German workers show the way

Time to fight back!

'SUPERPOWER RETAKES GUTTED CITY' was last week's Observer headline. Just 15 months after the 'new world order' was proclaimed by killing 100,000 in the Iraqi desert, the US ruling class faced the humiliation of an uprising of the poor and oppressed in its own cities.

In Germany hundreds of thousands of striking public sector workers have just given Chancellor Helmut Kohl a bloody nose.

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall the media have announced the final victory of capitalism. But world capitalism as an economic system is failing badly.

The economic crisis is hitting Britain hard, and new attacks on the unions and welfare state are being quickly prepared by Major's government. After Labour's election defeat, neither the Labour nor union leaders have any answers.

The Labour leadership election, after the undemocratic exclusion of Livingstone and Grant, is becoming a farce. Neither Smith or Gould have anything but empty platitudes to offer.

Germany and the US show it is possible to fight back. The German workers won despite harsh anti-union laws. Waiting for the next general election, perhaps as far away as 1997, is a useless option for British workers. Now is the time to fight!
If Smith or Gould is the answer, it's a silly question
Labour's choice of evils

By Harry Sloan

Friedrich Engels described Brit-
ish elections prior to the Labour
Party as being a choice of which
member of the clanging class would
next exploit the workers.

Now a special Labour Party con-
fERENCE is due to decide which Kin
nockle is to press ahead with the rightward pol-
icy that will catch a humiliating fourth electoral defeat and
now further disastrous losses in coun-
dy elections.

It was bad enough for many to re-
aquire that Neil Kinnock's reactionary
rule had been worth all the left wing challenge from Livingstone and
Grant.

It is even worse to sit through the
caricature of a debate between the
Goulds Tweedledews and Smiths
Tweedledums - a debate in which all
the traditional terminology is useless.

is John Smith, the union bureau-
crat's choice, who excludes all the
chairman and deputy chairman on
him, to the 'right' of Bryan Gould, the super-
annuated populist who masterminded
Kinnock's catastrophic 1987 election
fail?

is Margaret Beckett, the former
Secretary who backed the miners in
1984 before swerving to the hard right
(only to rediscover her CND card in a
dressing table drawer during the
leadership contest), less 'radical' than
John Prescott whose main fighting
credentials centre on his populist ex-
perience in the Commons tea-room?

When you reach the magnetic
North Pole, your compass will not
work. Labour's policies have been so
far removed from any socialist or working
class vision that the class origins of left and right mean
nothing. This is even more true
now the 'soft left' have divided their
support between the various leader-
ship contenders.

The LUC is in particular split, with
some following Gould while others,
like the bookish friend Robin Cook
clearly with an eye to the best chance
of preference if he backs the winner,
are backing the Smith campaign.

Quickly into the lists for Gould was
Clare Short, with an article in Tribune
backing him because he is more rad-
ical and imaginative', but also backing
Smith - John Smith and Bryan Gould
would make a fine team.

The reality is that all four conten-
dents stand gullty of flagrant, long-term
Kinnochism. Despite Kinnock's pre-
election joke that no sensible house-
holder would call back a number who
had already failed three times to fix a
clock, Labour Party members are being
asked to choose a new leader from a
galaxy of Talbots.

Smith and his deputy Beckett - the
architects of Labour's wretched
economic policy, so conserva-
tive as to offer nothing to working
people, so half-baked as to give the
Tory press a field day, cut on a ticket of more of the same.

Gould's gossamer-thin left
credentials rest on his commit-
ment to economic 'intervention-
ism', though he also pioneered the
concept of 'social ownership' as a
facade behind which na-
tionalisation is a goal.

He was quick to describe Fanny
Ashton's 'cheeky' suggestion of a
Lab-Lab bloc as 'interest-
ing'.

The extent of Prescott's political
challenge to the existing leadership
is seen from the fact he is willing
to be deputy to John Smith, doing the
doggywork of building the party
organisation while Smith steers through right wing policies.

For the left there is little option but
to campaign for a write-in campaign
to spoil papers by showing support
for Livingstone and Grant, and to press
for rule changes to lift the ludicrously
undemocratic requirement that a chal-
lenge requires the endorsement of
20% of Labour MPs in order to stand.

Scottish
arger

mounts

By Gordon Morgan

THE GENERAL election result surprised
Scotland and shocked most commentators,
especially the increase in Tory seats.

The Tory concentration on
maintaining the union, and on
Labour's tax plans, allowed them
to pick up 40,000 extra votes.

The Labour vote held steady
and the SNP picked up extra
votes from the Liberal Demo-
crats, but not enough to make
a breakthrough.

Labour's Scottish executive was
outraged by the election result
and remains unable to re-
pose to events.

The SNP are being predicted
a breakthrough which did not
materialise, and they predicted
an other breakthrough at the dis-
trict elections, which also didn't
happen, with Labour holding
over one district council they
must reassert their
tactics.

The SNP also blame Labour re-
tains control of all Scotland's
major cities, despite their vote
dropping from 34% to 29%.

After the initial election shock, their was anger
throughout Scotland that such a
result had been allowed to
happen. Seventy five
per cent of Scots voted for
constitutional change, and for the
fourth general election in a row
this was denied.

At least three separate cross-
party
groups were set up to
campaign for constitutional
change, and in particular for
a referendum. The most signifi-
cant was Scotland United
backed by Campbell Christie of
the STUC and Pat Kane of
Har
Cry

So far two rallies have
been held in Glasgow attracting five
thousand and six
people respectively. Local committees are being set
up.

Multi-question

The Scottish referendum
campaign is backed by the Scot-

nese groups of Labour MPs, the

SNP, Liberals and Greens. Al-
though the exact formula has
not been determined, all sup-
port a multi-question referen-
dum in Scotland on the status
quo, devolution or inde-
pendence.

Many hurdles remain how-
ever. Labour is committed to
campaigning for a referendum,
but not committed to holding one if the government says no.

The SNP wants to hold a refer-
endum but is internally
divided on tactics. It won't go
ahead on a constitutional conven-
Aion, but seems willing to oper-
ate on a referendum sub-com-
mittee.

Now the district elections are
over the Salmond wing of the
SNP may be able to win tactical
collaboration with Labour if
they agree.

The key issues are the wind-
ing of the referendum and
laying out a timetable. It would
cost about £2 million if the
government refused to play ball.

The favoured date is St An-
rew's day in November, if there
was a 'yes' vote to con-
stitutional change, a mass rally
would be held in Edinburgh in
December to coincide with the
EC heads of government meet-
ing.

Labour is clearly divided on
this issue. Around a dozen
Labour MPs are backing Scotland
United. Others like Brian
Wilson are vehemently opposed.

They key for success is pressure
from below.

A Scottish Socialist meet-
ing, with over two hundred at-
tending from the Labour party,
the SNP, and independent socialists, was a general
agreement to build a socialist
campaign via a referendum; building the committees from
below, just organizing the socialist
answer at the same time.

This campaign has a sell-by
date of one year hence. If a re-
ferendum hasn't been held by
that time, or another major ini-
tiative taken, decentralisation
will set in.

Women speak - will
Labour listen?

By Terry Conway

WOMEN involved in the
Livingstone Grant campaign are
trying to ensure that women's is-
Sues are forced up the agenda in
the leadership election.

They are led up with the fact
that it is the concern of the Labour
Party who have made propaganda
around making the party more
women friendly. For them of course,
this means getting rid of nasty
'masculine' things like strikes and
demonstrations.

They ignore the millions of
women in low paid, part time jobs;
without nursery facilities and deeply
affected by cuts in public services.

Making Labour listen to women is not about
abandoning socialist policies, it is about rethinking the
principles of struggle and solidarity.

Women are coming together to
organise a fairly unusual meeting as
part of the discussion on what way
forward for the party. Under the title
Women Speak - Labour Listen they
have organised an afternoon of
debate and discussion to which all
those who stood in the leadership
deputy contests have been in-
vited.

Each candidate will be given five
minutes at the beginning, and five at
the end, to state what they think
Labour can and should do in support
of women. But the bulk of the meet-
ing will be discussion from the floor.

The meeting has been sponsored
by Women for Socialism, Women in
NAC, Women in Black Sections and
the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

Women Speak - Labour
Listeners' Sunday 25 May, Red
Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Rd,
London N7 (Finsbury Park tube)
2-5pm. Crashes, Refreshments,
Wheelchair Access. Admission
£1.50p. All Women Welcome.

March against racist attacks
Stop racist policing

Sunday 17 May
Assemble 2.30pm Drummond St,
London NW1
March to Kentish Town police station
Called by Drummond St. Asian Youth Association
Time to regroup the left
For fighting left unity!

LABOUR’S general election defeat and the election for the new Labour leader must mean some hard re-thinking on the left. In the next period the new realist right wing will intensify its attack on the left throughout the labour movement. The working class is going to be renewed attack from the bosses and the Tories. In situations of defeats the way is opened for drawing right-wing and defeatist conclusions.

But this is not the time for demoralised abstraction or routinist responses. On the contrary the left must go on the offensive against new realism and the legacy of Kinnochism.

The candidates of Smith and Gould provide a focus for all those who want to move the labour movement further to the right. Indeed the impending victory of Smith is more than just a re-run of Kinnochism; it is the victory of the hard right.

The project of the right wing and the trade union bureaucracy will be to weaken the links between Labour and the unions, and work, over time, towards a new form of coalitionism with the Liberals. Some ideologues of a new ‘anti-Tory’ coalition even argue that the foundation of the Labour Party was a mistake.

For workers at the sharp end of struggle the choice of waiting for a Labour government (until 1997!) is no longer there. The response of the union bureaucrats will be to urge compliance and acceptance of the bosses’ offensive – job-cutting, ‘Japanisation’, speed up – rather than resistance.

Deepen defeat

Now the left must say as loudly as possible: the right must not be allowed to get away with it! They have delivered us defeat after defeat. They want to deepen defeat, opening the way for open business unionism and political coalitionism.

How can we fight back? In the Labour Party, there is now a choice. The decision of the Campaign Group to stand Livingstone and Grant was a big step forward. Despite the undemocratic stitch-up preventing them being formal candidates the campaign will continue. Good. The right wing are trying to gag the left, and it will not be gagged.

But the election campaign will come and go. More important in the long term is that the new situation is used to reorganise and regroup the fighting left. How can this be done?

Obviously there needs to be a move towards the maximum unity of all those forces which reject new realism and stand by socialism, class struggle and democratic advance; and those forces need to debate out the key political campaigns which can begin to build an opposition to the slide to the right.

Crucial here is the role of both the Socialist Movement and the Socialist Campaign group of Labour MPs. The Socialist Movement must turn itself into a more active, campaigning force.

Livingstone-Grant
First tasks include an all-out mobilisation around the Livingstone-Grant campaign, and building for a huge tour for the Socialist Movement trade union conference on 18 July, the Leeds conference of the Labour left in June and the Convention of the Left in the autumn.

But the Socialist Movement cannot stand alone: it has to broaden its base of support and seek fighting unity with all other forces prepared to stand out against new realism in the labour movement.

This is not a question of narrow tactical debates about whether to be in or outside the Labour Party. We need, for example, a fighting unity of all those in the trade unions, including forces currently organised around the Morning Star, to fight to unshackle the unions, attack new realism and resist the bosses’ offensive.

Such initiatives would be strengthened by a more unitary attitude by the SWP and the Militant, both of which organise considerable forces.

The dividing line now is all those who stand against new realism and for class struggle on the one hand, against those who are going to capitulate to the right-wing consensus of the union and Labour bosses.

The organisational basis for reorganising the Labour left and class struggle forces cannot be suckled out of anyone’s thumb. Clearly, the building of a new broad alliance of the left must be based on a commitment to class struggle, and not simply inner-Labour factional fighting.

But the precondition is agreement on a platform of clear anti-capitalist and democratic demands to fight together in the labour movement on.

Scotland
The left must champion the demands for self-determination in Scotland and Wales. The fight for Scottish self-government in particular will be at the cutting edge of resistance to the Tories in the next period; it has an explosive dynamic. Any left regroupment which fails to take this on board will be still-born.

Other key bases of a new left platform must include the fight to unshackle the unions; combating racism, starting with the fight against the re-introduced Asylum Bill; fighting for women’s equality; and the commitment of the labour movement to alternative economic policies, including a radical reduction in defence spending, re-nationalisation of privatised industries, a shorter working week with no loss of pay, and swingeing taxation of the rich.

These proposals should form the basis of new Socialist Charter, around which a campaign of signatures should be launched throughout the labour, women’s and anti-racist movements.

All socialists worthy of the name will mobilise all-out for the Livingstone-Grant campaign. But the opportunity must now be seized to forge a new alliance capable of fighting back against the new realist right and the Tories. As Fidel Castro once put it: ‘Division in the face of the enemy was never a socialist or intelligent tactic’.

The extraordinary workers’ mobilisation in Germany is a salutary reply to all those who want to write off the working class and its struggles. After the post-election shock, millions of workers will be faced with the choice of either fighting back or going under. It is likely that workers’ struggles and confidence will only gradually be rebuilt; but to maximise resistance to the Tories and new realism the left cannot sit on its hands.
German strikers humble Kohl Vorsprung durch picketing

By Patrick Baker

By Patrick Baker

PUBLIC SECTOR strikers in Germany forced Helmut Kohl's conservative government into a humiliating retreat, as negotiators backed down on their 'non-negotiable' pay offer.

Union leaders have recommended a 5.5 per cent deal, plus various lump sum extras, to their 2.5 million members. But many trade unionists are angry at the small increase in the offer, and want to stay out for a better deal.

In the biggest public sector strike Germany has seen in decades, hundreds of thousands of trade unionists have filled the streets for nearly two weeks, demanding a 9.5 per cent pay rise.

Workers walked out in airports and post offices, and left their trains and rubbish carts standing idle. The strike cost hundreds of millions of marks.

Warning given

Private sector workers are still in dispute, including engineering workers in IG-Metall, Europe's biggest union. "Warning strikes' of more than 100,000 have already been called to show employers that the engineers mean business. Building workers have started a work to rule and look set to join the strikers soon.

Starting point

Private sector employers were quick to claim that 'the result of the negotiations in the public sector can and will have no function as a model for private business'. But the 5.5 per cent deal is likely to be seen as a starting point, whatever employers say.

Helmut Kohl's conservative government is faltering, hit not just by strikes but also by the resignation of Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. With Kohl in hospital with a broken leg and the government's credibility on the ropes, the strike is likely to be a major blow to the government's credibility.

The largest prison house in the world

WHICH COUNTRY imprisons more of its population than any other in the world? South Africa perhaps.

No, the United States of America, guardian of western democracy. With a prison population of over 1 million, the USA's incarceration rate is nearly 50 per cent higher than that of South Africa. And it is expected to go up by a third in the next three years.

A disproportionate number of those imprisoned are black. If you are a black American in your twenties, you have a one in four chance of being in prison or on parole at any one time, the new half a million black men in US prisons.

And the racism of the US 'justice system' is now so extreme that it is one of the darkest corners of the US legal system, 'Death Row'. The death penalty in the USA was halted for five years in the 1970s because its application was so random as to be unconstitutional. But when it was reintroduced, only the letter of the law was modified - the basics were not.

One per cent of convicted murderers in the US are sentenced to death. People are sentenced to death not so much for what they do but for who they are. A new study of the penalty concludes. And that means, in practice, that those on Death Row are overwhelmingly black, poor and uneducated.

Now George Bush is trying to extend the death penalty, playing to the most reactionary 'law and order' sections of US society. A new bill before Congress would mean that capital punishment was available for a further 10 offences.

The American Civil Liberties Union says of capital punishment, 'It is not thinking. Toughness is the universal solvent to every problem that America faces. The death penalty is a symbolic demonstration of toughness. They conclude there are over 2000 people on Death Row. If we were to kill them all - the US would witness the greatest slaughter of its citizens by a western democracy this century...'

The prison system and Death Row are the sharp end of a system that is racist and repressive. The only surprise in the explosions on the streets of LA, Atlanta and other US cities is that it didn't come sooner.

Under attack

Coupled with low unemployment and union laws that make Britain's look union-friendly, strikes were few and far between. But now all that has changed. It's not because Germany's unions have swung to the left, but because the economy is under attack - first from the international recession, second from the cost of unification.

The economy is going through a durable recession and political confidence in the bourgeois government is falling. This was not a radical union leader, but the head of the German Institute of Directors. After years of growth up until 1990, things have now changed. Since 1991, production has stagnated, orders have gone down and real incomes fell by about 15 per cent.

That's bad enough for the houses, but of more concern for the workers and the state, who have borne the massive cost of unification. The national debt has mushroomed and tax rates have increased for ordinary workers. Coupled with soaring unemployment (at least, that's a recipe for explosion.

Defensive

With the strongest working class in western Europe, and around a third unionised, German workers are well-placed to force Kohl on to the defensive. Union leaders arebeginning to get more combative. Monika Wulf-Mathies, leader of the public sector union ÖTV, said of the negotiations, 'We stood next to each other and did not have anything to say' But while the workers are on the offensive and Kohl's government is weak, opposition to Labour, seems to have moved away from the idea of coalition with Kohl's CDU.

It has no more answers to the destruction of east Germany's economy, or the decline of wages in the west, than the CDU. The left is weak, and in its absence it is the extreme right Republikaner who are gaining among the youth and the unemployed.

If the left can build out of the current wave of strikes, showing that workers' unity is a real alternative to the extremes, it would be a real step forward for the German workers movement.

"Germany is renowned as the economic powerhouse of western Europe... But the last few weeks' strikes have seen more days of action than any of the last five years. The social peace is no more"
US Rebellion

‘Not a race riot, a class riot’

By Jeff Mackler

THE QUOTATION in the headline above is taken from a special report in the 11 May edition of Newsweek.

This one-sided judgement by urban sociologist Joel Kotkin, that class not race propelled the protests, nevertheless helps explain the depth of the uprising in South central Los Angeles.

The intolerable conditions being suffered by Latinos and even white workers in this community spurred it to take action in solidarity with their black sisters and brothers when the outrageous Rodney King verdict was announced.

This is what triggered and gave force to the powerful response throughout that city and across the United States.

Detonator

It was the fundamental issue of racial oppression which detonated the rebellious outbreak of mass protest. At the same time, it was the generalised misery suffered by all sections of the working class in the central cities which explains the multi-racial composition of the protest and the exceptional force of their combined action.

The report reveals for the first time how deeply broad sectors of the working class have been affected by the relentless decades-long ruling class assault on workers’ living standards.

It also marks the latest and most convincing proof that the coming American revolution will combine a workers' struggle for class liberation with a black struggle against super exploitation and national oppression.

When four white cops were caught on videotape in the act of beating black motorist Rodney King within an inch of his life while being arrested for a traffic violation, the US ruling class was put on trial in the eyes of America and the world.

The repeatedly televised video, showing 81 seconds of one of the most brutal beatings ever captured on film or tape, allowed the whole world to see the day in the life of black America.

Naked

The nakedness of this racist jury’s decision was the sheer nakedness of its upside-down verdict: the jury ruled that this prostitute and helpless black victim was the criminal and that the four gun-toting club-wielding cops were his intended victims.

A reaction from the black community was only to be expected. But the fury of the uprising in South central Los Angeles — which spread to cities across the land — exceeded all expectations.

The economic situation for African Americans has grown worse since the urban uprisings of the 1960s. Average black unemployment for the 1980s was over 11.4 per cent, nearly three times the rate for whites (4.1 per cent).

Among black teenagers unemployment stands at a constant 25 per cent and over 40 per cent of all black children are growing up in poverty. Over the last decade funding for social services in the inner-city schools has dropped by 60 per cent.

One of the most telling statistics, which clearly reveals the pent up rage in the black community shows that there are more black males in prison than there are in college — one out of four blacks is either in prison or on parole!

On the spot television newsmen clearly showed that the fury of protestors was directed at a ‘system’ which shut them out and condemned them to lives of poverty. Virtually everyone interviewed cried out for jobs which could provide a decent living and decent housing.

Outbreak

This forced the capitalist media to take note of the underlying economic and social cause of the outbreak of mass protest. It couldn’t be denied or ignored.

The capitalist media worked overtime to create the basis for another white backlash like the one they created and nurtured after the ghettos exploded in the 1960s.

At that time one of their poison-pen journalists went so far as to connect a story alleging the existence of a ‘Blood Brotherhood’. A pure invention, never substantiated, in which unnamed blacks were alleged to be planning murder and mayhem against whites.

Today, virtually every news account of the Los Angeles uprising includes the word ‘violence’ in its title, the daily death toll was reported like scores in a World Series. And the false impression was driven home that it was black and latino ‘rioters and looters killing innocent whites.’

But the fact is that according to the latest figures, of the 518 reported killed all but 14 of the dead were black and latino (26 blacks, 18 latinos, 2 asians, and 10 whites). This strongly suggests that it was cops who did the killing.

Crisis of leadership

The first conclusion which can be drawn from the Los Angeles-centred rebellion is that the great force expressed in the uprising, there is evidence that a much broader revolt of working people is gestating beneath the surface of American society.

But the most important lesson is that without effective leadership and without a program around which the power of the exploited and oppressed masses can be effectively focused, spontaneous rebellions are not enough.

Up to this moment, unfortunately, such a leadership with the courage to lead and an effective program for action has yet to emerge.

The generation of the 1950s and 1960s found its Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, and the generation of the 1990s will also find leaders.

Furthermore, the crisis revealed by the fallout from the Rodney King verdict affects the working class as a whole, which also has not yet solved the problem of leadership. Nor is it a coincidence that this challenge to working people in the central cities comes on the heels of the defeat of the United Auto Workers, the most powerful industrial union in the country, in their strike against Caterpillar Inc.

Mass arrests

On top of all other causes of distress, 1,100 people have been arrested in connection with the rebellion in Los Angeles.

On May 6, it was reported that 6,600 protestors were still being held without charge. Ordinarily, they must be released if charges have not been made before the legal limit of two days has expired. But the California legislature took emergency action on the same day that the two-day limit expired — extending the holding period without charges to an unprecedented seven days.

The vote upholding this fundamental violation of human rights was approved by a shocking majority of 60-0 in the California Assembly and 33-0 in the Senate.

This gives them time to concoct phoney felony charges against those who dared to protest against police brutality, racial injustice, and political and economic repression.

Jeff Mackler is co-National Secretary of the US Fourth International organisation Socialist Action.
Tube workers vote for strike

By Pete Williams

RMT members on London Underground have voted 2:1 for strike action against the Company Plan. There was a 65% per cent turnout in the ballot. The National Executive Committee, which contrary allegations in the mass media, is overwhelmingly supported by the ballots returned by nearly 70,000 postal ballots, voted for immediate talks with the company. It also voted to ball to the other rail unions in an attempt to force unity with them. The RMT is the only union for the tube and for the issuing of mass ballots to the public.

RMT chief Jimmy Knapp

Meanwhile the other rail unions - ASLEF, TSSA and the Cofwd - continue to refuse to ballot their members on the grounds that the Plan 'doesn't affect their members'. The failure to name a date for strike action after the Cofwd meeting may well combine with full-time officials to delay negotiations beyond 25 days, by which time under the anti-union laws, action must commence. The RMT believed the employers became unavoidable once the UUL management changed their position on accepting the Plan the RMT ballot had commenced.

Prior to that the management had been absolutely that the Plan was not up for negotiation. All they wanted was discussion of the proposal with local representatives.

With the RMT ballot underway, management informed the workers by individual letter that they were now prepared to negotiate within the existing machinery and would honour the Promotion, Transfer and Redundancy agreement which has as its cornerstone the principle of seniority. The danger now is that minimal concessions will persuade national negotiations to call off the strike allowing management to return to imposition in a few months' time.

The membership stood up to man-
agement line, intimidation and misin-
formation and demanded a re-management for strike action within a for-
tnight which led to the RMT's defeat. Once again it will be to the RMT District Council to turn the mandate into effective defence of the membership.

Car unions fix ballot to back japaanisation

By Tony Johnstone

UNION leaders at Rover, from the right-wing of the EETPU to the TUC, have given their approval to the japaanisation of the company. The document introduces 'New Management Techniques' in one fell swoop.

It proposes, for example, complete factory closure, 'learning' working and 'continuous improvement', setting a precedent for the whole motor industry. Its acceptance was a travesty of democracy.

One or two changes were made at a national level - there will be no short-form contract workers and unemployment levels in negotiation structures.

All the rest was left to plant-level negotiation. After six months, with no involvement of ordinary workers, a few more concessions were made, largely

around the question of seniority in cer-
tain, very particular situations. Union leaders then argued for ac-
ceptance. To persuade union struc-
tures within Rover to accept the deal they argued 'if you don't accept this, the company will just implement the original document'.

So the National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJNC) unanimously recommended the deal, and then a 150-strong delegate conference confirmed it with only four votes against, followed by a plant-level com-
mmittee.

In Cowley, the Joint Shop stewards Committee (JSSC) wasn't allowed to vote. In Longbridge, the JSSC first voted against, but after a visit from TOWo official Tony Woodley they agreed.

Shop stewards' meetings were hostile, particularly those held by management in Cowley and Southill. The impression was given that workers had no real choice. But this was hardly challenged by the unions - the NJNC never issued

a single ballot. Only after thorough hostility was so strong that they broke down this barrier and at the NJNC meeting, asked management how many workers had voted - and no way of challenging the result. At the count itself, the management promised that the workers' vote was first announced as being against, with a majority of 240. After a 'count', this changed to a vote in favour, with a majority of 16.

All those at the count waved their 'yes' vote - so no further recounts were held. Added to the staff vote in favour there was a majority of 169, out of a total of 40,000 votes.

On April 16, the unions happily signed the agreement. Not so happy were the workers, who have to live with it and can't understand where this 'yes' vote came from.

TUC tries to shackle trades councils

By Sam Stacey

This year's Trades Councils' convention is the result of a 'let's get rid of the Trades Councils' last year's. It was organised 'legally', after being disturbed by the TUC. Faced with a level of opposition to

of all unions to their Trades Councils.

But it also says that affiliation money should be paid direct to the TUC. At the moment, local TUCs get the money from the unions, main-
tain their own finances

Teachers challenge NUT leaders' retreat

By Ian Kaye

The main teachers' union (NUT) conference met this year under the shadow of the Tory victory. But delegates remained combative, and not ready to give the NUT's Broad Left/Right wing (now almost indistinguishable) an easy ride.

The Conference started with a procedural manoeuvre from the Broad Left to exploit a rift between Kinnock, rank the argu-
ments, motions would be divided into Policy and 'Action', to be debated in separate groups. The line the Conference was clear - the leadership should 'left face on' policy, and then oppose any-thing but the most token of ges-
tures in action. But it backed down and the manoeuvre was rej ected. This was to be the key to the leadership approach - card votes and any procedural device to delay discussion. But the conference wouldn't have got away, the Broad Left told us their rejection to the fourth Tory term. The strategy had changed from 'Wait for a better government', now the word 'longer' had been inserted.

The majority of the left, grouped in the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), tried to amend this to remove the threat of job losses and redund-
cy. This fell, promptly splitting the left over where to vote for the leadership's new

point-blank to implement the decision, and ordered security staff not to allow Stafford into the hotel.

Now moves are afoot to force Eclecstone to back down from the union's National Execu-
tive. If these attempts fail, a campaign is likely to be launched within the union for a Special Delegate Meeting to sack

The NUJ right-wing's other move at conference was to try to use the union's financial crisis to try to slash back every last vestige of the union's cam-
paigning structures. But they were again heavily defeated by conference.

In elections, NUJ Left candidates generally did well. John Toner was elected unop-
posed as Vice President; Per-
gammon strike leader Jim Broomhead tied with right-
wing Bob Trevor, and will serve as President for the first six months, and Kyran Con-
nell came within ten votes of unseat- ing the union's General Treasurer.

The conference also agreed to back the 'Unshackle the Unions' campaign and to get involved in the Anti ARA and Anti Trade Union Act.
**Benn and Scargill launch Unshackle Unions conference campaign**

TONY BENN and Arthur Scargill both called for unions to break the anti-union laws at the May Day launch of July's Unshackle the Unions Conference.

Bakers' leader Joe Marino and Furniture Traders (FAT) general secretary Colin Christopher both spoke at the launch, together with leading member of the Haldane Society and industrial relations expert John Hendy QC.

The conference, at Conway Hall on 18 and 19 July will focus on bosses' offensive through 'Japaneseisation' and new working practices, as well as the anti-union laws.

The Saturday of the conference will coincide with the special Labour conference to elect a new leader. A rally addressed by Benn and Scargill will take place at 6pm that evening.

**Election defeat**

The campaign to 'unshackle the unions' has been launched by the Socialist Movement trade-union committee.

In his speech, Arthur Scargill traced the general election defeat to the domination of the labour movement by new realism.

He argued that the 1984-85 miners' strike should have been turned into a general strike, and that the leadership of the labour movement fatally underestimated the possibility of anti-Tory advance through the won passes campaign.

The new Tony anti-union law will abolish the check-off system of union dues payment, enforce full postal balloting, cooling-off periods before strikes and introduce the right of individuals to sue unions for loss of service.

The Unshackle the Unions campaign was backed unanimously by last week's NUJ ADM. And building the conference was a theme of speakers at May Day events in Southampton, Manchester, Birmingham, Oxford, Chesterfield and Newcastle.

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**Block vote under fire**

Will Labour become like the US Democrats?

By Paul Lawson

Both John Smith and Bryan Gould agree that a return of Labour's links with the unions is necessary; indeed this is the broad consensus among Labour and union leaders alike.

It is declared that the public isMetrics of the huge block vote is 'inappropriate to a modern party'. What lies behind these proposals for change, and how should socialists react?

The present form of the block vote is, of course, highly undemocratic - hundreds of thousands of votes cast at Labour conferences by right wing union bosses, with no serious consultation with their members. But is this not the reason for the current trend to denounce, or abolish, the block vote?

Working class

Rather, what is being posed now is a move to weaken the links between Labour and the organised working class. It is part of the process of trying to radically shift the Labour Party away from its identification as the party of organized labour.

The present form of the block vote has been the guarantee of right-wing domination of the party. It was the block vote which stopped Benn being deputy leader and installed the Kinnock-Hattersley 'dream ticket'. It was the block vote which steam-rollered through the Policy Review and the defeat of radical policies in the 1980s. But the repeated defeats inflicted on the left have effectively damned the party from any radical challenge for the foreseeable future. The block vote is unnecessary, at least in its present form, to ensure right-wing domination.

Liberal link

Loosening direct links with the unions is required by the right wing in order to position the Labour Party to be able to move towards open or de facto coalitionist policies with the Liberals.

No one should be hoodwinked into thinking that the moves against the block vote are designed to give more power to ordinary Labour members. Rather, the tactical outcome of the nominations process is the leadership election will lead to a reorganisation which strengthens the grip of the PLP.

In any case, it is harder and harder for left-wing resolutions to consortium the procedural hurdles and make it onto the floor of the Labour conferences.

The left must approach this question from the viewpoint that the formation of an independent working class party based on the unions is a big step forward for the working class. The situation, for example, the United States where no such party exists reveals the problems clearly. Capitalist politics in the US is a joke and no form of working class politics makes it into the national political arena.

But defending Labour's union links must also involve campaigning against the face of union general secretaries wielding millions of votes.

In the short term, there is little chance of a complete rupture between Labour and the unions. Labour becoming a simple capital party like the US Democrats is a long way off. But the process of attacking Labour's position as a party of organised labour is gaining momentum; it should be resisted.

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**Back Unshackle the Unions**

The July conference is the culmination of a long campaign to gain support for the Unshackle the Unions statement, launched by the SMITC, the Haldane Society Employment Committee, the Solidarity Network, Labour Party Socialists and Trade Union News.

The statement, published below, has been signed by hundreds of Labour movements. It invites us to build up to the July conference, efforts should be redoubled to gain support for our initiative.

Get your union or political organisation to sign the statement. So far include MPs Tony Benn, Dennis Canavan, Jeremy Corbyn, Eddy Lopdell, Alice Mahon, Alan Mead, Dawn Primarolo, Dennis Skinner. Unions secretaries/presidents include:- Arthur Scargill, Ken Cameron (FBU), Joe Marino (SPAWU), Colin Christopher (FTAT, Ronny MacDonald (ILC), Peter Heathfield (NUM).

Dozens of union branches and regions have signed the statement. Last week's NUJ conference supported it unanimously.

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**Unshackle the Unions**

"WE DEMAND the complete repeal of all anti-union legislation and that the British government comply with the Conventions and Principles of the United Nations International Labour Organisation for the full restoration of union rights.

We do not accept the criminalisation of union activity and the attacks on civil liberties.

We reject the argument that a trade union movement of 8 million members has no alternative but to comply with anti-union legislation.

We support trade unionists threatened by the use of the laws and all those who challenge the laws to defend their interests."

**Eve support the Unshackle the Unions statement**

Organisations interested in supporting the statement should contact: Name: Neale Blundell (Organisations Coordinator)

Position/held (personal/official capacity): Assistant General Secretary

Address: Room 21, 38-40 Farringdon Road, London EC1N 8QX

Phone: 01-636 4141

Send to Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E15
Reaching out to the soft left

The undemocratic rules of Labour's leadership election have excluded Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant from being formal candidates. But a 'shadow' campaign continues with meetings all over the country. Socialist Outlook talked to KEN LIVINGSTONE about the campaign and the future of the left.

John Smith is about to become Labour leader. Is this a continuation of Kinnockism or a further shift to the right?

UNLIKE Kinnock, John Smith doesn't come from the left of the party, so there isn't the personal bitterness against the left.

Kinnock hasn't spoken to Tony Benn since 1982 or me since 1986, but Smith has left the lines of communication open. As far as I remember John Smith is almost unique in never having attacked another Labour Party member. This is one of the things used against him by people like John Cunningham: 'where were you during the fight against the Nazis?'

But on the issues of policy, such as 'targeting benefits', which is a codeword for supporting mean testing, and the danger of coalitionism, then there is a big danger of a further shift to the right.

In 1981 Tony Benn got 49.5 per cent of the electoral college in the deputy leadership battle. This time you got only 13 nominations from the PLP. This obviously reflects a decline in the Labour left nationally. How do you explain this?

YOU'RE comparing the absolute high point of the left in Britain since the war with a very different situation today. This has to be the low point. But I'm not pessimistic. I think there are going to be a lot of industrial struggles against attacks on the welfare state. And it is clear that Smith is coming up with an agenda which is going to galvanise the left against him.

Instead of proposing big defence expenditure cuts Smith will propose cutting welfare benefits to a huge swathe of middle income families, which is what the 'Commission on Social Justice' is all about.

This fits in with what is going to happen throughout Europe. The absence of a welfare state in Japan means that Japanese capitalism has a distinct advantage; and the United States has the same advantage. Now capital throughout Europe is going to move against the welfare state, giving rise to the most massive struggles.

Equally we're moving into a decade in which environmental issues are going to come to the fore dramatically with the destruction of the ozone layer. So this is going to be a decade in which both economic and social struggles, and the ecological and economic crises, are going to put left issues back on the agenda.

Still 13 nominations is a small base to start with?

ACTUALLY it was fourteen, Ronnie Campbell's vote got 'lost'. But in any case this small block of votes represents a bigger parliamentary left, because there were numbers of people pressurised by their local parties, or disgusted with the whole process, who couldn't or wouldn't vote with me this time.

We have a left core from which we have to expand. And that means reaching out to the soft left. Obviously a lot of the people supporting Gould share concerns about the welfare state, the environment, the trade union link, denouncing the pound, and of course shared our concerns about the Gulf war. About a third of the PLP can be won to the left, so the Campaign group has got to find some way of reaching those people.

Equally we have got to reach out to the trade union lefts, because these people are going to be at the forefront. And this is why we have launched a Socialist Forum, to see what kind of common ground and common agenda there is on the left.

The 13 points we've put forward may not satisfy every left group, but they are a realistic basis for discussion. It's 'objectivist', or voluntarist, to imagine that in this situation we could suddenly recreate something like the old Bennie left.

Over the past five years a lot of people have left the Labour Party. Surely left organisation has to reach out to trade union and campaign activists who refuse to be in the Labour Party?

THAT'S fine. I don't have the slightest objection to the widest umbrella organisation of the left, including many people who don't want to be in the Labour Party. Provided that doesn't exclude the essential task of actually organising in the Labour Party.

The Socialist Movement could have been the ideal framework for that. The problem was that there were a lot of people who quite openly saw it as the forerunner of a 'red-green' party, or a new socialist party, for which there was no basis.

Once you start talking about that, no union broad left will touch it. It's a clear waste of time.

In the end, should the left vote for Gould and Prescott?

"We have a left core from which we have to expand. And that means reaching out to the soft left.... about a third of the PLP can be won to the left."

I SPENT two years on the economic policy review group chaired by Gould. And for nearly all that time we were fighting together against people like Gordon Brown and Patricia Hewitt, who were taking a classic neo-liberal line of 'let the market do it all'.

Bryan Gould and myself both argued for intervention, subsidies and planning, the differences being solely those of scale.
Bryan Gould was denoted by Kin-nock for all that, and removed from the industry portfolio – the same way Mi- chael Meacher was denoted for still de-fending some trade union rights.

Labour went into the last election with the most orthodox economic team we had since 1929. All the talk is now that John Smith won’t allow anyone like Prescott or Gould any economic portfolio at all.

So if that is the case, then the basis here for a long-term working arrange-ment and community of interest be-tween the hard left and the soft left, on questions like defence, Europe, rejection of the Maastricht accords, the environ-ment etc.

But the key thing here is the attitude to the unions. The left can’t vote for any candidate who is calling for the ending of the trade union link. Prescott is in favour of keeping it, so no problem we can all vote for Prescott.

As for Gould, it depends which way he comes down. There was a good letter in the Guardian last week from the Gould camp saying “keep the block vote but democratis it”. That’s fine. But un-less Bryan Gould openly comes out on this question we can’t vote for him.

But there’s another question coming up before this election, and that’s the debate on the Maastricht accords. Part of that is tying Britain to the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and this quite clearly means, as the Campaign Group said, a deflationary policy putting another mil-lion people on the dole. So we should call for the Labour Party to vote against the Maastricht accords. And we want to see people like Gould and Prescott, if not actually voting against the accords, then at least criticising them.

The Campaign Group has a block of votes which could determine the outcome, at least on the deputy leadership election. So we should say we want something for those votes. We should demand that Gould and Prescott also come out against all such hunts.

In this respect, it’s worth noting that Bryan Gould’s main organiser is Nigel Stanley of the LCC, which is precisely the body organising a witch hunting campaign against Bernie Grant in his own constituency for standing in the deputy leadership election.

But surely Gould is compromised by years of clear support for Kinnockism?

WHICH is precisely why without some clear commitments, to the union link and stopping attacks on the left, then there’s no point in voting for him.

Is coalitionsism really being prepared? Or it just fantasy?

YES, for certain. The whole of the Guardian/New Statesman type of ‘left’ are talking about it.

It will be delayed if Labour’s support begins to pick up, but as we approach the next election, if there’s the slightest doubt about the outcome, the right wing in the party and the unions will start to demand an electoral pact with the Libe-rales.

Frankly, it’s not realistic to expect that MPs who had no qualms about suppor ting the killing of 100,000 Arabs in the Gulf war will be disturbed about arzelec-toral pact with the Liberals!

Despite the fact that you and Bernie Grant are not formal candidates, the campaign goes on?

YES, we have meetings all over the country. And beyond that there will be plenty for socialists to do.

And are entering a most turbulent and dangerous decade, the world is being torn apart. There’s the most massive crisis in the ex-Soviet Union and eastern Europe as well as the third world, and a real danger of fascist governments arising in Europe.

During the last period when the US and British economies were in crisis, capitalism was sustained by Germany and Japan. Now, Germany’s economy is turning down and there is the banking crisis in Japan. Just one major mistake and you’ll get a slump. They may avoid it, but the danger is there.

What are the key tasks for the left?

THE FIRST task is to preserve the trade union links with the Labour Party. Without those links the Labour Party would decline into just another capitalist party, and that would be a massive blow to working class organisation.

The second is defence of the welfare state. It’s quite clear now with the finan-cial crisis of the state that either the gov-ernment has to cut back sharply on defence spending, or deeply attack the welfare state, and no price for guessing which one they’ll choose.

The third point is international or-ganisation of the socialist movement and labour movements. There’s not the slightest doubt now that capitalism is now totally globalised, and to respond to that the socialist left has to build genuine rank-and-file links between working people not just trips round the world for top parliamentarians and union leaders at the expense of the ‘Second International’. It’s question of building links between working people in struggle to stop them being divided by the multinational.

The period when the world was divided ideologically, and that you had to choose sides between different states, is now over. We are entering what is called a post Cold War period, which means one where the working class has to build its own internationalism.

I think that in the next period of crisis if you got a single breakthrough, like Lula winning a presidential election in Brazil, or any broadly anti-capitalist force making a major breakthrough, the whole situation would explode and be transformed.

When you had Nicaragua standing up, or Peru defying the IMF, then these places were small enough to be crushed. But it would take just one anti-capitalist force to come to power in a major country, which couldn’t be easily crushed, to divide the world on interna-tional class lines. That’s how turbulent and fragile the international economic and political situation is.

Interview by Phil Hearne and Patrick Baker

Why we won’t be backing Bryan

KEN LIVINGSTONE’s decision to stand with Bernie Grant in the leadership contest was absolutely right. For the left to lie down and play dead in the post-election situation would be disastrous.

As Ken Livingstone points out, the ‘shadow’ election campaign now gives the opportunity to rally left wing and socialist forces against the right and now realism.

The comments that Livingstone makes in the interview about the turbulence of the world situation are well judged. Stalinism may be at dead’s door, but to insist that atom bomb delivery or stability for world capitalism would be wrong. The uprising in the United States and the mass strikes in Germany are the first signs of the stormy period we are moving into.

Socialist Outlook supporters will do everything possible to promote the campaign of meetings and rallies which Ken Livingstone and Bernie Grant will now hold. But we have strong reservations about the tactical course which ‘Labour’ leaders have outlined for the left.

In the first place, there are no conditions in which the left should vote for Bryan Gould in the leadership election. Gould is utterly compromised with years of support for Kinnockism and the witch hunts. Ken Livingstone lays down strong conditions for supporting Gould; but to imagine anything outside this is fooling the whole left.

But this is an indication of a more substantial disagreement. It implies that a third of the PLP cannot win on the left, and that the Campaign Group must have a strong orientation to building alliances with the parliamentary ‘soft left’ — what we would prefer to call, all left, the centre.

But in the end Labour MPs reflect the pressure of their base, and the strength of the Labour left nationally. Most of the 70 odd new MPs are a Kinnockite lot, and the Labour left is very weak. The Labour left could only be rebuilt as a result of substantial developments in the class struggle. That is why any new alliance of the left needs to have weight on the forces in the unions and mass campaigns, as well as the Labour left, which are key in turning the situation around.

The Socialist Forum being launched by Ken Livingstone must be judged from this angle. If it remains at the same level as groupings like Labour Left Liaison and the Women’s Action Committee, essentially concentrating on inner-Labour left faction fighting, it will be still-born. If it becomes a much broader alliance involving forces based on class struggle, then it could be a substantial step forward.
Thatcher's dream – the US nightmare

*Fortress Los Angeles*

*City of Quartz*

By Mike Davis

Review by Jane Kelly

*IN THE BLACK* sheaths of South-central Los Angeles, 70% of black men will have been involved with the criminal justice system before they are 35. Across the US more young black men are in prison than in college. The insurrections in Los Angeles and across the US cities, sparked off by the obscene verdict in the Rodney King affair, has lifted the lid on the enormous racial and class tension felt especially in the lower cities in the US.

But the roots have deeper roots and are also the result of recession, being paid for by the poor and underprivileged. In the US, the richest country in the world, more than 25 million people are food-trained. Without a welfare state the soup kitchens and voucher catch only the most desperate and vulnerable – all 25 million of them.

It is no coincidence that it was in LA, home of the Hollywood dream, that these events started. Mike Davis’ book City of Quartz: *Excavating the Future in Los Angeles,* recently published in paperback, examines the corruption and racism of the notorious LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department), by the Police Chief Daryl Gates, and the history of the gang, especially those in South-central.

Vietnam-style

In a chapter entitled “The Hammer and the Rock” he describes how the LAPD’s style of policing led to bootleg coffe in one operation ‘arresting more black youth than at any incidents of the Watts rebellion of 1965...’

Kids are humiliatingly forced to ‘kiss the reenact’ or spread across police cruisers while officers check their names against computer lists of gang members. There are 1,453 arrests... mostly for trivial offenses. The habitual parking tickets or curfew violations. Hundreds more, unchallenged, have their names and addresses entered into the electronic gang roster for ‘futur surveillance.’

Vietnam metaphor proliferate. “This is Vietnam here,” says the chief of the District Attorney’s Drug Unit, “the Viet Cong abroad in our community” says a local mayor.

This same South-central area was once the home of the LA Black Panther Party. With the Party leadership formed from gang members, gang hostilities in the mid 1960s virtually ceased, while black youth politicised under the influence of the Civil Rights movement and Malcolm X, forming patrols to monitor police abuse and guard the annual Watts festival, rather than trade narcotics in the streets of the area.

Socialist ideas

But as in the rest of the USA, the Panthers’ politicisation of blacks, as well as Malcolm X’s increasingly socialist ideas, were beginning to endanger the state.

At elsewhere, the Black Panther leaders in LA were murdered, “on the campus of UCLA by members of a rival nationalist group (which Panther veterans still insist was actually police instigated)... Although a general massacre of the Panther cadre at their South-central HQ was narrowly averted by an angry community outing into the streets, the party was effectively destroyed.”

Gang activity

What took its place was a resurgence of gang activity. The recent events of South-central are the result a mixture of violent criminal activity, gang activity, and property in their own neighborhood, combined with more political response of attacks on police stations, city halls and banks. The lack of a radical leadership with a way forward, is a disaster.

Los Angeles was developed as a union-free town in competition with highly organised San Francisco. Compared to that city, nothing about LA’s geography makes it an ideal place for a huge city.

Basingly screwed up

Basic Instinct

Directed by Paul Verhoeven

Reviewed by Sam Inman

IT WOULD BE A gross understatement to say that this film hails few new people hot under the collar.

Reviewing Basic Instinct in *City Limits* Bonnie Vaughan describes it as ‘a film of such virile sentiments as to make anyone despair of what it takes, a lot of money, to make a hit.’

Maybe there is something deeply wrong with my taste in movies, but actually I thought this a rather funny film, certainly well worth ignoring the reviews and going to see it for oneself.

The only disappointments for this reviewer were (a) a certain male character ended up not getting his way, but (b) there is a boringly high content of sexual sex scenes – not exactly my cup of tea.

Catherine Tramell, the murderer-writer and murder-suspect around which the film revolves, is played wonderfully by Sharon Stone. She is one mean woman, cold as ice, and with a bisexual appetite to match her conventionally stunning beauty and her fabulous wealth.

Michael Douglas plays the law-some detective. Nick Curran, who wants to nail Catherine for the murder-by-kick-of-her-rich, ex-pop star tep-two-male – a murder described in detail in her latest book. He gets confused – poor chap – by the unwieldy way in which Catherine saw her relationship with the deceased, ‘we never dated, we just fucked.’

Sometimes predictably, they end up having an affair. Equally predictably, the affair is derailed of passion but has plenty of sex. Both are using and manipulating each other. Her for her new book. Him, to solve both the murder and the enigma of a woman who can control him. As a thriller, however, this film is greatly psychological tricks that crop up time and time again ensure that from beginning to end the viewer is ensnared in a complex, if unbelievable, plot. There is also one of the best car chases I’ve seen in a long time.

So what of the critics? Well, the only thing in the film appears to be Rosy (Leticia Sabal), an irresponsible lover of Catherine’s. But this is not the place to dissect some of the reasons why lesbians may get more than a little taste at the complexes of being in love with a soulful and enterprising woman – and there seem to be a few of these in the film.

As to accusations of homophobia and misogyny, reality fail to understand them. Nearly all the characters are self-seekers, egotistical, manipulators. The world is full of them.

And one thing, which no reviewer I’ve seen has picked up on, is that it is all set in the social circles of the super-rich and the San Francisco police department. Why would anyone expect to find a positive image there? The best thing to do is have a laugh at all that sprawling each other’s heads up.
Irish pro-choice campaign left to fight alone

By Anne Conway, Peoples Democracy

WHEN THE case of the fourteen year old rape victim hit the headlines in February, the establishment political parties, particularly the women TDs (Irish MPs), made a lot of concerned noises.

Now that the dust has settled, all are prepared to ask for a YEs vote in the Irish referendum on the Maastricht Treaty on 18 June. This is despite the EC protocol that protects and directs the 8th Amendment – the constitutional article which caused the interment of the fourteen year old and which prohibits abortion information and counselling.

Along with the bourgeois parties, practically every other organization has shied away from expressing clear opposition to the protocol.

Most disgracefully, the Congress of Trade Unions, the two biggest unions in the country, the Irish Labour Party, and the Council for the Status of Women, have all called for a YEs vote to Maastricht.

This is seen by many as clear evidence that the co-option and incorporation of the leaderships of organisations representing the oppressed has been completed.

The Repro the 8th Amendment Campaign has been left to fight on its own. With meagre resources, the campaign now has no back up from those we would expect to support us, such as women’s committees in the unions.

The far-left is probably the single biggest force within the campaign - but they have hardly showered themselves with glory.

They have been in and out of the campaign, depending on the strike level, and have complained from the sidelines about ‘indictive leadership’. This is despite it being within their power to carry through the clear and unambiguous campaign policies – REPEAL of the 8th amendment, NO to the protocol, NO to Maastricht.

Instead they have run off on a tangent, confronting SPUC in a more provocative way – including harassing and attempting to block a demonstration of the anti-abortion forces. Although organised by the Socialist Workers Movement – sister organisation of the SWP – the stunt rebounded on the campaign.

Despite the setbacks though, there have been a number of very successful campaign activities. Packed meetings have taken place in Dublin and other areas.

On 6 May, over 150 women took part in a symbolic solidarity trip, from Dublin to Holyhead, to highlight the large number of Irish women who travel to Britain for abortions every week. They were met by women from the Irish Women’s Abortion Support Group in Britain, and the event received wide media coverage.

Regardless of the outcome of the Maastricht referendum, the real struggle over abortion rights will come when the poll is over. The Church and Fianna Failing can be expected to mobilise fully against any liberalising of Ireland’s anti-women laws.

Support and donations can be sent to: Repro the 8th Amendment Campaign, PO Box 3441, Dublin 8, Eire.

Afghanistan: end of a failed experiment

By Bill Turner

AN ERA has ended in Afghanistan. A thirteen year experiment – dominated by war and Soviet intervention – has been brushed aside. And that war – superficially, a straightforward Cold War confrontation – has moved from tragedy to farce.

Now the war has shifted – to a tribal-based conflict between ‘moderate’ Muslims and the more extreme followers of Gulbuddin Hekmatiar. That the Afghani tragedy will continue, and in some respects worsen, is the easiest prediction to make. But what is it that has really happened in Afghanistan?

The thirteen years of ‘communism’, led by the stalinist Peoples Democratic Party (PDPF), were indeed an experiment. The experiment was not just doomed because of the Soviet military intervention, though that snatched the lid off the coffin.

It was also an attempt at social advance in a society that was undeveloped in every sense. A small country of less than twenty million, 90 per cent its population live in the countryside, and one in six of those are nomads. It is population deeply imbued both with Islam and with tribalism.

These forces are a reference point for every section of society, not just the Mujahedin – the PDPA too was affected by tribal conflict, principally between the majority Pushtuns and minority Tajiks. This forms an essential backdrop to today’s situation.

But also, Afghanistan’s industry is tiny. In 1978, the industrial workforce was estimated at 40,000 – one in every five hundred of the population.

So the PDPA’s bid for power wasn’t doomed from the start – that came with Soviet domination – but its tiny social base of urban workers and intellectuals meant that it was precarious, to say the least.

The second point is that Afghani society was almost destroyed by the war between the US/Sov and the US-backed Mujahedin. Nearly half the population were uprooted, one third became refugees, three quarters of roads and 60 per cent of rural health centres were destroyed.

The PDPA’s base among the urban poor people in Kabul, almost certainly remains. And it is that population, particularly women, who will suffer most under Mujahedin rule. The new ‘liberal democratic’ freedoms that Afghanistan’s urban population were able to enjoy are already starting to be destroyed. Afghan society is shattered. As in eastern Europe, for most people the ‘word’ socialism signifies military domination of their country. And that association will not be easily dispelled.

The lesson that is driven home once again is that socialism can’t be imposed. And when it is imposed in a backward country, in alliance with ‘foreigners’ who are seen to militarily occupy the country, it is very damaging indeed.

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Is Zionism racism?

By Michael Warschawski

In 1975 the United Nations General Assembly 'resolved' that Zionism was a form of racism. But the equation of Zionism with racism requires that the terms be defined. Zionism is a political movement working for the solution of the Jewish problem by bringing the Jews to the land of Israel and the establishment there of a sovereign Jewish society. Racism: According to R. Shostak's authoritative dictionary of the Hebrew language, racism is 'the point of view that the nations of the world are divided into inferior and superior races'. In the face of all of these, Zionism has no racist dimension at all, at most it is a utopia, more suited to the 19th century than to present-day reality. Zionism does not state that the Jewish people is a superior race or that the Arab nation is inferior. And indeed this definition is the basis for the claims of all those who denied the validity of the UN resolution: the Jewish people is not a race, and Zionism does not speak about inferior or superior races. Therefore Zionism is not racist.

Yet there is another definition of racism, closer to its meaning in colloquial language: racism is the discrimination against human beings on the basis of their national, racial, religious or ethnic origin.

In this sense, Zionism as an ideology is not racist, but the Zionist enterprise and the Zionist state of Israel is very, very racist.

Discrimination

Discrimination between Jews and Arabs is inscribed in the identity card and in the genetic code of the state of Israel and has had a vital part in defining the nature of the existing regime and its laws, its national priority and its dominant culture.

First and foremost, the United Nations which in 1975 condemned Zionism as a form of racism, bears no small responsibility for the existence of the racist regime in the state of Israel. In 1947 a UN resolution established two states in Palestine, one almost entirely Arab, and the other with a majority of Jews.

One way or another, by defining the Jewish character of the original Israeli state, the UN granted international legitimacy to Israel's racist character and perhaps to its expulsion of the Arab population.

Jewish

The statement in the Israeli Declaration of Independence proclaiming Israel to be the state of the entire Jewish people expresses the essence of the existing regime, and defines the collectivity of the state of Israel. This collectivity is not all of the state's citizens, but of the entire Jewish nation, over and above those who are citizens of the state, and excluding citizens of the state who were neither born to a Jewish mother nor converted to Judaism according to Jewish law.

In other words not only does a Jewish refugee from Paris have the ability via Zionist institutions to help determine the state's priorities, but the few Palestinians who managed to obtain citizenship have neither the right nor the ability to be part of the sovereign collective.

A blatant example of this can be found in the land laws which forbid Arab citizens to buy 'national land' or 'state land', while Jews living outside Israel who are not its citizens, have that right.

Another example is the Law of Return. Every Jewish person has the right of residency in Israel; by contrast there is no absolute right of residency even for an Arab citizen of Israel. It is always provisional and on sufferance.

The pretentious liberalism of Israel's founders - and the need to keep the United Nations quiet - made it hard for those to legislate open apartheid laws. But since the existing regime was based on an apartheid system they were compelled to search for sophisticated ways to institute this racial discrimination.

The primary form this has taken is the state of war; the Law of Prevention, the Military Government of Arab areas until 1966, and the non-repeal of the mandatory Emergency regulations. There are just a few examples of the way in which a system of double standards was created under the pretext of a state of emergency.

The initial Zionist approach to the country's inhabitants can be described as 'ecological racism'; the Arabs are part of the landscape, sometimes an interesting bit of folklore, mostly a nuisance.

This way of relating continued after the establishment of the state as well; the Arabs 'disappeared'. Including from memory.

The minority who remained in Palestine were placed in 'reserves' in the hope that they too would disappear (the Katib massacre, and the plan of which this was a part, took place only five years after the mass expulsion of Arabs, which went on until 1961).

The Arabs who remained were accorded the status of provisional citizens and given the vote.

Third-class citizens

That the Arabs would be third-class citizens went without saying; the state of war with the Arab world, and the relatively small size of the remnant left after the mass expulsions, made their expulsion from the collective easier, even for the most liberal Israeli Jews.

The state and society were not only Jewish in theory but also in practice; and at that time the contradiction between a Jewish state and a democratic state was not obvious.

It was therefore possible to put in place a policy of discrimination without apparent hatred, without problems of conscience, without moral quandary. Israeli society in the 1950s and 60s could easily free itself of any association of with openly racist ideologies.

In the 1960s a combination of factors brought about a revolution in the relation of Israeli society towards the Palestinians in the state. The internal economic, social and political needs of Israeli society, which led to the end of the period of military government, and to greater integration of the Palestinian minority into society; the addition of one and a half million more Palestinians to the area under Israeli rule after the 1967 war; and the foundation of the Palestinian national movement and its successes after 1967.

Racism

These three factors prevented the continuation of a policy of ignoring the non-Jew within Jewish society, exposed the racist character of the current regime, and granted legitimacy to various forms of racist behaviour and openly racist ideology.

In 1967 the Palestinians became a 'problem' and the 'problem' activated the potential racism inherent in the existence of an exclusive Jewish society.

For peoples as for individuals, dealing with reality as it is, including its past, is an essential condition for being able to overcome existential problems.

Denial of reality is a much shadier enemy than open hatred: the existence of the Palestinians is indeed a problem for the advocates of a Jewish state, and especially for those Zionists who honestly champion democratic and humanistic values.

The problem is not that there are Palestinian Arabs who claim to belong in Palestine and demand their rights over land, but in the contradiction of a democratic approach and one which claims exclusivity in a place where there are other human beings.

The price of Israel being an exclusivist state is that it is being turned into a mixture of South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Wild West. In simpler terms, the choice is between either a democratic state or Massada.

*Michael Warschawski is a leading member of the Black-White Communities league, Israeli section of the Fourth International.
Ex-Trotskyists in auto-destruct mode

Bad news delights Socialist Organiser

By Paul Clarke
SENN FEIN president Gerry Adams lost his West Belfast seat at the general election, a fact greeted by Socialist Organiser (SO 520) with the headline ‘Good news from West Belfast’. For Socialist Organiser this amounted to a ‘rejection of sectarianism’ by West Belfast workers.

At the level of facts this is absurd. Adams lost his seat despite the fact that his vote, absolutely and in percentage terms, went up. Some hundreds of loyalist voters switched to the SDLP to vote Adams out. SO supporters say the SDLP is the ‘party of the Socialist International’. It may be thus. But is it not, like the Labour Party, a party based on the workers movement? It is a bourgeois nationalist party, full stop.

Joy at defeat

SO’s ‘joy at Adams’ defeat stems not from principled consideration, but from their irrationally prejudiced against the nationalist struggle in Ireland. Adams’ defeat is simply a victory for imperialism, albeit a marginal victory. Let Socialist Organiser chief Sean Maguire be unbound.

This particular piece of nonsense led some SO contacts to stop buying the paper. But worse was to come.

In SO 521 Maguire lets off steam with a huge attack on Ken Livingstone, denouncing him as a ‘pantomime candidate’, unmasking a stream of bizarre epithets (Lord Rock, Cheesy Red, the candidate of the Sun and culminating with ‘scumbag’); and calling on Tony Benn to stand against him.

Of course Marxists have many disagreements with Ken Livingstone. Maybe Tony Benn would have been a better left candidate. But so what? Marxists don’t support left candidates against the right because we agree with them politically; on everything, but because we support the fight of left against right to advance the struggle.

The main factor in the situation is that someone on the left has been prepared to get up and fight back against the new realists. The whole left should therefore stand behind Livingstone’s campaign, while quite rightly making its criticisms of his policies.

But the bizarre antics by SO are not the end of the matter. SO supporters in the National Union of Students intend to take the NUS to court over its abolition of winter conference.

Court intervention

The motivation for calling on the bourgeois courts to take action, overriding the independence of the NUS, is a simplistic factorial one. NUS conferences are highlights of the Organiser annual political routine. When paper sales and contacts are up for grabs, who cares about political principle?

The present political gyrations of SO are just the latest of a series of eccentricities of this ex-Trotskyist grouping.

Others are, notably, denouncing the whole of the far left as ‘irrationally bigotry against Israeli Jews’ for backing the Palestinian struggle, and giving almost uncritical support to Boris Yeltsin.

Socialist Organiser is moving to the right politically at a rate of knots. Increasingly based on students; its leadership is no longer able to distinguish itself from all other left forces by the adoption of bizarre sectarian badges of honour.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with open polemic in a Marxist paper; it educates and clarifies. But what is happening to a socialist tendency which denounces someone on the left as ‘separatist’? Especially when that denunciation comes from its best-known leader?

These kind of antics are the death knell for a once-Great International Socialist tendency and other loons. They reek of fashionable deference. Socialist Organiser is going into auto-destruct mode.

Feedback

We welcome letters on any subject but please keep them brief. Letters over 350 words will be cut. Send your letters to: Socialist Outlook PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UW

Ireland and the armed struggle

IT SEEMS to me that the real issue under discussion in the recent letters about Ireland is the role of the IRA’s armed struggle. That marxists and consistent anti-imperialists say they have the right to criticise the armed struggle against British imperialism is not in question. The debate is around the contribution this armed struggle, as presently conducted in Britain and Ireland, makes to the defeat of British imperialism.

My view is that it is making no contribution. The British Army losses in training exercises is 80 loss to the IRA and while blowing up the City of London inconveniences capitalists, it will not bring British capitalists to the table to negotiate its withdrawal from Ireland.

Marx summed up its impact on British workers when writing of earlier bombard in central London, ‘one can’t expect London proletariat to allow themselves to be shot up by the tender socks of the Fenian entrance’.

The armed struggle is becoming ever more autonomous, more divorced from politics. It is the one thing everybody in the Republican Movement can agree on, even if Gerry Adams is now saying that Sinn Fein ‘understands’ rather than supports the IRA campaign.

It is also the voice of a population excluded from political life, excluded from white areas of the economy with no real industrial muscle – only the unions are able to shut down the electricity supply, for example. Cheering a successful IRA action or provoking a safe house is their way of retaliating against the British state.

Working class

This is the politics of the powerless. The only force in Ireland with the power to defeat British imperialism is the working class. The task for revolutionaries in Ireland is to develop an organisation and a programme to lead this class, not to devote new energies to Sinn Fein.

Socialists in Britain have the duty to use the working class and organisations to support the fight of the Irish people to determine their own future.

There is a big contradiction between the armed struggle and the Republican Movement’s avowed aim of a mass movement against British imperialism. I think it would make for a more interesting debate in these pages to focus on this conflict rather than the merits of particular armed actions.

Liam MacUaid
East London

Surrogate Kinnock

I WAS pleased with the latest edition of the newspaper and the analysis of Labour’s election defeat.

Labour’s performance proves that Kinnock and his policies have been completely discredited, and yet the Labour bureaucracy is nothing, like the lemmings, to appoint a ‘surrogate Kinnock’ as the new leader.

This was not because changing a name at the top, rather than changing his policies, is an alternative to the Tories, will not win them any increased support.

Matt Gibbons
York

Referendum - a boost for De Klerk

Before writing his letter criticising SO’s position on the all-white referendum in South Africa (SO April 17), Michael Wippell should have asked himself who has benefitted from the result – the liberation movement or De Klerk and the white establishment?

What is quite clear is that De Klerk, with an almost united white population behind him, is now in a stronger position in his negotiations with the ANC and the other organisations in CODESA.

Two days after De Klerk hailed his victory with the statement that this heralded the end of apartheid (again!), his government introduced a budget which maintained the differentials in pensions for the still officially designated four racial groups, with the black majority, as always, at the end of the queue.

A week after the referendum, the government announced that it was going to resume executions and tabled diluted proposals for power-sharing with the black majority. Far from moving toward the Constituent Assembly demanded by the liberation movement, the government team on CODESA conference produced its latest proposals for an interim administration.

De Klerk was honouring his promise to the white electorate that a future constitution would ensure that there would be no risk of a ‘black dictator’. He also promised that the existing racist apartheid parliament might be kept as the upper house of a new parliament and that the regionally elected senate previously promised.

A real boost for De Klerk was the almost instantaneous abandonment of sanctions by international capitalists, despite the expressed request by Mandela and the ANC that sanctions should not be lifted until the constitutional issues had been settled. The culmination of this was the red carpet reception for De Klerk in Nigeria – a visit which took place without the approval of the ANC.

This is of particular significance because historically Nigeria has been one of black Africa’s most implacable opponents of white minority rule. And Nigeria’s president, Ibrahim Babangida, is the current president of the Organisation of African Unity.

Meanwhile the massacre of black people in the townships of Natal and the Rand continues – a useful weapon in the propaganda war against the ‘black organisations which cannot control their supporters are obviously not fit to take over the rule of the state’.

Charlie van Gelderen
Cambridge
Where unions are bosses' partners

Our Special Correspondent DAVE OSLER reports from Japan, where management lead the field in the use of tame union structures.

IF YOU THINK you've got it tough being a trade union activist in Britain, imagine what it's like in Japan, the country where 'Japanisation' is not the latest employers' offensive but the daily lot of the working class.

Before bosses at the two neighbourings Sumitomo shipyards in Yokosuka established a company union in 1973, the independent Zeninnoh Zoenkai Kono organised the entire workforce. Now it's down to just 50 activists, with 1,250 in the so-called alternative.

First union

As Sumitomo could not legally derecognise what became nicknamed the First Union, it systematically punished supporters with lower pay, eviction from company housing and denial of recreation; with Japanese companies owning all amateur sports facilities, militants don't even get a game of bowls on their day off.

For First Union diehards Takeo, Yoshiaki and Shin, also members of the 500,000 strong Japan Communist Party, it's a moral obligation for workers to fight constantly for justice. Many of our workmates respect our stand, but lack the courage to join us.

The company outfit ritualistically demands a decent rise, a bigger bonus and reduced working hours every year, but demanding is where it stays. They have to pretend to reflect members' wishes, but in reality they ignore them. For management, it's great to have a union that accepts everything it says.

The Japanese have an expression - 'SK' - for jobs that are kiken (dangerous), and kitai (hard). This job, the men joke, is 'SK plus Y', the last standing for yatsu - low paid.

Basic pay for a forty hour week is £14,000 a year after 30 years' service. Japanese industrial workers command just two thirds the purchasing power of counterparts in the USA or western Germany.

Annualised hours average 2,300, around 500 above typical western levels. This excludes time spent in quality control (QC) circles, management pop talks where workers are forced to devise ways of working harder.

Thanks to criticism of Japan abroad, the government wants the 1,800 hour year in place by 1994. Rengo (the mainstream union federation) has adopted established 5 per cent benchmark.

This reflects bulging order books and rising profitability. Japan now builds 46 per cent of all new ships in the world. But with the economy in trouble, rises elsewhere were the lowest since 1980.

The steelworkers at gritty working class Kawasaki, forty minutes train ride from Tokyo, is one of the most militant workplaces in Japan. The local authority has a Socialist/Communist majority.

No alternative

But things aren't quite as good at the 3,500-employee Isuzu dumptruck plant. JCF activists Kenji, a warehouseman, and track worker Hisao work within the company union, because there's no alternative.

We are ashamed to hear what western workers are told to 'learn' from the Japanese. Please tell British workers this: if they accept Japanese working practices, they'll end up with poorer living standards and worse working conditions. If Japanese practices are introduced into western companies, workers will oppose them, won't they?

At Isuzu, the 45 minute 'bunch break' routinely goes on QC Saturday - theoretically a day off - is almost universally worked. Monthly basic for an average worker (meticulously defined as aged 35, two dependants and with the company for 13 years) is £1,000 a month pretax. Hisao and Suzuki, apparently, are paid less.

Of the 18,000 workers in four major factories, 24 died on the job last year, with heart attacks due to the pace of work the biggest killer. Despite many accidents, only 72 people were given 'long-term sick leave' that is, more than a fortnight. This year has seen four deaths already.

Workers are routinely moved from plant to plant, leaving family behind. The word Tan- shin-Funin ('transfer-separation') has entered the language.

Asking what the union does about all this prompts laughter. 'The union is the company's partner', it represents management's interests. Ordinary workers expect nothing from it.

We campaign hard, but there hasn't been a single Communist union rep in the whole of the Isuzu group for 15 years. If you want to stand for a position, you have to be a workplace committee member. To stand as a delegate you need the permission of lower management.

A JCF member with 100 per cent support in his section was recently elected unopposed; the bosses transferred him to another shop.

We stand as union democracy candidates rather than party members, but management knows we are Communists and so do our workmates. The ballot isn't secret, so people who want to vote for us are often frightened to.

The last strike was in 1980. Industrial action is now limited to unofficial overtime boycotts or refusal to participate in the theoretically voluntary QC. Occasionally, resolutions critical of the company union are carried. Two shops rejected this year's pay demand.

As they cannot even conceive of things getting better industrially, Kenji and Hisao look to parliamentary solutions. The JCF has launched a major labour legislation reform campaign under the slogan, 'lives worthy of human beings'. All hopes are pinned onto the eventual emergence of an anti-LDP coalition that can be pressed into taking up some of the demands.
Left activists hope for breakthrough

By Dave Osler

Civil service union CPSA expressed its confidence in Brighton this week with the right wing leadership accused of trying to rig elections for the union leadership and set to push a low paid public sector workforce against substantial stringings, the conditions of end of national bargains.

The row over the conduct of elections for the union's executive and top three jobs has now engendered a dispute over the domain. The 'National Moderate Group' are accused of using their supporters at the union's HQ to provide ballot numbers in advance, giving their election campaign an advantage over both the Kinnockite 'Left of Centre' group and the Militant-dominated Broad Left.

Members had not been told by Easter weekend exactly how much the government is offering in current talks. Now it has been announced that the executive or introducing an order of just over 4 per cent, despite the rejection of a 45 per cent deal by the executive of the service and ancillary workers' union NUCPS.

NUCPS is likely to call for an industrial action.

But CPSA's leadership may try to put the package to a national ballot during the conference period, when many activists will be away from their workplaces.

The threat of derecognition hangs over many departmental and semi-privateized agencies. In the Employment Service, some managers are now insisting that they are not legally obliged to consult unions on terms and conditions and have stopped doing so. Emergency motions are likely.

Another major issue will be the defeat of year-long strikes over claimants' staff at open-plan Dole offices at Forest Hill and Marylebone in London. The right is arguing the question was settled, with minimal concessions at some offices. But left wings point to the lack of any serious coordinated campaign to win the dispute.

The CPSA ballot for a new General Secretary, with a close race in prospect between Militant supporter John Macrae and right winger Barry Reamsbottom, is one of those affected by the current malpractice scandal.

The broad left hopes the collapse of the Kinnockite breakaway Broad Left '84 faction's 'vocal for Labour' argument will tip the balance towards them.

Socialists, with members both in and out of the Militant-controlled Broad Left, are to meet to discuss the situation, with platforms including the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the Livingstone/Grant campaign.

OutRage! ditch autonomy

By Sam Iman

NOT ANOTHER lesbian and gay group... this time high profile OutRage! activist group, has ditched its commitment to lesbian and gay autonomy.

It is part of a long-term trend against the autonomy of. Lesbian and gay movement which is now disappearing. This situation is part of a long-term. In the last few years, the group has been weakened by internal contradictions. Nobody is arguing that people who are not lesbian or gay can support the liberation struggle, but the Left has to support the liberation struggle.

Student new realism wins the day

By Andrew Berry

This year's NUS conference against the bankruptcy of the SWP and Socialist Organiser's move in setting up the NOLS leadership.

Although the Socialist Organiser, dominated Left Unity candidate for President Janine Booth came very close to beating Lorna Fitzsimmons, the NOLS contender, they failed to win more than the full-time position on the NEC.

The one victory of the weekend was the passing of the position of Black Officer into the constitution. This has now been fought for by black students for a long time and marks a significant forward in the recognition of the right of oppressed groups to autonomy within the student movement.

Murray Bookchin tours Britain

MURRAY BOOKCHIN, seen as one of the main spokespeople on the left of the green movement, will be in Britain during National Environment Week (16-24 May) for a speaking tour.

While many SO readers may be familiar with Bookchin's ideas and work, this is a refreshing voice from a country that has seen some of the most reactionary ecological politics anywhere.

While leading members of the radical Earth First activist group calling themselves 'deep ecologists' - began talking of AIDS and famine as nature's just revenge, Bookchin fiercely took the opposite tack, panning his ideas about 'social ecology' to the state, class race and gender into ecological philosophy and politics.

Determined with the pathetically watered-down Earth Summit holding itself up, he was critical of the so-called 'nature's' argument that US and Britain's most reactionary ecological crisis is worsening day by day, and with a Green Party in Britain that has lurched rightwards into virtual oblivion, socialists cannot afford to be ignorant about left ecological politics. Getting along to one of the Bookchin meetings would be a useful introduction to the debates.

• 14 May: Bristol University, Lady Mitchell Hall, 7.30pm.
• 15 May: City of Westminster Polytechnic, 7.30pm.
• 16 May: Biggin College, 7.30pm.
• 17 May: Cranfield Polytechnic, 7.30pm.
• 18 May: Leeds University, City Centre Theatre, New Arts Block, 7.30pm. Donations.
• 19 May: London, St James's Piccadilly, 7.30pm.
• 20 May: Huddersfield University, 7.30pm.
• More information from Gideon Kassoff on 081 802 3582.

Bringing Malcolm X to Brixton

By Jane Kelly

AN AUDIENCE of over 500, nearly all young and 95 per cent black, gathered at Dr. Manning Marable talk for an hour and a half about the life and ideas of Malcolm X in Brixton on May 8th.

Clearly inspired by his enthusiastic audience Marable spoke of 'brother Malcolm's' political evolution from the conservative black nationalism of the Nation of Islam to the revolutionary black nationalism and socialist ideas of the last three years before his assassination in 1965.

In writing a new biography of the black revolutionary leader, Marable has had access to FBI files on Malcolm X, proving that they followed his every move, opened and copied his every letter, even systematically poisoning the most prodigious source of information on his life. Due to be published this summer, it promises to be a much more serious and socialist account than previous biographies.

The biggest cheer of the night however, came when Marable, speaking of Malcolm X's recognition of the need to unite all the oppressed, reminded the men in the audience of the right of women to take their place in the leadership of the black movement.

He finished with a call to continue the struggle. 'No power given way without a fight,' he said. 'Malcolm X would not want to be remembered as an icon. Climb on his shoulders and we will win.'

One year on strike

No victimisations or sackings

March to support Camden social workers

Saturday 23 May

Assembly 12.30pm Camden Town Hall, Judd St WC1

Called by NALGO Metropolitan District

No. 21

May 16, 1992

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OutRage! giving cops a hard time in Islington

OutRage! victory

LESBIAN AND GAY activists in Brighton intend to launch OutRage! a manifesto for lesbian and gay liberation, on 18 May as part of the town's Pride '92 celebrations.

The aim of the manifesto is to reassure our basic rights and freedoms as a central issue of concern for the lesbian and gay communities. OutRage! covers lesbian and gay issues in education, law, the police, employment and housing. It also covers parenting and reproductive rights, young people, the arts, media and community.

For Outright victory

...
One year on: still going strong!

The left needs Socialist Outlook!

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK in its newspaper format was launched on May Day 1991. Since then we think it has become the best newspaper on the left.

We went from a monthly magazine to a newspaper at the end of the Gulf war. Our experience of producing newspaper-format broadsheets during the war had shown that we could reach many more readers with a campaigning newspaper style.

We started out with a front page on the struggle of the Kurdish people, demonstrating that the imperialists would defend them from Saddam Hussein. We were right. Since then the Kurdish people in Iraq have been the victims of new attacks by Saddam, and of air raids from Turkey while the West stood back and watched.

From the start Socialist Outlook campaigned against the harmful effects of kleptocentrism in the Labour Party, and new unions in the movement. We backed the campaign to unseat the unions launched by the Socialist Movement Trade Union committee and carried a detailed analysis of the effects of the bosses’ offensive through ‘Japanisation’ and other new management techniques.

The summer of 1991 saw the offensive of the Milosevic Serbian regime against Croatia, and then in August the attempted nationalist coup in the USSR. Socialist Outlook was second to none in analysing these events.

The rise of extreme right organisations in Europe, and the struggle against racism and fascism in Britain has been a constant factor of the paper. We have tried to make the paper a platform for the movements of the oppressed - black people, women, lesbians and gay men.

During the year of our existence we have constantly tried to be a paper of analysis, and not just repackage or simple-minded propagandising. In a period of dramatic world events, and the so-called crisis of socialism, the left needs not just a guide to action, but a political vision of a democratic socialist future.

Overall we think the paper has been a substantial achievement. But it is no secret that its production has been at the limit of our resources, especially financial resources. We have had to raise a couple of issues because of lack of cash. No left newspaper covers its costs through sales; whether you pay 40p or 50p for a left newspaper, it is heavily subsidised by its supporters - and we are no different.

In the past few months our debts have accumulated, so we have made two decisions. First, we are going to continue. Second, we are going to put our finances in order and not allow our debts to overwhelm us; and that means that if we don’t have the cash, we won’t produce the paper.

The present financial situation is not the fault of our sellers. Many of them have done wonders. And many of our readers who are not in organised supporters’ groups have been exceedingly generous. But still we need more sustainable regular cash from our supporters and readers.

So we want all our readers to do two things. First, send us a donation, no matter how small. Now, Second, fill in a bankers’ order to our 300 Club, using the form below. In the post-election situation the left needs Socialist Outlook more than ever. Now it’s up to you.

300 Club

Win £50!

For just £5 a month you get the chance to win £50 in our monthly draw. In addition you can bank in the knowledge that you have helped Socialist Outlook to continue making life difficult for the capitalists and the New Right wing.

The first prize of £50 this month goes to Stuart Richardson while Kathy Lowe takes second prize.

Yes, count me in!

My bank

Bank address

My full name

My bank-sorting code

My account number

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Please pay to the Co-operative bank PLC 78/80
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1992 and thereafter every month until
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Date

Please complete and return to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UJ.