Freedom for Palestine!

As the Madrid peace talks wound down, Israel was bombarding the villages of southern Lebanon, which have seen so much bloodshed in the past. The Israeli aim is to drive the villagers out, to widen the size of its northern 'buffer zone', the better to prevent Palestinian commando attacks. At the same time, Palestinians demonstrating for peace were having their marches broken up, and were being arrested by Israeli soldiers.

The fighting in southern Lebanon – business as usual for that part of the world – highlights the reality behind the conference rhetoric. In the past four years there have been more than 1200 Palestinian deaths during the Intifada – the mass Palestinian uprising in the territories under Israeli military occupation.

The Palestinians fight back because they have no alternative. Tens of thousands of young Palestinians have decided that it is better to die on their feet, rather than live on their knees – in the squalor and hopelessness of refugee camps policed by Israeli military thugs.

Whatever is decided in the 'peace process', the Palestinians and their struggle will not go away. There can be no peace without Palestinian freedom, and no Palestinian freedom without liberation from Israeli tyranny.
Labor's Industry spokesperson Gordon Brown might denounce British Telecom's layoffs as profits. But his blunt response—when he knows BT are raking in more than £100 per second—just highlights the inadequacy of Labor's policies.

The scandal of BT's massive overcharging—and the three billion a year profits that result—mean that it is a prime candidate for a popular Labor campaign for nationalization. At a time when Telecom is in the process of sacking a further 20,000 workers, Kinocks 'sacking' is a disaster.

Research shows that BT charge more for prosperous service than their major competitors on an international level. Even the conservative Financial Times pointed out that the monopoly could slash its profits by a billion and still out-perform its competitors. Glidewell Bros. of the Telephone Users Group said 'Customers have been robbed left, right and centre by this monopoly and some of the vast sums of money should be ploughed back into providing a better service.'

Labor's campaign around the NHS shows that one of its best hopes for winning the election lies in the defence of public services. A campaign to take back control of BT, stop the sackings and reduce charges could be a real vote winner.

And it would provide some of the funds Labor desperately needs, if it is to have a hope in hell of implementing any of the minimal improvements in public investment that it has promised. But Kinnock's dependants rush to the right, dropping every policy despoiled 'poorly left' by the tabloids, blinds Labour's leader to such obvious failings.

Gordon Brown's call for an inquiry into BT's profits is all well and good. But what does really make the point—are the cash, and Cash will lead us to compensate for years of under-funding of services—would be an up-front pledge to re-nationalise Telecom.

And labor and trade unionists must demand that Labor is re-nationalised with compensation only in cases of proven need. And those millions of workers paying a fortune to make phone calls should be told exactly what BT does with its billions—at a time when it is making thousands redundant.

By a special correspondent

IN A DRAMATIC moment during the NCU Broad left AGM on 26 October, the Chair Ian Cuthbert noticed that outgoing secretary Andy Gibb was taping the proceedings.

When asked to turn off his tape recorder, Gibb refused and stormed out of the meeting—claiming that the Broad Left was being a 'sabotage of the Broad Left'.

This set the seal on a split which had been planned for some time. It was organized by the Kinneclitck/Eurocommunist 'Unity campaign', the right-wing faction of the Broad Left.

The background to their desertion was the outcome of the 1990 pay claim. The Kinneclitck faction of the Broad Left, which is powerful on the national executive, was complicit in a sellout pay deal.

As a result, some of their supporters were opposed by more militant Broad Left members in the national executive elections, and defeated. Thus for the Kinneclitck/Eurocommunists bloc, the broad left began to lose its usefulness as an election machine.

Indeed the split in the BL was engineered by union general secretary Tom Young, backed by the majority of NFC members from the clerical section. These people have only ever used the Broad Left as a flag of convenience.

The split in the Broad Left was inevitable. In recent the NFC is controlled by a Kinneclitck/right wing ('Members First') alliance.

Their latest sell-out is a facet of the appealing redundancy scheme (see SGO), in which BT over-rats will be forced to retire, and 16,000 voluntary redundancies will be sought.

Few members have any confidence that this many voluntary redundancies will be achieved, and thus compulsory redundancies loom.

The split in the Broad Left is a clarification. The situation in which militant activists were in the same union grouping with Kinneclitcks and others who have no axe to grind, but bargaining was never viable.

It is a first step towards giving an effective lead to those who do want to fight.

Socialists for Labour say

Don't sit out the general election campaign!

by Pete Firmin

Politics in Britain is dominated by the general election—it's not just the parties' pre-election sparring.

As for the class struggle, it's at its lowest level since the 1930s—despite the magnificent resistance to the Poll Tax. The Tories' anti-unions laws, combined with the fear of losing a job have succeeded in holding down any fight-back to the shake-out of the recession—albably assisted by most union leaders.

Most workers are looking to a Labour government to provide relief from the 12 years of battering they have taken from the Tories. After defeats over jobs, housing, education, the NHS, social services and union rights, it 'is reaching water' until after the election.

But Labour's leadership has not only dropped nearly every 'left' policy if it is seen that its long and increasingly censured itself from anti-Tory strategies over the years. It has also tried to kill off any idea that Labour will reverse the damage, with its well worn phrase 'as the economy allows.'

A Labour victory would still in the hope that things go the right way. We may only be able to affect the vote in a small way. But we have a major task in building a campaign which calls for a Labour vote, but also raises radical policies which 'put workers' interests first.

We have a duty to warn against the austerity policies of an incoming Labour government—but also to lay the basis now for the political opposition to such sell-outs.

Socialists for Labour (BSL), launched earlier this year by Labour Party Socialists aims to be such a campaign. Its basic platform includes rejection of coallitions; repeal of the anti-union laws, restoration of cuts in public services; an amnesty for Poll Tax non-payers; unilateral nuclear disarmament; a woman's right to choose and complete equality for lesbians and gay men.

It already has over 200 sponsors from trade union and Labour Party activists, including Ronnie McDonald from the OFLC oil workers union, Joe Marino, general secretary of the Bakers' union, Jeremy Corbyn MP and a number of trade councils and union branches.

Further sponsors should be sought in every area and union (not just from Labour Party members), but the campaign also needs to be built in the localities. A recent rally in Manchester attracted several hundred people.

Still, our link up with a wide range of issue campaigns, linking their demands with a call for a Labour vote. One of the most fruitful areas will be around defence of the NHS. Labour may have gained the high ground in the pre-election arguments, but it is being very careful about its lack of commitments. Activists can link up with campaigns against opting out, against hospital closures, and others.

Wherever possible we should try to get the Labour Party to make this a part of their official election campaign. But such is the mood of not 'rocking the boat', that even on single issues this will be rare.

The only alternative to tuberculosis until after the election or just peddling Labour's official policies is to build Socialists for Labour now.

The BSL national meeting on November 16 will discuss left policies and practical campaigning ideas. All those in broad agreement with the campaign should be encouraged to come and bring their ideas.
Pax Americana in the Middle East?

On the eve of the Madrid peace conference two Jewish settlers from the West Bank were killed in an ambush. The Israeli 'Defence Force' swept into action, barring Palestinians from the West Bank from Jerusalem, and carrying out their routine 'search and harassment operations.'

Speculation immediately started about how such an event would 'harm' the peace conference. If it had been two more Palestinian dead, no one would have noticed. What's a couple of Palestinians more or less, when more than 1200 have been slaughtered by the Israeli army during the Intifada?

The conference is being held because the US has managed to persuade the Arab governments that there might be something in it for them. In the new world order it is now impossible for right-wing Arab governments to manoeuvre between the US and the Soviet Union, as was possible at the height of the cold war.

To get aid and loans from the IMF and the World Bank, and from the US government itself, close diplomatic accord with the US is vital.

It is possible that Israel could give the Golan Heights to Syria, in exchange for a peace treaty and recognition of Israel. But the Palestinians will get nothing worth having.

Demanding self-determination: the fight goes on

Every day work advances building more Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Arab fields are confiscated and Arab houses bulldozed to make way for the settlements. The aim is to use the influx of Soviet Jews in particular to permanently change the demographic character of the West Bank, to make it impossible to ever become the centre of a Palestinian state.

Opposition to the peace conference from Israeli hard-liners like Ariel Sharon makes it appear that something substantial could be conceded to the Palestinians. This is a totally false impression. 'Land for peace' is never going to apply to the Palestinians. Israeli and its US backers have no interest in even a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and in Gaza.

The conference is a big diplomatic victory for the US. By brokering the conference America looks the 'peacemaker' and confirms its status as the sole superpower. Any real concessions are likely to come from the reactionary Arab governments, abandoning their limited support to the Palestinians. Overall, it is the Palestinians who have most to lose.

Most pathetic in this charade is the Soviet delegation led by Gorbachev, acting as the loyal servants of Pax Americana.

The real line up in the Middle East is clear: a holy alliance against the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination, under the hegemony of the US. Pax Americana will offer nothing in the way of justice for the Palestinian people.

First steps towards a Euro-army

By Clifford Smith

Last week the United States gave its first response to the French and German proposal for a European army. In an interview by the US ambassador in Britain, Raymond Seitz, the US was not amused. In a non-diplomatic way he told the Europeans that it was not on.

Why has this proposal come forward? Why are the Americans so hostile to it? The run up to December's Maastricht summit show the race for European monetary and political union is accelerating.

New world order

The basis for European capitalist integration is no longer the 'world order.' This is not so much a question of the collapse of the Soviet state, but the decline of absolute US economic dominance. Today there are three contenders for international economic supremacy - the United States, Europe and Japan.

Undemned

After the second world war, the United States towered over the world economy and political scene. But by acting as the motor force to rebuild the shattered European and Japanese economies, in order to ward off the threat of 'communism', the US undermined its own long-term position.

While West Germany, the largest of the European economies, rebuilt, Japan developed high technology industries based on a low-wage economy with weak trade union organisations.

The long-term crisis of international capital profitability has hit US manufacturing industry particularly hard. Japan now equals the US in manufactured goods. But the United States still has by far the biggest national economy.

The crisis in eastern Europe throws the three-way inter-imperialist conflict into sharp relief. Japan is buying into US banking and real estate, as well as taking over manufacturing firms; there is a tide of anti-Japanese chauvinism in the US.

To compete with the US and Japan, the ruling classes of Europe must go for economic integration. But economic integration, to be effective, requires common laws, and that means political integration.

As the Gulf war showed, political and economic power are intimately linked with military power. Because of its overwhelming dominance militarily, the United States is able to partly compensate for its declining economic position.

Deadly dynamic

The idea of a Euro-army has a deadly dynamic. In all of preceding capitalist history inter-imperialist competition has led to war. The rapid decline of the 'common enemy' - the military power of the USSR - puts in question all preceding alliances. For the United States, the vital question is to maintain the framework of NATO. NATO has been the key mechanism for maintaining the dominance of the United States in Europe for forty years. NATO is not just the co-ordination of national armies, but a political framework which links European domestic politics to the US at every level.

Sinister

The significance of the Gulf war was that it pointed the direction for a new revamped NATO under US leadership. This is an utterly sinister project - to swivel the gun turrets of NATO 'southwards' against the Third World.

The problem is precisely that the Europeans and the Japanese know exactly what the US is doing, but until now the Europeans have feared a direct confrontation with Bush and Baker. During the Gulf war the German government in particular gave cast-iron guarantees to the US that on all key aspects of military and security policy it would not go outside the NATO framework.

But already there is agreement to create a 10,000-strong European rapid deployment force. But will it be inside, or outside of NATO control? A compromise the US could accept is control by the Western European Union, on which the US is represented.

The function of the deployment force is itself likely to be intervention in the Third World. Over the past few weeks French and Belgian paratroopers have been imposing 'order in Zaire. It is a sign of things to come.

For the left, a Euro-army is in no way preferable to a NATO army. It is one more sign of the shape of an integrated capitalist Europe - an undemocratic 'fortress Europe' which offers nothing positive for the working class, immigrant workers, or the oppressed. The left must demand no to NATO, no to European militarism!
Anti-fascists combat threat from far right

by Ian McLarty

Pickets besieged a fascist paper sale in Brick Lane, East London on 20 October. The area has a large Bangladeshi community and has seen an increasing number of racist attacks in the last 18 months.

The picket, called by Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) to highlight the increased threat posed by fascism in Britain, attracted more than 300 supporters. The pickets outnumbered the fascists by more than two to one.

Branches, trade unions and Labour parties. As the first national demonstration against the far right in many years, it is particularly important that the event is a success.

Workers are planning to stand in at least 60 seats at the next election, and activists are now planning a broad based campaign to isolate the candidates.

The campaign also aims to expose far right ideas inside the workers movement, ensuring that any attempt made to gain legitimacy through the elections is exposed.

Such a campaign would need to recognise the self-organisation of black people and their self-defence as a positive development rather than as an obstacle. Potential supporters of such a campaign are broad, particularly among those threatened by fascism – the black community, lesbians and gay men, trade unionists.

It is only such a campaign that can have the numbers and authority to prevent the intimidation of whole communities caused by fascist marches. This is what is necessary to deny the extreme right the platforms they abuse and the 'democracy' they deny to others.

How will ‘super-union’ uphold women’s rights?

by Gail Squires (E.Mids Rep, NALGO Women’s Committee)

NALGO, the local government workers union, is Britain’s third largest trade union, organising white collar workers in the public services.

Of its 750,000 members, about 500,000 work in local government, with the rest working in the NHS, gas, electricity, water and universities. Over 50% of NALGO’s membership are women.

The proposed merger with the public employees’ union NUPE and the health union CONCSE would bring a further 6 million women into the new union. But despite the opportunities this creates, there are also potential major setbacks.

Since 1987 NALGO has had a clear policy of promoting self-organisation for women, black members, members with disabilities and lesbians and gay men. It is generally recognised as one of the most progressive unions on the question of equal opportunities.

But there is no cause for complacency. The right to self-organisation for women and other oppressed groups within NALGO has been a hard-fought battle. There have been many pitfalls along the way for activists campaigning for representation and structures based on self-organisation.

In 1989 NALGO held its first national conference for women members. Delegates were placed upon the leadership to implement its decisions. These included proposals around the National Women’s Committee and other structures to organise and represent women in the union. It also demanded the right to a direct input into NALGO’s annual conference.

NALGO’s conference endorsed these proposals. But the leadership refused to implement them, continuing to refer to the Women’s Committee as the Women’s Rights Committee.

Two years on, some progress has been achieved, but much remains to be done. The Women’s Committee is reluctant to confront the union leadership, attracting criticism from rank and file activists.

Women in the Unions Conference

23rd November

Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1 N

I would like to register for Women in the Unions Q

enclose ................................ (65p per person)

I would like to book ................................ places in the cheque

The venue is wheelchair accessible

Please return to Gail Squires, 53a Gardens Road, London E9. Make cheques payable to Women in the Unions.
**Bigots unite against sex education**

An interesting, if unsurprising, feature of Northern Irish society over the past 20 years is the unity of Catholic and Protestant bigots on matters sexual. JOHN MAGEE, from People's Democracy – the Irish section of the Fourth International looks at this issue. This article originally appeared in *An Reabhlóid*, the bi-monthly journal of PD.

This unity surfaces every time there is a suggestion that people in Ireland should have the opportunity to be as informed about sexuality as other European peoples. It matters not what the intensity of sectarian conflict may be on one aspect. Nothing is allowed to stand in the way of the blessed crusade to keep the populace ignorant.

While Catholics are gunned down on a daily basis by Loyalist murder squads, the Catholic hierarchy and Ian Paisley's Free (sic) Presbyterianists are mounting a campaign against anyone who opens an abortion or birth control clinic in Belfast.

The opening is at the invitation of the local Health and Social Services Board. It reflects growing concern amongst health professionals at the rising incidence of teenage pregnancies, and the basic factual ignorance that many young people display about how their bodies function.

It was recognised that these same young people were the last to seek advice from their family doctors or the statutory agencies. The hope was that an independent voluntary agency, guaranteeing confidentiality, would be able to reach these young people.

The religious approach to sex education in Ireland is to deny sex exists, or to surround it with a fog of nonsense. A recent survey of teenage schoolchildren in County Cork gave a disturbing insight into what children are taught at a young age. Teachers said they had been told by girls that a girl could become pregnant by sitting on a boy's knee. The survey also revealed that 70 per cent of the 14 and 15 year olds interviewed knew a young girl in their class who had become pregnant.

Another survey examining the attitudes of Irish women who seek abortion revealed that the main reason those women chose abortion was their 'fear and shame' of having a child outside marriage. It also showed that young Irish women who became pregnant outside marriage felt isolated in having to cope with the situation alone.

The 'progressive' wing of the church, if such be possible, of course admits the need for sex education – but only as a preparation for marriage.

The coordinator of the Marriage and Family Ministry in the Catholic diocese of Down and Connor, covering the greater Belfast area, claims that 'sex education should be properly called 'education for love' and is 'much more than information or facts'. He wants sex education 'within the framework of the Christian vision of human love and sexuality'.

It is this same 'vision' which seeks to terrorise Irish women. That which energetically mobilised all the droves of Irish society to prohibit divorce in the 26 counties, to outlaw not just a woman's right to choose but the 'information or facts' that would allow women to make an informed choice.

A campaign has been set up by socialists and feminists to support the Health Board's initiative. The socialists' decision should be sent to Dr. Gabriel Scally, Director of Public Health, Eastern Health and Social Services Board, Linenhall Street, Belfast.
As the dictatorship of the market takes over from the Party in Eastern Europe Women forced back to the kitchen sink

By Sam Imman

‘COMPASSION be the bright light of your eyes’. So says the motto on the cover of the influential Hungarian women’s weekly magazine, Nők Lapja. It never used to be there. But these days women in Hungary, along with their sisters in all the other former Stalinist dictatorships in Eastern Europe are facing a huge ideological and economic offensive.

From Poland to Czecho-solovakia, East Germany to Hungary, anti-abortion attacks on elderly, childless families are being shut down, and hundreds of thousands of women workers are losing their jobs and livelihoods.

Removing classes, the removal of subsidies, inflation and other pressures hit women hardest, since they are most often responsible for feeding and raising the children.

The first subsidy to be scrapped in many East European countries was that on children’s clothes.

State-run market moves, Eastern Europe is also witnessing the growth in the number of reactionary ideologies. For women this means explicitly that their role, first and foremost, is as wife, mother and homemaker. Virtue, in a good woman, is seen through how caring, tolerant and understanding she is.

Re-emergent nationalist currents also have a tendency to latch on to women’s issues with which babies can be produced ‘for the nation’.

The danger lies in the fact that many women may accept this retreat. Why? Surely women in Eastern Europe will automatically demand the defence of the real social gains of these previously post- socialist states? Not necessarily.

It is not hard to understand why, means looking beyond the surface ‘emancipatory’ rhetoric of the old Stalinist regimes.

Without doubt, it is true that there were massive gains for women in Eastern Europe made, albeit, imposed via bureaucratic fiat. Legislation provided free abortion, virtually on demand in the first three months of pregnancy. Women were positively encouraged to gain ‘economic independence’ by having full-time jobs.

State-run factories and nurseries were provided in varying degrees throughout Eastern Europe and there was positive discrimination for women in training opportunities were taken for women by both women and men in the GDR, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

Today many of these gains are under massive attack. Crochets and nurseries are under threat, women’s machines which female labour are considered all ‘useless’, hence the huge numbers of women that are now joining the growing army of unemployed.

So why aren’t working class women visibly demonstrating mass resistance to these attacks? In part, this may be a result of the mass exclusion of Stalinist ideology, since official Stalinist ideology has come to mean itself to women’s emancipation.

But the fundamental material (and ideological) contradiction of the old system was that women were defined as both workers and mothers, without any corresponding definition of the role of men.

Therefore women faced a double burden, enshrined in legislation, where not only were they expected to be model wage-workers as well as to raise families and be domestic workers, surveys showed that women in Eastern Europe were responsible for some 75 per cent of domestic work and some 53 per cent of child-rearing.

Indeed many women also faced a triple burden, as many were also expected to play some role in social and political work. Not surprisingly, many women did not feel the slightest bit ‘emancipated’. On the contrary, they felt positively over-stretched.

Whilst women were at all levels of the dissident movement prior to the 1989 upheavals, and were present in large numbers on the 1989/90 pro-democracy demonstrations, they have subsequently been marginalised from political activity.

With few very exceptions, the former dissident women who make up the new transitional governments are men. In the new parliaments, women, on average, make up about 9 percent of deputies. Even in the former regimes there were never more than some 33 per cent of women deputies. Of course in both regimes, power does not rest with parliament.

Many independent women’s organisations have been closed down, women are mobilising in support of their rights. But a number of independent women’s organisations have sprung up in Eastern Europe, those that do exist are small and politically very diverse. Feminism, like socialism, is far from popular in the eyes of the masses.

The idea of independent women’s organisations has been discredited by the old-style official women’s movements, trolled by the bureaucracy. In new independent organisations of the state with a pretended autonomy.

Now, in the immediate aftermath of the events of 1989, there were signs that a strong independent women’s movement could develop.

In the ‘89 newsletter of the women’s magazine, Fur Dic, which had been closed by the officialist women’s movement, became far more radical post-1989. It supported the newly emerging independent women’s movement, and was vocal in demanding both the decriminalisation and extension of women’s rights.

This came to an abrupt end after the publisher was taken over by a West German company in association with that well-known defender of women’s rights, Robert Maxwell. Fur Dic had been closed down in its new incarnation.

In Poland, after the death of the Unborn Child Protection Bill was discussed in parliament in April/June 1989, there were huge demonstrations in Warsaw, Poznan and Bydgoszcz.

Many independent women’s organisations arose during this period – the Polish Feminist Association, Democratic Union of Women, Pro Feminist, Women’s Self-Defence Movement. But while opinion polls showed a majority of Poles in general opposed to the Bill, active mobilisation was limited.

This passivity is a real problem. It reflects the thorough domination of the Left and the ideology of ‘motherhood’ that is gaining ground in Eastern Europe, a vital task of socialists everywhere.

This task is made all the more difficult by the absence of a strong socialist feminist movement in Western Europe. Men in the West as well as the East have a responsibility to help address these issues up as women do. This experience shows again that there can be no socialism without feminism, and no feminism without socialism.

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El Salvador: is liberation struggle facing defeat?

By Tony Franklin

In late September, negotiators from the El Salvador right-wing government, and from the rebels of the FMLN, agreed the basis for the country’s 15-year-old civil war to be worked out. A commission to investigate human rights abuses by the army.

A permanent national consultative body, including government, labour and bosses’ organisations, on economic issues.

Private peasants to be allowed to till state-owned lands, and the government to respect peasant occupancy of land in guerrilla-controlled areas until the courts decide on ownership.

The establishment of a national commission for the consolidation of peace, with representatives from all sides.

In the framework of the agreement, the FMLN would be disarmed, and transformed into a political, and not military, force. Former guerrillas would not be eligible to join the army, but could be admitted into the national police force.

The agreement includes important concessions from the government side. But the FMLN have been waiting for a political struggle for the past 12 years. Have they really achieved that much if this agreement is accepted? This is a highly controversial question. The FMLN, in internationally.

No agreement has been finalised. This is just the basis for a possible agreement.

But FMLN fighters have been systematically prepared by their leadership for the transition into civilian life. The end of the war is certainly coming.

Originally the FMLN set out to defend socialist aims. But after violent struggles in the FMLN leadership, in 1984 they adopted a programme for a ‘government of broad participation’ which immediate the FMLN and Salvador army into a single force.

No such proposal is on the table now. Although a purging of officers responsible for crimes is a possibility, the army would remain intact, but the FMLN fighters would disband.

The FMLN faces huge difficulties in its fight with the death-squad government. Internationally it is isolated, especially in its events in the Soviet Union, and the defeat of the Sandinistas. The people above all want peace. This event a huge

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Salvador army on terror campaign pressure.

But with the army intact and the FMLN disbanded, there is no guarantee against the return of the rule of the oligarchy and the death squads.

Proponents of the agreement argue that the FMLN is winning as much as can be won, and that a strategic retreat is inevitable; thus revolutionary struggle has now to be waged by other means. But the danger is that the FMLN will become a social democratic, reformist force.

Nobody can doubt the enormous difficulties which the FMLN face, and the courage with which they have waged their war. But unilaterally disarming their forces could open up huge dangers.

The Salvadoran revolution is on the verge of defeat. The fact that it is fighting with the death-squad government, internationally it is isolated, especially in its events in the Soviet Union, and the defeat of the Sandinistas. The people above all want peace. This event a huge
From Soviet bureaucrats to capitalist elite

by Fred Weir

Nobody rubs shoulders. A huge, brick-walled dacha village presented Stalin to a physical Andrei Sakharov sit on the same shady lane, just a few doors down from a somewhat more modest one owned by former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's daughter, Galina, and her currently-imprisoned husband Yuri Churubov. Former New York Times correspondent Hedrick Smith wrote a long, and mostly accurate description of Churubov in his 1976 book, The Russians. His central remark about the place was that, had you stood by the village store any morning in the early 1970s, you would eventually have seen 'everybody' go by Brezhnev, Kosygin and other top leaders would have raced past in their limousines headed for Moscow. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, then staying at the villa, would Stalin's retired henchman, Vyacheslav Molotov. And so on.

The place is a real village, in more senses than one.

nomenklatura elite itself. The list of residents in this sprawling dacha village, barely 30 kilometres from the heart of Moscow, reads like a who's who of the old nomenklatura. If you genuinely believe that independent social revolution is taking place, where else would you feel its reverberations if not in this citadel of old-fashioned Soviet privilege?

At the centre of Churubov is a complex run by the Soviet Council of Ministers, comprising dozens of lovely country homes occupied by the currently-powerful.

In several areas around this compound are private dachas ranging in grandeur from the humble rented cottage of television star Vladimir Pozner to considerably more imposing homes constructed by luminaries of the old elite, such as artist Ilya Glazunov, musician Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergei Mikhaylov, son of the old CPSU family. The place is a real village, in more senses than one.

Come over here hoping to invest profitably could do with a lot less confusion on this point. They often appear to be looking for Soviet policies that correspond to the noble, untainted entrepreneurial type - like the heroes of those elevating ideological tables you always find above the central bar of Reader's Digest. Hence they scan the ranks of political prisoners drifting back from Siberia, or search for budding young Henry Fords among the street hustlers. And they come to grief.

Reader's Digest

In July Reader's Digest launched its Russian language edition in Moscow. It had taken the company's executives less than a year, an incredibly short time, to come over to the Soviet Union, recognize their own kind, and cut a deal. Reader's Digest parachuted in just one employee of its own, Konstantin Chalykh, a former researcher at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, to see the whole Soviet operation. The nomenklatura chefs will spoil the purity of the magazine's traditional bread. However, the first Russian edition of Reader's Digest can carry a mazurka, hero of Operation Desert Storm, an article about the retiring US ambassador to Moscow, a rights-polarizing entitled 'Myths about the American homeless' and a story about the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl.

I trust I haven't digressed. The point is, no insurgents are banging at the gates in Churubov or any other bastion of the old elite. Vast changes are taking place, but few of them are likely to alter the social hierarchy.

The Churubov, freed from communist hypocrisies about concealing and moderating privilege, is growing more visibly prosperous by the day. Along the shaded lanes, new Mercedes, Saabs and Audi glint in driveways. Someone is erecting a satellite dish. There is a distinct whiff of charcol in the air.

Meanwhile, 20 minutes drive away in downtown Moscow, queues for everything keep getting longer and longer. Ordinary Soviets, feeding their daily calfage, appear to have less say about what's all going on than they ever did.
Labour's eight decades of Kinnocks

Elected by workers, working for the bosses!

AS THE LABOUR leadership plans to fight the next election on the most right wing Labour platform for decades, HARRY SLOAN looks at the track record of British social democracy in government.

MANY on the left feel not only bitter but betrayed by Neil Kinnock's demolition of the radical policies fought for and won at Labour Conferences in the 1980s.

In many cases the disillusionment with the present Labour leadership arises from the mistaken belief that the Labour Party could be transformed into a genuine workers' party on a socialist programme.

The idea is often linked to the illusion – promoted by the old Communist Party, and even by Militant's call for an Enabling Act – that socialism can be achieved in Britain through parliamen-
tary measures, using the existing capitalist state machinery to legislative away the power of capital.

These were always illusions. If anything, by renouncing any policy that even hints at a challenge to the legitimacy of capitalism, Kinnock's team are returning Labour to the old, right wing traditions of British social democracy. It has been the periodic bouts of 'leftism' – primarily during spells in opposition – that have been the exceptions in Labour's history: class collaboration and right wing policies have been the general rule.

Bourgeois

Marxists have always shared Lenin's characterisation of Labour as a 'bourgeois workers' party' – one tied hand and foot to capitalism and its state, but linked to the unions and resting upon working class support. We call for a Labour vote despite, not because of the various policies, programmes and manifestos it has published, none of which has ever called for working class action let alone mapped out a perspective of socialism.

There was never any 'golden age' in which Labour leaders spoke out as working class militants or put forward a socialist programme. Nor could there have been. The Party began life in the early 1900s as the political offspring of the far-from-radical trade union bureaucrats, themselves not socialists but on the rebound from their traditional alliance with the Liberal Party.

Though the formation of a Labour Party organisationally and politically independent of the capitalist parties represented a historic stride forward for the British working class (one which workers in the USA have yet to make), the development was restricted. The new Party took on in parliament the traditional trade union reformist goal of seeking to improve workers' lot within the capitalist system.

Since then Britain has had a succession of Labour governments. Each time the basic policy framework has been the same – an attempt to manage (or 'plan') capitalism better than the capitalists, backed by a readiness to repress the workers when their militancy gets in the way.

Labour's problem is that no matter how serviceable may be its leaders' behaviour and commitment to capitalism, the Party's base of working class support and its links with the unions mean that it is always potentially under pressure – and therefore regarded by the employers as less reliable than their own political party – the Tories.

Turning points

Many of the watershed dates and events in Labour's history that stick in the mind concern major betrayals under economic pressure. Having rejected any socialist solution to the capitalist crisis, Labour leaders wind up taking responsibility for restoring viability.

1931: It was Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's failure to persuade his cabinet to impose huge spending cuts to placate the City which led him to form a coalition with the Tories and Liberals. In the ensuing general election Labour was decimated – falling from 289 to 52 seats, and remained marginalised throughout much of the 1930s.

1951: The post-war Labour government's decision to respond to economic problems by imposing charges for spectacles and false teeth – undermining the principle that the new NHS should be free at point of use – triggered the resignations of Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson. But it also helped ensure the defeat of Attlee's party in the General Election, ushering in the Tories for their notorious '13 years of misrule'.

1966: Harold Wilson's pay freeze ran alongside his witch-hunting and state scabbing on the Seafarers' strike. The 1967 devaluation of the pound and Wilson's attempt to cover up the impact it would have on workers' living standards ('The pound in your pocket has not been devalued') helped undermine Labour's support in the working class even before the attempt at anti-inflation legislation in 1969.

1976: When Labour's Chancellor Denis Healey returned from the Interna-
tional Monetary Fund to unveil a swingeing package of public spending cuts and compulsory wage controls, he set the scene for the subsequent parliamen-
tary pact with the Liberals, and for the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978-79 which saw a Labour government in pitched battle with section after section of trade unions, opening the door for Thatcher.

The economy, or the workers?

It was nothing new when Neil Kinnock boasted at the 1985 Bournemouth conference that Labour was 'the party of production'. He insisted that:
"We've got to have a government that likes the people of Japan, of Germany, of Sweden, of France, of Italy, puts the real interests of its country first."

This approach follows on a long, unbroken history of Labour leaders struggling to run the capitalist economy. The economic policies of the 1945-51 Attlee government were strongly shaped by Labour's involvement in the wartime coalition government, in which TUC leader Ernest Bevin as Minister of Labour spearheaded the strikes-breaking and speed-up offensive in industry. After the Wartime Joint Production Committees – in which unions collaborated with employers to maximise output – as did the brutal 1952-7 anti-union laws, passed in the aftermath of the General Strike, which remained in force until broken by mass unofficial action on London docks. The Labour government used its massive 100-seat election victory as a mandate not to sweep away but to reconstruct British capitalism. The profitable manufacturing and engineering industries were kept secure in private hands, as were the banks (other than the Bank of England) and finance houses. Only a few key strategic sectors like nuclear power and aerospace were taken in, but even there, the profits accrued were shared with the management. Paying lavish compensation to the old owners while many of the existing management staff were simply fired. Just as government cash was the only way to keep banks solvent, so the establishment of the National Health Service in 1948 – arguably Labour's most radical step ever – hauled out hundreds of bankrupt charity-funded hospitals which faced ruin.

White Heat

When Labour eventually returned to office in 1964, it pledged to reforge the (capitalist) economy in the wake of the technological revolution, its radicalism was equally limited. It took the form of nationalising the alliing steel industry and attempting to "plan" capitalism, with the establishment of a new Department of Economic Affairs as a counterweight to the Treasury, and the drawing up of a National Plan. However the plan got little further than establishing an industrial group; it failed to attract sponsor mergers between big firms, which had been a feature of the plan elsewhere, such as GEC, British Leyland and ICL. The attempt to rope unions into a common plan, and to get the unions to take responsibility for stabilising the market, also failed. When Kinnock now proclaims his refusal to repeat Tory anti-union laws, he is committing to making reform a burden on the working class.

The early honeymoon period of class collaboration was the result of the surrender of the TUC and the Contract in which TUC bureaucrats decided that their members should make no demands to exchange for the promise of reform. This was swiftly followed not by reforms but by outright wage cuts, triggering a prolonged national strike by firefighters in which Labour (unsuccessfully) called out the troops as scabs.

By 1978 the unbroken militancy of the working class resistance led Prime Minister Callaghan to demand a TUC agreement to a "docking and curtailment of strikes in the public sector."

When Kinnock now proclaims his refusal to repeat Tory anti-union laws, he is committing to making reform a burden on the working class.

Foreign Policy

Though the left watched aghast as Kinnock's team vied with the Tories to be most hawkish-on-the-Gulf war, we should remember that from the very outset Labor has always been a party committed to British imperialism, acting in wartime as the recruiting sergeants of the capitalist class.

Under Wilson, Labour governments in government insisted in 1968 that the Falklands had to be retained. In opposition 14 years later, Neil Kinnock's Foreign Secretary came quite consistently in obligingly backing Thatcher's colonial war. Labour in office has shown its readiness to support not just its "own" capitalists, but also the world's imperialists. The Attlee government sent troops back to the USA's bloody intervention against North Korea in 1950, while Wilson from 1964 defied growing protests in Britain to give political as well as military support to South Vietnam's war effort.

The 1974-79 Labour government created and used the brutal police-court which led to a reign of terror against the left. The police murder of anti-fascist demonstrator Blair Peach.

Having been the first to send British troops into the six counties of northern Ireland in 1969, Labour was also the most ruthless in the repression of Irish prisoners - triggering the H Block blanket protest and hunger strike by withdrawing political status from republican prisoners. It was the incoming 1974 Wilson government that steamrolled the vicious Prevention of Terrorism Act through parliament, effectively making it a crime to be Irish in Britain.

No Illusions

It is clear that in eight decades, British social democracy has learned nothing and forgotten nothing in their dismal repetition of class collaboration.

So why do we call for a Labour vote? Because despite Kinnock's policies and intentions, the very fact of contesting the 1980 election would create better conditions for a revival of working class militancy and activity.

The tension that will develop between the government and its working class supporters contains a positive dynamic that can break down the demoralisation and apathy that has gripped much of the labour movement during twelve years of Thatcherism and almost unbroken defeats.

One example shows the difference. Should the Tories return to office for a fourth term, they have pledged draconian new anti-union laws that could all but extinguish shop floor organisation; if Kinnock takes office there will be a battle - but it will be over how much existing Tory legislation should be repealed.

It is clear that workers will have to fight hard against an incoming Labour government, to resist many of its reactiona policies; but the fightback will be on more favourable ground, strengthened by the anger of workers whose illusions in social democracy lead them to expect real reforms and concessions from Socialists would spell out and popularise a programme of policies and demands that build on the progressive aspirations of the working class in living standards and democratic rights, and lead towards the building of a socialist solution to the economic and social crisis of capitalism.
Trotsky
Still dangerous after all these years
by Ben Wolf
EUROPE is awhirl with racism and reactionary nationalism. Nothing could be a bigger indictment of the failure of the 'official' labour movement – of the democratic parties and Stalinist par-
ties. The collapse of the Stalinist system in the east combined with the chronic failure of the social democratic parties to offer the prospect of radical change during the last 20 years.

Social democratic govern-
ments, like those of Mitterrand in France or Raulista in Spain, have provided nothing but austerity and sketchy sup-
port for the priorities of the market.

The international political scene is profoundly affected by this failure of the dominant trends in the labour movement. The space has been opened up for a reactionary offensive emanating from capitalism and imperialism. It is not that socialism is 'dead'. For millions of people world-
wide this offensive has credibility because of the ex-
perience of Stalinism and social
democratic parties which have become profoundly reactionary and conservative.

In many countries there is much discussion on the left of the necessity for a 'refoundation' of socialism. In Italy, because of the right-wing collapse of the once-powerful Italian Communist Party, a new leftist coalition is being formed this autumn.

The world-wide failure of Maoism has led to a reassessment of the left and of the role of its parties.
Behind Middle East Conference Palestinians fight for their homeland

By Paul Clarke

ONLY a small minority of the world's Jewish population lives in Israel. There are many more Jews in the United States; probably as many in New York as in all Israel itself. As an illusion to the problem of anti-Semitism, Israel is no solution.

The roots of today's conflict over Palestine lie in the wave of anti-Semitism which swept eastern Europe in the last part of the 19th century. Under modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl, wrote his book The Jewish State in 1896. At that time the idea that a Jewish state would solve the problem of anti-Semitism was fiercely contested in the world's Jewish population; many Jews in Eastern Europe adhered to the mass socialist movement.

Until the end of the first world war, Palestine was part of the Ottoman empire. After the war, it became a British protectorate. In 1917 British Zionists managed to persuade the British government to declare in favour of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. This was summarised in the 'Balfour Declaration'.

By 1936 British imperialism hoped to stabilise its grip on the area by creating a loyal, client population--as a counterweight to the Arabs and rival imperialist powers. Until 1917 there had only been 60,000 Jews in the area. Between 1919 and 1923 this increased to 100,000.

Massive campaign

Under the protection of the British and with the authority of the Balfour declaration the international Zionist movement waged a massive campaign for Jewish immigration to the Holy Land.

By 1933 the number of Jewish settlers in Yishuv, the immigrant population, had risen to 117,00, or 17 per cent of the population.

Punished poured into the country from wealthy backers abroad to buy land. Every effort was made to join up existing strips of Yishuv-controlled land, and to exclude Arab labour. Arab goods and produce were boycotted. The Yishuv became a self-governing and near autonomous entity,-renounceing the boundaries of Arab-controlled land.

Palestinian anger at the erosion of their territory and their treatment by the British culminated in the massive uprising of 1938, brutally crushed by the British army, together with Jewish irregulars.

The shock of the Holocaust boosted support for a Jewish state. In 1947 the United Nations decided on the partition of Palestine. In 1948 Britain withdrew and immediately war broke out, which pitted the neighbouring Arab armies against the well-armed and motivated Israeli forces.

Disappeared

The resulting Israeli victory created a new state way beyond the borders agreed by the UN. The West Bank was absorbed into Jordan. Palestine had disappeared.

Zionism had thus won its most decisive victory. The new state it created was based on the expulsion of the Palestinians, an expulsion based on terror. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were now in refugee camps, from which they have never departed.

From the first Israel was a pro-imperialist state. Its very existence gave imperialism, especially American imperialism, a decisive foothold in the region.

This became important during the 1950s, as pan-Arab nationalism began to rise. Nationalist regimes came to power throughout the Arab world, most importantly Nasser's regime in Egypt.

In 1956, Nasser decided on the nationalisation of the Suez canal, and, as a countermove, formed the Arab League. To defeat this, Britain, France and Israel launched a joint invasion of Egypt in October of that year. World-wide protests joined by US president Eisenhower as a means of boosting US influence in the Middle East, failed to prevent the withdrawal of the invading armies.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was formed in 1964.

The PLO rapidly created its own armed detachments, the Fedayeen. Sections of the PLO, especially the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Popular Democratic Front, evolved into a left-wing direction.

Tension between Israel and its neighbours, especially Nasser's Egypt, reached a peak in 1967. Israel launched a blitzkrieg attack in June that year, destroying the Egyptian airforce on the ground. The armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan were devastated.

Israel conquered the West Bank from Jordan, and the Gaza strip and Sinai desert from Egypt. The Palestinian populations of the tiny and over-populated Gaza strip, and the West Bank, came under direct Israeli control. To this day, the occupied territories have not been returned.

Catastrophe

Most Palestinians considered the 1967 defeat a catastrophe. This reinforced the idea that they had to rely on their own struggle to win their national rights.

But the Fedayeen fighters faced a major strategic problem - their reliance on bases in neighbouring Arab states controlled by reactionary regimes.

In September 1970 King Hussein of Jordan turned on the powerful PLO forces in his country, launching his army in a war to drive them out.

The PLO made its new headquarters in Lebanon, where it was allied with powerful Arab nationalist and left-wing military forces.

However, in 1973 the Palestinians became once again the victims of intervention from reactionary Arab regimes. In the 1973-6 Lebanon civil war, the right-wing Maronite Christian militias were defeated by the nationalist-Palestinian-left wing alliance.

Fearing the consequences, Syria's Hafiz Asad sent his army to occupy much of the country.

The Palestinian position in Lebanon was dealt a final blow by the Israeli invasion in 1981. Despite a courageous defence of Beirut the Palestinian fighters were forced to leave.

Thus, the fedayeen were dispersed, and the Palestinian population in Lebanon became the victims of terrible atrocities, notably the horrific massacre at the refugee camps in Sabra and Chatila.

This was carried out by Maronite militias, under the supervision of the Israeli army.

In 1974, after the Arabs had been defeated in the 1973 war, the PLO leadership made a new political turn. Its historic programme - for a 'democratic, secular Palestine' in which Jewish Israelis would be united with Palestinian Arabs on the basis of equality, was now practice abandoned. Arafat now fought for a 'two-state' solution, involving a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank.

It is against this idea that the Israeli policy of creating new settlements on the West Bank is aimed. The West Bank and East Jerusalem, won in 1967, have been effectively incorporated into Israel.

Military defeat

Since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the military struggle of the Palestinians has been effectively defeated. But the Palestinian masses in the occupied territories, especially the youth, revolted in the mid-1980s with the Intifada - the mass civilian uprising.

The Intifada put Israel on the defensive again. Its brutal suppression of the uprising gained international condemnation.

The Gulf war was a new defeat for the Palestine Liberation Organisation's domination of the Middle East is now much more powerful than in the 1950s. Revolutionary Arab governments have more and more openly distanced themselves from the Palestinian cause.

The cause of Palestine cannot be won outside of an overturn of imperialist rule in the Arab East. That means that the national struggle of the Palestinians must be linked to the fight of Arab workers to defeat the reactionary Arab regimes, who have stabbed the Palestinian struggle in the back at every turn.

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"The launch of socialist comes at a very important time for the left. It is essential that everyone who cares about the future should read and support it." Tony Benn MP

socialist

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French workers challenge government

by Patrick Baker

More of a ritual than economic death 'sniggered the Financial Times. And this is a fair summation of the media reaction to the French 'general strike' on October 24.

The day of action, called by two of France's three union federations, in fact saw hundreds of thousands take to the streets in protest against government austerity. But the protest was fragmented, and one of the largest union federations didn't support it.

The fragmentation was reflected in the lack of any common call for action from the two sponsors - Force Ouvriere (FO) and the Confederation Generale de l'Education (CGT), and in the lack of any joint demonstration in Paris.

But any attempt to pretend that the action was not wide-ranging and massively followed ignores the facts. Equaliy, any complacency on the part of Edith Cresson's administration would be foolish. Important struggles continue among health workers, airline workers and car workers.

Health workers, often forming the most militant contingents on demonstrations on the 24th, saw the day of action as part of their sustained action against government health "reforms".

They had mobilised in thousands just two days before, and on numerous occasions over the last five weeks. And, despite repeated government attempts to negotiate a settlement, the action continued.

The threats facing French health workers will be familiar to those working in the NHS - long hours, understaffing and a headlong rush for 'local control' and 'profitability'.

Edith Cresson's administration, consistent with its reactionary record, is attempting to smash up France's national health system.

Health workers are responding by organising their own rank and file coordination, rather than relying on national representatives in talks with minister Durieux. The 'Inter-hospital collective', meeting at the same time as government representatives meet with union negotiators, united hundreds of delegates from hospitals around the country.

The workers made it clear that the time had come not for negotiation or compromise, but action. Activists are now preparing for a national demonstration on November 7.

Working at the manufacturer giant Renault in Cleon are also stepping up their struggle. Workers are fighting to safeguard their bonuses - and for an end to the white collarisation with inflation. The Renault management has responded with a campaign of intimidation against the strikers.

But the strike has been characterised by a very high level of rank and file participation. Mini-demonstrations of factory managers have met with derision from pickets. Workers have been sending delegations to other major plants in the area to win support - to supermarket giant Carrefour, chemicals manufacturer Rhone-Poulenc, and others. A Women's Support Committee has been formed, organising factory and street collections to support the strikers.

These examples show that Cresson's problems are far from over. If it is these struggles that provide an alternative perspective to the wave of racism and reaction that has swept France - aided and abetted by the government's anti-immigrant policies.

But one key factor that is missing - and which dulled the effectiveness of October 24 - is trade union unity. The fact that France's labour movement is split into three, and the bureaucrates of each federation often refuse to work with each other, is a block to workers' unity.

Rank and file coordinations - like that of the health workers - provide one way of overcoming the divisions. But in the end, the bureaucrats that run the union federations must be forced to work together and unite France's labour movement.

Polish voters say no to rapid marketisation

by Bill Turner

POLAND'S FIRST 'democratic' elections saw most voters abstain, and the next rejet all parties linked to the previous government.

With only 40% of the population voting, and no party winning more than 12% of the vote, the elections have resulted in a political vacuum. No political force can claim a popular mandate.

Communist front

But parties that called for a showdown on privatisation plans did remarkably well. The Alliance of the Democratic Left, an electoral front for the Communist Party, got around 10%.

The elections were particularly disastrous for ex-Prime Minister Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the Social Democratic Union, the Centre Alliance and the Liberal Democrats had all been campaigning for privatisation. Nonetheless, the three parties - which are all within the Solidarity framework, and associated with the government - only mustered 28% between them. On the other hand, parties that had opposed the 'marketisation in 50 days' policies of Finance Minister Lech Balcerowicz generally did well.

Thus the Confederation for an Independent Poland, which had "blessed with success" the move to privatisation and workers control was the only winner to Poland's economic crisis.

But the only real winner in the elections was President Lech Walesa. Jan Sylwestrowski commented Walesa has been looking for an excuse to take over and now he's got it. It won't be difficult for him to despoit the parliament."

Walesa's threatening to rule by decree for some time. If the 18 parties now elected to parliament can't form a government and agree a budget inside three months - a constitutional obligation - Walesa has the perfect excuse for a 'government of national salvation', with himself as Prime Minister (and who knows what else)."

Little enthusiasm

However, some of Walesa's past supporters have shown little enthusiasm for this idea.

Sylwestrowski argues that the left's response should be a front in defence of democratic rights.

He also points out that, in one sense at least, the elections mark a step forward for Poland's workers movement. 'At least now Walesa has lost the argument that economic and political problems were all the fault of the system. Whatever government is formed, they will have the responsibility for the situation. It will be much easier to direct strikes at the government, as opposed to the fragmentation we had before.'

Hear the latest on South Africa!

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

Brecker's tour 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 dates for the tour have been announced, venues will be announced soon. The dates are

Southampton 11 November
Brighton 12 November
Bristol 14 November
Swansea 15 November
Leicester 17 November
Central London 18 November
Oxford 19 November
Birmingham 20 November
Manchester 22 November
Newcastle 24 November
Glasgow 26 November
Socialist Outlook rally 28 November

29 November
Bolivian women workers strike back for union rights

by Philip Edwards

The domestic workers story is the saddest of all. We don't have set hours. We are not allowed to sleep. We are always at the disposal of the patrons. We are people who should not die, who can't rest. All for the patrons - only they are allowed to rest.

Talking to Eduarda Soto, vice president of the Houseworkers Union of Santa Cruz, you are immediately aware of her self-confidence and ability. Only to be expected perhaps, as a leader of one of the most important unions in Santa Cruz - the major city of Bolivia's tropical region.

Persuasive, humorous and politically adept, she has the qualities one would look for in a union leader.

At twenty-six years old, she has been working as an 'empleada' for over ten years. She started her first job living in her employers' house, having to eat leftovers from the babies she looked after.

On arriving in Santa Cruz from the country, she couldn't read or write, but would never admit it, preferring to say she had problems with her eyes. In one job she worked for three years without pay; in others, employers would never allow her the time to study. Yet others dismissed her without even a day's notice - a common practice, but harsh considering that the majority of domestic workers live in their employers' house. But her case is not the worst. The union has helped women who have been locked in the house and denied food, or subjected to violence, including stabbings and rapings. Often the remedy is to help them escape.

The legal position of domestic workers is worse than that of the working class in general. Domestic workers suffer from the 'casas cholas', a form of apartheid. They are employed in a sector of the economy which is separate from the main stream of society. There are no legal safeguards for them. Their old age is not protected, nor are their children. There are no holidays, no vacations, no sick leave, no retirement plan. They are not even considered as workers by the government.

Eduarda described the situation of domestic workers in Santa Cruz.


Eduarda Soto explained that the houseworkers of Santa Cruz are demanding social security and health benefits, and recognition of their special cultural, occupational, and political positions.

In pushing for these, they have recognised their own weakness in the labour market, putting great emphasis on education campaigns, and trying to influence the government directly to introduce regulatory legislation. They face an uphill battle. Since 1985 governments have rigorously followed a neoliberal monetary policy, and are still inclined to introduce new laws in this field. More fundamentally, there is a general blindness to the empladadas themselves.

For many of them, the struggle to recognise their dignity, and in a phrase repeated by nearly all the women, to be 'recognised as human beings'.

This blindness extends into the conventional labour market. The regional trade union organisation takes little interest, and although there has at last been a recognition of the Houseworkers' Union, this recognition is 'worth more on paper than in practice'.

Women workers in Cochabamba.

There is no mistaking the bitterness when the unionised empladadas talk about the lack of support they receive from male colleagues. After attending the early meetings of the union, the local labour representative lost interest.

They are always talking in the name of the workers, but never mention us women. They haven't got the right to talk in the name of the workers. What are we then? And we are the great majority of the labour sector in Santa Cruz," said Miriam Suarez.

There are sentiments that many European women might recognise, but in Bolivia women workers face not only a traditional hostility from their organisations, but an economic climate that has devastated the labour market and weakened even the strongest unions.

In addition to this a strong regionalism which is hampering cooperation with similar regional organisations and it would be easy to be pessimistic about the future of such a union. There is, however, a great difference in the nature and style of this type of unionism.

It is giving the empladadas a respect and authority which society has denied them. Even without economic concessions, these are substantial gains, that will sustain them until they gain some legal recognition.

A change in social attitudes is one of the preconditions for future advances. Due to the work of the union and the example of women like Eduarda Soto, this has already started to happen.
Seven lessons from Chinese Trotskyism

Memoirs of a Chinese revolutionary
Wang Fanhsi
University Press, Morningside
£10.95
Reviewed by Charlie van Culleren

The new English-language edition of these memoirs should be welcomed by all interested in the Chinese revolution. Particularly for revolutionaries who may have missed the first edition published in 1981. Wang’s life-span embraces almost the entire history of the Chinese and international communist movement. Born in 1907, he is now the only one of the founding members of Chinese Trotskyism still alive.

Despite his great age and ill-health, he still takes a lively intellectual interest in current events. His only regret, as he wrote to this reviewer, is that he is too ‘sad and physically weak’ to take part in the great debate after the Tiananmen Massacre and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. To do full justice to this book and to the life of its author would require a great deal more space than is available here.

Wang took part in the Chinese revolution of 1925–27 when the young Chinese Communist Party was hamstrung, on Stalin’s instructions, by its alliance with the Kuomintang. It ended with the bloody massacre of Communists by Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist forces in Kwantung and Shan-ghai.

This new edition is particularly welcome as it contains a new short preface by the author, his preface to the French edition, and the chapter on ‘Thinking in Solitude’ – left out of the first edition for reasons of space. In his re-written preface, translator Greg Benton draws attention to Wang’s discussion on democracy with Chen Yung-hsi. In view of the importance of this question today, it is worthwhile to conclude this review with the full text of Wang’s seven theses:

Thesis 1: Under present historical conditions, if the proletariat through its political party aims to overthrow the political and economic rule of the bourgeoisie, it must carry out a violent revolution and set up a dictatorship to exercise state power. In nine cases out of ten, it is bound to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus and establish a new state. This is not an absolute impossibility.

Thesis 2: A proletarian dictatorship is set up in such a way neither must nor should destroy the monopoly of power and the various democratic rights, including habeas corpus, freedom of speech, press, assembly and association, the right to strike, etc., etc., etc., already won by the people under the bourgeois democratic system.

Thesis 3: The organs of the dictatorship selected by the entire toiling people, be under the thoroughgoing supervision of the electorate and recallable by them at any time. The proletarian dictatorship should not be concentrated in one body but spread across several structures so that there is a system of checks and balances to prevent the emergence of an autocracy or monarch.

Thesis 4: Opposers must be allowed to exist by the dictatorship as long as they support the revolution. Whether or not the present conditions should be decided by the workers and peasants’ councils is not yet settled.

Thesis 5: Opposition factions must be tolerated within the party of the proletariat. Under no circumstances must the political line of the party be confused or changed. Opposers are entitled to unlimited freedom of criticism under no circumstances must thought be made a crime.

Thesis 6: Under no circumstances must proletarian dictatorship be confused with autocratic control of a single party. Workers’ parties organised by the working class and the intellectuals, must under no circumstances replace the political power democratically elected by the toiling people. There must be an end to the present system in the communist countries where government is a facade behind which party branches assume direct command. The ruling party’s strategic policies must be discussed and approved by an empowered parliament (or soviet) that includes opposition parties and factions, and only then should they be implemented by government; their implementation must continue to be supervised by parliament.

Thesis 7: Finally, since political democracy is actually a reflection of economic democracy and there is no political democracy possible under a system of absolutely centralised economic control... to create the material base for political democracy a system of democratic planning and self-management within the overall planned economy is essential.

All these points are not in themselves enough to save a revolutionary power from bureaucratic degeneration; but since they are not phased out of the void but rooted in bloody experience, they should (a) help workers and peasants in countries that have had revolutions to win their anti-bureaucratic struggle when the conditions for the democratisation of the dictatorship state have further ripened, (b) enable new revolutionary states from the outset to avoid bureaucratic poisoning.

Getting away with murder

Deaths at work

Accidents or corporate crime – the defects of inquests and the criminal justice system
Price £3.50
Reviewed by Patrick Baker

COMPANY directors in Britain get away with murder. Of 5,000 workplace deaths in the last decade, only one has been the subject of a police investigation. Deaths at work is the subject of a new booklet produced jointly by Inquest, the campaign investigating deaths in police custody, the London Hazards Centre, and the Workers Educational Association. It shows that companies are immune from prosecution for the hundreds of deaths that take place each year in the workplace.

In the minority of cases where a prosecution does take place, directors and executives are hardly ever held personally responsible. And companies are rarely fined more than £500, the maximum possible in a Magistrates Court.

Sarah Zimnowski, sister of a builder worker killed in Central London last year, said: ‘£1000 for a life. I just couldn’t believe it. And the company which admitted in court that it had a turnover of more than one billion pounds. This was the second time a worker had fallen down an unlit shaft on the site, but of course you never hear anything about that in court.

Why is this case not referred to the Crown Court? Why did the HSE agree to the prosecution to an inspector and not an experienced lawyer. Just tell me what punishment this is? What deterrence is this? What justice is this?’

Now a campaign is being launched, supported by Labour MPs and trade union leaders, to ensure adequate investigation and prosecution of such cases. It calls for a criminal police investigation of the conduct of company officers after every death at work, and clearer health and safety legislation so that prosecution of companies is made simpler. They point out that under the current system, prosecution for manslaughter is never considered, since there is no criminal investigation. And the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) does not, as they claim, pass cases on to the police. This is despite the fact that HSE reports show that 70% of workplace deaths are the direct fault of senior management. But individual managers or directors are only prosecuted in less than 1% of cases.

Fiona Murtie of the London Hazards Centre said: ‘The entrenched bias of the criminal justice system is clear from this report. Fundamental changes are required before the public can have confidence that the law is applied equally to all, and companies and their senior officers are brought to account.’

Available from: London Hazards Centre, 308 Grangeton Road, London WC1X 2DS or Workers Educational Association, 9 Upper Berkeley Street, London W1H 2BY.
Students must force NUS to fight

By Bala Kumar

CHANTS of 'No IIs, No Buts – Stop the Education Cuts' quickly gave way to 'Hey you, Tory shits – give us back our benefits' on last month's student demonstration in London.

Organised by London Area National Union of Students (NUS) around the issue of student poverty, the turnout of around 2000 was disappointing for many student activists. This is a reflection of the widespread mood of despair and gloom permeating the student movement today.

12 years of Tory attacks have left hundreds of thousands of students deep in debt and poverty. With loans, students can no longer claim income support over the long summer break or housing benefit whilst they are at college.

Lecture theatres are filled to bursting point, library books are in short supply and staff are being axed beyond their limit.

Soup kitchens have been set up by some student unions, and many colleges have had to provide sub-standard emergency accommodation. In a recent report the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux estimates that a person on income support receives up to £1000 more per year than students on a full grant.

Those lucky enough to get grants often find their cheques don't arrive until halfway through the term. Some don't arrive until the end of term.

Student unions are also under attack. The model Tory council of Wandsworth recently cut funding for two Further Education college unions by 40 per cent. They also instituted voluntary membership of the unions and banned affiliation to NUS.

Other unions are facing cuts in their budgets, despite the mushrooming workload of welfare issues that they are dealing with.

What is the national union doing? Nothing. The New Realist leadership of NUS, controlled by the National Organisation of Labour Students, has made plain its contempt for student militancy.

Instead of using its resources to turn the despairing membership into an active, combative force to be reckoned with, NUS is planning a 70th birthday party!

The complacency is staggering. In a recent interview in the Guardian NUS President Steven Twigg even said that voluntary membership would not damage the union.

But local victories won by rent strikers, occupations and sit-ins show that action works. As Kevin Bowe, the convenor of London Area NUS, argued: 'Students must go back to their colleges and build for a national demonstration for next term'.

Trafalgar Square Prisoners

(See below for prison addresses; EDR a quarter of a page)

Brian Tavares MV3239, Camp Hill, EDR Nov '92
Timothy Demagny MW1058, Down View, EDR February '93
Darren Hesley RA2183, Wandsworth, EDR September '92
Neil Bremner MW2216, Coldingley, EDR October '92
Paul Jacob RA0711, Coldingley, EDR May '93
Mark Lee MW1054, Featherstone, EDR November '92
Simon Russell ND1666, The Mount
Robert Wray MW1242, Feltham, EDR June '92
Keith Wray MW1241, Feltham, EDR February '92
Michael Dalley FPE098, Wandsworth, EDR May '92
Mark Hutchings MW2737, Coldingley, EDR January '93
Non-Paying Prisoners – contact the Trafalgar Square

Defendants Campaign for latest details.

Prison addresses

HMP Camp Hill, Clissold Road, Bethnal Green, E9 6BP
HMP Wandsworth, Heathfield Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 3HS
HMP The Mount, Molyneaux Avenue, Bovingdon, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 2NZ
HMP Coldingley, Buxley, Woking, Surrey GU24 9EX
HMP Down View, Sutton Lane, Sutton, Surrey SM2 5PD
HMP Feltham (VOI and Remand), Bedfont Road, Feltham, Middlesex TW13 4ND
HMP Featherstone, New Road, Featherstone, Wolverhampton WV10 7PU

More information from: Trafalgar Square Defendants' Campaign, c/o Britons Late Centre, 506 Britons Road, London SW6 4EN Tel: 071 734 7586

Apology against the blockade of Cuba

Seventy-five members of the European Parliament have now signed up to sponsor the campaign in defence of Cuba, along with political figures from more than 20 countries.

The appeal, launched in France with the support of the Cuban government, is an important step towards countering George Bush's anti-Cuban offensive. With the withdrawal of Soviet support for the key island, the US government is clearly targeting the Cuban revolution.

Now socialists, greens, anti-racists and others are rallying to its defence. Examples of the campaign's sponsors include the leaders of FSMN from Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador, Lula, leader of the Brazilian Workers party; Ben Bella, ex-president of Algeria; and MPs from left parties around the world, from the New Democratic Party in Canada to the German SPD.

British supporters – apart from the 25 Euro-MPs – include Peter Heastiefield, General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers; and a series of Labour MPs, including frontbench's Ben Greet and kite- wingers such as Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn.

Now efforts must be renewed to broaden the appeal still further. Socialists should go out to win signatures in Labour parties and trade unions. But this appeal can win support in broader circles too – there are many who would not call themselves socialists who do not want to see Cuba crushed under the heel of Bush's New World Order.

The combination of the 30 year-long American embargo against Cuba and the sudden reduction in trade with the USSR and eastern bloc has created a crisis situation.

Problems in getting supplies are multiplying. Cuba's high levels of health care and education are now under threat.

In the name of human rights, people criticise the lack of democracy in Cuba. But this criticism does not give anyone the right to economically strangulate a country, in the name of the same humanity.

We, the undersigned, have different views on the Cuban regime. But we have come together to denounce a situation in which there is an attempt to deprive a regime by starving its people.

This unilateral aggression by the world’s most powerful nation will never lead to freedom for its people.

We demand the lifting of the blockade – an attack on the dignity and life of the Cuban people.

Name
Address
Organisation/position

Please return to: Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Write to Poll Tax Prisoners

Tories back Labour's Brighton sackings

150 NALGO members packed into Brighton Town Hall's corridors shouting 'no cuts' as the council met to approve Labour's £8m cuts package on October 31.

The no cuts message was carried inside the council chamber itself by members of Brighton area Action Against Section 28. They stood in front of the mayor for six hours holding a banner saying "You cut we bleed.

The public gallery was packed by protesters from the voluntary sector which is facing severe cutbacks, and caravan owners from Seepcote Valley who face eviction.

They asked a series of well-organised public questions which forced the Labour group leadership onto the defensive.

The meeting ended with an amendment to the cuts proposals from the six suspended Labour councillors, reaffirming Labour's 1990 council commitment of no compulsory redundancies.

The Labour group joined with the Tories to vote this down, and then approved a £7m cuts package that will axe over 100 jobs.

John Green

Labour Party Socialists AGM

Is there a future for the left in the Labour Party?

Sunday 17 November

10am-4pm

Camden Town Hall, London

For more information contact LPS, c/o

58 Florence Road, London SE14

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Sectarian assassinations, hospital bombing...

One solution

TROOPS OUT NOW!

Last Saturday’s bombing of a Belfast military hospital got the full ‘shock, horror’ treatment from the media. Not even the firmest friends of the republican movement could claim that this was a well-chosen target.

Nonetheless, the media treatment of this event contrasted starkly with press coverage of the events of the preceding two weeks. The nationalist population of Belfast has suffered 12 sectarian assassinations by Loyalist hit-squads in a nightly reign of terror. But you would have known little about it if you relied on the Mirror, Mail or Express for your information.

Only the Guardian gave extensive coverage to new revelations of systematic brutality by the RUC, and to new evidence that Loyalist murder gangs are being fed information by RUC officers.

A list of all the facts about the events in the Six Counties in the past weeks would give a rather different view to the one being doled out to the average British viewer in their sitting room. The facts show that the nationalist community is under murderous siege.

Against that background, the bombing of a military hospital looks different from the Falls Road. Fourteen years of British troops in the Six Counties have only led to war and bloody mayhem. The road to peace and freedom starts with the removal of the army of occupation.

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Socialism and the new world order

Ernest Mandel
(United Secretariat of the Fourth International)

Janette Habel
(author of ‘Cuba – the revolution under siege’)

Rally November 29
7.30pm

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

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