Rostock – the lessons for the left

Unite to beat back fascist threat!

Pogrom in Rostock – feature Page 3
Irritating at it again

No one on the international Nazi circuit has done more to encourage the birth of fascism in Germany than 'revisionist' historian David Irving. Irving has been speaking at Nazi rallies all over Germany, praising the 'vigor' of 'vigorous nationalism' among German youth.

These activities have already earned Irving a £70 fine in Germany, for contemptuous anti-Semitic laws—claiming that the holocaust is a Zionist myth.

Now Irving is to speak at another revisionist seminar on 19 September. These closely-guarded events are presented in 'non-party' terms, but the attendance and organisation is heavily dominated by the fascist BNP.

Manchester

Thousands march against racist murders

By Rachel Newton

Over three thousand people took to Manchester's streets on 22 August to protest the brutal racist murders of Mohammed Sarwar and Siddik Dada earlier this year. It was the largest anti-racist mobilisation Manchester has seen for many years.

The march was a highly militant display of anger. Slogans like 'Justice for families,' 'No justice, no peace!' and 'Self-defence is no defence' were chanted in Urdu, Bangali and English.

The march was joined by countless others from around the Greater Manchester area, and thousands more people affiliated with Black peoples' organisations, including Birmingham, Sheffield, Bradford and London.

Many businesses on the route of the march were swept by the Black communities, demanding a show of solidarity.

The march was addressed by the recently-formed Black peoples' Alliance, Newham Monitoring Project, the Anti-Racist Alliance and several local campaigns.

The success of the demonstration was the result of several months' hard campaigning. The Siddik Dada and Mohammed Sarwar Memorial Committee has organised a series of events in his memory. It has also provided an exemplary model for the type of campaign.

Firmly based on grassroots activism with black militias in the forefront, it managed to unite a wide range of forces under its banner. From fruition beginning to the barricaded families placed at the heart of the campaign and fully consulted at every stage.

Despite attempts by the Anti-Nazi League and sections of the Anti-Racist Alliance to gain narrow factional advantage out of this serious campaign, a real working relation, based on mutual respect, was forged between black militias and white radicals on the basis of co-operation and mutual respect.

Socialist Outlook supporters played a full role in this, and will continue to work to build an anti-racist movement in Britain that is grassroots based and democratic, with a clear understanding of the need for black self-organisation and leadership.

Irritating at it again

Irrving's last seminar concentrated on the holocaust; this time he is speaking on the 'race problem.'

The Committee to Stop Irving is organising another demonstration to protest the historian's activities. Meet 19 September 12 noon at R. Duke Street, Mayfair from where it will proceed to the fascist meeting. Further details ring 071-277 0817.

Alessandra Musolino, grand-daughter of the Italian dictator and very much a champion of fascism for herself, is to be speaking at a fringe meeting organised by the sinister Western Goals outfit at the Tory party conference in Brighton. A demonstration is likely to be organised outside the meeting.

Germany

Social democrats retreat as Nazis step up violence

A WAVE of neo-Nazi violence rocked Germany last week in the wake of six consecutive nights of fascist riots in the Baltic coast city of Rostock. Copycat incidents were reported in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Goerlitz, Leipzig, Stendal, Schwerin, Neubrandenburg and Elbe-Ratzeburger.

Far right gangs have killed seven people so far this year in around 300 acts officially designated as serious violence, as against three fatalities in the whole of 1991.

Troubles flared up after 300 mainly western right-wingers converged on Rostock on Saturday 22. Intelligence sources knew of the plan, but the authorities failed to take preventative measures.

On the Monday night a hostel for asylum-seekers in the suburb of Lichtenhagen was torched down after police gave the green light by withdrawing for an hour, ostensibly to reinforce.

Local residents shouted encouragement from the balconies of their tower block flats, many giving raised arm Hitler salutes. Around 200 Romanian gypsies living in the building were subsequently evicted.

The disturbances were the worst since those in Hoyerswerda in September 1991, which saw almost all foreign workers driven out of town.

A national-wide anti-fascist mobilisation backed by local trade unions drew an estimated 20,000 to the city on Saturday 29.

Some 3,400 additional police were drafted in to mount a huge security operation, baying charging anarchists demonstrators at the end of the peaceful march in sharp contrast to their tacit co-operation with the fascists.

Meanwhile, the trial of five ex-German skinheads accused of murdering a black Angolan outside a nightclub in Eberswalde began in Frankfurt on the 28th.

A gang of 20 youths went out with a specific intention to 'slam riggers'. The ringleader boasted: 'There wasn't one of us who didn't stomp him.'

With the right to asylum enshrined in article 16 Germany's constitution, over 500,000 refugees are expected in the country this year, twice the 1991 figure.

There is a growing clamour across the mainstream parties for immigration law to be tightened, led by members of the governing CDU party frightened of losing electoral support to the far right.

Even Bjorn Engholm, leader of the left-of-centre opposition SPD, backed on traditional party policy to declare 'immigration must be broken and controlled'.

Most of Germany's quality press has been critical of such responses. In a front page opinion piece, heavyweight weekly Die Welt commented: 'The asylum debate, designed to serve infighting among conservatives, has only damaged them and was useful to the right-wing extremists alone. The last comment came from the FDP - disguised by a thousand witty got-out-of-court claims, it seems to be feeble opportunism, and will prove as much an exercise in self-deception as in voter deception.'

Initiative-Schwarze Deutsche [Black German Initiative] London spokesman John Amadeus told Socialist Outlook: 'The most frightening thing about Rostock is not that the Nazis thugs attacked foreigners - the happens all the time.'

'The worse problem is that ordinary citizens in the street were applauding their actions. That is something that shocked me, as a German.'

'I believe that they just wanted for something like this to happen to say, "we've got too many immigrants, we've got to change the asylum law".'

Amoateng-Cantarina concurred that the police response to Nazis with the heavy-handed suppression of anti-nuclear protesters in the late eighties, adding: 'Don't tell me the police are not able to protect 200 frightened foreigners. The people could easily have been dead by now.'

The Anti-Racist Alliance staged a picket outside the German Embassy in London on Thursday 27.

Rostock - the port they made redundant

ROSTOCK lost much of the reason for its existence the day Germany reunited. No longer is it a port for the nearby Polish city of Szczecin, Gydina and Gdansk, it functioned as an integral part of an international port and shipbuilding complex servicing the entire eastern bloc, with standards equaling those in the West.

Local shipping line DSR played in the international league, operating port services with Britain's Napier Steamship.

Massive shipyards, developed in the fifties to meet Moscow's demand for vessels as part of war reparations, provided work for 55,000, a ship a day called at the port while vessels queued for a berth.

On October 3, 1990, the house of cards came down overnight. Real unemployment is now around 50% in some of the surrounding agricultural villages, the figure soars to 90% around ports. The workers are out of work, with no prospects of jobs in Hamburg and Bremen. They are told to buy worldwide facilities at the Warnow shipyard, in an attempt to save the port for the future. The shipbuilding industry now employs just 5,000.

Meanwhile, Germany's finance minister Theo Waigel is calling for cuts in unemployment benefit and training grants.

Small wonder the fascists 'are taking our jobs' rhetoric is winning a response in Rostock's grey concrete tower blocks.
**Pogrom in Rostock**

From David Mueller in Berlin

AUGUST 25 was a truly historic day in Germany; two to four hundred fascists, cheered on by a mob of several thousand, burned down a hostel for asylum-seekers in Rostock.

And on the same day, the leaders of the opposition SPD let it be known they would support changes in article 16 of the German constitution, which stipulates that the politically persecuted enjoy the right of asylum.

It is just a year since Nazis in the town of Hoyerswerda were able to violently shut down a home for immigrants.

The CDU/CSU government had already made asylum an election issue, successfully using it to deflect attention from their lack of answers. But that time they weren’t able to exploit the question to build their own support. Militant neo-fascists, however, explored the racist atmosphere to carry out violent actions.

This was even more the case in Rostock. The Nazis have now succeeded in bringing blatant terror — in influencing national politics for the first time since the Hitler regime.

The Nazis no longer “only” confine themselves to breaking up left demos and intimidating immigrants, refugees and other “on-Germans”. They now play a clear political role.

Bourgeois politicians and the CDU Mecklenburg-Vorpommern regional government, directly responsible for Rostock and its police, initially approved the terror.

This is demonstrated by the fact that at one stage on the 25th, only six Rostock policemen opposed over 200 armed Nazis, while hundreds of border guards stood passively by, with no orders to intervene. It is little known that 60 per cent of those arrested were anti-fascists who tried to help the asylum-seekers.

Fascists flying the flag

The press and the bourgeois politicians talk of “the helpless- ness of the police”. In plain speaking, this means they simply don’t want to act. The self-same police chiefs and politicians readily mobilised over 3,000 policemen against the left’s anti-fascist demonstration on August 29, and arrested over 90 people even before the march.

The racist basic attitudes of the bourgeois politicians and the police leaders are well-known. They are out to enforce one concrete political aim: changing the constitutional right of asylum.

Additionally, the racist wave is important to the government, because it deflected attention from its lack of perspectives for dealing with the crisis bought on by reunification.

It’s also no surprise that the bourgeois media and politicians on the one hand set themselves against “the violence of the right” and the violence of the left).

They mean they don’t want an independent, active fascist movement at this point, and want a hard hitting anti-fascist movement still less. But at the same time display surges of understanding for the Nazis.

The whole spectrum of bourgeois politicians speak only of a solution to the problem through stopping the influx of “asylum seekers”. At the same time, CDU and SPD security experts use the situation in an almost macabre fashion to demand the creation of a 2,000-strong special police force.

It’s easy to guess who would actually be deployed against Nazi terror and leads direct- ly to the strong state — against the left.

All measures bourgeois politicians seek to paint as directed against the Nazis actually play into their hands. Thus the asylum-seekers in Rostock are evacuated, the right of asylum is altered and the state re-armed.

**Nazi success**

The Nazis can count the whole affair a major success; even as the terrorists of Rostock fade away, there are still five or ten attacks daily on Germany’s refugee hosts.

It is disastrous that the SPD leadership has flipped its position, not only over asylum but on deployment of German troops in United Nations forces.

In a nutshell, the SPD leadership will participate in the production of refugees and then hinder their entry into Ger- many. One section of the SPD tops are flirting with thoughts of a Grand Coalition. The real background to the capitulation is the integration of the SPD bureaucracy into the apparatus of the bourgeois state and their cluelessness in the current situation.

The SPD has no more of an alternative to the conservatives than it did at the start of the Brandt era. The breakdown of Stalinism did not hit the party as evidently as it did the Stalinist-reformist left, but it gives way step by step to attacks from the right and, given the shift in the balance of forces to the right, does not even consider a counterattack.

The only opposition comes from the SPD’s youth wing, but even they cannot muster the necessary district aggregate to force a special party conference.

The opposition is so dis- penced that now SPD leader Engholm is even considering convening such a conference to put his politician over.

If the party continues to retreat, the SPD socialists will probably resign or go over to the Greens. Nevertheless, it remains the task of socialists to discuss with these comrades and build common activity against racism and militarisation.

**Broad support**

The Rostock counter-demonstration was notably broad, ranging from district union federations to anarchists. There was considerable support among the 20,000 people for embracing action with the far left.

The left is still able to mobilise far larger numbers than the radical right. But the demo also revealed crucial splits on the left. One part of the reformist spectrum is coming from the lower middle class but also increasingly the lumpen proletariat (for example, in Hoyerswerda) and apprentices gives ground to the ideology behind the racist measures, for example calling for restrictions on immigration.

The opposition is made up by some “radicals” that fiercely polemicate against racist ideology and organise militant resistance, but are unwilling to put forward social demands at the same time.

They don’t believe that it is possible to win over a convinced racist through social questions. This is a big mistake when the source of much of the racism in the ex-GDR stems precisely from the unemployment and social devastation that has come with reunification.

In order to build a left opposition, the anti-racist struggle for complete legal and social equality for everyone must be combined with a movement of immigrants and refugees putting forward social demands for all workers.

Only in this way can a left pole be created, constituting an alternative to racism. If we don’t create it, for more and more people in Germany, “foreigners out!” will become a political programme.
Miners face new onslaught

THE TORY government is set to order British Coal to pay off the 50 remaining deep mines, at a cost of 25,000 jobs, in the run up to privatisation. The 60 per cent cut in capacity would inevitably mean the closure of many modern mines and pit villages. Ministers have inferred civil ser-
sers to draw pay during the 48-hour strikes on a scale unseen since the destro-
y of British Steel in the early eighties, the Independent of Sunday reports. Pits at risk include Easington and Vane Tempelite in the North-East, Markham Main in South Yorkshire, Derbshire's Bolsover, Portside in Lancashire and Belfairs and Taffnew-
thy in Wales.

Strengths of the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers-which effectively broke the 1984-85 pit strike—will still be dauntingly high. Un-
employment in its Mansfield heartland will soar to well over 20 per cent.
British Coal's commercial future depends on currently deadlocked negotiations for a new deal with the miners. The private coal miners of Doncaster buy 65 million tons of coal a year from BC, four-fifths of its entire output.

The electricity companies are seeking a full-scale switch from gas and cheap imported coal when the present agreement expires next year. A move which will inevitably squeeze the chances of a successful BC sell-off of the company.
The government may be forced to interface with market forces to ensure a new deal.

National Union of Mineworkers executive member Peter Price of the NAM Outlook that pits nearest the coast would be the first to face closure from imports, with coal collieries halting "in the end, you'll be looking at just five or six pits.
Meanwhile, British Coal's smoke-
less fuel business, Coal Products, is set to be the first branch to be privatised, with Coal owners Anglo-Striped to sell its stake in the coal trading firm to a consortium proposing management buy-outs. Anglo's main interest lies in shifting the company to from producing the fuel to being a more diversified energy company, with inevitable cutbacks. The NAM's anti-privatisation strategy centre on building alliances with the TUC and Labour against the British Rail. Talks between the NAM and TUC coalfields leaders are expected shortly.

Coventry purge of Labour left

SOME 127 Labour activists have been suspended from the Coventry constituency Labour party by the NEC.

Charges centre on alleged sup-
port for independent socialist can-
didates in the April general elec-
tion, when former Labour MP Dave Nellist and John Hughes stood as official Labour can-
didates in the city after being ex-
pelled and deselected respectively.

Local activists claim some of those accused have been present in either campaign, while others who

opened worked for Nellist and included "In reality, it is every rightwinger's guided trip, going back over a
decade," said NUT activist Will

Rheeve, who is named despite his

prior resignation from the party.

Those suspended include well

over half of regular ward meeting

attendees, and up to 50 per cent of

activists, he added. "It essentially

amounts to the destruction of the

Labour Party in Coventry,"

Also on the list Nellist's partner

John co-founder  George Ready (who was in hospital for heart surgery throughout the campaign) and former West Midlands Councillor Dare Spencer.

One result of the witch-hunt has

been the formation of a Coventry

Socialist Alliance, open to people

who believe in the Labour Party. The new group will hold a day conference on September 26.

Pergamom strike called off

Minority fight against Elsevier

SEVEN participants in the three-year-long National Union of Journalists strike at Pergamon Press - the longest dispute in recent British history - are to launch a new campaign for reinstatement and full trade union rights at the Oxford publishing house's parent company.

- The dispute was officially ended last month after the 23 strikers took a majority decision to accept a derisory financial settlement. The 85,000 pay-
mements amount to a mere £1,350 per journalist for each year of the dispute.

Using the NUJ's deep financ-

ial crisis as a pretext, the union's leadership progressive-

ly whittled strike pay down from 100 per cent to 60 per week to zero, leaving many of the strikers with the feeling that eventual deal was the best ob-
tainable. The chapel has been

formally dissolved.

But all those who rejected the offer are to continue the fight for union rights at Pergamon's Dutch owners Elsevier, one of Europe's biggest publishers. The firm is planning to build a new plant in Oxford - and clearly its refusal to compromise on the union issue suggests unions will not be recognised.

Print and general unions in Holland will be centrally in-

volved in the ongoing camp-

aign, and may be in a position to fund the work. Pergamon strike leader

Wargafford told trade paper UK

Press Gazette: "There is scope for a strong campaign in the

Netherlands. This is not going to be the only dispute the Dutch

trade unions are going to be dealing with over 20 per cent.

"All industries are under threat by the fact that Britain's free-trade union legislation means it is going to be harder for the Taiwan of western Europe."

The campaign has already won a good deal of support from prominent militants in the NUJ. Following the election of Per-

gamon spin-off firm to the NUJ, a significant bloc of union officials is likely to follow.

Completed on 0855 794245 for more information on the strike. Contact 

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UNION REPS who argue for a strike — however strong the justification — could now be breaking the law.

Last week's High Court judgement forcing striking council employees in East London back to work, simply because their union NALGO campaigned for a “yes” vote before the ballot, may well prove a landmark in industrial relations history.

The Labour Government's recent recourse to Tory anti-union laws has resulted in a further whitewash of workers' basic democratic right to withdraw their labour.

The ruling potentially opens the door for every employer in Britain to silence workplace militants in union positions.

Last week a group of workers in Newham went on strike on August 3 after a ballot of 2,500 NALGO members saw 63 per cent backing for all-out action against compulsory redundancies.

NALGO general secretary Alan Jinkinson immediately instructed members to go back to work and not even picket the council, in the belief that the ruling “cannot possibly be what parliament intended in draft section 72A of the 1990 Employment Act”.

Yet the day after the court ruling, NALGO allowed the call for total repeal of such legislation — a policy carried at last year conference — to be comitted off the agenda for this week's TUC conference in Blackpool in order to keep the peace at the August gathering.

The probability is that the TUC knew damm well what they were doing.

NALGO are appealing against the decision. If it is allowed to stand, the consequences are obvious. What will it take to make the TUC take the fight against anti-union laws seriously?

Messages of support and requests for speakers: Newham NALGO, 081 519 6799.

Willis pushed aside

**New realists look to dump TUC**

IT IS AN OPEN secret that TUC general secretary Norman Willis is living on borrowed time.

Top union bosses have told him to commit suicide or be forced into a humiliating working resignation, or he will be replaced by his deputy, John Monks.

Willis does not, of course, mean that the message of the need to fight Tony Blair is not getting through.

Nellis is too much "out of tune" to the needs of a modern TUC.

But what it does mean is that Willis doesn't understand that, according to the new realities, the TUC is finished in its present form.

Workers in Britain are under sustained attack on all fronts. The Newham NALGO court decision is yet another betrayal of the working class.

Unemployment is going through the roof, the welfare state is being destroyed, and employment rights are being crushed by the management.

Agreed, the TUC has done nothing.

At the same time, the union race for members is spreading the formation of UNION and the likely TGWU-GMB merger, means the union movement is going to be carved up by three or four super-union.

Their bureaucratic leaders want to squeeze the remaining smaller unions, to minimise any kind of political debate, and to maximise their elbow room in doing deals with the employers at the expenses of the rank-and-file.

This has already reduced the TUC to insignificance and is a definite objective of preventing single-union deals and poaching of members.

Their only hope in the new world of trade unionism is clear. New realists is turning to their simple business unionism.

The existing giants organisations progressively crushing internal democracy.

This is putting the union link in question. In the face of all this, who needs the TUC? To unionise at loggerheads in many of these sections. In addition, TGWU and GMB are in a House of Commons committee that is discussing, that is predicted in Socialist Outlook last March — now are in the offing.

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Yet a successful conclusion to the discussions is by no means certain; the two unions have historically been

GWU and GMB, Britain's biggest general unions, are due to com- mence merger discussions which could bring about the biggest super-union yet, with a combined membership of over two million.

While a formal announcement is unlikely until the conclusion of this week's TUC conference, sources in both unions confirmed that talks - first predicted in Socialist Outlook last March — are now in the offing.

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Why unemployment will be 5 million within a year

A socialist guide to the sterling crisis

The pound, as everyone who hasn’t been asleep or on a foreign beach for the last month knows, is in deep trouble. Endless discussion of exchange rate strikes most people, even socialists, as deeply boring. Who cares?

But this time the pound crisis is going to have a big effect on the standard of living of the vast majority of British workers.

The root of the problem is the international recession which has lasted since 1989. The United States has low interest rates and is trying to get people to borrow money and get business going, so the US can get out of the recession; but Germany has high interest rates because it needs an influx of capital to pay for reunification.

The net result is that the flow of international capital is heavily towards Germany where the short-term return is best. In effect, international financial institutions are buying Deutschmarks. The result is the Deutschmark becomes strong and the dollar, and other currencies, become comparatively weak. So what?

The sting in the tail is that Britain is stuck in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM). This means that the pound must be maintained at a certain minimum value, at the moment 1.77 Deutschmarks to the pound. To do that, the international financial markets have to be willing to buy pounds; today they would rather buy marks, at least at the present exchange rate.

In the end there are only two ways out of this situation for Chancellor Lawson; either the pound is devalued by resigning the ERM, or money is attracted back towards pounds by raising interest rates. Devaluing the pound will make all imported goods and foreign travel more expensive. The price for doing this would be to add inflation to Britain’s already near-stump economy.

Raising interest rates would give another twist to slump. High interest rates are recognised by millions of people as meaning that their mortgage goes up. But it means much more: money is expensive to borrow, and loans are much more expensive to pay back. Businesses, especially small businesses, go bust. Big firms don’t borrow to invest. The economic recession gets worse.

Consumers respond to high interest rates by not buying on credit, with the inevitable result that high street trading slumps again.

Now the government has organised £7 billion in loans from foreign currencies to attempt to avoid raising interest rates. The irony is that in the end both may happen: devaluation of the pound, followed eventually by a rise in interest rates.

This is the classic deflationary spiral that the British economy is in. But ‘belt tightening’ is the least of it for working people: this crisis will inevitably and inexorably hit the poorest in society.

Real unemployment is running around 4 million (the official figure is 2.9 million). Now the poorest are going to be hit by massive slashing of government spending.

In a recession government incomes from taxes go down. Last year the government spending deficit was probably £53 billion in real terms. That compares with the government actually being £10 or £12 billion in credit during the 1988/9 boom years.

Either the government prints money on a vast scale, to the tune of £40 or £50 billion a year causing massive inflation; or it cuts back.

Unemployment and social security benefits are certain to be a target, because if held at present rates they will bankrupt the government as unemployment goes up. Already unemployment benefit has been cut to 6 months, ensuring that millions more are on income support, which is savagely means-tested.

The other two big-spending ministries are Health and Defence. Defence is undergoing a rationalisation, but of course core spending is bitterly protected. The NHS is bound to suffer a further round of cuts. As with social security benefits, cuts are effected by just not increasing spending in line with inflation.

The job market is becoming quite desperate. Mass sackings of industrial workers are being compounded by the slashing of white collar jobs; government, local government, data processing, and ‘professions’ like journalism are all heavily affected.

This will now be redoubled by government plans massively to extend higher education, to take 18-21 year-olds out of the jobs market. The government plans to cut the number of unemployed students in college, and from the March 1993 budget onwards, those on training schemes will be expected to provide their own training. This means that the Labour opposition would have a field day. The problem is that Labour is caught in the deflationary political trap implied by the ERM and Maastricht treaty; indeed Labour was demanding that Britain go into the ERM before the Tories actually did it!

If France votes against Maastricht on 20 September then European capitalist unity and with it the ERM is in danger of collapse.

But with or without the ERM British capitalism is stuck in a recessionary spiral which only the most radical social and political measures could break out of.

The sterling crisis means above all an attack on the working class. Indeed in the post election situation, far from Labour having dragged the Tories towards the ‘centre’, the attack on the working class is just getting deeper.

The Labour and union leaders are paralysed by this onslaught; John Smith and his team have spent the whole summer in a stunned and compliant silence.

The whole working class is paying the price for the refusal during the 1980s to take effective measures to organise the unemployed, to fight back against unemployment by demands of banning overtime and job sharing with no loss of pay and the refusal to anything substantial to defend the low-paid and the welfare state.

In this new situation it is not just employment and living standards which are under threat; it is the whole structure of the welfare state.
Bosnia: the facts behind the headlines

Why Milosevic is prolonging the agony

AFTER A YEAR of war in ex-Yugoslavia, the siege of Sarajevo and the onslaught against many Bosnian towns and villages shows no sign of ending.

In Bosnia alone two million people have been driven from their homes, and 700,000 Bosnian refugees have crossed into Croatia.

For the first time since World War two, there are common camps in Europe, and perhaps as many as 30,000 people have been killed.

Much of the press and TV reporting of the crisis has been distorted, especially that of the Guardian’s Maggie O’Kane.

But many of the explanations in the West reek of naivety: we are led to believe that irrational, ‘ethnic hatred’, primitive survival of the Middle Ages, is all that has emerged from the ‘backward’ peoples south and east of Vienna.

And, regrettably, only slightly more sophisticated versions of this have been common on the left, where ‘ethnic hatred’ gets replaced by a uniform ‘reactionary nationalism’.

All such explanations ignore the real history of what has happened.

During the last years of Yugoslavia in the 1980s big tensions developed between the various republics, not identical to ethnic groupings, over the allocation of economic resources.

Serbian nationalist offensive

But it was not inevitable that these should turn into massive ethnic clashes, let alone civil war.

That was determined by the political developments inside Serbia. The Serbian wing of the Yugoslav League of Communists, led by Slobodan Milosevic, transformed itself into the ‘Socialist’ party, and decided on a very precise programme for keeping itself in power: the regeneration of Great Serb nationalism.

The turning point in this process was not the declaration of independence by Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, but the military-police offensive by Milosevic against the ethnic Albanian population of the Republic of Kosovo.

The start of the civil war in 1991 was not some unplanned outbreak of ethnic hostilities, but the declaration of independence by Croatia and Slovenia, and the consequent military attack by Serbia.

As for the geographical reasons, it was that it was impossible militarily to subdue Slovenia, the Yugoslav army, together with Serb irregulars, set about trying to conquer as much of Croatia as possible.

Once Croatian areas had been conquered, the process of ‘ethnification’ began. It reached its apex after the six-month siege of the Croatian town of Vukovar, where hundreds of Croats were slaughtered once the town had been overrun.

The attack on Bosnia was a logical consequence of the Greater Serbia project. This was a particular tragedy in a republic in which Serbs, Croats and Muslims had lived together in peace for decades.

In the face of these developments, there is only one sensible reaction for socialists – a defiant attitude towards Croatia and Bosnia.

The socialist programme is for federation; we have no fetish of national borders. But federation cannot be imposed by force. Croatia and Bosnia have the right to self-determination, and that means the right to independence and territorial integrity.

Ex-stalinist fuels nationalism

Republican elections in early 1991 brought ex-Communist bureaucrat Franjo Tudjman to power in Croatia. Tudjman is of course a reactionary figure, but not, as some simple souls on the British left have suggested, a ‘fascist’.

Among the defenders of Croatia were certainly some semi-fascist Uljecki elements, especially from the exile Croat population in the US, Canada and Australia, who flocked back to fight.

But they were a small minority among the fighters, who included ethnic Serbs.

Croatia’s offensive campaign however involved many features which were indefensible, and indeed opposed by the small left wing in Croatia.

For example, in many areas a ‘dive-in’ attack on the Serbian minority in Croatia and an attempt to drive Serbs out of Croatian-held areas. Milosevic’s ethnic cleansing gave rise to its mirror-image in the attempt to create an ethnically-pure Croatia.

Undoubtedly in this process many atrocities were committed against ethnic Serbs, although of course nothing on the scale of the wholesale massacres carried out by the Yugoslav army and Serbian ‘chetchik’ fighters.

Croatia’s attitude during the Serbian assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina has been determined by narrow nationalism. Thus, although a formal ally of Bosnia, Tudjman sanctioned the creation of ‘Herceg-Bosna’, the de facto linking up of Croat areas in Bosnia and their incorporation into Croatian territory.

Carve-up

As a result, Croatia made itself complicit in the carve-up of Bosnia, breaking the tenuous Croat-Bosnian alliance against the Serbian assault.

What has been the attitude of the West to all this? As usual in such conflicts there is a big gap between the rhetoric of the imperial powers and their realpolitik actions.

Germany from the beginning has been a strong defender of Croatia and Slovenian independence, believing that its economic interests lie in integrating these areas into its sphere of economic influence. These calculations of course have nothing to do with any principled positions on the right to national self-determination.

Under the pressure of public opinion, and exile communities, Bush and Major have adopted hitherto positions against the atrocities of the Milosevic regime. But their refusal to do anything effective about the Serb assault stems from a practical calculation of their own interests.

Western interests

Not only are key strategic western interests absent, unlike the situation in oil-rich Kuwait, but the Western powers probably feel that essential stability depends on placating Serbia, the most powerful state in the region. Britain’s role has been particularly cynical, through the agency of the indescribable Lady Chalker, who has emerged at the forefront of those wanting to ensure that Bosnian refugees never make it into western Europe.

A consistent socialist position on the crisis must start from the understanding that the war was unleashed by the attempt to whip up Great Serb nationalism to keep the degenerate ex-Communist bureaucrats around Milosevic in power; and that Croatia and Bosnia have the right to national self-determination.

Self-defence

This logically entails the right of the Bosnians to defend themselves – against the Serb onslaught and Croat encroachment – and their right to have the arms to carry out that self-defence.

The UN relief operation into Sarajevo cannot be opposed; indeed it should be vigorously supported. But the call for all-out military intervention by the West is another matter. Imperialist troops will not proceed according to the principles of self-determination, but will satisfy the immediate needs of the West, which will detach on supporting all the most reactionary forces in each region and installing them in power in the different republics.

In any case, in the real world, there are no western troops coming to the rescue to the besieged Bosnians. The London conference was a cosmetic operation which will change nothing on the ground.

The key to the situation is bringing down Milosevic’s regime, and building the political forces, of the peace movement and the left, which can end the war.

In fact a powerful opposition exists in Serbia. Indeed it is probably that the reason for the prolongation of the war, in a situation in which the Serbs have already made 99 per cent of the territorial gains they can hold, is Milosevic’s desire to maintain the siege and emergency atmosphere in Belgrade, to play the Great Serb nationalist card for as long as possible.

Milosevic’s regime is indeed unpopular in Serbia, and in time it will go. Meanwhile the luckless people of Bosnia are being forced to pay the price for keeping his degenerate bureaucratic regime in power.
Evoking towards a revolutionary solution – Malcolm X

Why they killed Malcolm X

By Paul Clarke

SPIKE LEE'S movie about Malcolm X has created a surge of interest in black America's most important post-war leader. Malcolm's assassination on 21 February 1965 was no surprise; in his last few months he lived in constant fear of assassination.

After a first murder attempt, which obviously relied on meticulous surveillance and planning, Malcolm suspected that some agencies were involved.

Despite the hostility of the Black Muslims to Malcolm after he left them, most likely the US state security agencies, for whom the Black Muslims were to some extent a threat. In particular, the FBI's investigation of the Malcolm X assassination was not as thorough as it should have been.

The FBI's investigation was inadequate in several respects, including the failure to understand the significance of Malcolm X's political activity. Malcolm X's assassination was a significant event in the Black Power movement, and his death was a turning point in the struggle for civil rights.

The assassination of Malcolm X highlighted the need for continued vigilance and activism in the struggle for racial equality. Malcolm X's legacy lives on as a symbol of the struggle for justice and equality, and his ideas and principles continue to inspire people around the world.
Never mind the socialism? SWP distorts Malcolm X

Malcolm X: Black Nationalism and Socialism

Kevin Ovdenv, Bookman, 72/95

Reviewed by Ben Waller

The two white students and one black man (Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney) killed by racist police during black voter registration in Mississippi (the murders are dramatised in the film Amistad, by Steven Spielberg). He dropped his opposition to 'mixed marriage' – the Nation of Islam, of course, would never have approved inter-marriage anyway. But the basic ideas of self-organisation as a liberation strategy was fully developed in his speeches. In the last few months of his life Malcolm developed an explicit anti-capitalism, and a growing understanding of socialism.

Questioned about whether capitalism could abolish racism, he replied 'Can a chicken produce a duck egg? It can't. It's just impossible.'

His statements on socialism were very guarded; he was feeling his way. He made favourable comments on socialism, saying it was 'no accident' that socialism was so popular among black revolutionary revolutionaries in Africa. If you love black nationalism, he said, then you'd vote for it.

He spoke several times at meetings organised by the US Socialist Workers Party (nothing to do with the British SWP). He granted interviews to their paper the Militant and ordered copies of their International Socialism Review for some of his key supporters. Among his detractors there were dark rumours about his 'flirtation' with Trotskyism. Malcolm's organisation of Afro-American Unity was more than a few hundred strong. During his last months he was wrestling with the idea of what kind of organisation to build.

His main idea was that the OAAU would be a vehicle for unity among the different black organisations, not a rival to the established civil rights groups. But he never really had time to think the problem through.

By the end of his life, Malcolm had completed two stages of his political development: the first from separatism to black nationalism, and then towards building a revolutionary anti-capitalist, identifying especially with anti-imperialist struggles elsewhere in the world.

But he was not a socialist or a Marxist; and speculation about whether he would have become one or the other is pointless.

While his OAAU never amounted to much, he had given a political profile and definition to black nationalism, embodied in an implicit strategy of black self-organisation and black liberation.

He was the key figure in freeing the black movement in America from the purely civil rights and 'integrationist' strategy of moderate leaders like Martin Luther King. He opened the door for Black Power to become a major force.

These political gains became for years the mainstream of black US politics; the idea that blacks should defend themselves and not be pacifists, that they had to organise themselves for struggle without waiting for white liberals, that blacks were fighting a whole power structure and system, not just individual backwardness and prejudice among whites.

In future issues we will look at the development of not black movement after Malcolm's death. In the reactionary political atmosphere of the 1980s black politics has moved to the right, with middle class blacks being admitted to former white preserves (more so in America than with Malcolm, Powell supervising the slaughter in Iraq), and black mayors in major cities championing black aspirations within the system.

But Malcolm's ideas stood against all that, and are a permanent reserve and example of another route – that of black liberation, with its inherently anti-capitalist dynamic.

A brilliant organiser and orator armed with a Black Power strategy, openly revolutionary and anti-capitalist – this was a challenge which US capitalism answered in its all-too-familiar fashion.

* George Brechtman's book is published by Pathfinder Press. As the US SWP moved increasingly towards Castroism in the early 1980s, George Brechtman remained faithful to Trotskyism and was one of many of the older cadres expelled, becoming a leader of the Fourth International Tendency.
What is to be done about... The housing crisis

By Dave Osler

HOUSING minister Sir George Young owns an eight-bedroomed million pound mansion set in 13 acres of Berkshire countryside and has a second home in one of the nicer suburbs of south London. His insight into the average person's housing situation is obtained accordingly.

In a witty aside during an otherwise serious speech last year, the old Etonian baronet remarked of the homeless: 'They are the sort of people you step on when you come out of the opera.'

One's enjoyment of Pavarotti is presumably marred by the University of Surrey study which put overall homelessness in London at 130,000, effectively a shanty town 'as large as might be expected in a Latin American city.'

In London alone, 2,000 sleep on the streets, the same figure as for 1904. But cardboard city is merely the most visible aspect of the capital's housing crisis.

Another 6,000 homeless are in benefit-funded hotels: 25,000 — including 7,000 children — are in bed and breakfast; and at least 30,000 squat, despite plans to make it a criminal offence. Ten of thousands of others sleep on the floors and sofas of friends and relatives.

A million homeless

Over 418,000 were officially considered homeless in England alone last year, on a definition excluding single people and childless couples. Add those and the figures for the rest of the UK and the overall total may well exceed a staggering one million.

Additionally, 300,000 pensioners are living in houses officially designated unfit for human habitation.

Amidst this massive need, completion of social housing — that is, council and housing association accommodation together — fell from 126,000 dwellings in 1975 to just 35,000 in 1991-92.

London councils started only 363 new homes in 1990, the lowest figure since the war, and 46 per cent drop on 1989. The picture has since worsened, the Association of London Authorities confirmed.

Even the government's own Audit Commission figures, that 750,000 public sector houses be built every year for the next ten years.

While there are still over five million council houses in Britain, some 22 per cent of all dwellings, the Tories openly seek to abolish the sector altogether.

The right to buy policy has seen over a million council houses sold off, generally the better stock, sold off since 1979. Policies such as Housing Action Trusts and compulsory competitive tendering of housing management should see all the rest.

Meanwhile, the quality of the stock continues to decline, now needing maintenance work costing at 68,500 million — over £2,000 for each home — according to the Audit Commission.

Nevertheless, rents in England and Wales have risen 41 per cent since 1990, a quarter above inflation.

Even many so-called 'homeowners' — in reality, often people who have borrowed huge sums of money at high rates of interest in order to have a secure roof over their heads — are in deep trouble.

The Tories deliberately fuelled housing hyperinflation in the late eighties, pushing people into buying by closing down all other options while simultaneously relaxing credit and maintaining mortgage relief, a tax-break which even now costs over £5,800m a year. By 1987, London prices were rising 53 a day.

In the recession, the fallacy of such policies is obvious. Some 1.5 million mortgages now amount to more than the accommodation they are worth.

Over 300,000 mortgages — 3 per cent of the total — are six months or more in arrears, with repossessions this year certain to exceed 1991's 75,000.

The lost £1 billion

The government now spends £1,000 million a year on paying mortgage interest for the unemployed, which goes straight into building society coffers. Tory backbenchers openly voice fears that the current state of the housing market could push the economy into its present deep recession into thirties-style slump.

Top city accountants Touche Ross have been asked by Whitehall to carry out a secret study of the consequences of a property crash. The brief includes the risk of social disorder.

Tackling the housing crisis would be an obvious priority for an incoming socialist government.

Among the short-term measures, extortionate prices could be levied on owners of the 600,000 private houses now lying empty, unless they are promptly let at reasonable rents. Outright confiscation is not advocated in general, but one or two opera-goers might suddenly find themselves devoid of the odd eight-bedroomed mansion.

But the real answer lies in an emergency programme for the renovation of existing social housing and the building of good new publicly-owned stock.

The ownership fetishism so assiduously promoted in the eighties is not the natural condition the Thatcherites painted, as the experience of other capitalist countries with substantial rental sectors demonstrates.

Many people — students, those who jobs require mobility, those forced into buying against their will — actually prefer affordable, secure tenancies on decent flats and houses.

Nationalisation of housing bodies... this de facto policy of President Reagan after their US equivalents found themselves on the verge of bankruptcy... would enable people that wish to buy to do so, while opening an escape route for those caught in the mortgage trap.

Loans could be written off in full, with fair tenancy agreements put in their place; the better the home, the higher the rent.

Sixties nightmare estates, where still structurally sound, can be turned into nice places to live through imaginative replanning — as one or two local authorities proved even during the Thatcher years.

Few people, however, would be sorry to see the worst tower blocks dynamited down. A beneficial side effect of the whole programme would be the creation of thousands of jobs in the depressed construction sector.

But where are any of these ideas to be found now? Even Harold Wilson became prime minister on the promise to build 400,000 new homes a year; Labour's 1992 manifesto did not promise a single one.
Revolutionary art of the static image

John Heartfield with the Cutting Edge

The Barbican Art Gallery until October 18th. Entrance £3.50 Reduced admission Monday-Friday from 5pm £2.50

John Heartfield’s work has shocked and fascinated over the years. This exhibition of his work provides an opportunity to re-examine the man and his art. CAROLINE CADBURY tells a look at the life that produced such powerful images.

JOHN HEARTFIELD was born Helmut Herzfeld in Berlin in 1891.

He is said by friends of the artist that he became known as the Anglo-persona John Hearfield during the first world war as a protest against ‘anglo-phobia’ which was expressed in greetings such as ‘God punish England’ which replaced ‘good day’ in everyday usage.

In 1913 he enrolled in the school of arts and crafts in Charlottenburg. His original ambition was to become a painter. This changed in 1915 when his brother Walter Herzfeld introduced him to George Grosz.

Grosz was a close friend.

Both of the brothers were born into the cynicism of Grosz’ art and attitudes, and stunned by Grosz’ artistic achievements which were a marked contrast to their own expressionism.

Heartfield, Herzfeld and Grosz became enthusiastic Dadaists. The Berlin wing was started in 1918 with the opening of 245 Dada which had in its high point in the Dada fair of 1920.

The Berlin Dadaists were anti-German politics and culture which felt had been manipulated and propagandised to the extent that it had contributed to the outbreak of the first world war.

Inspired by the Russian revolutions of 1917, Heartfield and friends joined the Communist Party and a slogan poster for the 1920 Dada fair read ‘Dada stands on the side of the revolutionaries proletarians’.

In 1930 Heartfield summed up the approach he evolved in the 1920s. He said, ‘New political problems demand new methods of propaganda. For this task photography possesses the greatest powers of persuasion.’

From 1930 to 1938 Heartfield worked on a regular basis for Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (Workingmen Illustrated Times), AIZ which was founded by Willi Münzenburg in the 1920s.

Its name was changed to Volks Illustrierte in 1936 (Peoples Illustrated). The change of name was a reflection of the popular front strategy against fascism adopted by Moscow in 1936.

When Hitler took power in 1933, Heartfield and the AIZ fled to Prague.

Heartfield escaped Prague in 1938 and fled to London where he lived until after the war.

Even with his anti-Nazi credentials he was briefly interned in 1940, but complaints in the House of Commons meant he was released on health grounds.

Heartfield settled in the DDR in Berlin 1950 and worked with Brecht and the Berliner ensemble. He died in East Berlin in 1968.

Part of the exhibition at the Barbican is an exact recreation of a room at the film and photo exhibition that took place in Stuttgart in 1929 which gives you a real feel for the way Heartfield worked and the way in which he wished that work displayed.

Also part of the exhibition is a video documentary by Gerd la Tapes entitled ‘Yggdrasil - John Heartfield and the political image’.

I think Heartfield’s statement on photography and new means of propaganda is still relevant today even in the age of television because a single static image is always more powerful than one that the viewer knows will soon move to another.

The continuous use of Heartfield’s work and of techniques of photomontage by other artists today to express political dissent is surely proof enough.

The Cutting Edge provides a complement to the Heartfield exhibition and contains work by Fanny Adams, Splitting Image, Steve Bell, Peter Brookes, Steve Dixon, Jacky Fleming, Mona Hatoum, Peter Kennard, Karen Kozier, Ingrid Pollard, Chris Riddell, Ralph Steadman, Trojan, and Bill Woodrow. Watch out for Trojan Bombing - Harris and Le Pen cartoons and Ingrid Pollard’s ‘A trip to Hastings’.

There is also a series of short animation films which start showing at 11am, 1pm, 3pm and 4.45 and include ‘Send in the Clowns’ by Steve Bell, ‘Revolution’ by Bob Godfrey, ‘Dad’s little bit of Dresden china’ by Karen Watson and ‘Body Beautiful’ by Joanna Quinn.

At 6pm daily in The Decision by Vera Neubauer which is 33 minutes long – so you could spend almost a day at those exhibitions and you definitely get your money’s worth.

The exhibition will be shown in Scotland and Ireland after October 18th.

Write in candidate for write-off elections?

Black man for the White House

By Dave Oser

AMERICAN VOTERS are being urged to reject both the George Bush and Bill Clinton in November’s presidential poll and send controversial black gangster rapper Ice-T to the White House instead.

The latest issue of Rock & Roll Confidential – an influential radical US music newsletter – carries a full page article entitled ‘10 Reasons To Wre-Wre-Wre Ice-T’.

Under the American electoral system, it is legal to amend ballot papers to include additional candidates, with all votes duly recorded.

Ice-T is currently at the centre of a furor over his latest album Body Count, withdrawn by the record company after widespread protests over a song titled Cop Killer.

But while the man is possibly suspect on law and order issues, Rock & Roll Confidential is adamant he is the perfect peace and justice candidate.

‘Unlike Bill Clinton, he has never been a party to the execution of any citizen, let alone one with brain damage. Unlike George Bush, Dan Quayle, and Al Gore, he has never instigated a pointless war where several hundred thousand innocent people died.’

Ice-T is the unity candidate. He’s a rapper and a rocker.

That means he’s comfortable speaking to both white America and black America, unlike either of his opponents.

RCC argues an Ice-T presidency would mean both the most exciting inaugural speech since Abraham Lincoln, and guaranteed social change in America: ‘The guy’s probably never so much as voted himself, which means none of the idiocy and corruption of our present government is in any way his fault.’

There is, however, a serious point behind this rather splendid joke. Most radical US publications are backing Bill Clinton’s Democrat ticket in this autumn’s presidential election, against sitting Republican George Bush’s right-wing ‘God and family’ platform.

But RCC points out that Tipper Gore, wife of Clinton’s vice-president running mate Al, is a central pillar of the Parents’ Music Resource Centre, the campaign that has succeeded in getting ostensibly obscene or blasphemous records banned from most mainstream outlets.

In an editorial slamming the ‘loser of two evils’ position, RCC argues: ‘To vote for Clinton and Gore is to agree that America’s health is declining not because governors and senators work to enrich the wealthy and punish the poor, but because rappers and rockers say bad words on their records.

‘If you want a morally healthy America, tell Al and Tipper and their friends ... to go f**k themselves, and set to work creating a system that features real choices for a change.’

RCC is spot on.

Interestingly, Ice-T himself has not totally ruled out running. In the only known statement of his political philosophy, he succinctly notes: ‘We’ve got two options, you know, the way the government does. I’m down with either one.’
The brutal face of US 'democracy'

The Un-Americans

BBC2, Wednesdays 9pm
Reviewed by Philip Hearse

HEAR THE word McCarthyism and you'll probably think of Hollywood stars being blacklisted or Berndt Brichta playing cat and mouse with his inquisitors.

But, as the BBC Timewatch series shows, the 1940s witch hunt hit thousands of working people. Communist groups up to 20 years in prison and a $10,000 dollar fine (an enormous sum then), simply for their political beliefs, as anti-red hysteria swept the country.

In 1951 Steve Nelson, chair of the CP in Pittsburgh, got twenty years. Fourteenth hundred lawyers refused to take his case, and he was forced to defend himself. During his trial, one of dozens of anti-Communist films was on show in Pittsburgh—and the main character was transparently supposed to be Nelson himself, a man who in the movie ordeals executions and sabotage.

Some Communists went underground; others had their children put in care. Many leftists of foreign origin were deported. The last imprisoned Communists were not released until 1962, and the threat of deportation hung over some until the 1980s. The witch hunt took place under the notorious Smith Act; this was the law used to imprison James P. Cannon and other leaders of the Trotskyist SWP during the second world war.

The Un-Americans vividly highlights the injustices done and the personal toll it took. It argues, through the testimony of ex-Communists how the CPUSA was vulnerable to the charge that it was an agent of a foreign power—with its unwavering loyalty to Stalin.

But, at least in the first programme, the reasons for the witch hunt are little explained.

The witch hunt was not just a product of the dam of the cold war and the outbreak of war in Korea. It was first and foremost a result of the domestic class struggle, and it started with anti-communists and a law against industrial militancy.

After the second world war the US experienced the greatest labour upsurge in its history, far bigger than the famous battles of the 1930s. In 1945 six and a half million workers took part in strike action, in 1946 four and a half million. This compares with a minimum of two million during the great truckers', coal yard and other battles in the mid-1930s.

But as the post-war economy stabilised and the strikes were sold out, the strike wave rapidly declined; in effect it was over by the spring of 1947. The ruling class now moved in to try to crush the unions.

The fight against industrial militancy combined with the turn in the world situation, as the cold war started and Stalin was blocked by the Soviet Union, anti-Red hysteria developed.

Communist Parties worldwide temporarily abandoned the popular front and took a left adventurist turn, a mini-revolution of third period 'terror in the streets'.

US authorities published long lists of the names and addresses of union activists, effectively driving many out of work. Ganges of right-wing workers named factories, looking for 'leftist workers to beat up'.

Of course hit the union fractions of the Trotskyist SWP, as well as the CPUSA.

Nonetheless, the Communist Party was hit by the biggest organisation and the main target in the early 1950s is still 43,000 members. But its ability to defend itself was compromised by its policies, and its defensive approach sharply contrasted to that of the SWP.

The CP was poorly organised and unpopular with much of the left and many militants because of its pro-American anti-strike line during the second world war. And during the witch hunt, it judged that the US was on the verge of fascism, sending many of its second line units underground for long periods.

By contrast the Trotskyists determined to use every legal opportunity to defend themselves, to use even the smallest opportunities to build a united front, not to run in the face of the witch hunt and not to go underground.

Their most famous campaign was that in defence of the 'legends' veteran James Kechner, fired from his government job with his pension revoked for the 'crime' of membership of the SWP. In each case the US history is full of lessons for socialists. It shows that generalised witch hunts start from periods of sharp decline in the class struggle, and that attacks on unions can be used to sustain attacks on all democratic rights—a point of obvious relevance today.

Capitalist democracy is quite compatible with repressive and draconian repression of the left. And all the witch hunts in the workplace, and those perpetrated by the labour bureaucracy itself, prepare the basis for generalised hysteria against the enemy within.

Welsh Assembly — will Labour pass the test?

By Dalyy Rhys

Welsh Assembly is once more on the political agenda in Wales. The dispute has widespread support amongst working people and is the focus of activity of the Welsh Labour Party and Wales TUC.

Yet thirteen years ago it was overwhelmingly rejected in the referendum referendum.

What lies behind this turn around?

These have been no ordinary thirteen years. Wales has never once voted Tory but has suffered four consecutive Conservative governments. The consequences of Tory rule have been particularly severe in Wales.

Body blows

The destruction of steel and coal dealt body blows to the economy and the much vaunted 'recovery' has been largely based on low-waged, low skilled jobs. Wales and Northern Ireland are now the poorest parts of the British state.

The decline of industry, has meant an increasing reliance on services particularly the public sector to provide work. This makes the Welsh economy especially vulnerable to further cuts in public expenditure.

As a consequence many Welsh workers feel increasing dissatisfaction with a British centralism which provides them with little benefit and over which they have no control. There is also a feeling that if the Scots can kick up a fuss, then so can we.

Development in Scotland, be they positive or negative will have a big impact on the mood and confidence of those supporting an assembly in Wales.

Convention

The Wales TUC conference held in April passed an emergency motion on the assembly. It called on the Wales TUC to establish a Constitutional Convention, in collaboration with the Campaign for a Welsh Assembly.

The general council is now divided over implementing this policy, with lack of money due to British TUC cuts being used as an excuse for inaction.

The Wales LP executive has since voted against participating in the Convention and has set up its own 'Policy Forum' on the issue. The Campaign for a Welsh Assembly is organising an 'Open Day, with a view' on the issue. The Campaign for a Welsh Assembly is organising its own conference and has set up its own 'Policy Forum' on the issue. The Campaign for a Welsh Assembly is organising an 'Open Day, with a view' on the issue.

in this context the conference on 'A New Agenda for the valleys' called by Peter Hain MP is a welcome initiative.

The Neath Declaration, published and displayed at the conference, has, so far, met with a mixed response, but the idea of an assembly for Wales has been widely endorsed.

The campaign for Welsh Assembly is growing and attracting support from all sections of the Welsh Working class. It is now time for the Labour Party to show the lead in this vital struggle for democracy and workers control.
By Zhang Kai*

**Chinese regime retreats under workers' fire**

**By Joe Pass**

Brazil faces ‘campaign by coup makers’

**By Zhang Kai**

**Brazil faces ‘campaign by coup makers’**

Brazil faces a political crisis, with the start of legal moves to kick President Fernando Collor de Mello out of office.

A corruption scandal—so far little more than an internal squabble within the ruling party—now threatens to explode into mass mobilisations against the regime.

The biggest demonstrations since the pro-democracy protests of 1988 have seen hundreds of thousands on the streets of all major cities, dressed in black to symbolise a return of Collor’s appeal to don national colours of yellow and green in support of him.

Some 70 per cent of all Brazilians now want Collor to go; as recently as July, 67 per cent thought he should stay.

Collor, an open admirer of Thatcher, came to power in 1990 in Brazil’s first direct election in almost three decades, riding on a free-market liberal government ticket.

Last May, his younger brother Pedro quedo as president of presidential campaign treasurer Paulo Cesar Farias—also Pedro’s main business rival—of accepting hundreds of millions of dollars in kickbacks for government contracts.

**Swimming pool**

Collor is alleged to have received secret payments including a swimming pool, money for admiralty payments and $81m for 'home improvements'.

Collor ominously refers to the scandal as ‘a campaign by coup makers’. A Brazilian political scientist summarises the affair as a simple dispute between those who have power and those who want it. If you line up the tanks, cannons and troops, you see that Collor wins.

The country has seen six military coups this century, and after recent events in Peru, an attempt to restore military dictatorship cannot be excluded. But for the first time, a powerful organisation is a factor in political decision-making.

**Fightback**

The anti-Collor protests could trigger a working-class backlash against the privatisation caused by welfare cuts and other measures for government contracts.

The magazine said most workers in state enterprises in Shanghai felt the same way. It said that some workers said they were forced to sign labour contracts ‘flavoured with capitalism’. Some workers have responded with extreme actions.

**Killed**

In the first two months when the reforms were launched in Jinhua City, Zhejiang province, seven managers were beaten up by workers compulsorily transferred. A director of a biochemical factory in Hefei who was forced to resign last year when run over by a worker using a factory vehicle. A factory worker in Yunnan province ran amok in a car after being refused a wage increase, knocking down 34 people.

A worker in Huzhou fired a shot at a factory worker who had been fired. He was killed. There were also reports of mass protests, beating up of managers and sabotage of equipment in Shenyang and Shandong.

In Jinhui City, Liaoning province, Wang Fuqi, a worker at an oil refinery was beaten to death as a factory manager to death, and was later sentenced to death, suspended for two years. The case caused local uproar, with mass protests and factory cadres and attacks on their homes.

But it was in Shanghai, the largest industrial city, that the reaction was strongest. There were strikes, sit-ins, protests and disruption of production. As a result, the slogan of cracking the three irons was dropped, and the reform process was slowed down.

In February the government announced that about 1.7 million workers had been involved in enterprises subject to the reforms, about 16 per cent of all workers in state enterprises.

Workers resistance has deterred the smooth implementation of the government’s reform of wages and the labour system. Fierce resistance will probably occur if moves are made to privatise the state enterprises.

**Tradition**

The Chinese working class has a long history of struggle. Today the industrial working class is a vast and powerful force: they are much better educated than 30 or even 20 years ago.

But long years of Stalinist repression have resulted in the weakening of their collective strength; and several attempts to organise independent unions, especially in 1980 and 1989, have been brutally suppressed.

Industry has stagnated (although not agriculture) because of a combination of bad general management and the reforms. Workers’ enthusiasm has been shattered by the policy of attacking their interests and promoting those of the bureaucracy.

It is of organised resistance which has caused mainly individual acts of resistance and anger.

The only feasible alternative is workers’ self-organisation against the bureaucracy, corrupt officials, capitalists and mafia, to prevent the country’s wealth falling into the hands of the privileged few.

*Zhang Kai is a member of October Reunion, Chinese supporters of the Fourth International.*

*In Brazil, the pro-political crisis, with the start of legal moves to kick President Fernando Collor de Mello out of office.*

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The country has seen six military coups this century, and after recent events in Peru, an attempt to restore military dictatorship cannot be excluded. But for the first time, a powerful organisation is a factor in political decision-making.

The anti-Collor protests could trigger a working-class backlash against the privatisation caused by welfare cuts and other measures for government contracts.

The magazine said most workers in state enterprises in Shanghai felt the same way. It said that some workers said they were forced to sign labour contracts ‘flavoured with capitalism’. Some workers have responded with extreme actions.

In the first two months when the reforms were launched in Jinhua City, Zhejiang province, seven managers were beaten up by workers compulsorily transferred. A director of a biochemical factory in Hefei who was forced to resign last year when run over by a worker using a factory vehicle. A factory worker in Yunnan province ran amok in a car after being refused a wage increase, knocking down 34 people.

A worker in Huzhou fired a shot at a factory worker who had been fired. He was killed. There were also reports of mass protests, beating up of managers and sabotage of equipment in Shenyang and Shandong.

In Jinhui City, Liaoning province, Wang Fuqi, a worker at an oil refinery was beaten to death as a factory manager to death, and was later sentenced to death, suspended for two years. The case caused local uproar, with mass protests and factory cadres and attacks on their homes.

But it was in Shanghai, the largest industrial city, that the reaction was strongest. There were strikes, sit-ins, protests and disruption of production. As a result, the slogan of cracking the three irons was dropped, and the reform process was slowed down.

In February the government announced that about 1.7 million workers had been involved in enterprises subject to the reforms, about 16 per cent of all workers in state enterprises.

Workers resistance has deterred the smooth implementation of the government’s reform of wages and the labour system. Fierce resistance will probably occur if moves are made to privatise the state enterprises.

The Chinese working class has a long history of struggle. Today the industrial working class is a vast and powerful force: they are much better educated than 30 or even 20 years ago.

But long years of Stalinist repression have resulted in the weakening of their collective strength; and several attempts to organise independent unions, especially in 1980 and 1989, have been brutally suppressed.

Industry has stagnated (although not agriculture) because of a combination of bad general management and the reforms. Workers’ enthusiasm has been shattered by the policy of attacking their interests and promoting those of the bureaucracy.

It is of organised resistance which has caused mainly individual acts of resistance and anger.

The only feasible alternative is workers’ self-organisation against the bureaucracy, corrupt officials, capitalists and mafia, to prevent the country’s wealth falling into the hands of the privileged few.

*Zhang Kai is a member of October Reunion, Chinese supporters of the Fourth International.*
Autumn offensive

$7,000 Development Fund

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With our political batteries recharged after a successful Summer School and after the editorial team has spent the regulation ten minutes sitting in deck chairs, Socialist Outlook is back on the campaign trail, raring to go. But as we resume fortnightly publication, we come up against the problem of technical and material resources. We may be fresh and fit after our break – but our equipment is as old and knackered as before.

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Union News

September 11 strike call

Manchester BR guards fight victimisation

By a railworker

BRITISH RAIL guards at Manchester Piccadilly stage an unofficial walkout last month following the dismissal of four union representatives who sought to uphold existing working agreements.

The step was in apparent defiance of Tony anti-union legislation, which caused widespread disruption to rail services in the region, and further action is in prospect.

The dispute has its origins in years of confrontation at the station, where RMT railworker-union reps repeatedly forced to take on management high-handedness in a number of successful strikes in defence of guards’ interests.

On Thursday August 20, management broke a rostering agreement that had been reconfirmed only the day before. Bosses refused even to discuss the situation.

When guards remained in their mess room awaiting a union meeting, a manager arrived with dismissal notices in his pocket and handed them to the reps.

The immediate response bought almost all trains in the area to a standstill that evening and throughout the following day.

This action was reluctantly called off at an angry meeting on Friday 21, after promises of a ballot for official action which subsequently produced a two to one yes vote. A initial one-day strike is planned for Friday, September 3.

Leaflets have been produced to inform all the unions in Manchester what is going on, and visits arranged to other parts of the country to put over the guards’ case.

The stakes in this dispute are massive for railworkers, one of the guards told Socialist Outlook. “This is a determined attempt by management to break one of the best organised and best led unions in the area.

Success here will leave other sections of BR workers and their reps exposed to attack. If management do not back off quickly, RMT will hopefully expand the official action.”

RMT capitulate on negotiation machinery

By SR Driver

LAST MONTH the RMT leadership narrowly voted to accept a new system of Negotiation for British Rail staff. Before the ink has dried it has been revealed that the decision has seriously weakened the union.

Unions have been told by BR that old structures have been abolished so have all local agreements. The dispute and Manchester Piccadilly is happening because management have been given the green light to move against anyone trying to influence these agreements.

The new machinery gives increased power to BR’s new ‘business sector’ management structure. Rail workers who previously organised together will find themselves split up and having to negotiate with what is now in effect dozens of separate companies, rather than just one.

In 1989 similar proposals were seen off after a token strike. BR knew RMT members had been mobilised and were ready to fight. This time nothing has been done to explain the issues to ordinary rail workers.

Having managed to safeguard the role of national officials by retaining a semblance of continued national negotiation, the reality of local and regional negotiation has been abandoned.

Coming soon the sellout of London Underground workers this new capitulation is a serious blow to the RMT. The union response to events in Manchester underline the dangers – following legal advice it has been decided that no circular on the dispute will be issued for anyone outside Piccadilly.

RMT General Grades Committee have been advised that the new system is saying the BR are going beyond what they agreed to, and that they would never have voted to accept the new machinery if they had realised this was what would happen.

If this is to be seen as anything more than a last-ditch attempt after the election then the GCC must immediately repudiate the deal and start to mobilise the membership for a real fight. A next step would be a march up to the legal threats and begin to organise some support for the sacked Manchester workers.

Labour and the union

Fighting to keep the link

Steps are underway to establish a campaign in defence of the Labour Party-trade union link.

Immediately after Labour’s election defeat, the right argued for the dropping of the union link and put up candidates with the Liberal Democrats.

This raised the question of the organisational independence of the Labour Party from the openly bosses’ parties and its reflection of the organised working class and their ability to influence its policies.

While the issue of parties has been put on the back burner (probably until the Labour Party comes up with a definite policy on electoral reform), there has been an ongoing debate about the link with the unions, with the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the right-wing unions (mainly AEEU) pushing most vigorously.

Several mainstream unions (UCW, NUPE, GMB) have opposed such moves.

The importance attached to the issue is shown by the 30 odd resolutions submitted to Party conference – more than most other subjects – with the overwhelming majority for retaining the link.

However, the NEC has set up a working party to review the issue and report back next year.

The majority of unions, including those which have submitted resolutions, are certain to support referral to the working party.

In time-nominated Labour Party fashion, this working party will send out a consultation questionnaire with the responses to which it will ignore and produce proposals which are a fudge. The same process on parliamentary selection has meant a procedure which undermines the principle of trade union input through its very unmanageability.

The task for the moment is to build support throughout the Labour movement for the principle of maintaining the link. At a later stage, detailed responses to any working party report will need to be discussed.

Meetings have been held with the aim of establishing a ‘Keep the Link Campaign’, and a wide range of Trade Union and Labour Party bodies and individuals are being circulated with and asked to endorse a general statement. A planning meeting is being held at Party conference at which it is hoped to establish a campaign.

Every effort should be made to raise the issue throughout the labour movement, getting support from other sections and donations for the campaign. This should not be limited to the left but open to all those supporting retention of the link.

For copies of the statement, write to 120 Northcote Road, London E17 7ER.
Brum protest over hospital closures

HEALTH workers and pensioners marched through Birmingham on Saturday September 5 to protest at threats to close three local hospitals and axe 600 jobs.
The Save Our Services campaign is combating the effects of the long-term underfunding of Birmingham's health services, now compounded by the impact of the Tory government's new 'internal market'.

South Birmingham health authority merged last year with Central Birmingham, only to discover that the combined cash shortfall was a massive £16 million—mostly from Central Birmingham.

It then announced a draconian £7.5m saving plan which includes the closure of the South Birmingham Accident, the Royal Orthopaedic and Woodlands hospitals, shedding 600 jobs over three years.

But even as protests gathered at these hospitals a further £2.6m shortfall has been revealed as South Birmingham is squeezed from both sides by the 'internal market system'.

On the one side, neighbouring health authorities have pulled out of contracts worth £750,000 to buy orthopaedic treatment from South Birmingham's directly managed hospitals.

On the other, South Birmingham as a purchasing health authority has been prevented from withdrawing from contracts worth £700,000 with Solihull Hospital and East Birmingham Hospital Trust.

To make matters even worse, the battered South Birmingham HA has been told that it must spend half its 'development' budget this year—a mere £2.1m—on repaying its old debts.

Health services in the city had already been thrown into turmoil by the controversial plans of the West Midlands Regional Health Authority to 'centralise' services through a wave of closures.

Now the Save Our Services campaign is calling for a public inquiry into government underfunding in Birmingham, and for the sacking of West Midlands regional health chief Sir James Ackers who has masterminded the closure plans.

Three local MPs (Richard Burden, Lyn Jones and Estelle Morris) have already lent their support to the campaign, which is pressing for support from the City Council and the local labour movement.

The SOS campaign can be contacted on Joint Union Offices, 63-64 Tree Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6DJ (Telephone 021 627 1627 ext 51503).

JOHN LISTER of the NHS pressure group, London Health Emergency, will be speaking at a Birmingham meeting on the NHS crisis on September 15. The meeting will be at 7.30pm at the Queen's Arms, Eases St.

London NHS fightback

By Harry Sloan

2000 health workers and campaig-ners joined a lively demonstration against NHS cuts and closures in London on August 21.

Called by all three merging health unions, COHSE, NALGO and NUPE under the UNISON banner, the day also saw lunch-time meetings and other indications of support from hospital and local authority members.

The march—which the unions regard as a springboard for further action at local level—went from the doomed Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital to the Department of Health.

The protest has been triggered by the wave of cuts and closures which is sweeping away vital beds and jobs in health authorities and Trusts throughout the capital.

Already well over 1,000 jobs have been axed, and hundreds of beds have closed. At the beginning of August, technicans' union MSF staged an angry 3-day strike against threatened job losses in Riverside health authority.

But the march also served a warning that much bigger cuts are looming, as the Tory government's Tomlinson Inquiry continues to unveil its plans for restructuring hospital services in London and elsewhere in response to requirements of the 'internal market'.

A detailed report researched for COHSE by London Health Emergency has warned that Tomlinson is likely to propose closures including three teaching hospitals—Charing Cross, St Thomas's and either the Middlesex or University College Hospital.

The Tories are being egged on by the Government, which has suggested closing at least 15 hospitals. The media, too, have permitted the Tory line that the capital (with 150,000 beds) is overcharged.

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Socialist
Outlook

Strikers on speaking tour

STRIKERS FROM Burrell are now addressing labour movement meetings across London, in a speaking tour organised by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, Solidarity Network and Trade Union News magazine.

The workers have been out demanding union recognition, equal pay for women, reduction of compulsory overtime, reinstatement of a victimised worker, and action on safety.

A joint statement from the tour organisers insists: Success is possible.

Public support in the West Midlands is high, Burrell's business operations are being damaged and even the health and safety executive has vindicated the strikers' concerns over safety.

A victory for the Burrell strikers would be a boost for all trade unionists, especially for black and immigrant workers.

London branches, Labour Party and community groups are being asked to show their solidarity. The strikers have also been invited to meet London employers.

Birmingham Trades Council is raising £200 a week to support the strikers, and support

Birmingham strike still solid

By Bob Smith

The GMB and CWU picketed the Burrell electroplating plant in Smethwick near Birmingham and took their strike into its third month.

GMB general secretary John Edmonds has urged shop stewards to address both the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

A demonstration and labour movement rally in their support, hopefully involving the black community—the majority of the workers are Pakistani women—will be organised in the near future.

However the GMB has refused to call for a mass picket to confront scabs and close down the plant, or a boycott of the firm's goods which go to car manufacturers like Jaguar.

The two year struggle over extremely low pay, harsh shop floor discipline, compulsory overtime and dangerous working conditions is still on. After 65 hours work a 4.5-hour compulsory overtime, wages were only £120 with women earning £50 less.

The workers are appearing before equal pay, wrongful dismissal and工伤 discrimination tribunals soon.

Birmingham Trades Council is raising £200 a week to support the strikers, and support

GMB picnic at Edmonds from Colour movement bodies and the black community is pouring in.

For support messages, donations and speakers requests contact: Joe Quigley, Burrell Strike Fund, GMB, 2 Birmingham Rd, Hagley, Redditch B65 3HP Telephone 021 550 4888

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Birmingham Trades Council is raising £200 a week to support the strikers, and support...
Iraq faces more ‘collateral damage’

With George Bush trailing Bill Clinton by up to 20 points in the opinion polls, a huge aerial bombardment of Iraq is being planned to boost presidential ratings. A prime objective of the assault, according to Bradford University analyst Paul Rodgers, will be to kill Saddam Hussein.

The US military build-up exceeds anything needed to police the ‘exclusion zone’ which covers a least of third of Iraq. Massive numbers of planes, including Stealth fighters and fighter-bombers, have been prepared. US bombers have been armed with air-launched cruise missiles. And a B-52 squadron in Louisiana has been put on alert to launch a long-range attack on Baghdad from the US.

A key part of the US arsenal is a new bomb designed for destroying hardened control bunkers. Twenty-five of the bombs, capable of blasting through 70 feet of earth and then 20 feet of reinforced concrete, are ready to try to wipe out the Iraqi leadership.

Bush is having difficulty creating the excuse for the attack. UN weapons inspectors have not been able or willing to create a significant ‘incident’ in their hide-and-seek attempt to track down Iraqi military hardware and technology.

Saddam Hussein has quickly got his planes out of the exclusion zone, and attacks on Shi’ites and the Arab population of the southern marshlands have ceased, at least for the time being.

**Key targets**

But odds are that an attack will go ahead, excuse or not. Apart from Saddam Hussein, key targets will include government ministries in Baghdad, airfields, military bases, bridges and other ‘strategic’ installations. Civilians and civilian areas will not be targeted as such; but planners apparently accept that more ‘collateral damage’ is inevitable.

The crude cynicism of the Bush leadership in manufacturing a new ‘crisis’ is obvious. Saddam Hussein’s regime is, as the whole left argued throughout the Gulf war, a thoroughly despicable military dictatorship. Saddam’s attacks on the Shi’ite population and the Kurds are obscene.

But the idea that George Bush is kept awake at night worrying about the fate of Saddam’s victims is preposterous. Intervention or non-intervention is entirely a matter of the perceived interest of the United States. Military dictatorships are friends on enemies depending on temporary circumstances.

If George Bush were moved by the milk of human kindness, US marines would have been relieving the siege of Sarajevo months ago.

Final calculations may ultimately mean that zapping Iraq again is just too damn obvious a ploy in the election game; but don’t bet on it. The likelihood is still that some thousands of Iraqis are about to be slaughtered for the good of the Republican party.

Eighteen months after the Gulf war, the New World Order is getting into top gear. So far it has brought mass starvation in Africa, havoc in ex-Yugoslavia, the rise of fascism in Germany and more than a 100,000 deaths in the Gulf.