A generic boss recently claimed that the company medical scheme adds $750 to the selling price of each car. Estimates suggest that if US systems remains unchanged, it could gobble over a third of GDP by the year 2030!

We want above all to cut state spending on health, forcing individuals to pay more. They also want to expand private provision and profitable openings at every level of health care.

Contract farms

- Since 1984 health authorities have been compelled to put ancillary services - cleaning, catering and laundry - out to competitive tender.
- Others have privatized portering and other services. In each case standards of hygiene and patient care have plummeted as cheap private firms have moved in, seeking profits from key support services and low-paid staff.
- NHS chiefs have been encouraged to siphon off taxpayers' money into developing and refurbishing lavish private wards and wings, and into deals with commercial medical firms. A key "freedom of contract" secret is their cope to switch NHS beds to private use without any public consultation.
- Yet new NHS beds make no profit: many stay empty and lose money, since there is already huge over-capacity in the private sector.

- More and more health authorities are closing down their long-stay beds for the elderly and hiving off these patients to private, profit-making nursing homes. There the fees are paid from means-tested social security income support, often "topped up" by health authorities as a "scarlet" means of being rid of the elderly. West Berkshire DHA is setting the pace, with its plan to close down all 200 long stay elderly beds by 1990, while two private nursing homes are built on NHS land and a new NHS unit at Newbury is handed over to private management.

- Vital areas of health research and treatment - notably on cancer and heart disease - as well as front line services such as intensive care baby cots at Guy's Hospital, are increasingly funded from outside the NHS by charity appeals or private firms.
- IVF treatment is already unobtainable on the NHS in London. In Kettering, sterilisation operations for women are only available privately; last January NE Thames Regional Health Authority published a list of non-emergency operations it proposed no longer to provide on the NHS, forcing patients to pay or go without.
- Meanwhile soared prescription charges under Thatcher and Major have been matched by the new £10 minimum charge for eye tests and astronomical bills for dental checks and treatment.

It's precisely these types of bills - paid only by those working age where are in employment - which point the way for future Tory strategy.

Once the new "market" system is fully functional, every NHS operation, treatment and course of drugs will carry a precisely costing and price tag.

For years the Tory right has argued that in-patients "who can afford to" do so should pay the "hotel" costs of bed and board while in hospital. Once the full range of prices are revealed we won't extend this, and follow the example of dental charges, by imposing means-tested fees for every treatment.

Threat

The mere threat of facing such substantial bills could force millions more people into taking out pre-emptive health insurance.

In this way the Tories could force individuals to subsidise the NHS while insurance firms could also cash in at a profit.

Twelve years of Thatcherite failures have not persuaded even one in eight of the population to take out medical insurance. But if Major wins another term, the blizzard of means-tested charges could yet do the job.

Ronin Cook and the Labour front bench are absolutely right to point the finger at the Tory drive towards privatisation of the NHS: they must not be allowed to retreat on this between now and the election.

Will NCU fight BT threat to 16000 jobs?

By Joan Armstrong

BT, the most profitable denationalised firm, has announced plans to make 16000 engineers and clerical workers redundant during the next 18 months.

Plans to shed this huge part of the workforce stem from the massive influx of new technology and the deepening economic recession.

For the National Communications Union (NCU), it poses a major challenge. Will it co-operate with these redundancies or will it fight? The signs are not good. An article in the latest issue of the NCU journal, entitled How the jobs agreement will work, glosses the jobs cuts in a positive light.

It says: "BT believes that there is an urgent need to "rebalance" its engineering and clerical workforce. The result will be job losses. Pressure comes from the severe effects of recession on the company, as well as from the introduction of new technology and the impact of growing competition as a result of government decisions..."

It is no accident that this has been the response of the current leadership of the union, which has increasingly gone along with new realism and the Knocskick leadership in the Labour Party.

Over the past year BT has already shed 5000 managers, and has decimated its workforce, who belong to the UGW - dockworkers, cleaners, catering staff. Now it is aiming against telephonists, radically cutting back staff who work on directory enquires. Having dealt with the UGW, BT feels strong enough to take on the NCU.

A recent article in The City showed that BT wants to shed as many as 30,000 jobs in the long run. Immediate plans include cutting nearly 3000 jobs in the Personal Communications Division, up to 650 in Group Logistics and 250, including over 2000 engineers, in Business Communications.

Other big job losses will hit Worldwide Networks, with job losses here concentrated in London. The sackings threats have led to widespread calls from branches for a special conference to discuss a coherent fighting strategy to defeat the cuts.

The whole issue is a challenge to the union's Broad Left, which has been increasingly under pressure from new realism. The elements of a fightback plan are already contained in the so-called Broad Strategy already adopted at NCU conference. But will it be activated by the NCU leadership?

The slogan BT must "play ball with the punches" and accept a flood of voluntary redundancies which will permanently reduce and weaken the workforce, or adopt a fighting strategy based on the demand for a reduced working week with no loss of pay, and strike action to stop redundancies.

The NCU is at a crossroads.
Outlook

Courts rule against part-timers

Earlier this month, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) failed in the High Court legally to eliminate unlawful discrimination against part-time workers on the grounds that it contravenes Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Ninety per cent of part-time workers are women, some 4.6 million women. In this fourth article in our 'Women in the Unions' series, EMMA DEAN looks at the issue.

THE High Court's decision to reject the EOC's claim, goes completely against a ruling in 1989 from the European Court of Justice on a similar case. In that case a West German woman part-time worker successfully argued that West German legislation, which excluded those working less than 10 hours or less a week from statutory rights to sick pay, contravened Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome. This Article requires equality of treatment between men and women.

The Court ruled that, since a greater proportion of women worked part-time, legislation excluding them from pay protection was discriminatory against women.

Implications

This was thought at the time to have important implications for women workers in Britain since according to government surveys, many part-time women work schemes in the retail sector (where large numbers of part-time workers are employed) do discriminate against women.

The ruling demonstrates that women workers cannot rely on a legalistic framework (British or European) to solve the problems of discrimination in the workplace or the reasons why women are forced into part-time, low-paid and low-status jobs.

For many women, working part-time is a necessary result of not being able to find full-time work. It is not unusual for women to have several part-time jobs, particularly in cleaning, catering and retail.

But for many women, part-time work allows them to fit their work around their family responsibilities. As a result many women are found working twilight shifts, part-time school hours, or on weekends.

Assumptions

Challenging traditional assumptions over the sexual division of labour, it is argued that the home and the workplace, is therefore vital when campaigning around rights for part-time workers.

At present, if someone works less than 16 hours a week they have to wait for five years - rather than two - to qualify for compensation for unfair sacking, redundancy or maternity pay. If you work less than eight hours a week, then you don't qualify at all.

Some 2.4 million part-time workers are not covered by National Insurance benefits and are therefore not covered by social security protection.

There is also the question of low pay. The average hourly earnings for women who worked part-time in 1990 was £3.95. That was the average, many thousands of women work for substantially less.

The vast majority of part-time workers are not in a trade union. This is also the case for homeworkers and temporary workers, most of whom are also women. Some trade unions have begun to try and recruit these workers but there is still much that needs to be done.

Still no rights for kids!

Hailed as 'the most radical piece of legislation to affect child care to date' the Children's Act claims to be an innovation and many predict that it will revolutionise child care law.

But is it really such a radical step? Here KATE AHRENS looks at the act and examines its implications.

The Children's Act is a comprehensive piece of legislation which formalises what has always been seen as 'good practice' in social work circles, providing parents with rights to challenge care orders, and encouraging voluntary agreements between parents and social workers.

It also introduces mechanisms for children to take steps in court cases - widely explained as 'expanding children's rights'.

Under the care orders must be justified as part of a general plan for the family involved - if no longer possible (in theory) to apply for an order and then think about the longer term problems. Every action must be geared to 'the child's welfare' paramount.

The child's welfare' is a phrase much applied to such an action as corporal punishment, lacking children and young people up and National Service? Not everyone would agree that those actions were 'best' for the children involved.

Although the Act has been described as expanding children's rights, in reality it makes very little difference to the choices open to children.

Children (who are considered mentally mature enough) can now argue for contact orders with their parents whilst in care. They can challenge emergency protection orders and push for the ending of care orders.

These measures will serve only to increase the pressure on children. How parents, social workers, and the courts will have added reason to persuade children to take a certain course of action which they, not the children, consider to be in that child's interest.

The aim of the Act is in fact to re-entrench the family as the unit of welfare in society. Most of the changes such as the right to challenge care orders after 72 hours are designed to reduce intervention by the state.

Queen to solve philosophical problem

By Ray Dominguez

THE QUEEN has been asked to aristurate in a row over dodgy philosophy degrees at University College Swansea (UCS). The dispute reached a watershed in July when the MA degree in philosophy of health care was scrapped.

Despite this, Michael Cohen and Colwyn Williamson - two of the lecturers involved - were exempted from the MA course - have been suspended from their jobs. A third, Anne Macken, paid in of February, is now asking for her job back.

College authorities lodged a string of disciplinary charges against the lecturers after they made their complaints.

Students in the philosophy department quickly established a defence committee. For their stand against the suspension of Macken, the student union was fined £200.

The University of Wales (UoW), meanwhile, refused to make a final promise to investigate the centre for philosophy and health care, and the college - which spent over £100,000 during the disciplinary hearings - hoped to demarket its way out of the mire.

But three days before the council was to consider a recommendation to dismiss Cohen and Williamson, the University announced that it was commissioning a report from Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer. The lecturers were suspended pending the outcome.

This turnaround was probably due to a number of factors. Three weeks earlier Cohen and Williamson published their evidence of 'serious improbities' in the grading of degrees. A number of professional philosophers had already protested to the University. Entire departments registered their protest and the media profile, sustained by student protest, intensified.

The UoW's very existence as an education authority is dependent upon the University in colleges in Wales, colleges who have every reason to be apprehensive about their association with Swansea.

In April a high-level University committee stripped one candidate of his MA for plagiarism, and expressed 'grave concern', at certain weak areas in the overall administration of this MA scheme.

If the inquiry announcement saved the two lecturers' jobs in March, it was only the tip of the iceberg. The court report did make it clear. In July, Lord Callaghan, as president of the University, pushed a compromise on the college council. The suspensions were replaced by 'estranged study leave'.

UCS have publicly declared that Swinnerton-Dyer's recommendations are 'unconstitutional', and the MA course has been re-stated, another, a new course.

But they have twice been sufficed by boiled water held back from striking the dismissal blow. If the campaign dies now, then they will not go so easily - regardless of what Liz Windsor has to say.

We are not amused

Oct. 26, 1991, No. 10
Cuban communists under siege

by Patrick Baker

The fourth congress of the Cuban Communist Party took place in the atmosphere of a last stronghold under siege. And with good reason, as economic and political threats from the West multiply daily. The Cuban communists did not buckle under the pressure. They didn't entice the virtues of the capitalist road to Western democracy, as so many in the West sometimes have done in recent times. Instead, they reaffirmed the revolution that had given Cuba its remarkable standards of health and education.

The congress coincided with threats of a possible association of Soviet Socialists for the island state. It was an opportunity for Castro's leadership to map out a new strategy to defend the gains of the revolution. But, sadly, that opportunity was largely missed.

The closed-congress session did, however, respond to the threat to Cuba's economy and the shift in foreign investment and self-sufficiency, agreed. And elections to the party central committee were, for the first time, open to nominations from local party cells. But Castro rejected any radical changes to the political or economic system.

The claim that the party still controls overwhelming support and that the Cuban people is almost certainly true. And the 'dissident' groups given massive coverage in the Western media clearly represent very little.

But Castro's claim that the people are ready to die is a hostage to fortune. As austerity bites deeper, the congress' refusal to allow any popular uprising away from economic centralisation will become more contentious.

The argument that marketisation brings with it the threat of corruption is a point. But some measure of independence for small farmers could have one response to Cuba's deepening economic crisis. And the rejection of a move towards more democracy or pluralism throws away one of the best chances of maintaining popular support for anti-capitalism.

Castro, of course, quite rightly to fight the 'dissident' groups failed to answer the problems of underdevelopment; and that Western 'democracy' is a fraud.

But economic centralisation has hardly solved these problems, particularly in underdeveloped countries. And one-party states haven't experienced democratic pluralism, however popular the current wave of opposition groups that have always distinguished Cuba from the West.

Cuba must be allowed to choose its own path.

Mexican elections
The prostitute's campaign

CLAUDIA COLIMORO hit the news in 1991. She stood as a candidate on the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT) slate in the Mexican federal elections.

She is a feminist, and has fought hard for contraception and abortion rights. She is a prostitute who has campaigned for the legalisation of the profession in Mexico.

I AM 35 and have three children. I started working as a prostitute while I worked for the social security. I had financial problems when one of my children was ill. I worked more than 12 hours per day. I had no office, and also had to oblige my boss's sexual desires to keep my job. I soon realized that I would earn much more money as a prostitute.

Hypocrisy
We want prostitution legalised and their rights recognised. Refusing legal status is proof of the double standards and hypocrisy in society. It makes oppression and exploitation by officials easier.

In Mexico, prostitution is controlled by laws passed 56 years ago, which are completely obsolete. Legal recognition would be a big improvement on being at the mercy of corrupt officials and police - even if it meant paying taxes! It would also allow a much more effective control on AIDS.

Now we are setting up a project for street children where they can sell things or do small local jobs. They are especially vulnerable to prostitution and drugs. We don't want to put them in institutional homes. We want to create an association for the street children and develop open nightshelters, giving them free education and training to help them find a proper job.

Swathoaps
We have a similar project for embroiderers. We don't intend to teach them to sew or embroider, do crochet or cross-stitch. They must have real choices so that they can get well-paid jobs when they decide, from age or fatigue, to leave this profession.

Women's wages in Mexico are pitiful. In the frontier zones, the women who work in the free-trade swathoap drudgery for 15 hours a day still don't earn enough to live. About half of them have to work as prostitutes at the weekend.

The government is also trying to pay them a mere $9 a day. This is not enough to make a living. We want to support them by educating them. We want to educate them to become independent and raise their children better.

I wanted to work because I wanted to be able to join the media to tell people about the problems and new standards. Our voice should be heard. I am a voice for those that have none.

Corrupt authorities
My election campaign was extremely difficult. At first, journalists were friendly enough, especially the official Mayu Tocilo, an ex-pornographic model. Later they showed me their true colours. They tried to make me understand, to teach me who is the real power in the corrupt authorities.

I am loud and clear that every woman can end up as a prostitute, and that being a prostitute is also a form of resistance. When I was young I was forced to work in these brothels.

During the campaign, I heard about the injustices faced by women every day. They suffer from police abuse, threats, and violence. They are beaten, stoned. They are raped by police and even by the police department.

It was the first time a prostitute had stood in an election in Mexico, and a lot of women were pollutants. I heard about attacks on prostitutes and transvestites by police; and also about the police department keeping information on people who take AIDS tests, although it should be known.

We oppose these attacks on the authorities, prostitutes are citizens like any other.

This was the moment when the first time a prostitute had stood in an election in Mexico, and a lot of women were pollutants. The police were watching me, and some journalists present, there were a lot of women who had been beaten and injured.

I wanted to win because I wanted to change the media to tell people about the problems and new standards. Our voice should be heard. I am a voice for those that have none.

Anti-AIDS
It is very difficult. At first, journalists were friendly enough, especially the official Mayu Tocilo, an ex-pornographic model. Later they showed me their true colours. They tried to make me understand, to teach me who is the real power in the corrupt authorities.

I am loud and clear that every woman can end up as a prostitute, and that being a prostitute is also a form of resistance. When I was young I was forced to work in these brothels.

During the campaign, I heard about the injustices faced by women every day. They suffer from police abuse, threats, and violence. They are beaten, stoned. They are raped by police and even by the police department.
USA: Bosses' attacks and workers' resistance

Where workers still wait for a Labour Party

By Paul Le Blanc

The Presidency of Ronald Reagan and George Bush have been described as a period of "conservative capitalist counter-offensive" by influential maverick-conservative analyst Kevin Phillips.

He means that it has been a period when the government and capitalist class have been determined to roll back the economic and social reform-oriented direction, adopting policies overtly favourable to the big business elite.

Economic imbalances and inequality grow rapidly in such a period. Phillips' view that his conservative views, Phillips' analysis is accurate.

Economic restructuring has created a devastating reality for many industrial working class communities in the US. In my own Pittsburgh area, which used to be the steelmaking capital of the world, and is the cradle of the US labour movement, communities of once-prosperous steel workers are turning into derelict slums. Steel mills are rusting or torn down altogether; the biggest employer in the area is now the University of Pittsburgh.

This industrial decay reflects the economic weakening of the US, especially against its Japanese and European competitors. The US share of the world economy has fallen from about 40 per cent in the 1950s to a projected 25 per cent in the 1980s.

Sectors of the US ruling class gathered around George Bush are trying to preserve their position through continuing the policies of imperialist resurgence stated in the Iran-Iraq War. A strategy involves the aggressive militarism we saw in the Gulf, is part of a larger strategy for US dominance in third world areas.

The Bush administration has had undeniable short-term successes with its war policy in the Persian Gulf. But it is still an open question whether this policy will be successful in the long run; there is no certainty that military and political clout can compensate for economic weakness in the long run. But US capitalism is not just trying to solve its problems by military aggression abroad. In the last decade US workers have been under sustained attack. Part of that attack has been through economic restructuring and the change in the composition of the workforce.

During the 1970s 38 million industrial jobs were lost, despite the fact that the absolute number of blue collar jobs is higher than ever, it is a declining proportion of the workforce.

Living standards under attack

About 85 per cent of the new jobs created since the 1980s are concentrated in low-wage white collar and service jobs; there has been a significant expansion of part time and temporary employment. Real wages fall by eight per cent during the 1980s. Almost 20 per cent of American workers have no health insurance and 40 per cent no pension plan.

The general decline of living standards has had profound impacts on the consciousness of the class. Younger workers face many fewer job opportunities than their parents. Twenty-two per cent of US children live in poverty.

White male workers serving as the "sole breadwinners" have traditionally been seen as a privileged group in the working class. But their real income fell by an average of 22 per cent between 1970 and 1984. Working class families need two incomes to survive at the same levels that their parents did on one income. There has been a huge increase in women in the workforce, and even the AFL-CIO union federation leadership, union membership, and some union leaders are turning towards a more radical and socially conscious trade unionism. In some unions militant caucuses reflecting new moods are making headway. These include the Committee for a Democratic Union, the New Directions Caucus in the United Auto Workers and dissident networks among railroad workers and the Journal Against Stagflation. Other militant caucuses include the Hell on Wheels caucuses among New York transit workers.

In addition to these struggles of rank and file activity there is a growing interest, albeit modest so far, in international labour solidarity.

Labour Party

But the absence of a coherent national independent working class politics is seen as a serious deficiency by growing sectors of the union movement. While old-time bureaucrats and many social democratic "professionals" and committed to the Democratic Party, significant numbers of union members are looking to the creation of a Labour Party.

Tony Mazzocchi, a leader of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, says, "The bosses have two parties. We want one". He has recently initiated and urged workers to join a new body called Labour Party Advocates. He says that 5000 local union leaders are joined up, a convention will be called for to set up a Labour Party.

There are other stirrings of independent political action. Among the Afro-American community there is deepening resentment against the phoney reforms, empty promises and deep-seated racism of US society. A huge percentage of blacks have drawn radical political conclusions, reflected in support for Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. But the Rainbow is deeply divided by turning back up with the Democratic Party. Recently, a former top strategist of the Rainbow, Ron Daniels, has broken with Jackson on the issue of the Democratic Party.

The National Organisation of Women has recently helped to lead mass struggles against reactionary attempts to restrict abortion rights. It has also declared its support for struggles of the Afro-American community and labour movement, and took a consistently antiwar position on the Gulf. A majority of the NOW membership, and a significant component of its leadership, has taken a position in favour of a new party based on radical social and feminist politics.

Radical activists

Another important factor in the US today is the broad-based militancy of left-liberal and radical activists, most of them relatively young and a growing number of them part of the resentful wave of politicising students. They have constituted a vital part of the Central American solidarity movement, the anti-war movement of the Gulf, and the movement against US support to apartheid.

Such activists have also been in the forefront of struggles to defend abortion rights, which is a central struggle for the US at the present time. The federal government and the Supreme Court's conservative majority have been eating away at the legal rights of women to safe and affordable abortion care. But fighting Christian fundamentalists have taken significant steps forward to slow down abortion clinics. Some of the most massive and militant demonstrations in recent years have been called to counter these reactionary attacks. This issue is likely to be a focal point for action in the next year.

Many of this layer of activists have been active in anti-racist campaigns for the example over the cases of vicious police brutality in Los Angeles and New York. The recent 漏motions in New York's Howard Beach and Bensonhurst. New York has also seen recent mass campa

Anti-War GIs face prison

SEVERAL US marines who refused to fight in the Gulf war are facing heavy prison sentences. Most immediately threatened are Marine Corps reservist Erik Larsen and reservist Tahan Jones. Both are from California.

Originally the two were charged with "desertion in time of war" which carries the death penalty. This has now been altered to "desertion to avoid hazardous duty and/or shirk important service", which carries up to seven years in prison.

Larsen is a particular target because of his outspoken anti-war activities before and during the war. He spoke at over 100 rallies in 20 US states, as well as anti-war protests in Germany, Italy and Britain.

At a preliminary hearing the Marine Corps deliberately proceeded while Larsen's civilian lawyer was out of the country. Marine lawyer Captain Wendell Ari, assigned to defend Larsen, protested at this and was told by the prosecutor "Civilian counsel is a pnick and has to be taught a lesson now or later. A jury ruled not guilty in the facts that the hearing were invalid and had to be redone. The Marines have also tried to obstruct Larsen's attempt to gain conscientious objector status. But a district court judge in San Francisco has ruled that Larsen's application must be heard.

Meanwhile a broad-based defence committee is conducting a vigorous campaign on behalf of the two marines.

Messages of support, and resolutions from labour movement and campaigning organisations should be sent to: Larsen,James Defence Committee, Box 225, 1678 Shaboutt Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709, USA. Telephone (415) 655-1301.
The Left

As the foregoing indicates, we believe that in the 1960s, there is the real possibility of the creation of an independent working people’s party, based on sections of the union movement, the black movement, the women’s movement and layers of independent activists. There are of course no guarantees, but it is a real possibility.

In addition to this, there is a growing proletarianisation of the population, accompanied by radicalisation and deepening working class consciousness. Regardless of how the ‘new party’ developments unfold, there will be big opportunities for the Left.

The most substantial groups to the left of the Democrats are the Communist Party and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The CP has around 5000 members, and continues to have a significant impact in social struggles and among some labour activists. But it is a shadow of its former self, and is undergoing an agonising crisis over the collapse of Stalinism internationally. It may well end up by splitting. Some members seem intent on hanging onto Stalinism, but others who leave may drift into social democracy.

The DSA is a social democratic grouping affiliated to the Socialist International. It has around 5000 supporters, but many of these are people who do more than pay dues and attend one or two special events a year. It has some influence among labour leaders and in the social movements, but so far has been incapable of building an activist movement which could act as a pole of attraction for younger activists.

The forces of revolutionary Marxism in the United States are scattered, being mainly organised in the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, Socialist Action, and within a politically broader grouping of several hundreds called Solidarity. Urgent steps are under way to unify the forces of revolutionary Marxism. If they are successful, there are good prospects for the building of a significant Marxist force, which could play an important role in the vital struggle for the political independence of the US working class—a Labour Party. This struggle is of vital significance for workers world-wide.

Paul Le Blanc, author of Lenin and the Revolutionary Party (Humanities Press) is a leader of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

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Thomas case puts sexual harassment centre stage

THE CONFIRMATION of black judge Clarence Thomas to the US Supreme Court was a foregone conclusion. Presidential patronage was used massively to literally bribe Democratic senators into voting for him.

Nonetheless the case has rebounded on George Bush. It has made sexual harassment a debating point all over the US. There have been numerous reports of women coming forward to challenge sexual harassment in the workplace as a result of the case.

Bush's proposal of Thomas as a Supreme Court judge was a very calculated move. Thomas has a record as an equal opportunities lawyer, but is ultra-conservative on most issues. He opposes positive action for women and black people, and is violently anti-abortion. Bush calculated that by nominating a black conservative he would split the civil rights movement. His calculation was correct.

The fight against Thomas, which started months before charges of sexual harassment against him, focused on the abortion issue. In state after state, reactionary legislation restricting abortion has been passed. As detailed in the accompanying article by Paul.

Le Blanc, abortion continues to be a central fight for women's rights in the US.

In coming forward with charges of sexual harassment against Thomas, Anita Hill made a very courageous stand. She opened herself up to vilification, from the senators on the hearings committee and beyond. This she did.

But although Hill had to suffer abuse from senators in the hearings, and although Thomas was confirmed, her actions won an important victory: sexual harassment has been put on the political agenda in the US as never before.

Anita Hill blew a hole in the wall of silence which surrounds the issue, and by doing so made it easier for women to resist harassment and to campaign on this question.

Thomas and his huge battery of lawyers ruthlessly exploited the fact that he was black. Thomas accused his critics of opposing him because he was an ‘ugly black’ and of being a ‘lynch mob’.

But this couldn’t disguise the fact that all the most reactionary and racist parts of the establishment mobilized in his defence. They went out of their way to show Supreme Court judge Welks: he would support anti-black and anti-worker judgements.
Is capitalism in crisis?

By Andy Kilmister

WHAT do we mean when we talk of capitalism being in crisis, or the crisis of the US and British economies? Are the US and Britain in crisis at the moment? To answer these questions we need to distinguish three levels of crisis.

Fundamentally capitalism is vulnerable to crises because it depends on the exploitation of labour as the source of profit. As capitalism develops, more and more capital takes the form of machinery, forcing profits down. However this long-term tendency can be offset by profits generated in foreign trade, increased exploitation of workers or technological improvements making machinery cheaper. These strategies have their own problems though: for example forcing wages down can reduce sales and mean lower profits.

This is where the second level of crisis comes in. Stamps in production close the weakest firms and raise the rate of profit overall, laying the basis for future accumulation. In this way cyclical crises precede booms.

But as booms progress, wages and raw material costs rise, and if productivity does not rise fast enough to maintain profits, then slumps will recur.

In the 19th century cycles happened fairly regularly, every decade or so. The greater complexity of modern capitalism, particularly the growth of imperialism and state involvement in the economy, has modified this pattern.

A particular set of circumstances US regulation of the world economy and working class defeats in the 1940s together with the arms spending of the 1950s and 1960s - led to a 25-year upswing from 1948 to 1973.

A balance was maintained between mass production of consumer goods and demand stemming from relatively high wages and employment levels. These factors were temporary, however, and after 1973 the underlyng cycle of crisis and recovery reasserted itself with slumps in 1974/5 and 1979/80.

So the concept of crisis refers both to the fundamental weakness of capitalism and to the periodic slumps which express this weakness and lay the basis for future booms.

But what is happening now? Here we need to look at a third aspect of crisis.

Different national economies respond to crisis in different ways. In particular the USA and Continental Europe diverged significantly in the 1970s.

The share of the USA in world industrial production fell from 44 per cent in 1950 to 29.5 per cent in 1973. The main reason for this was the long-term slowdown in the US rate of productivity growth; from 1960 to 1973 this was 2.5 per cent per year compared with 4.8 per cent in Europe and 9.6 per cent in Japan.

But after 1973 the US maintained its share of production and grew faster than in Europe. Government spending, particularly on defence, and middle class consumption fuelled by tax cuts boosted demand even though investment was weak. The price was a sharp increase in the balance of payments deficit and government budget deficit. Income inequality increased and by 1989 average real wages fell to the level of 1961.

Corporate debt increased from 23 per cent of GDP in 1950 to 39 per cent in 1989. The corresponding rise in household debt was from 24 per cent to 64 per cent and for other non-financial business debt from 7 per cent to 24 per cent.

So we can speak of a third aspect of the crisis, the crisis of a specific national economy. The underlying US crisis has been expressed by the way the US ruling class responded to the 1974 and 1980 slumps.

In many ways Britain has been similar, though the government budget deficit has been less and unemployment higher.

The UK company sector financial deficit reached record levels of four per cent of GDP in 1989 and five per cent in 1990. The governments of these countries face a dilemma.

Loss of home production and investment has left them vulnerable to inflation and trade deficits even in very weak upturns. A lot of speculative capital has been created.

But financial fragility means that any attempt to prevent this can easily turn into a major slump. So there is a choice between raising interest rates to control inflation and lowering them when a recession threatens to get too bad.

The current recession is an example of this. Fears of inflation increased in 1990 led to a restrictive monetary policy. The idea was to have a brief recession and resume growth in 1991. But this autumn the US economy stubbornly refuses to grow. Bush is having to put pressure on the Federal Reserve (US central bank) to cut interest rates further and to renegotiate the Federal debt reduction package agreed last year with Congress.

None of the basic problems of US debt and low productivity have been touched. This kind of pattern is not limited to the USA and Britain, though it is especially acute there. In Japan credit conditions were eased in the late 1980s, as the Yen rose and the economy relied more on domestic demand. Now credit is scarcer and in the first seven months of this year 5,000 company bankruptcies led to more than $29 billion of bad debts. Investment is falling. South Korea's exports have risen by over 28 per cent in the last year.

Europe has escaped some of these difficulties. The problem there remains the high unemployment level compared with the US and Japan. Having the same rate of output growth as the US with much higher productivity growth has thrown millions out of work. This is leading to Britain's response of regions and states to crisis mean that national or regional crises have superseded the local and crisis of capitalism? Many economists think back to Keohane et al, 1990, more or less to the new paradigm of eastern Europe, particularly German unification, in mid-1989 and discuss the new paradigm of eastern Europe, particularly German unification, in mid-1989 and argue that these areas are increasingly independent of one another and of the US.

But this ignores the increasing internationalisation of the world economy and globalisation of the growth of foreign investment since 1986.

Foreign firms have become much more dependent on foreign investment and sales. In 1989, for instance, 29 per cent of total sales were by companies outside the US. The figures were 28 per cent for GEC, 29 per cent for Volvo and 48 per cent for Honda. The US recession is now affecting France, Italy and Japan. Having the same rate of output growth as the US with much higher productivity growth has thrown millions out of work.

Understanding the basic vulnerability of capitalism to crisis involves understanding the way in which individual crises act to resolve, temporarily, the contradictions of the system, and lay the basis for renewed growth and capital accumulation.

Socialism and the new world order

Ernest Mandel
(United Secretariat of the Fourth International)
Janette Habel
(author of 'Cuba - the revolution under siege')
Carl Brecker
(General Secretary of the Workers Organisation of Socialist Action, South Africa)

Kingsway College, Sidmouth Street, off Grays Inn Road, London WC1

Rally November 29 7.30pm

WOSA Tour

Carl Brecker, a leader of the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), is coming to November for a tour sponsored by Socialist Outlook. WOSA is a comparatively young organisation in South Africa, but has built itself a significant base on the local trade unions, especially among the youth.

Brecker's tours will be of interest to all those who want to find out more about the state of the liberation struggle, the political forces to the left of the leadership of the African National Congress. Provisional details of the tour have been announced, venues will be announced soon. The dates are:

- Southampton
- Brighton
- Bristol
- Swansea
- Central London
- Oxford
- Birmingham
- Manchester
- Newcastle
- Glasgow
- Southall
- Socialist Outlook rally

- November 11
- November 12
- November 14
- November 15
- November 18
- November 19
- November 20
- November 21
- November 22
- November 25
- November 28
- November 29
Polish marxist backs election campaign

by Dave Osler

MACIEJ GUZ is converter of the militant break-away Solidarnosc '80 union at Warsaw's FSO car plant, which organises around 1,000 of the 15,000 employees at the city's biggest workplace.

He is also a supporter of the Fourth International, introduced to it after his release from the underground Solidarity network by NIKERS' Unions. Solidarnosc '80 was formed by activists who rejected the 1981 PRL agreement, which brought Solidarity into a coalition government with the Stalinists, as explained.

Politically, the split occurred during the capitalist way of development, they looked to the peaceful current in Solidarity to help them transform the situation and pacty workers. Solidarity took the historic role of social democratic western countries, a current of compromise.

Solidarnosc '80 now has 250,000 members nationally and is the largest union in one or two cities. As well as left-wingers, the anti-semitic right support it.

The leadership, which Guz categorises as 'clericalist nationalists', wants to expel him, accusing him of being a 'communist' and a 'security agent'. But the PFO factory committee voted 15-2 against the move.

At present level, Guz is trying to draw both Solidarnosc and the former state union OPZZ into a united front. Following the abolition of the old workers' committee at the state-owned factory, Solidarnosc '80 is organising an unofficial replacement, known as the 'Workers' Committee for People of Labour'.

'The programme is based on the transition programme and the first programme of Solidarity - and that's not a contradiction. For instance, we struggle against the privatisation of state factories under the slogan capitalism, is it?'

He hopes to be able to recruit the best from the politi cal group, which has been forced to act as a genuine union in order to preserve its existence under the new political conditions in the country.

Guz warns that the end of Stalinism could lead to capitalist restoration and a rightist dictatorship. The repression of the Solidarnosc group will strengthen the reactionaries. And direct action involving strikes by Walesa or even banned trade unions is both possible.

'It depends on the situation and the arguments used to introduce dictatorship. Part of it sounds very rightist.'

South Africa: workers' leaders threatened

LEADERS of the powerful South African workers' movement are once again under attack. Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of the COSATU union federation and Moses Mayekiso, leader of the miners' union, were recently arrested.

The union leaders have been convicted of kidnapping and assassinating an undercover police agent. The police spy was found outside the COSATU headquarters in the aftermath of a spate of bombings aimed at the union offices.

But the magistrate that convicted Naidoo and Mayekiso found that the spy posed no threat to them. Their lawyers will be appealing against the conviction.

Independence only answer to Yugoslav canage

SEBRAS's attempts to hold together what was Yugoslavia by force are looking increasingly untenable, as the holding down of the 4 million strong state was immediately threatened with invasion by Belgrade. At the same time, Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic was signing the ninth peace deal in recent weeks in Moscow. The Belgrade's intervention was no more effective than the increasingly farcical efforts of the EC, breaking down almost immediately.

The potential threats to the Yugoslav federation looks increasingly small. Only Serbia and Montenegro are now prepared to be part of it. The only real alternative to Milosevic's bloody war for a Greater Serbia is the right to independence for Yugoslav's national minorities.

And it is the peoples of Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia who will achieve it - not the EC or Moscow.

Turks massacre Kurdish civilians

On OCTOBER 11 and 12, the Turkish air force, supported by thousands of troops, bombed Kurdish villages in Iraq with napalm.

Three civilians were killed and more than 50 wounded. The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), supposedly the target of the attack, claimed that none of its fighters were hit. But it did cause an exodus of refugees from the UN security zone, and destroyed a newly built health centre.

The massacre forms part of an increasingly frantic election campaign by Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal. But it also seems to signal the failure of attempts by Iraq Kurdish leader Talabani to improve relations with the Ankara government. These attempts conflicted with the PKK's guerrilla campaign against the Turkish state.

British troops have been stationed near the Gulf war, with a brief to protect Iraq Kurds. But they took no action. It has been suggested that the aggressor's membership of NATO could be part of the explanation for this.

Bulgarian elections: final nail in the Communists' coffin

by Kathy Kirkham

THE domino effect of collapsing Communist Parties in eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union has finally reached the hitherto calmest corner of the Balkans. With the last residues of the government of Bulgaria, the Socialists (formerly Communists) Party which clung to power after the bloodless overthrow of Todor Zhivkov in 1989, was ousted in the country's elections on October 13.

The complete voting figures were still being compiled at the time of writing. It is clear that the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) will now form Bulgaria's first non-Communist government for 40 years.

The UDF, a mixed bag of mainly pro-capitalist and pro-US forces, has been torn by bitter fighting for months over whether to collaborate with the Socialist Party (SP) in Parliament. In fact, shortly before the elections, three 'green' and anti-social democratic groupings broke away and decided to go it alone (unsuccess fully) at the polls.

Nonetheless, the UDF has apparently won over 30 per cent of the vote, ahead of the Socialists' estimated 33 per cent. It looks as if the Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), with 5 per cent, will hold the balance of power.

There is little likelihood that the SP will be able to do any deals with the MRF to 'paralyse' the new government. In Zhivkov's day, the old Socialists Party persecuted the million-strong Turkish minority in Bulgaria and in the run-up to these elections the policies continued to court the nationalist, anti-Turkish MRF.

A UDF-MRF coalition is now the most probable development, though the UDF staat to be no means free of anti-Turkish elements and the Turkish movement's leaders are sure to demand a hard bargain in an effort to fully regain their lost ministerial positions.

An important turning point came with the September 50 Party congress, where reformers were outflanked by the old guard, whose hold on the party was reaffirmed. By December, as the economy spiralled into chaos and after huge demonstrations and a general strike against austerity, the Socialist government was forced into a caretaker coalition with the UDF.

The present elections may have temporarily broken the political stalemate. Economically, however, Bulgaria remains the most unstable of any of the former Commein trading partners. It has the lowest foreign investment, sharply declining production, failing exporters and hard currency countries and grave shortages of petrol and other essential goods.

Workers continue to radicalise in their fight to defend their livelihoods and democratic rights. The unions achieved a party, inflation-proofed pay agreement with the government and employers in January, anticipating the February price liberalisation, with a rise in the national minimum wage of 128 per cent.

Nevertheless, Bulgaria may yet have to go through the convolutions of the United Federalist Party before conditions for a real renewal of the workers' movement and its leadership are created.
**Outlook**

**Reviews**

Fighting back against the bigots

High risk lives

Lesbian and gay politics after the Clause
Edited by Tara Kaufmann and Paul Lincoln
Prism Press, 1991
6.95
Reviewed by Dani Aherning

This is an important and challenging book. As a chronicle of recent lesbian and gay history this collection of articles picks up where Radical Records left off. The editors reflect the diversity of lesbian and gay communities and essays by the editors provide a strong theoretical thread throughout the book.

Two particularly powerful articles are "Disabled lesbian and gay women: how do we stay?" by Kirsten Hearin, and "The making of a radical black gay man" by Peter Nevin. Both ex- press anger at the oppressive attitudes and behaviour with which the white able-bodied lesbian and gay communities are meetuped. But the piece is more seriously flawed by its ex- clusive focus on London. In- cluded, one of the few weakness- nesses of the book as a whole is its London-centric bias.

Other contributors attempt to analyse the political basis of the Stop the Clause campaign. It is extremely refreshing to see a clear and well-argued critique of the "we can't help it - we were born that way" line.

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**Watching lesbian detectives...**

Gaudi Afternoon
By Barbara Wilson
Virago Press

Reviewed by Rebecca Ivens

THE TITLE of Barbara Wilson's latest book is an obvious and unashamed pun on Agatha Christie's classic novel Gaudy Night. They both belong to the same literary genre - that of detective fiction - but the resemblance ends there.

The massive difference be- tween the two is a testament to some of the great changes in western society and its literary traditions that have oc- curred this century.

Protagonists in crime novels written by women are no longer aristocratic men in the mould of Lord Peter Wim- sey. They are more usually strong, independent women who are more than a match for their foppish male opponents.

It is easy to follow the flow- ering of lesbian feminist detective literature since the 1970s, including such well known examples as M.S. Boal's Angel Dust, has been the subject of endless speculation and debate.

But do we think we have particular- ly effective sleuths? Should we make the texts be interpreted as metaproph? Perhaps they represent on some kind of symbolic level, an attempt by lesbians to solve the problems of, and make order out of, a hostile and alien world? Maybe they are a continuation of the tradition of witch- like riding to rescue damsels in distress.

"Gaudi Afternoon" is a more simple ex- planation. If you want an en- gaging and enjoyable read, without any pretensions of literary grandeur, then detective fiction is an obvious place to start. Books are always more enjoyable if you share their broad ideological framework and can identify with some of the characters.

The growing genre has also been the beneficiary of a range of strong authors whose work continues to develop and mature. Barbara Wilson is one of these, already known for her crime novels such as Murder in the Collective and The Dancer: Murders in Murder, in other fiction.

Gaudi Afternoon breaks with her past style and successfully extends the boundaries of lesbian feminist detective fiction. It tells the story of one Cas- sandra O'Reilly, an itinerant translator of interesting ethnic origins, who is hired to find a missing proselytiser in Barcelona.

Set against the background of the architectural splendour of the local community and the sexual diversity of the Catalan capital, the plot revolves around questions of identity. The identity of the missing person, the identity of all the book's characters, of friends and lovers, parents and children, all shift and blur, puzzle and provoke.

All this is woven into a com- plex tapestry of political com- edy of the bizarre. There is even an element of self- parody in the narrative. The book Cassandra is translating - the sprawling, outstretched,主线是 from Mar- quet and Alfordes - floats in and out of the story.

It is the parameters of gender identity that are par- ticularly explored. A serious theme twists and turns amongst the beautiful scenery and sparkling and eccentric characters that populate the book.

In this it follows Wilson's previous writings - well con- structed and characterised crime novels, which have nonetheless dealt with matters of great weight and impor- tance. She has covered US im- perialism, prostitution and rape, and pornography and lesbian sub-masochism.

The light-hearted approach is innovative. There is no murder, but plenty of mystery. And it also leaves the familiar terrain of urban America for romance Europe.

Shame on you if you have not yet read any of this genre! The book would be a good place to make amends.

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**TV franchises**

Sudden Death

at Camden Lock

MRS THATCHER expresses her great regret. TV AM, symbol of the union-busting, de-regu- lated yuppie eighties and the apple of Mrs T's eye, has lost its franchise.

The great ITV auction franchise has also given the thumbs-down to Thames, who provided London's weekday TV programmes. Among the thousands of expected redund- ancies is Carol Thatcher, who works for TV AM.

A lot of what is provided by com- panies like Thames and TV AM is utter pap - so why should anyone worry?

In fact that new franchise system is a hidden form of political censorship; and like other forms of de- regulation it will widen output, casualise the workforce and weaken the unions. Why?

First, as Thames, NUI FoC and Labour Black Sections activist Marc Wardsworth pointed out, the whole TV franchise system began - and Thames' chances of winning the franchise now because of Thatcher's anger over Death on the Rock - the Thames documentary which exposed the deliberate ab- sission of IRA volunteers in Gibraltar.

Other TV companies will take note of Thames' fate. The new sys- tem has removed control over the allocation of franchises from the (government-appointed) IDA to the new, government-appointed, ITC.

The criteria adopted - namely going to the highest bidder, plus some vague "quality controls" - is an invitation to bidders to massively cheapen production costs.

TV franchise winners who replace the big ITV companies will no longer be programme producers with a large staff and facilities. Instead they will be little more than publishers of programmes commissioned on contract by much smaller private production com- panies, and men - as has been pointed out - on "bought-in" half-hour steam, especially US-produced sitcoms, of the kind which increasingly pervade Channel 4.

Small independent producers in Britain have come up with a lot of interesting and innovative material. But in future they are going to be at the mercy of the purchasing (and political) policy of the franchised companies.

Working in TV will more and more become like working in the theatre - casualised, with many more workers 'enjoying' long periods of 'resting' between assign- ments.

TV jobs were already under heavy pressure. Both the big ITV companies like TNN and the BBC have been shedding jobs as fast as they can. For the TV companies the recession has meant a huge cutback in advertising.

Combined with the advent of cable and satellite, bringing dozens of new channels, the franchise sys- tem brings TV much more directly under the control of big business and big business political values.

That is the strategic goal for which TV AM was sacrificed.
LORDS NEC have imposed a candidate for the 7 November by-election in Hennessworth constituency. The candidate who had the vast majority of the nominations and the backing of the locally powerful NUM, Prof. Ken Capstick, has been overturned in favour of Kinnekkio Derek Etrignt. The NUM's victory is indicative of the state of democracy in the Labour Party. Hennessworth's constituency is centred on the town of South Emal, which was at the heart of the 1984-5 miners' strike. It includes the huge pit of Frickley, and includes the South Kirby pit, shut down two years ago.

Frickley and South Kirby miners were among the most militant and determined during the 1984-5 strike. David Jones, the first miner to be killed during the strike, was a miner from South Kirby. And Ken Capstick started work at the pit at the age of 15.

The NEC says that Capstick has no record of activity in the party - despite being a member for 13 years. Capstick annyoed the Labour leadership by moving the resolution at this year's NUN conference condemning the Labour leadership over the anti-Kinnsley media witch hunt. He has also committed the heinous 'crime' of opposing the anti-union laws.

The NUM plays an enormous role in the Hennessworth Labour Party. Ken Capstick was the miners' choice, and the NUM's local power base. The NUM had always played an important role in the party, which he reveals his continued contempt both for the mining communities and democracy.

Tories plan pit butchery

LAST week a report by merchant bankers Rothschilds on the coal industry was leaked. Copies of the report, from the Department of Energy, it proposes the near-destruction of the British coal industry, reducing the number of pits by 14, and the number of miners to just 11,000.

Rothschilds' proposals are in the context of the long-term plan to privatise coal production in Britain, breaking up British Coal.

This will certainly be on the Tories' agenda, if they win the next election. Despite claims by Home Secretary John Wakeham that nothing has been decided, the destruction of the domestic coal industry has been a long-term Tory objective.

No real substitute for capitalism

I'm sure I wasn't alone in being surprised at the front-page Of Outlook No.9. Surely, talking of the 'Bee-eater Second Eleven', is only telling the obvious. In fact, it gives credence to the view that the Labour Party is somehow becoming like the American Democrats. The whole point of my article on Page 2, given the heading 'Proving themselves to the City.' is to highlight the contradiction between Labour giving even small pledges on the economy, and the supreme confidence the City has in them. Labour cannot be a party of capital while the link with the trade unions remains. Opposition to the City will be combined with a deep-seated belief that Britain will not become even more weak. Indeed, the catalyst for renewed union action, could be the struggle to implement the National Minimum Wage.

The opinion poll will end up finding its expression as the Labour Party, exploiting the futility of the situation, breaks with the trade unions it can ever be purely the 'Bee-eaters' Second Eleven'?

Sean Tunney, Brighto

Tories vendetta has targeted unions' solidarity

By Stuart Brown, S.Notts

Against the Poll Tax

Whether it's 'Can't Pay' or 'Won't Pay' lots of us aren't really bothered about who they put in prison. On 31 October, the raidably Tory Rushcliffe borough council attempted to jail Evelyn Amslan.

The council had already sent one eviction notice - with a Sherif's Order - before Evelyn's solicitor, and her local anti-Poll Tax union all told her she had a strong case. She earned so little that it would have taken the council seven years to recover the money she was owed.

She had filled in the wage arrears form. But because she earned so little, the council promptly returned it and sent in the bailiffs - with no success.

Yet still the council summonsed her to a committal hearing - and still the court tried its hardest to send her down.

Evelyn was given a suspended sentence and ordered to pay the full amount with four weeks; so much for our 'classless, caring society'.

Such vindictiveness can only fuel the anger and resentment against the Tories. Their attempts to smash the non-pay- ment campaign by the threat of imprisonment is doomed to failure. Resistance against the tax is far too strong - and the legal procedures to recover the debt far too lengthy.

Throughout the country, hundreds of similar struggles are being waged by the people against the courts and against the bailiffs.

With the Great Poll Tax Rebellion in full swing, there are calls for a unified campaign and a coherent national voice has never been greater. Over recent months the All-British Anti-Poll Tax Federation has been demanding a strike.

In order to ensure the final burial of the Poll Tax we need to maximise the fight against it. It is crucial that solidarity and support networks are forged, and that communication, both regionally and nationally, be strengthened. The finishing off the Poll Tax National Congress which has the potential for doing just that.

Organised by independent anti-Poll Tax groups across the country, the conference promises to be a welcome relief from some of the stage-managed rallies that we have seen in the past. It is essential that local groups get involved.

This is our campaign and if we really do want to see an amnesty for non-payers and Poll Tax Rebellion in full swing, there are calls for a unified campaign and a coherent national voice has never been greater. Over recent months the All-British Anti-Poll Tax Federation has been demanding a strike.
But the real criminals are still in control!

by Shaun Waterman

THE DRAMATIC ex-
posure of police malprac-
tice during the Blakelock murder investigation has vindicated the Tottenham Three and their sup-
porters.

But it has not secured the
men's freedom, nor brought to
justice those who forced false
'confessions' from Engin Raghip
and Mark Brittainale, and forged
Winston Silcott's interview notes.

More significantly, there
remains no guarantee of
reforms which might prevent a
repeat of their ordeal.

On November 25, the Court
of Appeal will hear lawyers ac-
ting for Engin Raghip argue
that the 'cooking' of the case
was a safe basis for a conviction,
because of his psychological

 Join our 300 Club!

Socialist Outlook has been
going for six months in a
fortnightly newspaper for-
mall. In that time we think
we've made a real con-
tribution to the left. But no
one is more critical of the
paper than its staff.

In the next few months we
will be attempting to improve
our coverage and design. But
to maintain the high stand-
ards we have set, and im-
prove on them, we have to
face hard facts. No left wing
paper covers its costs from
sales -- and the cost of pro-
ducing newspapers is going
up all the time.

To give us a minimum
regular income we have launched the '300 Club'. The idea is simple: 300 regular readers to contribute a stand-

ing order of £3 a month, and
each month those in the club
stand a chance of winning £50 in our prize draw.

We think there are easily 300 regular readers who
could afford £3. It's a small sum, but it would guarantee our finances for the foresee-
able future.

These are tough times for
socialists; activists in par-

 socialist shackles, a constant battle to maintain their standards and integrity.

NUJ: reinstat

Daniel

Stafford!

IN A FURTHER twist to the chain of events flowing from the bureaucratic sacking of NUJ

General Secretary Steve Turner. Financial controller Daniel Staff-

ord has been reinstated.

The move has provoked a threat of industrial action from the APEX

chapel at the NUJ head office.

Since Turner's dismissal, Jack

Ecclesone has been acting General

Secretary. He has repeatedly

claimed he was not in a position to reinstate himself to a disastrous candidate

for the job.

In a move deplored by a number of NUJ branches, Ecclesone axed all

resources for the union's race and

sex equality committee. He has ig-
nored all protests from within the

nuj: reinstatement of daniel stafford!

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socialists for labour
Unipart go union-busting

by Jack Johnson

UNIPART workers at Cowley in Oxford were called to a meeting on October 4 and given six months notice of union derecognition and the introduction of "new management techniques". This was what they called "World Class Performance". The document given to the workers is similar to the new Rover plan, except that it is more explicit and actually withdraws union recognition.

Workers were told that directors had never been to the USA, and that US-style derecognition was the only way forward. They were shown a video by a non-union American firm, to show "how it works".

The withdrawal of recognition from one of the best organised plants in the country, if successful, would be a major blow to the trade union movement. I would show that nowhere is safe from union-busting.

In recent years, trade union leaders have given in to almost every employer's demand. But they still weren't satisfied.

In March, the three senior stewards in the plant were sacked. Only two weeks ago, the appeal of two ASLEF stewards was rejected. They were sacked for "undermining a team leader". All of this has greatly weakened the workforce. They are now being badgered to sign new "contracts of employment" that confirm their present legal status.

Every employer in the car industry will be looking to see how the unions react. The trade union movement must now launch a counter-offensive in defence of union rights. Conferences of shop stewards should be called to map out a strategy for such a campaign.

Meanwhile, the company is proceeding with its "World Class" policies. The Unipart document outlines what this means:

a) A 30% cut in all targets, and the abolition of industrial engineers' studies.

b) A wage review in November, after which these will end. Individuals will be in a "salary range" within which they can move. They will be individually "appraised" as "average" or above or below average, on which any increase will be based.

Who will make this appraisal is unclear, except that the company will have daily meetings with the team leader, who will also assess them weekly - at least every three months they plan to have a wide-ranging, two-way discussion with you.

c) As for representation, the company will have "Independent", elected "forum". After each Forum meetings the outcomes will be reported to everybody through Team leaders and Area Team leaders.

So much for the independence. Workers will be able to use a forum to represent them in case of any grievance and this forum will also deal with redundancies which "become unavoidable".

It also makes it clear that all seniority is ended, and in the event of redundancy, the management can keep temporary contract staff, and dismiss any worker, regardless of length of service.

Unipart's new offensive is the thin end of the Legeron wedge. The labour movement must now go all out to defend union rights. The alternative is the kind of decimation of union organisation that we have seen in the USA.

Defending London's public services

THE IMAGE of the 'prosperous South East' is belied by the reality facing working people in London. Anyone who lives here will tell you that London is a city in crisis. Local authority services are collapsing, a result of wave after wave of cutbacks.

Public transport goes from crisis to utter collapse - it must be the worst in any capital city in an advanced country. If you want proof that this society doesn't make everything work efficiently, try spending a morning on the Moscow metro and then compare the London Underground service.

Other basic services like education and health are in a chronic state of decay. The crisis of all these vital services is compounded by unemployment increasing faster than the national average, and the increasingly dire housing situation, with council rents going through the roof.

Since the decline of London Bridge, which linked local authority unions in the fight against streetwalking, there has been an absence of serious co-ordination among London unions and campaigning organisations.

To try to overcome this a Crisis in London conference has been called to try to establish a permanent campaign to link the efforts of the different groups fighting back. All those concerned with the campaign against assault on working people represented by London's crisis should support this campaign.

NUT elections - vote for a new leadership!

by Keith Sinclair

TEACHERS will shortly be receiving NUT ballot forms for the union's 'ballot elections'. The left within the union is organising a strong challenge for all the available positions.

The leaderships of both TUC-affiliated unions, the NUT and NASUWT, have in practice adopted new realistic policies. The NUT leadership are rejecting their hopes on the election of a Labour government. Obviously socialists support the election of a Labour government, right wing as a Kinnock led one would be. Nevertheless, it is madness for the NUT to believe that this is the magic solution to the problems of under-funding of education.

The current leadership of the NUT has shown itself to be completely incapable of defending its members' interests. On most issues, such as pay, campaigns are restricted to giving publicity in the press. Such advertising campaigns do nothing to involve the membership. Large sections of them - who pay the adverts through their union dues - treat them with scepticism.

On one key topical issue - the appraisal of teachers - the NUT actually supports its introduction! Members in schools are being asked to believe that appraisal is a wonderful opportunity for 'professional development', rather than another weapon to be used by management.

Given a genuine leadership's record, it is essential to maximise the numbers of votes for the slate of candidates supported by the hard left Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA). Vote for us!

STAn slate

Vice-President

Vote Carole Regan 1, Will Reeve 2, Richard Reiser 3.

Treasurer

Vote Ian Murch 1, Dick North 2.

Ballot forms must be returned by 46th, November 28. Copies of ballot form and STA candidates can be obtained from Will Reeve on 0203 332320

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No. 10, Oct. 26, 1996, Page 15
Managers unopposed on the rostrum: workers eager, but on their knees. The graphics from the new Unipart management handbook spell out a union-buster’s dream.

STOP THE UNION BUSTERS!

Last week workers at the Unipart plant in Oxford - the best organised plant in the town - found out that their union is to be de-recognised. Instead they will have a new ‘Japanised’ system called ‘Demand-Chain Management’ imposed on them.

The blow against Unipart workers is a huge threat – if Unipart can be de-unionised then so can thousands of workplaces nationwide.

Throughout industry new management and working techniques based on ‘Japanisation’ are looming. With them comes the threat of de-recognition, or much-reduced union rights.

The Post Office is threatening to tear up existing agreements with the UCW. Rover faces total ‘Japanisation’. Newspapers and television stations have seen journalists confronted with ‘personal contracts’ and derecognition of the NUJ. The miners face new closure plans which could crush the NUM.

It is time for the unions to fight back against this deadly threat; and doing that means challenging the anti-union laws. Otherwise huge blows against working class organisation could be inflicted.

INSIDE: The Unipart ultimatum page 15; UCW under attack Tories butcher coalfields... BT jobs under the axe