Scrap Trident

SO JOHN MAJOR is going to make defence a central election issue. More precisely the Tories will make a principle of building a fourth Trident nuclear submarine, at fabulous expense.

A fourth Trident submarine will ensure that Britain has a nuclear strike capacity of 4,000 Hiroshimas, as opposed to the paltry 3,000 it currently possesses. Doubtless millions of people will sleep more soundly knowing that!

The Tory proposal to buy a fourth Trident is loony - politically and financially. For this devastating arsenal of surprise attack, Britain will be paying £2 million a day for the next twenty years - £15 billion. Imagine what this extra money would do for the NHS, jobs and education.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the cold war arguments of nuclear deterrence are redundant. The hundreds of nuclear warheads will not be there to defend anyone, but to enable capitalist Britain to pretend to be a world power.

Labour will not build a fourth Trident. But the huge cost of the first three will continue to be borne and any saving will be spent on conventional weapons!

The case for billions spent on nuclear submarines is as dead as the Soviet Union.

SCRAP TRIDENT NOW!

Kick out Tory warmongers!
Support grows for Anti-Racist Alliance

By Sam Inman

ESTABLISHED IN November on the initiative of the Black Caucus Group — involving over 40 black organisations — the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA) was formed to combat growing racism, rising numbers of racist attacks and support for extreme right and fascist political groups.

Ten national trade unions now sponsor the ARA: MSF, NUM, NALGO, UCATT, FBU, NUPE, NAPo, NUS and the NUJ — along with a wide range of Jewish and anti-racist organisations, and celebrities.

Local and regional groups are also beginning to emerge. In London initiatives are taking place in Lambeth, Hackney, Southwark, Islington, Hackney, Waltham Forest, Camden, Hounslow and Haringey. Outside London launches are planned in Manchester, Birmingham, Cardiff, Wolverhampton, Leeds and Scotland.

The ARA Anti-Racist Alliance has also been established, and a London rally is planned for 9 March. Plans are already underway for a major national demonstration and carnival in the early summer.

It also looks as though there will be a national conference of the Alliance, again around summertime, after local groups have been given a chance to establish themselves.

The ARA rally on 29 January was a big success, attracting over 500 people. While the Asylum Bill was not really taken up enough by speakers, links were certainly made between the rise of Euro-racism and Fortress Europe, and also — more centrally — between the Gulf War/ New World Order and rising racism. The only disappointing aspect of the rally was that both Ken Livingstone and Marc Wadsworth seized the opportunity to make a dig at Wadsworth’s words, “extremist left-wing splitters” — referring to the SWP’s re-launch of the ANL.

The ARA aims to unite the anti-racist movement.

Disagreements over tactics, even strong disagreements, should be discussed within the framework of an open and democratic movement.

The ARA should be encouraged to move in this direction. Disagreements will not necessarily come only from the left — they could equally come from other black organisations.

For information about local and national events contact ARA, PO Box 188, London, SW1A 5BG or telephone 071 607 3988.

General strike against racism in Sweden

By Sylvia MacDonald

On the initiative of the Kurdish National League, fifteen immigrant organisations in Sweden called for a one-hour general strike against racism on 21 February. They are urging anti-racists to organise broad demonstrations outside and in all parts of the country on that evening.

The unrecorded racist violence in Sweden has become a regular feature of the news recently, especially in the capital city of Stockholm. On November, one Iranian student was murdered and five immigrant workers were injured after being shot by an armed racist. Two so-called ‘illegal’ men — who stalks the streets in and around Stockholm.

Tense

At present the situation is very tense. The Swedish em- ployers’ federation is clearly opposed to the strike but, up until now, do not dare to condemn it. Trade union leaders are divided in their support.

Carl Bildt, the Prime Minister, is met with growing contempt following his public speculation that the wave of shootings may been con- nected to rivalry within the criminal world. So far, only the Socialist Party (SP) — the Swedish section of the Fourth International — has called for Bildt’s resignation.

In a new development in Stockholm, collective defence is being organised for black and immigrant people who work alone in shifts. These ‘guards against racism’ have been pressed for by the SP in conjunction with social democrats, the Left Party and Stoppa Rasismen. They also have the support of the local radio.

The initiative follows debate over whether or not individuals should arm themselves for protection. The SP argues that, while individual arming cannot be condemned, collective defence is a better solution in the face of the criminal activity played by the Swedish police.

At present the ‘21 February Committee’ is enjoying a relative ‘honeymoon’ period with the press and politicians. This could easily change overnight. News of support from anti-racist and labour movement organisations in Britain would be very important for morale.

Contact: 21 February Commit- tee/ c/o Kardiska Riksför- bundet in Stockholm. Tel: 018-46-6-6528585; Fax: 018-46-6-6505236.

Rolan Adams campaign

Left must not fail anti-racist test

JUDGE THE Anti-Racist Alliance by their action said Richard Adams at the anti-racist demonstration on the 3rd anniversary of the brutal murder of 15 year old black youth while he was on the Thamesmead estate in London.

Richard Adams, sister of the British National Party moved their head- quarters into nearby Wellings, there has been a 140% increase in racist attacks. Thamesmead’s population is 90% black and white.

The Rolan Adams Family Campaign, in conjunction with the ARA, have called a demonstration around the anniversary of Rolan’s murder to Stop Racism, Murder. On the 21 February last year a gang of racist white youths on the Thamesmead estate in London.

Rolan Adams Family Cam- paign, in conjunction with the ARA, have called a demonstration around the anniversary of Rolan’s murder to Stop Racism, Murder. On the 21 February last year a gang of racist white youths were killed in Thamsemead.

In 1989, one in five black youths were stopped by the police. Since 1988, 61 black people have died in custody or due to police actions — no-one has ever been charged.

One in twenty blacks were beaten by the police. This is the police Community Police Complaints Authority, by which only 22 were re- sulted in any action.

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In this country, if the Police say you’re guilty, then you’re guilty, especially if you are black or Irish.
The decision to close Ravenscraig steel plant and the hypocritical statements from some in the Tory party stating sympathy with Scottish independence, have thrust Scotland once again to the centre of British politics.

For a long time the Tories have been utterly discredited and unpopular in Scotland. The imposition of the poll tax in Scotland first only deepened hatred for the Tories. But Labour are losing credibility rapidly as well.

Labour's decision to denounce poll tax non-payment and demand obedience to the hated tax severely undermined its position, as well as giving a boost to the SNP.

Whatever the scale of support for full independence, the demand for a Scottish Assembly with full powers on domestic questions is overwhelming. Labour promises an assembly, but insists it will be subject to veto by the Westminster parliament.

The row over Ravenscraig has exposed the Labour leadership to ridicule. Kinnock could have finally sunk any Tory hopes in Scotland by simply announcing that Ravenscraig would be nationalised by an incoming Labour government. Or if Labour could not tolerate nationalisation, at least they could have said they would keep it open somehow—either by subsidy or even buying the plant. But Gordon Brown's statement that it was just a 'business decision' which could not be interfered with was a disaster.

The politics of Kinnochism, as carried through by the Ravenscraig shop stewards, have deeply disrupted the possibility of a serious fight to keep the plant open. In effect, they accept the 'inevitability' of closure.

At the next election there is bound to be a surge of votes for the SNP. The election of Alex Salmond as SNP leader, as well as radical policies against Trident, the poll tax and for the nationalisation of Ravenscraig, has given the SNP a left image—the accusation that they are 'tartan Tories' carries little weight today.

On present opinion polls, 550,000 Scots could vote for the SNP at the general election. On the other hand hundreds of thousands of voters will vote Labour with clenched teeth—to nail the Tories and for no other reason.

In this situation the intervention of the left of the labour movement is vital. But no one will be strong enough in Scotland without a clear position on the national question. So how should socialists respond to Scotland's national demands?

Abstract denunciation of nationalism and simple-minded defence of the United Kingdom, in effect the positions put forward by the Militant tendency, are hopeless. The overwhelming majority of the Scottish people see themselves as oppressed by Westminster. The Scottish people have the right to self-determination; and, if they want it, independence. Supporting the national demands of the Scottish people today means campaigning for a Scottish Assembly with full powers.

The political situation in Scotland is developing very rapidly. All problems will limit themselves to supporting struggles against the poll tax and against job losses, but refuse to support the national demands of the Scottish people will be marginalised. And Kinnoch is dealing grievous blows to Labour's standing; if that were translated into many Labour losses in the general election, it could end all hope of defeating Major and the Tories.

ANL yes, but back anti-racism

By Paul Clarke

TEN THOUSAND people turned out for January's demonstration against the Asylum Bill, organised by Labour according to Kevin Blowes, London NUS convener, it was the biggest demonstration they had ever organised.

Events were sour, however, when SWP stewards seized control of the front of the demonstration for the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), hustling aside the banner of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA). In fact, the intention of the organisers was that black and refugee groups should lead the march. Logically, black supporters of both organisations should have been among them.

Those conflicts reflect deep divisions within the original ANL in the late 1970s. The launching of the ANL in 1976 was a response to the initiative given the rise of the National Front at that time, in localities where the NF had received 100,000 votes in London.

The IIED march were a real danger. A combination of the ANL and the election of the Thatcher government pushed the fascists aside for a whole period. Thatcher captured the racism.

But the ANL tactic always contained within it the danger that the struggle against racism would be reduced to fighting the fascists. It was a danger because the biggest threat to black communities in Britain was, and remains racism.

After 1979, the ANL wound up. But black communities remained besieged by new racist immigration laws, deportations as well as violent racist attacks.

Since 1979 it has generally been difficult to mobilise big demonstrations against this pervasive and systematic racism.

Of course, mobilising against the fascists aided the process of fighting racist attacks, which as Thamnos has shown are often linked with fascist activity. But the idea of building an alliance against racism in all its forms, the idea that lies behind the ARA, is correct.

The huge 25 January demonstration against the Fron National in Paris showed the importance of linking the fight against state racism with the fight against the fascists. Tens of thousands of North African immigrants were mobilised on the ANL march because it included demands against the immigration policies of the Mitterrand government, as well as the right to vote for immigrant workers.

Given the decision of the British National Party to stand candidates in the general election, there is a natural focus for anti-fascist activity at this time. But by its very nature the ANL cannot become its own kind of anti-racist movement that is needed.

There may well be problems of democracy in the ARA, although it is still far too early to draw final conclusions from this. But the ANL is hardly a model of democracy either.

One lamentable feature of the SWP's strong-arm tactics on the Asylum Bill march was its arrogant and authoritarian attitude to black groups supporting the ARA.

Self-organisation of the black community in the fight against racism has to central in any success struggle.

Without self-organisation there can be no viable self-defence of the communities against racist attacks. Without self-organisation, the huge potential power of the black community as an influential factor in political struggle will be wasted.

Any political actions which attempt to exclude or marginalise self-organised black groups are utterly destructive to the construction of a broad alliance against racism.

Now there are four national organisations engaged in the anti-fascist fight—ARA, ANL, and the smaller Anti-Fascist Action and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. Organisational rivalry between the former two is quickly becoming as no-holds barred fight for domination. This is entirely unnecessary and self-defeating. At the very least they should form an umbrella co-ordination between them.

This is certainly a time to resume the fight against the fascists, but it is not the time to forget fundamentals, yet again, and collapse anti-racism into the anti-fascist fight.

Despite the increase in their activity, the fascists are still a marginal factor in British politics. Racism, above all state racism, will remain the biggest threat to the black community, and a critical source of division within the working class.

No. 16 Feb. 15, 1992
AEU-EETPU merger vote

Turn apathy into opposition!

A MILLION ballad papers have now gone out after a vigorous campaign for a merger between the Engineering union AEU and the notorious Electricians and Plumbers union the EETPU.

Now the two unions have invited other unions to join them.

Leaders Bill Jordan (AEU) and Eric Hatton (EETPU) last week pulled a few last ones in their bid to form a new yellow bloc on the right of the TUC.

They have also had a hard job convincing AEU members that the EETPU is going to behave itself under President-elect Paul Gallagher, especially after rival EETPU poaching campaigns aimed at the building workers' union UCATT.

But their job has been made a good bit easier by the hopeless indiscipline of the traditional AEU left around the Engineering Gazette.

It seems that left AEU Executive member Jimmy Allin and his pals learnt nothing from the 1990 campaign, which defeated a similar merger move on the AEU executive. This time around, they have used the bizarre excuse of democracy to explain their complete failure to stop the AEU merger.

Democracy

The executive agree they have changed their approach so we must keep quiet - we can't campaign against union policy. Ironically it is precisely on the issue of democracy that the AEU leaders want a blank cheque - and most believe that Jordan plans to introduce EETPU structures, doing away with any real rank and file accountability.

Of course, the reason for the 'yes' vote is that practically every left executive member has been given the boot, with only a couple coming out clearly against the merger.

One union that will surely be swept onto the sidelines if the merger goes ahead will be the Electrical and Plumbing Industrial Union (EPIU), the remnants of pro-TUC elements in the EETPU. But when asked for their reaction to the super-union-plan, they refuse to say a thing.

Despite silence from the EPIU and the Gazette EAU activists on the ground have been waging a vigorous fight for a democratic union inside the TUC. Shop stewards in the North West have been organizing a last minute campaign; printing thousands of 'vote no' - We don't need a bosses union leaflets.

Scabbed on AEU

These spell out the objections in a few hard-hitting points:

* The EETPU -

Scabbed on AEU members at Wapping. Of 5,000 sacked, 250 were AEU members.

* Meetings of shop stewards and shop stewards have been called, but no one has attended.

* Meetings of union officials have been called and no one has attended.

* Meetings of union officials have been called and no one has attended.

We asked, what are they up to? Why not take the votes now? They didn't have any answers. There's not much enthusiasm for the merger.

The EETPU's agenda is obvious. Hammond may continue with the anti-TUC drive, but others want a left-wing bloc inside the left movement. EETPU efforts to form a right wing alternative to the TUC, reorganizing the so-called Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) and others, have not come to much.

But a business-units bloc inside the TUC is the serious danger. The lack of enthusiasm for the merger on the ground must be mobilized into active opposition.

GEC strikers dig in for jobs

A beacon of resistance

By Pete Williams

WORKERS at GEC Alsthom make distribution switchgear for the electricity industry.

They supply the newly privatised electricity companies in Britain. They also manufacture kits for assembly in Malta, Mexico and Venezuela.

Like workers in manufacturing throughout the country, they have seen their area decimated by successive recessions and the Tories' policies.

Between 1979 and 1982 GEC Alsthom shed 300 manufacturing jobs. Between 1982 and 1984 the region lost another 10,000. Since then there have been further haemorrhages, including losses at GEC.

But GEC workers have had enough. As a spokesperson for the Site Joint Trade Union Committee said: "We won't accept the principle of compulsory redundancies. We won't see people being sacked.

Four hundred workers represented by the AEU, GMB, MSF, EETPU and APEX unions are on official all-out strike. They are receiving strike pay, but financial support is still vital.

Workers in other GEC factories in the area are beginning to organize a levy. All the strikers have received one top-up payment already, but delegations are now travelling nationally to build support and raise funds.

GEC merged with the French firm Alsthom in 1989. By the end of 1991 over 1000 jobs had been lost in the former GEC factories. Then came the drive for compulsory redundancies at Higher Oponsaw.

Mismangement

But there is a long history of mismanagement. As the union spokesman told us: "The company maintain that they're losing a great deal of money - $5 million plus every year. They've put investment into this plant, but as far as we're concerned it hasn't been investment of the right kind.

We've had four different management teams on this site since 1981-82 and they've all said exactly the same thing - we're losing money hand over hand and we've got to redress it. But having made their mistakes, they redress it by asking our people to make the sacrifice of being put out of work. And as far we're concerned, enough is enough.

Japanese, Malayan and Korean firms are fighting to get a bigger share of the international switchgear market and the company has said that labour costs at GEC are too high.

Higher Oponsaw workers reject this claim. The basic rate for a skilled man is £204 per week.

They rather point to the fact that there are between 200 and 250 management and so-called 'management review' staff at their site using a fleet of 83 company cars.

At the same time as demanding compulsory redundancies, a lot of work previously done in-house has been subcontracted out. One of the strikers' demands is that this work is brought back to Oponsaw.

Solidarity unthinkingly given in the past to other workers in the struggle like the miners, Laurence Scotts, C&GQ and the ambulance workers is now being returned.

Solidarity messages have come from the C&GQ union federations in their sister factories in France. Local workers come down to spend a half hour on the picket line as well, to show the strikers that they aren't alone in what is now their sixth week of struggle.

Trial of strength

It is going to be a long fight, a trial of strength, but the atmosphere on the daily 50-strong picket line is one of quiet determination.

The basic trade union principle of 'one out, all out' is being bravely upheld in East Manchester. It is a beacon of resistance for the whole movement.

Messages of support and donations to: Dave Hughes, 23 Prince Edward Avenue, Denton, Manchester M34 1AF.
Major rearms as missiles go on the scrapheap

By Patrick Baker
THAT DEEP and no deeper'. So says George Bush on arms cuts.

In the depths of recession, publicly humiliated in Japan, Bush is prepared to go anywhere for a few million bucks to prop up the USA's ailing public services - even if it means cutting the US bomb-dump to a mere 4,000 nuclear weapons.

But when Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev, having re-targeted his missiles, proposed cutting each superpower's arsenal back to 2,500 nuclear weapons, Bush, under pressure from the military lobby and US arms manufacturers, objected.

Even those machinations of the superpowers seem almost sensible by the pronouncements of British Defence Secretary Tom King.

The Tories aren't quibbling about how many missiles to cut back. They are in the middle of a colonial rearmament programme.

'Ve make absolutely clear the Government's commitment to Trident as Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent force for the 1990s and beyond.' Isn't quite sure why or how many warheads he wants, but he definitely needs the first-strike submarine, even if it will cost £2 million a day for the next twenty years.

This has now been taken even further by John Major, who has made the issue of ordering a new submarine an election pledge, challenging Labour to say if they would cancel it.

Like Bush, the Tories are caught in a quandary. They can't hide behind the argument to justify their gargan-

nuous defence budget, but their own politics, inherited from the Cold war, make it difficult to cut. But it leaves them wide open to a 'nuke welfare not warfare' attack from anyone with an ounce of political nous.

The system, first ordered by Jim Callaghan in 1978, has been modified during the '80s to become more and more dangerous. Tom King has talked about reducing the payload of warheads on the system. But even the full potential is the equivalent of around 4,000

Hiroshimas, he can afford to, despite John Major's latest revelation that Trident is a 'minimum deterrent'.

Timid Labour

Once again, Ken Baker's crew has shown that it will miss out on any electoral opportunity if it risks the wrath of the Tory tabloids. Martin O'Neil, Labour's almost unheard-of defence spokesperson, has merely said that only three submarines will be ordered.

As a contribution to disarmament, increasing Britain's first strike capacity by only 3,000 Hiroshimas rather than 4,000 is hardly impressive. But only a handful of MPs have consistently defended the anti-nuclear policies that were common ground in the Labour movement a few years ago.

Socialists organisation a left input into the so-police elections are planning to put Labour on the spot, demanding to know why the whole system can't be junked, releasing millions for public investment.

Election smears: a growth industry
Expect more from the dirty tricks department

By Dave Osler

AFTER the 'Labour's Kremlin connection' and 'Paddygate' scandals, a spate of burglaries at MP's offices, and now apparent attempts by former Scotland Yard officers to link Kinncock to prostitutes, there is talk of the dirtiest general election campaign ever.

But smear tactics are nothing new.

The latest Kremlin smear is a slanted descent of 1940's so-called 'Zinoviev letter' from the Communist International to the CPGB, which somehow came into the possession of the Foreign Office. Conservative central office and - of course - the Daily Mail.

Forgery

The document, probably forged by an anti-communist Russian emigrant, was published just five days before the by-election. Conservative front-group faced re-election.

Labour's response was real diplomatic recognition, a commercial treaty and a money loan to

Campaign fights intervention in Libya

THREATS of sanctions and/or military intervention against Libya have multiplied in recent weeks. The West has demanded that the two officials allegedly responsible for the 1988 bombing of flight 103 at Lockerbie be handed over.

But sponsors of a new campaign opposing the threats maintain that the British and US governments are building international law. They also point out that earlier claims that the bombing was the work of groups backed by the Syrian and Iranian governments have been conveniently forgotten since the regime became Western allies over the Gulf war.

No intervention in Libya!

Public meeting
February 24, 7.30pm
Grand Committee room, House of Commons

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Teachers plan fightback

By Roy Leach
(Secretary, Oxfordshire NUT)

Education is suffering an accelerating wave of cuts in services and jobs. But the cuts, caused by poll tax and cuts in government grants, are often devolved to local level by the effects of Local Management of Schools (LMS) - the delegation of funding to individual schools.

The response of the biggest teaching union, the NUT, is dreadful. Linguishing in the grip of general secretary Doug McAvoy, overpaid full-time officials and a group of executive members who bizarrely call themselves the 'Display the Left', the union has failed to give adequate support to local anti-cuts struggles.

How to overcome this situation was the focus of a conference attended by more than 70 NUT activists in Oxford last Saturday. Delegated by 36 NUT associations, the conference brought together activists supporting the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, and non-affiliated left-wingers.

Among those who spoke at the conference were union treasurer-elect Ian Murch, who stood on a platform of opposing bureaucratic corruption, and plugging the union's strike fund to pay for glossy booklets and useless advertising campaigns.

The organisers' aim was to break the isolation of the numerous current fightbacks. Local reports from delegates revealed a national picture of short-lived strikes, reluctantly sanctioned by the national union, but doomed by the support, publicity and national coordination they need and deserve.

A central concern of the conference, in addition to discussing strategies for fighting redundancies, cuts and lack of resources, was democracy in the NUT.

The McAvoy leadership is one of the most authoritarian and anti-democratic in the trade unions. Last Easter's NUT conference saw numerous motions ruled out of order for being ''outside the aims and objects'' of the NUT, and not even published, let alone debated.

The Oxford conference decided to launch a campaign for a one-day national strike against cuts. Something the NUT leadership has always refused, hiding behind the anti-strike police gag.

Another meeting will be called to co-ordinate the left's intervention at this year's NUT conference, and to ensure that cuts and redundancies take centre-stage there.

And a conference of black teachers and anti-racism groups to discuss the fight against the IS 15 per cent cut in Section H funding - money given by the Home Office to aid the teaching of children from the 'new Commonwealth'.

This cutback has hit inner-city schools with many black pupils very hard.

Local government cutbacks

’Loony right’ Labour councils slam workers and services

By Brian Gardner
(Secretary, Islington NALGO)

WHITE COLLAR local government union NALGO has launched a £2 million publicity campaign in defence of local government services.

But the campaign, which follows in the wake of its 1983 and 1986 ‘Get the Facts’ and ‘Make People Matter’ campaigns, is bound to draw fire from the Tories in an election year.

But NALGO members will know that, with tens of thousands of local government jobs on the chopping block, this is the only hedge against the axe.

Women on benefit cannot afford childcare while they look for work, although they have been denied their Employment Benefit unless they have childcare provision available for 24 hours a week.

The campaign is to be known as ‘New Deal’ and will be launched next week.

NALGO has produced a paper outlining the likely effects of the Conservative government’s cuts programme.

Councils have been left with the worst cuts yet, with £5 billion cut from their budgets since the beginning of the year. This is a 12 per cent cut for councils, which have had to increase their income by £7 billion, say the unions.

NALGO is the only union to have produced such a document, says the Executive.

In press releases the unions say: ‘These cuts are the biggest in the history of the NHS and social services. They are the start of the end of the welfare state and the provision of services for the elderly and the disabled.’

‘Setting Labour policy?’ Headlines redunciadencies. In Camden, where social workers have entered their eighth month of indefinite strike action, the council seems set to cut 200 more jobs.

The fashion of slamming the workforce, Hackney is planning a ruthless new code of conduct, which makes a disciplinary offence to squat, not pay your poll tax, and refuse to inform on colleagues guilty of similar disciplinary offences.

Crunch

Cruise time for NALGO comes this spring when up to 40,000 jobs could go, mainly through voluntary redundancies, to add to the up to 20,000 jobs which went last year.

Some NALGO branches are fighting back. The union’s NEC has been forced to back a national campaign in Camden, while 1,600 workers are on indefinite strike in the huge Strathclyde region, to win the right to not have to cover for posts made vacant by redundancy.

But local fightbacks can’t disguise the fact that NALGO’s anti-cuts strategy isn’t working. It isn’t working because the successive strategies over the past five years have been reactive tactics - a pledge to back branches that fight back.

But in the absence of national co-ordinated action, every branch in Britain and Stewart knows that it’s extremely difficult, outside the most militant branches, to get a vote for industrial action to fight the cuts. That is the core of the problem; people are afraid of defeat which will make the situation worse.

The real policy of the Labour leadership is to take election victory. NALGO is deep in merger discussions with NUPE and CORBIE which shows that it’s extremely difficult, outside the most militant branches, to get a vote for industrial action to fight the cuts. That is the core of the problem; people are afraid of defeat which will make the situation worse.

NALGO’s publicity campaign will tell people to remember public services when they decide who to vote for. It should also tell people to prepare to fight whoever wins.
Major disaster as recession becomes slump

By Andy Kilminster

"If it isn't hurting, it isn't working, is it?" Why isn't it working? Why is the British economy failing to recover from the recession? There are two immediate reasons. First, the massive build-up of state and company debt in the late 1980s. Second, the effects of joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM).

In 1990, British companies' net borrowing was £27 billion, the highest ever, up from £21 billion in 1989. This compares with eight years of surplus before 1988. The build-up of debt by households during this period of strong money growth is also well known. In these circumstances, high interest rates in 1989 and 1990 were bound to lead to a slump.

Joining the ERM was always meant to be a deflationary influence on the economy. France's participation in the scheme was followed by several years of rising unemployment and Spain now seems to be undergoing a similar process.

With the pound loosely fixed against the German mark, any attempt to control inflation via the British economy faster than the German economy will lead to a rapid growth in the balance of payments deficit as imports expand. That means increased interest rates will have to be kept high to cool down the tide of capital fleeing.

The ERM ties the other European economies to expanding domestic demand at roughly the same rate as the Germans. This is a very slow road indeed.

It does not lead to such high unemployment in Germany, at least in the West, because of the ability of German firms to export their goods. But for weak economies in the ERM, such as Britain, which do not have such great export demand, high unemployment is a serious problem.

All this is understood very well by the government and by the banks, and the policy until now has been to use the ERM as a means of disciplining workers: the threat of unemployment is meant to encourage low wage demands and deliver high productivity. But this means short-term problems in terms of generating any pre-election boom.

Paradox

Debt and the ERM provide the immediate reasons for the slump. But why is the economy still refusing to grow even though interest rates have been cut? Part of the reason is the fear of unemployment growing. Another reason, paradoxically, is lower inflation.

As prices rise more slowly, the value of companies' existing and future investments in their individuals' debts and interest payments rises in real terms, discouraging spending. Borough councils have seen such as the Financial Times have begun to talk a lot about this kind of "debt-deflation" mechanism of recession.

But there are deeper reasons. The Tories' economic policies since 1979 have been designed to achieve two main things. First, a major increase in potential productivity, through lower wage rises and higher productivity. Second, enough economic stability to ensure the realisation of that profitability. The current recession is the outcome of their failure in both areas.

Real wage and profit have not been cut since 1979, unlike the experience of the late 1970s. So any increase in profitability has depended on the increase in productivity. During the mid-1980s there was much talk of Thatcher's "productivity miracle";

This now appears largely to have been a productivity mirage. The rate of growth of labour productivity fell from 3.1 percent in 1987 to 1.9 percent in 1989 and 0.2 percent in 1990.

Demand

Even if profits can be made in the productive process, they have to be realised by selling goods. Here investment demand is crucial. In 1991, UK investment fell by 11 percent. Manufacturing investment in 1991 was about 6.5 percent lower than in 1979.

Other sources of demand are limited. Exports are weak because of the recession elsewhere in Europe. Even if the government wanted to expand its own expenditure it is limited by estimates that the forecast government borrowing requirement of £29 billion for this year may be too small.

All this means that profitability is falling, by about 11 percent in real terms from 1990 to 1991. But companies have massed their dividend payments as well as cutting back their borrowing. This means that there is less and less money available for new investment, and it is no surprise that the slump continues.

The current recession shows that the last thirteen years of Tory government have solved none of the underlying problems of British capitalism. In the short run, recent reductions in interest rates will have an effect. Any attempt to reflate the economy above a certain level will lead to renewed inflation and balance of payments difficulties. Worse, if Germany raises interest rates as a consequence of the recent pay concessions to avoid a steelworks strike or because investment in the East begins to boom, then the recession may only be beginning.

No help from USA

More of the old bull from Bush

By Harry Sloan

Any hope that Bush, the US President, is going to bail out the British economy now that he has given his keynote State of the Union Message in Congress. Instead he outlined a timid set of tinkering changes, mainly directed towards placating the Republicans' disgruntled big business supporters.

The most wistful-reaching proposal was concessional interest rates of $3 a week to single people and $6 to couples, to level middle income wage earners. This will inject an extra $22bn in cash to help pay for clothing, shelter and "gas to heat your car."

While this tax cut pushes up the national savings deficit, a book-keeping fiddle will appear to manipulate it downwards by $38 billion. Some of this additional 'saving' is then to be spent on a John Major-style one-off boost to a fivemillion first-time buyers a $5,000 tax credit on homes bought before the end of 1992.

Super-rich

All the other giveaway measures outlined by Bush are targeted at the Republican super-rich. There are tax breaks for real estate developers, $4 billion in corporation tax concessions for big business, and plans to cut capital gains tax - three items together that will go to those earning over $200,000 a year.

To make matters worse for Bush, it is by no means certain that all these half-baked measures will be endorsed by the Democratic-controlled Congress. The measure known to be doomed in advance is Bush's half-hearted effort to defuse the growing crisis in the US health care system, and offer some form of insurance cover for 37 million uninsured and 65 million under-insured Americans.

The Bush plan involves diverting money out of the federally subsidised Medicare (for the elderly and disabled) and federally-sponsored Medicaid (for the poor and unemployed) schemes, and into tax credits to allow families or individuals to buy private insurance cover. Bush proposes also to offer credits to the unemployed and those on pay below the tax threshold. His "theory" is that once these people are covered by private insurance they will no longer make claims against the Medicare ($11bn) and Medicaid ($6bn) budgets.

In practice the scheme would simply be a thinly disguised cut in hospital care for the poor. It also offers a short-term cash windfall for the avuncular private insurers.

The discussion is academic, because Bush stands little or no chance of pushing this plan through Congress. The paralysis on this issue, while both of the major parties seem to be waiting for the next crisis and embarrassing deficiencies of the privatised system, symbolises the problems of US capitalism.

Despite his appearance of strength, Bush has found himself hamstrung by his lack of support in Congress, and can find no escape from the gathering recession.

Instead, dominated by two capitalist parties each shackled by a million links to the values and policies of the "free market", the USA has seen its vast industrial corporations caught and overtaken in their global dominance by their more modern and productive competitors in Japan and Germany.

Pyrrhic victory

While Bush can claim a US Victory in the Cold War, the US economy has paid a heavy price for Ronald Reagan's massive arms build-up in the 1980s. The federal deficit is now projected to be $400 billion in 1992, 8.7% of GDP.

One outcome of this is that having won a political victory in the Cold War the USA cannot now bankroll any new Marshall Plan initiative to restore capitalism in Eastern Europe or the ex-USSR.

And having won a "peace dividend" financially from the Gulf War, Bush knows that any US military dominance is not enough to guarantee markets for US manufacturing industry. Multinationals which for decades have traded on their monopoly of the giant US market now find themselves undercut by their cheaper and better imports.

Even the efforts to rid this back with chauvinistic "Buy American" campaigns have run into the snag that many US-made goods are Japanese or imported parts, or are made by foreign-owned firms in the USA.

No idea

So now, with a hostile Congress and no real idea of what to do, the most powerful man in the most powerful and wealthy country is reduced to shutting his eyes and hoping for the best as he slides towards the elections.
The end of an era?

In 1990 the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua was overturned at the ballot box, and a right-wing government elected under Violeta Chamorro. Now the FMLN, the revolutionary front that has waged a guerrilla struggle in El Salvador for ten years and more, has agreed to lay down its arms.

Patrick Baker from Socialist Outlook asked JAMES DUNKERLEY, author of such works on Central and South America as Rebellion in the Veins, The Long War and Power in the Isthmus, for his view of developments.

PB: The El Salvador Accords represent a turning point – either the end or a turn in a process unleashed in the late 1970s with the Sandinista revolution and the armed struggle in El Salvador. What is your assessment of the accords? Do they represent a capitulation by the FMLN or a tactical setback?

JD: It’s still not clear, because any decisive victory or defeat takes time – it’s a process. My inclination is more to say they’re a tactical decision, although it’s difficult to say anything with a tactic after 10 years of civil war. I think the Bolchevists’ Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is better than most historical analogues, though there aren’t many precedents for this agreement.

There’s been no significant or strategic change in the line of the FMLN in the past few years. You could even argue it’s a partial victory. Anyone who’s been to El Salvador knows that after November-December 1989 it was quite implausible that they would win by force of arms. The United States was not going to allow that. You could fight, but not win. Any responsible political leadership was going to have to take decisions.

So I don’t see it as a capitulation, particularly compared with the 1963-64 GAP accords in which the liberation organisations proposed a government of broad participation. I think it’s correspondingly accurately to the balance of forces within El Salvador, but much more importantly to the global balance of forces, for which the FMLN bears no responsibility.

PB: But the real question is: what are the possibilities of the accords being implemented, given that the whole apparatus is riddled with the goons of the death squads? It’s quite difficult to believe that the police and the army will be dispossessed, integrate both sides, and move towards a more or less liberal democratic state.

JD: That’s clearly the case. It’s also worth making the point that the balance is not the same as in Nicaragua, where the Sandinistas held state power. But some of the comparisons are worth drawing. If only because the actors in El Salvador are looking at Nicaragua.

The accords are bound to break on a tactical level. But the question is whether there will be a major break either by the paramilitary or even the central right to sabotage them. That possibility is not negligible. The question is, is it inevitable or likely?

At the moment I think the FMLN’s justified in saying there’s a possibility it won’t happen, and the guarantees in the administration of the accord give them some security. It could go horribly wrong, nobody’s disputing that. But the war had to end somehow, and if it’s not on the basis of surrender, then there have to be deals.

There clearly needs to be a degree of trust – they’ve been shooting each other, and in the case of the right murdering thousands of innocent people and ‘ideological enemies’ for the last decade. So sure, it’s not easy.

PB: It’s not easy to imagine anyone trusting people like D’Aubuisson…

JD: But D’Aubuisson is dying and his influence inside ARENA and the spoils network of the right in El Salvador is on the wane. These people aren’t very romantic or sentimental and they know he’s dying.

So what do you have on the right? No proper class analysis avoids dealing with the enemy first and foremost. You have a right which is no more pleasant – though with rather less blood on their hands – but which is prepared to listen to the USA.

The US has decided – partly the State Department but even the Pentagon – that they won’t deal with the left, but that El Salvador is an inconvenience. The ‘demonstration effect’ of defeating the left in El Salvador has become negligible for them.

So any deal that involves just minor concessions is relatively unimportant in the imperialists’ logic. Just as El Salvador itself, you have people in the apparatus who would prefer to go for an all-out offensive against the FMLN. But after ten years, the purely military aspect shows the FMLN is capable of surviving. The FMLN is divided on this point, because it’s not a truly united political force. There is a faction which is willing to upholding a maximum programme for social change, not negotiation on civil democracy.

But it would lose significant popular support if it implemented that line. It wouldn’t be able to engage in the battle of ideas, which is what the rest of the FMLN now wants to do.

PB: Going back to the links between the accord and what’s happening on an international and regional level, those events at the end of the 70s – the Sandinista victory and the FMLN guerrilla conflict – have now come to an end. It doesn’t look so long before Cuba will join them. So many on the left saw a chance for a real breakthrough on an international level seems to have fallen through. What do you think?

JD: The linkage between El Salvador and Nicaragua is interesting, because one took state power and the other didn’t, but they’re still suffering the same crisis.

I think this means that in this part of the world, holding state power doesn’t always hold the same advantages that we’ve always figuratively assigned to it. For reasons of the Latin American left, the important thing was conquering the institutions of the bourgeois state. That may have been misconceived in many respects.

The balance in Latin America is mixed – you can accuse the Brazilian Workers Party of harbouring a mish-mash of all sorts of things and some very important movements. And millions of people voted for it.

Similarly, millions voted for Cardenas in Mexico and there were elements in his campaign that were far from a sell-out. There were also elements that were even closer to the right than the PRI the party in government. But there were movements there that showed that elements of the historic left programmes haven’t just been junked.

So I wouldn’t say it’s all downhill. I wouldn’t say the Latin American social balance necessarily measures up as negative, in the context of the region as a whole. I think you’re right that it’s a matter of time before the Cuban revolution.

The big question – what’s the agenda – clearly involves a lot of revaluation across the board. But with Latin America, I don’t think it means throwing the baby out with the water.

I think there are elements there in particular that are an important in a region that has suffered acute imperialist oppression during the last century. These features are important although they run a danger of being met with in some countries.

But I think the left has been scared getting into these dangerous zones, and we hope it will now move on. If we have to compete in areas where we are ideologically dominated by the bourgeoisie, we need to have very good arguments to do it. That’s one area where left in Latin America has to get up to do something.

PB: An important factor in the case of Cuba’s decline but also Nicaragua at the withdrawal of Soviet aid, especially oil to the Cuban economy. That has an impact on standards of living, and I think there’s no doubt one of the reasons Castro has maintained so much popular support is that standards of living have been remarkably high. But Soviet aid was mainstay.

Given that, how do you think the collapse of the Soviet regime was seen by the FMLN, the FSLN and – a slightly different case – the Workers’ Party?

JD: Going back to Cuba for a minute the kind of analysis of ordinary Cubans in the ’60s and ’70s would be one reflecting the workers state of Cuba with the capitalist state beforehand. But it was their own, autonomous state, which came from the masses.

Now that generation is old, it’s not a bulk of the population any more, the majority compares this regime with
previous period of this regime and sees a
tangible decomposition. And it’s more
unusual, in fact, of its youth and the
history of the regime itself, to the in-
mony of consumerism.
If you talk to other Latin Americans,
you talk to the average left-
leaning Latin American – in Chile or in
Mexico – people have given up on
Pinochet, in terms of having the resources
to survive this. On the other hand, they
respect, admire and revere him be-
cause he stands up to the north Ameri-
cans.
Cuba stands for Latin American anti-
impersonalism, a beacon of oppositionism.
Neither in the period of peaceful coexis-
tence under Khrushchev, nor during the
period of the Brezhnev doctrine, has the
Soviet Union ever stood for that.
The Soviet Union was never seen as
having an alternative, except as a
counter to US capitalism. So with that
gone, the impact is much more on Cuba
logistically than the disappearance of
what was called ‘real’ existing socialism;
creating an ideological trauma for
the left in Latin America.
They didn’t really see it like that. The
groups coming up are the Brazilians IT,
elements of Cardenalismo in Mexico
which profess to be socialist, the FMLN,
the PSIN – these were almost all created
after the Cuban missile crisis, after
peaceful coexistence. So I think the col-
lapse of the Soviet Union represents a
shift in the balance of power, not an
ideological crisis.

PB: The Soviet collapse, along with a
string of events including the Gulf
war, means that there will be a big
global recomposition in terms of
zones of influence. But South and
Central America are still two regions
where some mass support exists for a
kind of revolutionary socialism. The
question is how that support can be
used to create a new breakthrough
against Bush’s New World Order,
given that the left is on the defensive.

JD: These are peoples who, with the
exception of Cuba, have a deep experi-
ence of capitalist management and econ-
omy and therefore are not duped. His-
ory has dealt them a very poor hand.
But it does mean that they understand
the changing nature of capitalism, that
capitalism can take various different
guises.
We should recognise the reality of
where most poor people who labour are
at: they move between very radical sol-
utions and survivalist ones. That’s ide-
ologically where their terrain tends to
be quite broad, why in these very violent
situations people are not continually on
the left.
You have to develop, sometimes with
in the realm of theory, alternatives that
are perceived by the masses as viable –
not least because they should come, at
least partly, from the masses own prac-
tice. There is a certain internal satisfac-
tion in being able to analyse, criticize
and condemn.
But you have to take the next step,
which is to propose an alternative which
is perceived as viable. Of course they
can’t be viable unless the masses make
them so.
No left wing activist is ever going to
be able to change the world for the good
unless the masses are there to do it. But we have to
believe in that possibility.
That’s what the Sandinistas had in
their bow, that’s why I’m prepared to
give the leadership of the FMLN the
benefit of the doubt. Because the masses
are quite patiently want peace, and would
condemn the FMLN for failing to allow
peace to go ahead, if they didn’t sign the
pact and take a risk.

PB: If we want to push the struggle on
different level – one that doesn’t
involve such direct confrontation, but
is on a more ideological level – surely
that presupposes a certain
transformation of these societies, a
liberal democratic framework.

PB: It is realistic, given the
socio-economic reality of Latin
America? These are tiny,
poverty-stricken countries on the
doorstep of the USA, and the
world economy is in massive
recession.
JD: Well, the ideal of liberal democ-

But it is a new conjunc-
ture – I agree that it won’t
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than a couple of years.
Therefore we shouldn’t say
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PB: The pay-off – a
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West. But it’s difficult to
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JD: Structurally, there
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the whole argument. I think
you could even get an in-
creased pauperisation of the
masses and they’d still
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what they’ve lived
through.
These people have
watched slaughter, whole
villages razed, their
families cut to bits with ma-
chetes. These are people
wiped out from war and death.
I think that’s why the
FMLN leadership has said
‘The masses are tired of but-
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We can protect our own, but
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Of course this isn’t a system that
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Class warrior women of the rainforests

Amazon Sisters

Directed by Anne-Marie Sweeney
Channel 4, February 3, also on video
Reviewed by John Lister
AT LAST we have an alternative to the sentimental, pro-environmentalist documentaries that blame peasant farmers for the devastation of the rain forests of South America.

Anne-Marie Sweeney's film Amazon Sisters is about the industrial revolution that is turning an area bigger than Europe into a vast mineral extraction and smelting complex, leaving a lunar landscape of smoke and dust in the heart of Brazil's Amazon jungle.

Here giant ironworks, financed by the World Bank and by Japanese and European capital, use charcoal as fuel, burning the forests and expelling the local population. To make matters worse, they are being built on the vast fringes of Brazil's rainforests, clearing vast areas of forests and leaving a blackened wilderness of smoke and dust in the heart of Brazil's Amazon jungle.

As the malaise spread, so health care spending has been cut: now the environment ministry has sanctioned spraying the area with insecticides including DDT - banned in Europe. Last time around, the spraying killed crops and even children.

Deforestation is itself big business. Around the region's iron ore capital, Paragominas are 600 saw mills employing men, women and children working in clouds of noxious dust and using potentially lethal equipment.

On the edge of the sawmills, charcoal workers sit out a tough existence in make-shift shacks and constant smoke and noise - the lack of the work done by women.

Even the local Environmental Reserve has its ulterior motives - owned by one of the most profitable firms in Brazil, known as The Vale. For Vale bosses, the issue is not the forest but their £3.5 billion scheme to exploit the minerals that lie beneath it. The man-made forest is protected by strong-arm forest police sexism against the peasant families who once lived there.

All this is the backdrop against which Amazon Sisters constantly focuses on the situation and courage of the struggle of women - their fight to organise, their willingness to take action in defiance of all restrictions and restrictions, and, in significant cases, to win victories against overwhelming odds.

The women tell their own stories, face to camera, recounting the problems and the battles of their lives with awesome cheerful-ness. Many explain how central are their union organisations, which have provided the strength and solidarity that enabled them to fight.

As the film progresses, this positive message of resistance and class action emerges consistently to the fore. One of the organisers recounts in detail the victorious land occupation led by women which in 1984-5 secured the 3,000-home settlement of Maratã-Indi- dard. The film shows the eviction of another settlement, and the sole survivor of the eviction is a young woman who tells the film-makers of the dreams.

As they add the final images of the landscape, the film is a testament to the struggle and to the human spirit that can prevail against all odds.

Peter Tatchell: making a principle out of being outrageous

Why then do Outrage! leaflet schools without trying to co-operate with NUT members? Believe or not, lesbian and gay teachers do exist - even in Catholic schools - and there are even straight teachers sympathetic to positive images of lesbians and gay men within education.

Leaflets

Just bouncing in and handing out leaflets showing lesbians and gay men kissing, to some bemused school students is not a serious campaign around positive images and anti-biases in education.

In fact it may be just counterproductive in some cases, but could easily be dangerous for lesbian and gay students and teachers who may not feel their environment safe enough to come out.

Direct action certainly has a central role in challenging lesbian and gay oppression, but lesbian and gay workers and students have got to be collectively involved and not merely passive observers of this highly individualistic method of operating.

From the tone of their recent adverts in the lesbian and gay press, it seems Outrage! are frustrated by the passivity of the lesbian and gay movement and its attempt just confined to lesbians and gay men. After thirteen years of savage Tory government, and now with an appallingly right-wing government just confined to lesbians and gay men. After thirteen years of savage Tory government, and now with an appallingly right-wing government just confined to lesbians and gay men. After thirteen years of savage Tory government, and now with an appallingly right-wing government just confined to lesbians and gay men. After thirteen years of savage Tory government, and now with an appallingly right-wing government just confined to lesbians and gay men.

Lesbian and Gay Liberation

Outrageous stunts not enough

By Lois Lane

WE ARE totally pissed off with the way the government, the media, the police and the public treat us like shit - join our campaign for 'equality by any means' - join the 'Queers with Attitude'. Outrage!, the lesbian and gay action group, are on the offensive.

Their leafletting at schoolgates, their illegal march on parliament have certainly caught the attention of the tabloid press. But do Outrage! seriously think they can build a movement for equality just by pulling off stunts?

Our growing number of lesbians and gay men are more than fed-up with the oppressive heterosexism running rampant throughout the whole of British society - including the organised lesbian movement and the left. It grinds you down; it moralises you; it gets you sucked in; it leads to losing your home, your parents, your children, your friends; you can be killed on the street because of it. But it isn't going to be fought by moralising.

Outrage! say that nothing has changed in the 25 years of male homosexuality was partially decriminalised. Why then, did the Tories feel it necessary to go on the political and ideological offensive with Section 28? Had they not thought of being reactionary big-bets before then? Of course not.

Advances

The reaction came because real advances were being made by the lesbian and gay movement - largely through working within the organised labour movement. The Labour Party leadership then predictably scrambled out as it did before, further to the right. Peter Tatchell: making a principle out of being outrageous

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demoralises you; it gets you sucked in; it leads to losing your home, your parents, your children, your friends; you can be killed on the street because of it. But it isn't going to be fought by moralising. Outrage! say that nothing has changed in the 25 years of male homosexuality was partially decriminalised. Why then, did the Tories feel it necessary to go on the political and ideological offensive with Section 28? Had they not thought of being reactionary big-bets before then? Of course not.

Advances

The reaction came because real advances were being made by the lesbian and gay movement - largely through working within the organised labour movement. The Labour Party leadership then predictably scrambled out as it did before, further to the right.
An American coup?

Reviewed by Paul Wozny
OULSTONE STONE'S controversial account of the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy is the subject of this review. The film claims the assassination was part of a secret plot to promote war to boost profits.

The Warren Commission was set up by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, to uncover the conspiracy. Two of its key figures were Allen Dulles (ex-CIA) and Gerald Ford ( Nixon's hand-picked successor as President). Their conclusion was that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone to assassinate President Kennedy.

Strenuously, the Supreme Court's findings and the Warren Commission's conclusions are incorrect. The Warren Commission was set up by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, to uncover the conspiracy. Two of its key figures were Allen Dulles (ex-CIA) and Gerald Ford (Nixon's hand-picked successor as President). Their conclusion was that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone to assassinate President Kennedy. Strenuously demolishes one aspect of the Warren Commission's work and is the subject of this review. The film claims the assassination was part of a secret plot to promote war to boost profits.

It is Stone's ideological analysis of Kennedy which has prompted many on the left to attack JFK. Kennedy was elected as President by taking a more aggressive imperialist stance than his Republican rival, Richard Nixon. It was Kennedy who launched the Space Race and accelerated missile production. Bobby Kennedy, JFK's right-hand man and later the darling of the anti-war left, worked for Joseph McCarthy during the red-witch hunts.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis it was Kennedy who brought the world to the brink of all-out nuclear war. It was also Kennedy who first sent troops to Vietnam and it was his government which organised the overthrow and assassination of the South Vietnamese President Diem.

Kennedy is often credited with America's Civil Rights legislation. In fact, the changes come from Congress and the courts. His successor, the corrupt and reviled Johnson had a far better record.

There have been many conspiracy theories. The CIA, FBI, Mafia and Vice-President Johnson have all been accused. Some links have all together in a grand conspiracy aiming to destroy Kennedy.

No mention is made of Kennedy's close connections to the Mafia. That would tarnish the image of Camelot. Stone never considers that the cover-up might have been used to protect the reputation of Kennedy and the American Presidency.

What is disturbing is how little Kennedy is linked to Vietnam. The reason is to be found in the way Stone has been able to manipulate the audience.

It is clear that Kennedy had withdrawn from Vietnam if he had been re-elected in 1964. As a Vietnam veteran, angry and disillusioned by the war, Stone views Kennedy as a romantic hero.

For The Boys
Directed by Mark Rydell
Reviewed by SEAN TUNNEY
Thanks to Odeon Cinema Brighton
WHAT IS the secret of comedy? Ern, timing. So, when is the worst time to release a musical comedy-drama which shows America how pointless fighting Korea and Vietnam really were? Yes, just after the end of the Gulf War. Hardly going to rate high on the 'feel-good' factor.

Such was the fate of 'For The Boys'. Still, it's not as if star and producer, Bert and Milder, didn't have fair warning. Many soldiers who were ever on the film were called up for the war while it was being shot. Despite this, the film flopped in the States.

'For The Boys' details the career of song and dance team, Dixie Leonard (Milder) and Eddie Sparks (James Caan). They meet in 1942 with Sparks at the height of his fame, the force's favourite. Dixie is thrown in at the deep end to appear alongside him, and through her no-nonsense sassy humour becomes an instant hit.

On demob, it appears that the only way is up; they star together in 'Boum' and 'Allen' type top TV show, only the bawdy humour flouts the censor. And when Korea flares, it's only natural that the wartime heroes should again go out to entertain the boys.

Instead of the fairytale WWII is presented as, Dixie is faced with real death in a real war where there appears no real enemy. Koreans are being attacked for accepting Communist blankets to avoid the cold, as Dixie's scriptwriting uncle (George Segal) puts it.

Shekow, she returns to America, to find the duo's show subjected to McCarthyism, which to Dixie's horror, Eddie is willing to accept. They are forced to be reunited, with Dixie's extreme patriotism footloring a Vietnam nostalgia tour.

It is here that the personal tragedy of war is forcefully brought home to both of them. But still Eddie maintains an unthinking patriotism. Only in the last few frames of the film does he start to question the wars he has spent playing 'for the boys'.

Bertally stated like that, the film appears corny and insensitive to anti-war liberal idealists. And indeed it is. Remember, it is very much Midler's show. And like 'Beaches' the audience is dragged through a rollercoaster of emotions, and I, for one, at times, felt manipulated. Nonetheless, while Milder, in her too good to be true role, does interminably veer towards the vitriolic, Caan gives an admirable, perfectly weighted performance.

However, the real problem of the film, is not that it doesn't denounce McCarthyism or America's involvement in Korea or Vietnam. It is that it doesn't confront seriously, or provide any real answers. But that's as much as we can expect from Hollywood comedy-drama at the moment, I suppose.

Essentially, the movie is a big-budget musical. And the music, especially the 40s big band sound, which features prominently, is not to everybody's taste. But if you want a good comedy/weepy nght out at the movies that is fairly political, then this is the one for you.

A new slant on the Soviet labour movement

Perestroika and the Soviet People
by David Mandel, Black Rose Press, £9.95

Reviewed by Paul Clarke
Dissatised by the momentous changes in the ex-Soviet Union in the press and on TV involves a change in the top, and the dramatic moments of coup and mini-wars. David Mandel's book starts the other way around. What are the effects of the changes in Soviet society on the Soviet people? How has their political thinking progressed?

The author's thesis is based on his wide travels in the ex-USSR and discussions with former revolutionaries, movement activists and others.

At the heart of Mandel's analysis is the attack on the working class through the move towards marketisation. He analys essential the facialisation of the economy, the push for the pro-market liberals, the removal of the collective bargaining and the move towards capitalism is contradictory and confused.

Mandel illustrates this in detail by reference to the programmes and discussions of the miners. Often they support marketisation, but at the same time expressing opposition to price rises and capital goods. Every political idea in the spectrum can be found among those who support the market.

In addition to his overview of the political transformations and his initial analysis of the labour movement, Mandel goes into depth about the strength of the political ideas and the positions of people. Mandel's analysis is not a sufficient concept of de-organisation and the move towards capitalism is contradictory and confused.

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The roots of racism

By Julia Stevens

Racism is a weapon used by capitalism to divide the working classes with other oppressions, it diverts the anger of the working class at the working class rather than at the ruling class and turns it on parts of the working class. The whole capitalist class suffers under capitalism and racism assists in the maintenance of the capitalist system. Fighting against racism is in the interests of the white working class, since ultimately attacking capitalism also attacks capitalism.

Benefit

But the reason that racism is such an effective tool of dividing the working class is that in their everyday lives, white workers are better off because it is, in part, responsible for the distribution of the goods that everyone buys. White people benefit from racism in a number of ways. In very direct ways, for instance if two people apply for a job, and one is white and the other black, the white person is more likely to be employed. Racism is also indirect ways: tobacco, coffee, tea, sugar, alcohol, honey, those things that are in plentiful supply in our shops, are there only because white workers can be made very profitable through using very cheap labour. The whole capitalist system survives because of the inequality of labour vis-à-vis the whites.

Imperialism

The major imperialism of the USA, Britain, Spain, France, etc., relied on the working classes of their respective countries to accept their actions abroad, and stirred up racist feeling to ensure that acceptance was forthcoming. Although many of these colonised countries have now gained their independence, the legacy is one of poverty and reliance on exploiting virtually all their goods to the advanced capitalist states. Racism grew not only out of colonisation, but from the slave trade. Before slavery, most white people had only heard vague rumours of the existence of people with a different skin colour.

When slavery began to bring Africains to work on the plantations in the West Indies and America, the practice was justified by insisting that the slaves were not actually human, but a lower form of primate. Slave owners and traders, knowing that they were dealing in human lives, maintained this myth to prevent the poor whites from linking up with the slaves to fight the imperialist system. Just preventing a united attack was not enough however. And the slave owners, in constant fear of slave uprisings, used brutal methods to keep the slave population weak. The most minor of 'offences' were punished with flogging, mutilation, castration and branding.

Civil War

Although now, the American Civil War is painted as a great victory for humanitariansim, and the battle against cruel slavery, it was actually the outcome of a struggle between the old southern plantation-owning oligarchy and the new capitalist classes from the North who wished to expand their influence and markets. Fighting against slavery was only a byproduct of the North's war campaign. And, indeed, for a long time Lincoln tried to prevent this becoming an issue so as not to alienate the slave owners in the border states. Racism is irrevocably linked with capitalism and thus racism cannot be destroyed without the overthrow of the capitalist system.

Anti-racism

But the specific struggle against racism cannot simply be collapsed into the overall anti-capitalist fight. It needs a struggle of the whole working class to defeat capitalism, but within that a permanent struggle against all forms of racism.

De Klerk nails his (white) colours to the mast

By Charlie van Gelderen

At last IT IS OUT. The end of apartheid (IC) does not mean the end of white rule. Not if FW De Klerk can help it. It is quite clear from his speech at the opening of the white parliament on January 25. Before any new constitution, agreed by the 'Convention for a Democratic South Africa' (CODESA) could come into force, it would have to be submitted to a national referendum. Not a referendum on the basis of one person one vote. The result of this would be a foregone conclusion. No. There will be a separate referendum for blacks, for coloureds and whites. And the decision of the white electorate would be decisive.

De Klerk was kept in a briefings to journalists before the President spoke by the Foreign Minister, Pj Botha, and Finance Minister, Bairdi de Klerk. When asked what would happen if the whites voted yes to the resolutions passed in the 19-party negotiations, the President would not be able to go back to the drawing board. There is no alternative.

The official report held by liberal, the ANC, and the Communist Party (SACP) that the whites parlia-
Hidden hand of US in Haiti crisis

By Roland Wood

SINCE THE September 1991 coup which overthrew Haiti's elected president, radical priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the army and police have killed more than 1500 people. On 16 December, the first anniversary of the Caribbean country's first democratic elections, police shot dead one left wing MP and burned down the houses of two others.

Thousands of people have been fleeing the island to escape the repression, mainly heading for the United States. Intercepted by coastguards, 9,250 have been intercepted at the US base at Guantamano, Cuba.

Repatriation

Now, the US government intends to repatriate these refugees, back into the hands of the army and the notorious Ton Ton Macoute. The Macoutes were for decades the private army of dictator 'Papa Doc' Duvalier, and subsequently of his son 'Baby Doc'.

Bush's decision to send back the refugees contrasts starkly with the attitude of the US towards those flying Cuba, who were automatically welcomed in Miami.

Officially the US deplored the overthrow of Aristide; but many of Aristide's supporters suspect that the State Department and the CIA gave the green light to the military plotters.

The US is involved in a bizzare and elaborate diplomatic game to prevent the return and reinstatement of Aristide.

In a deal cooked up with US involvement, it appears that the military have agreed to install Communist Party leader Rene Theodore as acting prime minister, replacing the army's nominee Jean Jacques Honorat. Meanwhile the legitimate prime minister who served under Aristide, Rene Preval, remains in hiding in their French Embassy.

Buying time

The hidden aim of all this diplomatic activity is to buy time. In time which the putschists can establish a position of strength, dismantle the popular organisations and terrorise the population. Thus when (and if) Aristide returns from exile, the bourgeoisie will be safe from any radical movement under his leadership.

The willingness of the Communist Party to go along with the US diplomatic game speaks volumes about its political line.

Who holds the real power was shown dramatically in January when plain-clothes police burst into Theodore's home and, beat him up and killed his bodyguard.

Genocide fear in Ngorno-Karabakh

FOR MORE than three years there has been bitter political dispute and ground-level fighting over the future of Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnically Armenian territory surrounded on all sides by Azerbaijan.

Since the surge of independence movements in the ex-Soviet republics, both Azerbaijan and Armenia have claimed the district. The people of Nagorno-Karabakh themselves have never made public its claims. Last week they were forced to change their minds. Now the armed Azeri-Armenian conflict is reaching crunch point. Karabakh is besieged and risks a crushing defeat by Azeri forces. The Karabakh capital Stepanakert is under daily bombardment.

Thousands of Armenian civilians in outlying villages have been murdered or driven from their homes by invading Azeri forces.

The issue of Karabakh has become systematically used by reactionary nationalist forces in Azerbaijan to build support. Prior to the fall of Gorbatchev the conflict was worsened by the cynical divide-and-rule policies of the Kremlin leaders.

In 1989 a pogrom was carried out against Armenians living in the Azeri capital Baku. Moscow used this as an excuse to intervene with a massive and murderous show of force, in which hundreds were killed - an action which drove many Azeris into the arms of the ultra-nationalist Azerbaijan National Movement.

But in the wake of this attack, with the Azeri Stalinsitsleaders firmly in power, Moscow utilised the notorious OMON internal security police, and KGB troops, to aid the terror being waged against Armenian villages on the borders of the enclave.

The Azeri Armenian leaders were sympathetic to last August's coup. Gorbachev had calculated that it was better to support the apparently more 'loyal' government against the Armenians.

The tragedy of this new situation is that for decades the mainly Orthodox Christian Armenians and Muslims of Nagorno Karabakh have lived in peace, with many villages being mixed, and Baku having a substantial Armenian population.

Today the conflict over Ngorno Karabakh is coming to a terrible conclusion. Every day artillery shells and rockets fall in the capital Stepanakert, with a ring of troops tightening their grip around it.

The bombardment has increased since the shooting down of an Azeri helicopter last week. Most of the active fighters on the Armenian side are supporters of the ultra-nationalist movement led by Armenian president Leonid Aramian.

If the siege is successful, the result will certainly be hundreds of deaths and tens of thousands of refugees. Armenians must stand for the national rights of the Armenian people of Karabakh, whatever the repressive character of their leadership.

Stalinist enclave threatens Moldovan civil war

By Paul Clarke

After his overthrow, Geor- gian president Gamakchur- dia, a new civil war is threatening in the republics of the ex-USSR. A 'creeping putsch' is taking place in eastern Moldova, the republics of 'dismantling socialism' and 'liquidating Soviet power'.

Armed workers

In response the Dniester leaders organised workers armed detachments based on the factories to fight against independence. These workers have since become a fully fledged 'Republic Guard', led by professional officers.

In the wake of the defeated neo-Stalinist coup, the Dniester communists began a process of taking over government buildings, using armed workers' detachments. In December they extended their actions to Bendera, a town on the right bank of the Dniester, in an attempt to extend the boundaries of their 'republic'.

In the south Moldovan area of Gagauz, power has also been seized by Stalinist forces, and it seems likely that the two areas will attempt to link up, thus effectively seizing a swath of southern and eastern Moldovan territory.

Units from the Fourteenth special OMON internal security police are reported to have flown there to support the Republic Guard. Extreme Russian nationalist forces have promised volunteer brigades to fight for the Dniester republic.

Cautious

The Moldovan government has been extremely cautious about a direct military confrontation with the Dniester rebels. However, the growing geographical spread of the enclave makes a direct confrontation almost inevitable.

The Dniester area backs directly on to the southern Ukraine, constituting an obvious threat to stability in the newly-independent republic. The Dniester forces could thus be effectively trapped in a pincer movement if a military conflict starts.
Unsung victories in ex-USSR

I DISAGREE with the tone and some of the content of Patrick Baker’s gloom-laden report in Outlook 14 (The Better Fruits of Marketisation). Yes, I think that the national question and the price rises are important issues. Patrick asserts that the victory of the social democrats in the republics for self-determination argues for a unification of independence (independent and sovereign states) is virtually impossible. The August coup was an ‘enormous step forward’. But he neglects to state that the Russian leadership consists of. In fact, he doesn’t have a single positive thing to say about the coup.

Instead, he goes on to assert that today’s situation is a ‘victory’ for the destruction arising out of national conflict ‘...is almost inevitable’. If this is the real outcome of the achievement of national independence then it should be described as a victory at all.

In fact, there was a tremendous (although partial) victory for many reasons, not least of which is the fact that the achievement of national independence (including international recognition and independence and sovereign states) makes bloody conflict of the kind envisaged by the Russian leadership less likely.

This is tangible evidence of a victory: a powerful obstacle to the development of Yugoslavia-style nationalism has been broken. This is the form of the achievement of national independence.

Remember when the Serbian-dominated so-called federal army attacked Slovenia and then Croatia aimed its armaments at the capital in the war of ethnically. This is the crisis of the bureaucracy’s privileges (hardly a socialist aim, but by the time Gorbachev dropped in the kibitz he had a good standing in the Russian state).

There is no difference between Gorbachev and Yeltsin – both stood for the reintegration of the market. The difference is how he move to the market.

Trotsky had a history of opposing both Stalinism and capitalism – it was a battle that when one has largely fallen and the other is in deep crisis such a misleading statement can be made.

Ian McLeary
London E10

湘潭

Bobby Southall

Whose terror?

Your article on Sri Lanka (Sri Lankan militants rally to Fourth International, SO 13) was excellent and highly informative. However, it was sad to note that Phil Hearne had apparently opposed the words ‘terrorist’ and ‘terror’ in describing the activities of the Singhalese organisation. The JVP should be praised for the resistance to their campaign.

No doubt there is part of the JVP’s political strategy, just as it was for the Bolsheviks during the civil war after the 1917 revolution.

And no doubt the programme of the JVP is one that is consistent with the same kind of vigorous criticism we would direct against the Tamil LTTE, the Peronist ‘Workers’ Party’ in the state and the unlicensed Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

Unfortunately no other political characteristic, the JVP’s prospect was seen in the press for articles in places like Beijing or Beirut. It is quite obvious that the mere existence of a Bush/Cheney path in their struggle against imperialism, if we are to condemn them, our perspective must be entirely different from our common enemy.

Left TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris: where was his fight against de-recognition?

TGWU idle as Unipart smashes union

By Anthony Dixon
FROM APRIL 7th, Unipart’s plant in Cowley, which at the moment has about 600 union members, mainly in the TGWU, will lose union recognition. The plant was once among the best organised of the Cowley car factories. Union organisation has been given up rather than taken away.

The management gave the union six months notice. In that time they have been threatening and bullying workers into signing new contracts of employment, that mean that all their problems will be dealt with by a ‘Forum’, dominated by ‘team leaders’ and not through a trade union. This pressure has been successful and almost every worker has signed the new contract.

What have the trade unions done? Early last year the three senior stewards were sacked: the TGWU officials argued against a strike. This was followed by the sacking of three other shop stewards for ‘undermining’ a union leader.

In all this time the trade unions, led by the TGWU have only issued three leaflets. They have not organised a single meeting and have simply argued that they are going through ‘procedure’ on union recognition. There has been now been a year without a membership meeting.

The final stage of negotiations on recognition took place two weeks ago. Jack Adams, top cars negotiator and newly elected TGWU deputy General Secretary led the talks, but got nowhere. However, instead of meeting the membership, he arranged to meet the company again on March 9th.

The union have said that after this they will discuss with the management. But in the mean time the workforce is getting weaker and weaker. In the 200 strong Unipart workforce in the North Oxford plant the company also gave six months notice and have now de-recognised the union with no organised opposition.

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Carworkers forge new international links

IN A WEEK which saw Ford UK management declare over 2,000 job losses, and more redundancies at Vauxhall, a seminar was held in Liverpool on the ‘New Management Techniques’ which are being introduced in the motor industry all over the world.

The seminar was organised by the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE), who are the only people organising such meetings. They have held similar meetings throughout Europe.

Shop stewards from the Vauxhall plant at Ellesmere Port assisted with the organisation of the day. Car workers from Spain, Germany, Canada, USA and Britain attended and research workers from Japan, Korea and Britain were also there, with the British workers coming from Ford, Vauxhall, Rover, Rolls Royce and some component firms.

Canada

There were highly knowledgeable introductions on the new management techniques in Canada, where the attempts to change over to the new systems of operation have not been as successful as elsewhere. ‘Team leaders’ and other measures have not been introduced in any of the Big Three car factories, but only in a ‘joint venture’ plant, SUMA, which has been heavily researched.

‘Greenfield’ workers in this plant are gradually moving away from management and towards trade unionism.

There was also discussion introduced by a Japanese and a British researcher on the methods used by Japanese capitalism to organise its supply of components through the control of the component companies.

Opposition

There were lively workshops, particularly on how the opposition to the new techniques was presently organised and looking at how to proceed.

One of the Canadian organisers presented three alternatives that car workers faced: accepting without fighting; negotiating the best deal; or opposing all the new management techniques.

All three options had their supporters in the meeting but most favoured negotiation. However, outright opposition is still taking place in Canada and in some factories in Britain.

Techniques

TIE should be congratulated for organising these opportunities to discuss the situation and how to proceed, and for providing such a wealth of information on the techniques being employed in the rest of the world.

The latest round of cutbacks at Ford companies in Britain demonstrate that the problems of new management techniques has not gone away, and there is a growing need for more discussion and action to combat them.

When exchanges mean daylight robbery

SEASONED watchers of British Telecom (BT) have to be careful. Two things happen every time they blink: BT makes another £50 in profits and sacks a thousand more of their staff.

Alan Tuffin, leader of the Union of Communication Workers and a man better known for rhetoric than action, was not far off the mark when he said that BT was ‘yet again pushing obscene profits before people and their livelihoods.’ Sadly, he didn’t explain what he was going to do about it.

By 1996, BT will have sacked 90,000 workers since the decade began – more than a third of their workforce. It has announced cuts each year, and sacked more than it announced every time.

Last year 10,000 redundancies were announced; 18,800 were sacked. This year 16,000 is the projection; unions fear it will be over 22,000 in practice.

The only surprise in the recent revelation that more than 50% of BT workers are not proud of working for Telecom is that the figure isn’t 100%.

Judges languish in poverty

The Top Salaries Review Board (TSRB) are in a terrible dilemma: apparently they are having ‘persistent difficulties in recruiting Circuit judges.’

Now the annual pay awards covered by the TSRB – senior civil servants, judges and the military brass – are to be put off until July. Perhaps they fear a wave of court occupations because the raises aren’t enough?

Well, not quite. It’s not that legal eagles are only getting the measly 6 per cent being offered to nurses. Actually it’s because they are getting raises averaging 40 per cent, on top of their six-figure salaries, which seemed a bit embarrassing during the election. Well, well. No wonder they’ve got recruiting difficulties.

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TGWU calls car seminar

The Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) National Automotive Committee has organised a national seminar for Senior stewards in the motor industry, on New Management Techniques on February 27th in Birmingham.

This arises out of a resolution from the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Cowley in Oxford. It will be a national forum organised by any union on this subject and is a major step forward.

The TGWU, nationally, has been in the forefront of isolating plants and forcing them to fight back against the new working practices plant by plant, almost always leading to defeat. This seminar should be the start of breaking that isolation.

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Ireland: the killings continue
No internment!
No British solution!

AS THE CATALOGUE of assassinations in Northern Ireland mounts, the knee-jerk cries for the introduction of internment and further repression intensify. Absent from the hysterical media coverage is any real analysis of what is happening, and why.

Both the press and TV portray the killings as 'tit for tat' reprisal killings, inexplicable but for the 'mad' and 'tribal' passions of the Irish.

People in the Six Counties know this is a primitive caricature. Random sectarian assassination is a weapon of the loyalist terror brigades, venting their hatred of the IRA on the nationalist population at random.

Republican attacks have been overwhelmingly on military targets. But it has to be said the Treebane bombing, which killed seven Protestant workers working on a military base, was tactically disastrous. It played into the hands of the loyalist assassins and the British state.

It is 23 years since the present round of the 'troubles' began. Thousands of deaths later the war goes on, for the simple reason that its basic cause, the national demands of the Irish people, remain unresolved. Ireland unfree will never be at peace; and internment will bring neither peace nor freedom one bit nearer.