SLEAZY TORIES PLUNDER WELFARE STATE

JONATHAN AITKEN, at the centre of the latest sleaze allegations, is a millionaire. He lives a life of luxury, including stays at the £1,000-a-night Ritz Hotel in Paris, for which he assures us he paid the bill himself. He is a member of John Major’s cabinet, where he sits with other millionaires, who also live lives of luxury.

But Mr Aitken is also Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and with co-thinkers Peter Lilley (Social Security Secretary) and Michael Portillo (Employment Secretary), a key player in moves to destroy the welfare state. They divide the responsibilities between them, Aitken with Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, holds down spending on social security, health and education; Lilley cuts back on pensions, sick pay and benefits for claimants; and Portillo devises ways to throw the 2.6 million unemployed off the register and press-gang them into low-paid and part-time jobs. They all have a common purpose: to cut welfare state provision far enough to enable Clarke to offer new tax cuts in the hopes of buying another Tory election victory.

This is government by millionaires, for millionaires – at the expense of tens of millions of working people. It’s worse than sleazy. It’s capitalism.

To fight capitalism, we need an alternative.

That’s why Socialist Outlook supporters are campaigning in defence of the welfare state, and fighting in the Labour Party and in the unions against Tony Blair’s retreat from Clause Four. Join us.
Tories put boot into jobless millions

New ‘contract’ paves the way for workfare

by Harry Sloan

THE NEW Tory plans to scrap unemployment benefit and income support, and bring in a ‘Jobseekers Allowance’ are a body blow to millions of today’s and tomorrow’s unemployed.

The present 12-month entitlement to unemployment benefit is to be slashed to six months, while pressure will be stepped up to press-gang the unemployed into low-paid jobs.

The government itself predicts that as a result of the new policies 90,000 will lose all benefits and entitlements in the first year, while another 150,000 will find their benefits cut back and subject to new means-testing.

Young workers

Hardest hit will be young workers aged 18-24, who are made redundant. They will no longer be entitled to unemployment benefit, no matter how long they have been working and paying National Insurance contributions. Instead they will receive only a much lower, means-tested benefit.

Women made redundant who have working partners will lose six months of non-means-tested benefit.

The automatic entitlement to £20 per week unemployment benefit for adult dependants is also to be scrapped, forcing workers made redundant to submit immediately to means-testing.

But benefit cuts are only a part of the brutal Tory package, which is designed to make life miserable for those on the dole.

The reduced amounts paid out under the Jobseekers Allowance will be conditional on the claimant signing a ‘contract’ with their job centre, which tightens even further the re-

Grim prospects for tomorrow’s young workers as full time jobs disappear

qualification on them to be ‘actively seeking work’.

This new policy runs alongside Employment Secretary Portillo’s decision to ‘crack down’ on the unemployed by doubling to 135,000 the target for claimants to have their benefits stopped for allegedly not seeking work.

Dole staff will be given draconian powers to vet the dress, appearance and behaviour of claimants.

Low pay

Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley made it quite clear that the objective is to force more unwilling claimants into low-paid and part-time work.

“The new rules will make it crystal clear. Those who pay taxes and National Insurance should not have to subsidise people who make no attempt to get a job.”

Lilley and his Thatcherite soul-mate Portillo have both identified themselves with calls for a US-style ‘workfare’ system in which the jobless are forced to do menial work for their benefits.

The Jobseekers Allowance ‘contract’ could form the platform for introduction of a workfare system.

In the meantime Lilley is promoting the concept of a ‘Back to Work Bonus’ scheme under which the unemployed would work part time for little or no actual wages, but build up ‘credits’ to be cashed in when eventually they find a job.

Lilley claims that up to £1,000 could be stored up in a lump sum bonus, though how long it would take a part-time job to earn this much is not revealed.

Bribe

Perhaps the claimant could then invest the cash in bribing a Tory MP to ask a question in parliament.

With so few full-time jobs available, it is unlikely that many claimants would voluntarily enter a scheme that offers absolutely nothing today, and only the spurious promise of a big pay-out some time in the indefinite future.

Dumped

Stranded in the midst of this onslaught are 500,000 unemployed who are aged over 50, with little or no hope of finding work, and countless individuals dumped through redundancies onto the scrap heap.

The recent launch of the Welfare State Network as a campaign to link all those fighting the Tory offensive against health and welfare rights offers an opportunity to reach out to those hit hardest by the Jobseekers Allowance.

Civil service unions, whose members have been called upon to act as Lilley’s stooges, and who themselves now face the loss of another 3,000 jobs from Job Centres and dole offices, must take the lead in organising resistance, backed by other unions and the wider labour movement.

A fightback could reach out to organise and mobilise support from the unemployed.

So far the Tories have felt able to attack the unemployed with impunity. It’s time to turn the tide.

Action for health & welfare
Get the bulletin of the Welfare State Network!

Affiliation is just £25 for unions and Labour Parties, £10 for pensioners and unemployed groups. Individual subscription is £5. Send your cheque to Welfare State Network, c/o Southwark Trades Union Support Unit, 42 Bragman Street, London SE1 7.

Welfare State Network
Budget day lobby of Parliament
defend pensions, benefits & education

Tuesday 29 November
Assemble 1.30pm at the lobby gate for meeting in the Grand Committee Room with Jack Jones, Kate Adams and MPs Tony Benn, Alice Mahon, Alan Simpson and Dennis Skinner.
Symptoms of a sneaky system

IN THEORY, nobody should be that shocked or surprised by the latest revelations of Tory sleaze.

The party of big business would, after all, be expected to reflect the values of big business – the grasping corruption, the ruthless profit-seeking and the secretive decision-making networks that are an integral part of the ‘free market’ system. Business chiefs who funnel money into the Tory Party will obviously expect a few favours in return.

As long as this is the case, then it is inevitable that every so often evidence of this other-world will rise to the surface, like much-carpeted rubbish boiling from a swamp.

But the disasters that have rocked John Major’s cabinet in the past two weeks may have inflicted more fundamental damage on the credibility of the Tories. As we go to press, two junior ministers have resigned; a vice-chair of the Tory Party has resigned from a lobbying company and is under pressure to step down from her party post; a heavy cloud of unanswered questions and improper conduct hangs over the head of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury; and Home Secretary Michael Howard has been quizzed over his links with Czech Harrods owner Mohamed Al-Fayed.

Soap opera

Perhaps in these post-Dallas days it is the tendency for politics to grow closer to soap-operas which grabs the public’s anger and fuels their indignation. These stories appear almost like Hollywood stereotypes.

Ordinary people have been given a horrifying glimpse into the jet-set lifestyle of MPs quietly pocketing lavish consultancy fees, with millionaire ministers routinely scoffing £200 dinners and allegedly ‘forgetting’ how they paid bills for £1,000-a-night hotel rooms (breakfast extra). Finally reminiscent of soap-opera is the outbreak of bitter feuds within the wages councils, allowing them to force pay levels even lower; and City speculators have creamed off billions in profits from privatisation.

Tories are going through a rough patch: but they have remained dedicated to the class they represent. For John Major’s rhetoric about ‘one nation’ and a ‘classless society’, they know they are in office to line the pockets of the rich.

Tea at the Ritz? Major shares a cuppa with sleaze row minister Neil Hamilton. For Jonathan Aitken is a Thatcherite right-winger, as are Neil Hamilton and Ruobold. The in-fighting within the party and challenges to Major’s authority further weaken his ability to control press coverage.

Despite the political repercussions, we should not get too close to some allegations out of perspective.

In relative terms the consultancy fees, hotel bills, bribes and sweetheart deals that have protracted the press since the ‘cash for questions’ row first erupted are peanuts.

The Elbowseat station project will bring not just a few grand, but tens of millions for developers Blue Circle.

And for fifteen years British business as a whole has cashed in handsomely on its investment in the Tory Party, with most of the rewards openly carried out through the front door rather than the back.

Top-paid bosses have shared out tax cuts of £20 billion; Lloyds’ ‘nominees’ have been generously bailed out to the tune of billions; companies have exploited the barrage of draconian anti-union laws; others are celebrating the deregulation of the labour market and the scrapping of

Take Clause IV fight into unions

By Aidan Day

TONY Blair’s attack on Clause Four must be fought by all trade unions. Behind the leadership’s media-friendly sound bites lies an attempt to get the rank and file of the labour movement to accept capitalism as permanent and unalterable.

Clause Four stands in the way of Blair’s desire to convince the masses that ‘capitalism is safe in our hands’.

He sees it as an impediment to getting his friends to high places to understand that Labour is a pro-capitalist party. The Labour leadership is trying to build a broad front against socialism — involving everyone who has a stake in the present system.

In this context Clause Four is an important symbol, and the fight to defend it is a key test of strength for the left in the labour movement.

Greed

At stake is the commitment to fight for a completely different type of society — not run by the greed of bosses, but based on an equitable shareout of the fruits of industry.

That’s why Tony’s friends in the City despise it so. And it is why trades unionists must take a stand. Getting rid of the Clause is an attempt to demobilise opposition to capitalism and to the bosses’ offensive.

Blair’s new constitution aims to break Labour from its working-class roots and would be a backward step for all workers.

The removal of the Clause would be a victory for the rich and for all the “new realists” who have given up the fight against the Tories.

Pressure must be put on every trade union leadership, especially on those with a big membership in the public sector, to oppose the change in constitution and to back the campaign in defence of Clause Four.

Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism

Campaign launch rally

Saturday November 12, 1pm
St Aloysius Hall, Phoenix Rd., NW1 near Euston Station (Eversholt St. exit)

Affiliations: minimum S10; send to NUM, 2 Huddersfield Rd., Balsamley, Yorks.
No justice in Commission's feeble plan for Labour

Moving backwards from Beveridge

By Aldan Day

ENGINE SMITH's brainchild, Labour's much-hailed advisory body, the Commission on Social Justice, caves in to the Tories on every issue that counts.

Its recommendations mean more means-testing, less benefits for workers and the unemployed, cuts in pensions and cuts in student grants.

While Tory ministers are living it up in Paris hotels and bosses are getting million-pound pay-offs, the Labour Party's advisors are lecturing us on "responsible" wage rises and the need to decrease welfare expenditure.

This is a report that concedes all the ground we fought Thatcher for in the eighties.

Affordable

Most importantly it ties levels of welfare to what the bosses deem "affordable". When this is combined with more means testing it has an unavoidable result -- the burden of the capitalist crisis is for the working class to carry.

It makes no challenge to the basic inequalities of class society and accepts that the market is the ultimate arbiter of what is affordable. This makes cuts inevitable.

Someone is going to have to pay for the Tories and it's going to be us.

When John Smith launched this commission he said it thinking of benefit as a right. This is what's behind the vocabulary of targeting. The report accepts the vocabulary, accepts the strategy, and accepts the result.

This is why the commission is a step backwards from Beveridge.

It surrenders the most significant things he fought for, not least of all a collective responsibility to the elderly.

Pensions

It breaks breaking the link between pensions and earnings. Workers are to be asked to pay higher contributions to pay for an increase. It says nothing about ending VAT on fuel and even proposes to extend the retirement age of women to 65.

The private sector will become more involved, and the basic pension will be steadily devalued in favour of means testing. In other words, we've got to look after ourselves.

So much for social responsibility.

Instead of appealing to deep feelings of concern and generosity to the old the commission advocates individual insurance to pay for care. As Jack Jones the campaigner for pensioners said "millions of pensioners were looking to the report. There will be a disappointment."

Pipe Dreams

Although there are a great number of fine phrases about the "aim" of full employment, "redistributing jobslessness" and making nursery provision a "high priority" this is all to be permitted only in the context of creating and developing a "dynamic market economy".

As the market shows less and less ability to provide for even the most basic of needs there is little chance of any of these wishes coming true. Without an economic alternative they become more pipe dreams.

If you look at the authors this is no surprise. It's the product of bosses Sir Gordon Borrie and Christopher Hawkins, SDP splitter Bernard Williams and the Liberal Democrat Steven Webb. Why should the Labour Party get these people to make its policy?

Intimidation

There is no mention of bringing back into public ownership the privatised industries, repealing anti-union laws or cutting military expenditure.

There are no proposals for job creation. Instead the report supports wage cuts to pay for the crisis' "unemployment and inflation can be kept down only if the average income earnings is no higher than the average increase in productivity"; in other words, work harder for less money.

While doing more than "considering" a wealth tax it explicitly advocates making social security harder to claim. This is Portillo style intimidation -- frighten claimants off to save money.

It airs the figure of £3.50 for a minimum wage -- significantly less than Labour's present £4.10. But simultaneously it warns "clearly a minimum wage which is set too high will produce job losses"; another concession to the Tories.

As well as laying the basis for further inroads into welfare provision it backs a graduate tax and the ending of grants in favour of loans.

When average student overdrafts are hitting a record £2,500 Borrie declares that "the burden of expansion in higher education will have to be borne by... full-time university students living away from home".

No justice in Commission's feeble plan for Labour

Birmingham Community Conference

A working conference for public sector service providers and users

UNITE & ACT

In defence of public sector jobs & services!

Sat 19 November 10.30 - 4.30 Union Club, 723 Fershade Road, Selly Park Birmingham. Entry £5/£1/50p. Details (0121) 451 2555.

Birmingham defends public services

By Bob Whitehead

Unite to defend the public sector

That's the message of the Birmingham Community Conference on 19 November, which has attracted widespread support from trade unions, Labour Parties and health and community groups.

It will consider a statement calling for a public spending and set up a local campaigning body to call for a public demonstration.

The Tories are set on savaging the welfare state in the Autumn budget. It is not any matter how low their popularity sinks. Benefits, jobs and services are all at the line.

They can only put away with it because of the lack of resistance from the labour movement.

It is vital to coordinate the various campaigns and unite them with the labour movement on a local basis -- to unite the providers and users of services in local campaigns of rallies, demonstrations and industrial action.

This is what we're trying to do in Birmingham.

If we can turn the declarations of support achieved so far into active support then we'll have gone a long way to building a part of a national campaign to put an end to these incessant attacks, and maybe the government as well.
Fighting for the Right to Strike

By Greg Tucker, SMTUC Secretary

THE FIRST year of the Tory government saw the highest number of strikes for 50 years. This year had the least. Vicious anti-union legislation has made it almost impossible to hold a legal strike – while “new realism” has made the union leaders unwilling to even try.

The Fight for the Right to Strike Conference on 26 November wants to turn this situation around. Despite all the restrictions it is still possible to fight to defend the interests of working people. At least five groups of workers have confronted anti-union laws in the past year.

College lecturers – walked out in spite of a legal judgement forcing NATFHE to give a completely accurate (and therefore impossible) list of all balloted members before going on strike.

Postal workers – massive walkouts in Liverpool, Milton Keynes and all over London and the south-east in a battle against casualisation and excessive part-time work.

Firefighters – new contracts withdrawn in Merseyside after spontaneous “emergency only” industrial action and a mass demonstration of 10,000 FBU members.

Local government workers – Selflow UNISON action against privatisation leads to a withdrawal of council plans despite two branch officers being taken to court.

Signalworkers strike – despite legal restrictions hampering the broadening of the dispute it becomes the longest in the history of the union and wins a partial victory.

Our movement is far from dead!

With Tony Blair’s back turned on working class struggle, and Tory talk of banning strikers in “essential services” it’s time to get organised.

The Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee has joined forces with Lambeth and Birmingham Trades Councils to organise the Fight for the Right to Strike Conference. It will provide a unique opportunity to discuss a strategy to unshackle the unions from Tory laws.

Barriers

In plenary debate and workshop discussion the conference will discuss how to overcome the present barriers to action and how to build solidarity action despite the anti-union laws.

We will be debating what sort of legal alternatives we want – and how we get the future Labour government to give them to us, as well as how we block future Tory plans to impose further restrictions on our rights.

The conference is not just a talking shop. It aims to build a network of supporters taking up our demands and organising solidarity across our movement.

We urge all trade unions to set the unions free

By a postal worker

TIME IS running out on Post Office privatisation. After three months of talking, the cabinet is still divided.

The consultation period has shown widespread support for the public sector option. It has united all major opposition parties and a handful of Tory backbenchers.

Do the Tories risk the partial privatisation option, and face down all opposition with a watered down version of their proposals, or do they retain the Post Office in the public sector?

With pressure on the Tories mounting over sleaze in government the last thing they want is a bloody nose over this.

However it would not be the first time that the Tories have pursued an unpopular policy in the name of pragmatism. Heseltine’s Tory party conference speech appealed to that.

There is also significant support for privatisation from sections of big business and of course the Post Office boards themselves.

An announcement of privatisation by the government should be met by an immediate response.

The campaign against privatisation has so far been concentrated on encouraging letter writing and lobbying MPs. There should be a massive demonstration against privatisation.

Throughout the summer there has been an impressive number of local activities. A national focus is now needed. As the demonstrations in support of the miners in October 1992 showed, hundreds of thousands can be brought onto the streets.

But we also need to draw the lessons of that campaign. When the mass demonstrations stopped, the Tory revolt crumbled.

Lacking stamp of authority

It is likely that a major national demonstration would be called as an end in itself, with the tried, tested and failed methods of parliamentary procedure – petitioning and lobbying Tories – the next part of the campaign.

Any announcement that the Post Office will be privatised needs to be a rallying point of all those UCW members who want to fight.

Pressure needs to be applied by UCW branches on the leadership of the union to carry out conference policy of building massive opposition – including giving consideration to strike action.

Bossses pocket the difference

COMPANY directors have received an average 6.1 percent increase in pay in the past year, according to a new survey.

Top bosses have been awarding themselves rates more than three times the rate of inflation, while average pay settlements in the engineering industry have been running at just 2.6 percent.

Almost a quarter of all engineers working were paid their freeze during 1993.
Blood runs high as donors kebabed

By Terry Smith

200,000 people in the North West have signed a petition, and on October 28 saw a demonstra-
tion in Liverpool opposing the closure of the city's Blood Transfusion Centre, which serves Mer-
seyside and North Wales.
The Centre, whose work would be moved to Manchester, is one of five to be axed out of a
total of 15, under new plans published in September by the National Blood Authority.
Other centres facing the chop are Lancaster, Oxford, Brentwood and Plymouth, as the NHA opens a £1.43bn from a Blood Service budget of
£135m, slashing at least ten percent of the 4,000 workforce.

Slower deliveries

Though the NHA boasts that its new network would deliver blood supplies to any hospital within 2 hours, this would be a worsening of performance: most centres already do better.

The plans arise from a £600,000 review of the blood service by management consultants brought in by the NHA's controversial chief executive John Adey.

Adey, until he took the reins at the NHA, was Chairman of Baxter's Healthcare, the monop-
opoly supplier of blood bags to the NHS.

Health unions warn that the closure, linked with plans to run the entire network of blood do-
nor centres from just three head

quarters in Leeds, Bristol and North London, will break up skills and dedicated teams, leave panels of donors unable to give blood, jeopardise the treat-
ment of patients with blood dis-
orders, and risk a total dislocation of blood supplies.

Though blood is given free by donors, under the new NHS market system hospitals are charged for each unit of blood they consume.

European market

NBA chiefs have been sound-
ing out internal management views on possibly extending this selling British blood products to the European mar-
ket.

The NBA closure package is theoretically open for consultation until November 11; but Adey has indicated that it would "take an earthquake" to change his mind.

Healthworkers and cam-
paigners in all the threatened localities are doing their best to create one.

Sheffield steeled against cuts

85,000 people have so far signed the petition opposing plans to close one of SHEP-
FIELD's two busy Accident & Emergency units, as the Tories' hospital closure programme grinds on across the country.

All parties say 'no closure'

In north London, 50,000 copies of a 12-page Hands Off Our Hospitals tabloid newspaper have been distributed by cam-
paigners fighting the clo-
sure of EDDWARE Hospital by the Health Authority.

The paper has been funded through advertisements from local unions, community groups, political parties and small businesses.

Hundreds joined a lively demonstration on October 29 demanding the health authority drop the closure plan, which has been opposed by MPs and councillors from all three main parties in all three boroughs af-
fected.

Central Mid hits back

Over 80 people turned out to a public meeting on October 25 to discuss the defence of Central Middlesex Hospital.

The hospital is threatened under plans drawn up by the Brent & Harrow health author-
ity, which would oblige pa-
tients from the deprived Harlesden, Wembley and Wembley areas to choose be-
tween long and awkward jour-
neys to St Mary's Hospital Paddington, or Northwick Park in Harrow.

Islington queues lengthened

Cash has already run out for non-emergency treatment at London's Whittington Hospi-
tal. The Trust has closed the doors on local waiting list pa-
tients five months before the end of the financial year as a result of spending cuts imposed by the Camden & Islington health authority.

Non-urgent cases will now join the Whittington's 3,000 waiting list until new money becomes available next April.

But in the meantime the press-
ture on the Whittington will in-
tensify with the planned January closure of casualty Bart's Hospital.

Local government pay deal

Old wine in new bottles

By Fred Leplat

UNIONS representing one and a half million council workers accepted a pay of-
er on 14 October which differs little from the previous 'final offer'. It has been
slightly repackaged to marginally benefit the low paid.

Under a two year deal, workers will get 1.5 per cent and £100 backdated to July
this year and 1.4 per cent and £100 from June 1995. The old offer was 1.7 per cent and £75 this year, and 1.4 per cent and £75 the next.

For a council worker on £15,000 a year this will mean £16 a week. Inflation and tax rises make this a cut in real terms.

Worst of all is it a two year deal which does not bind the employer to increase pay with inflation. According to UNISON, the employees ac-
cepted that the unions could re-open negotiations.

Will Tories bail out private hospital?

THE FINANCIAL and po-

tical scandal surrounding the building of the giant Health Care International private hospital in Clyde-

darkness refuses to die down.

As widely predicted, the £190 million hospital's opening was almost immediately fol-
lowed by a cash crisis and the threat of bankruptcy: the short-
fall this year is £15m.

Now there is even talk of the government stepping in to bail out the bankrupters by buying it for the NHS.

The hospital was built - in the teeth of huge public opposition and warnings that it would be a white elephant - with govern-
ment subsidies totalling £30m.

In addition there was a £4m loan from the job creation package - Scottish Enterprise.

It now turns out this loan was secured, and that the final £1m was paid even after offi-
cials knew HCl was in financial trouble. In the event the hospital has employed only 400 of the promised 1,800 new jobs.

Yielding

Also contrary to early prom-
ises the hospital intended to fly in private patients from abroad, HCl has been trying to solve its problems by lobbying for contracts to treat NHS pa-
tients - the latest being a £1m contract to treat waiting list cases from the West Midlands.

Now, amid international de-
bate over the rescheduling of its huge debts, and appeals from the HMRC for exemption from its £1m VAT bill, it appears that Scottish Tories are pressing for a study of how much it would cost to buy up the hospital and convert it for NHS use.

Estimates suggest a bill as high as £40m, but would the government get the contracts? And who would foot the bill?

With red faces bubbling in the clear blue water, the ma-

news will continue behind the scenes.

Replacing Labour's invisible man

L.JOUBER's new Shadow Health Secretary, Margaret Beckett, has promised to take a higher profile than her inglori-

ous predecessor David Blankett. That should be easy.

Blankett made little secret of his contempt for the post and the issue. He took months to come out with any clear op-

position to the massive hospital closure programme in London.

Now all frustrated Labour activists need is a fighting pol-

cy to defend the NHS, in place of the insipid evasions of Blankett's half-baked consult-

ation document.
RAISING THE BANNER OF SOCIALISM
A WORLD IN CRISIS

Part one of a series by JOHN LISTER

JUST AS the capitalist market system reaches a global impasse, condemning billions to grinding poverty and exploitation, Tony Blair's right wing Labour leadership has set out to jettison the Party's historic commitment to an alternative.

The fight to uphold Clause 4 and for a socialist perspective and policy in Britain is part of a fight for an internationalist perspective on the overthrow of a system that long outrived its usefulness.

The louder the celebrations of imperialist leaders, the deeper the crisis blighting the lives of billions of working people around the world.

Even as it congratulates itself for outliving the miserable Stalinist caricature of 'socialism', the capitalist system continues to demonstrate its total failure to satisfy the most elementary needs of the majority of humanity.

And as it does so, the market system continues relentlessly to undermine the political bankruptcy of all political formations which depend upon it and act to implement it - whether they be British Tories, US Democrats, Spanish Socialists, Polish Communists or ANC nationalists.

Exporting poverty

THE MARKET system brings daily misery to billions of people. Poverty, hunger, disease, homelessness are rampant. Absolute poverty is at record levels.

53 per cent of the world's population live in the poorest countries, with an average income of just $350 per person, sharing only 4.6 per cent of the world's income.

The gap between these poor countries and the advanced economies is growing. The richest countries with 16 per cent of the world's population have average incomes 35 times higher, with 78 per cent of the total income.

The wealth of Africa, with double the population of the USA, and despite its huge natural resources, is little more than that of Belgium.

Mach of Africa remains on the sidelines of the world economy. The total of foreign direct investment in the continent for 1993 was just $1.6 billion, less than three per cent of global flows of investment. The latest World Bank study does not even measure this investment or bother to assess its rate of return. China, not Africa, is the largest recipient of World Bank project funding.

By contrast, the IMF early in 1994 agreed a new $1.5 billion package to prop up the Yeltsin regime in Russia, and to reinforce a $4 billion standby loan which is keeping capitalist wolves from the door of those demanding repayments on the 0.85 billion foreign debt.

With the main imperialist powers struggling to resolve their own domestic economic problems, and seeking maximum strategic advantage from the collapse of monolithic in the east, there will be less chance than ever that Africa or south Asia can attract the capital they need to construct viable capitalist economies.

For most imperialists there is simply not enough to gain in Africa for them to invest capital. The law of uneven and combined development, under which newly-emerging capitalist enterprises are forced immediately to compete in a world market with the largest and most technically advanced and experienced multinationals, makes it all but impossible for Africa, Latin America or much of Asia ever to achieve more than deplorable status.

Only measures running directly counter to the capitalist free market can hope to rectify this imbalance, appropriating domestic and international capital and offering a cancellation of past debts, technical aid, educational programmes and a sustained programme to build democratic trade with more advanced economies.

To fight for this, Marxist parties based on the working class and with a programme developing Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution are needed to lead the combined struggle for genuine independence from imperialist domination and for socialism, which will link working class and peasant struggles, and reject the blind allegiances of collaboration with national or international capital which have led many nationalist movements astray.

Crisis in the East

THE ATTEMPTS to extend the market system into the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have so far led to a shocking increase of misery. There has been an horrific 40 per cent drop in industrial production in Russia, where nine per cent of enterprises are technically bankrupt, and economic and financial chaos throughout the ex-Soviet republics.

Yet the western bankers hold Poland's deal to repay most of its $13 billion unpaid bank debts as a success. Only Russia remains in default. Reactionary regimes seeking to roll back and privatise the nationalised economies in the ex-Stalinist states face not only political obstacles at home, but a shortage of capital for investment.

Imperialism simply does not have the resources needed to construct new capitalist economies on the mines and wastelands of decades of bureaucratic mismanagement.

There will be encouraging words from the bankers, a few selected projects will be favourably regarded, but, as the Poles have found, this will fall far short of the necessary investment in the big.
The imposition of market disciplines on enterprises also involves an attack on housing, health insurance and pension funds previously funded by the firm. The text notes that the enterprises that remain in state hands are imposing capital-style redundancies and a size class of the workforce of powerful workers and trade unions. Chinese urban unemployment is officially acknowledged to be four million, with a massive 130 million rural unemployed.

With the advent even of a "socialist" market in China comes the widening of class divisions and the spread of actual poverty. A recent trade union survey indicates that up to seven million families could be living in poverty with less than 50 yuan per month to live on; by contrast a lucky one million families have hit the big time, described by the Beijing Daily as the "one million yuan households". The entrepreneurial top third of the Chinese population owns savings of 253 billion yuan, compared with the 274 billion yuan of the entire non-literate 180 million Chinese peasants.

The bureaucracy has intervened to impose an additional price control to combat growing inflation, in order to prevent exploitation of mass anger.

The political revolution of the Central plains in the ex-USSR, Eastern Euope and China serve to underline the basic tenets of the Trotskyist struggle for political revolution. The 1980s, which began with the victory of the workers' movement to the power of Poland's Stalinist bureaucracy, saw Stalinist regimes in the region face a stark choice. Even as they clung to power, through increasingly desperate and repressive measures, they were confronted with the stagnation and crisis of their economies, leading even further back the technical advances in the West, yet forced to seek loans and credits from Western banks. More and more regimes saw that at first had been passive, waiting for resistance to develop into the downtown hostility of the masses.

Here the G7 against "impartial disarms" which ignore the feelings of "employers", and stress the need for redundant workers to be offered new jobs.

Best of a bad job?

Underlying the global rise in unemployment is the rapid decline of employment in manufacturing industry. Manufacturing is now only 20% of the GNP of the advanced economies. Of the advanced economies, only in Japan has the manufacturing workforce now large (by 25% per cent) than it was in 1970. In Britain, by contrast, the decline has been dramatic, to just 45 percent of the number employed in 1970. This demise has been accompanied by a worsening in the balance of payments, as consumer goods have been imported in ever larger quantities, while British goods have been exported in far less variety of goods to export.

Just one British worker in five is now employed by a manufacturing firm, and one in six in the USA, compared with one in three in Germany and Japan. But this decline has run alongside a big increase in manufacturing productivity. In fact, 80 percent of the 1970 workforce productivity double the 1970 output in 1992.

Many of these industrial jobs have been lost in the lower-paid developing countries, often by subsidiaries of the same multinational firms. 40 percent of the output of British firms is now produced abroad.

Other one-time bedrock manufacturing industries have been eclipsed by competition from abroad. In Britain, textiles, motor-cycles, cars, shipbuilding, much electronics and even coal mining have been largely wiped out and replaced by imports. Millions more jobs have been lost in service industries by decades of decimating the skilled workforce in print and other industries.

Organise the unemployed

The scope of unemployment is one of the most difficult to combat through normal trade unionism. It requires both strong organisation and a high level of consciousness about the nature of the capitalist market economy to stage strikes and occupations against an employer threatening redundancies, demanding the opening of the doors of the books and a pol-
ics of work sharing with
no loss of pay.
Without such policies and fight-
ing leadership, even a large na-
tionwide campaign for a 35-hour
week, workers can be persuaded
to accept a severely large lump
sum at the end of each year, rather
than risk an uncertain outcome to
a half-hearted fight.
The policy of work sharing and
the 35-hour week is also important
for organizing the unemployed
alongside the unions. This is a
response to the British union bu-
reaucracy, which rejected any at-
tempt at organizing the unemployed
in the early 1980s, threatening
sanctions against Trades Councils
which persisted in the latter. The
consequences of this failure of the
British unions are painfully clear for
all to see.
In Europe, however, campaigns
are growing again for the 35-hour
week, and we should promote
these while also attacking the
TUC's abandonment of the unem-
ployed. Local campaigns should be
mounted aimed at mobilizing
and organizing part-time, casual
workers and the unemployed.

Conveyor belt ends
Alongside the decline of
manufacturing has come a
relative expansion of
jobs in the service sector,
resulting from retail and
catering, to job loss, computer-
ing and design. However the service
sector is also suffering a squeeze
on jobs.
Privatization in Britain and else-
where of what were state-owned
utilities and services has triggered
a new wave of job cuts and sub-
contracting, slashing jobs and
working conditions for millions
more workers.
The break-up of the historic
centres of power, the power
sectors and centres of manufac-
turing, has struck a major blow at
union strength. And while
dramatically reducing the numbers
of traditionally 'male', full-time jobs,
the sector of the service sector
has created growing numbers of
part-time, casual, often low-paid
work to an increasingly over-
worked workforce - many of them
down wom nen.
The British trade union move-
ment has been especially hard hit
by this international phenome-
on. Traditionally strongly
organized, it has suffered a con-
comitant rise in unemployment and
a rapid drop in union membership
down to just 38 per cent of the work-
force, having lost four and a half
millions members since 1979.
Even this understates the qual-
itative weakening of most British

The do m ain b ou n d
One of the reasons in-
vestment remains at a
low level is that free
market liberalism has largely
failed to resolve the world fiscal
and crisis and create the huge
state budget deficits - which include
not only the crippling Third
World debt but also the gigantic
government deficit and growing
deficits in Europe.
The long wave of stagnation
and recession simultaneously in-
creased the social security costs of
growing unemployment while it
reduced the capacity of the state
through loss of taxes. Further cuts in
state spending on capital pro-
duction - such as road building -
also increase unemployment and
depress the recession, so fur-
ther undermining the state.
In the USA, even the Reagan
boom, pump-primed by colossal
foreign loans, widened the
deficit and forced up interest rates
as the government was forced
to borrow on the international
market to bridge the gap.
In Britain, the deficit has grown
to such an extent as to threaten
the bankruptcy of the state; only
North Sea oil has prevented a cri-
sis occurring earlier.
The problem has been exacer-
bated by the historic British house
tradition of investing abroad. 60 per cent of British capi-
tal investment goes abroad - more
easily than Thatcher's deregula-
tion of the City. Forty five per cent
of British manufacturing activity
takes place overseas.

GATTatabase
FRANCE in January
agreed the GATT agree-
ments liberalizing world
trade to the overwhelmingly dis-
advantageous position of the working class
and peasants in the underde-
veloped economies.
They will be the prime victims as
fledging domestic manufacturing
industries, agriculture and extrac-
tion industries are exposed to the
bitter blast of global competition
with multinationals, and raw ma-
terials prices continue their down-
ward spiral.
As the GATT director general ad-
mitted, 'it is wrong to say that
liberalisation is going to make the
poor richer as a result of the oppor-
tunity offered to them.'
In fact the USA, Japan and the
European Union will continue to
monopolize the major part of world
trade, leaving the poorer 20 per
cent of the world's population to
share the remainder. Poorer coun-
tries are even asked to elimi-
nate subsidies and protectionist
measures, and to grow food for
domestic consumption rather than
try to export cash crops on the
world market.
Indeed even the limited 'expansion'
which has taken place in the
OPEC countries as key econo-
 mies begin to clamber from out-
right recession, has taken place on
the basis of huge hidden subsidies
from the oil-producing countries,
where prices of $40 a barrel offer
little in real terms than the pitiful
return before the oil shock
brought 70 per cent increases in
It is clear that from the realities
of world trade today that despite
deals to trade technology be-
tween South Korea and China, and
whatever gains growth might take
place in Brazil, in India or else-
where, there is no possibility of
new industrial power emerging
to challenge the global domina-
tion of the present imperialist
power blocs.
There is no new golden age of
capitalist expansion: simply more
of the old misery until the working
class organise to take power in its
hands and smash the market sys-
tem.

Costing us the earth
SHORT SIGHTED and
deficient in the state
the OPEC states are pump-
ing out irreparable assets at
such a giveaway price that alter-
native energy and conservation
measures are not considered
economic, while bland govern-
ment phrases about the envi-
ronment have done little to limit
the output of greenhouse gases.
Indeed it is not only the ad-
vanced economies but also those
struggling to catch up with them
which are polluting the atmos-
phere.
China and Brazil between them
pumped almost a million tonnes
of carbon dioxide into the air in
1987, while Japan, with a GNP
that is almost double the two com-
bined, produced 230 tonnes.
The tide of pollution is even
more serious when the leaks and
discharges of radioactive and
other poisonous waste products
into the atmosphere, soil, even

Economists have called for global
policies to control fish stocks.
But such policies are ultimately
only enforceable through a plann-
ed food policy, which in turn
demands an end to the com-
petition of the free market, so that
fishing crews, like farm workers,
guaranteed a decent standard
of living without having to strip
bare the natural assets of the
oceans.

Building blocs
RATIONAL PLANNING
and the market system
are in constant contra-
diction with each other. So it
is not surprising to find that the
behaviour of growing cooperation displayed
at the G7 summits, the basic
trend of the market is increas-
ingly dividing the advanced
economies into three main trad-
ing blocs, headed by the USA,
Japan and the European Union
Each bloc, and sometimes each
major partner within each bloc,
is primarily intent upon maximiz-
in share of markets and preferential deals in the developing and underdeveloped countries. Each is seeking its own invades into Eastern Europe.

The North American Free Trade Agreement creates a US-led alliance of USA, Canada, and Mexico. In exchange for lessenng the pressure on Mexico to repay its $100 billion foreign debt, and erecting protective barriers to ward of competition for Mexican firms from Europe and Japan, the deal allows US and Canadian monopolies privileged access to the Mexican market.

Despite the gote of NAFTA, the US is seeking to prise open restricted markets in Asia and around the Pacific Rim countries, previously seen as the preserve of Japan.

The Japanese remain the dominant voice of the increasingly powerful bloc of Asian countries where Japanese capital has played a key role in developing modern industries— notably South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia. Japan is currently funneling additional investment into Indonesia and southern China. The most vored of relations arise in the European Union, where the attempt to forge a common trading bloc wielding political clout comparable to its economic potential poses a threat to the conflicting national interests of substantially national bourgeoisies. Nevertheless, the fear of intense competition from NAFTA, together with the storm clouds from the dynamic Pacific rim economies dominated by Japan, reinforce the dynamic towards European integration. The capitalist project for Europe was frozen half way between a simple free-trade zone (which the British Eurosceptics want to retain) and a real federal state (which they totally reject).

The Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty were attempts to move forward beyond this untenable situation with the creation of, amongst other things, a common currency. The creation of a political and military authority was scheduled for later.

The more far-sighted European bourgeoisie have aimed at economic rationalisation on a European-wide scale. They pressed for a European Monetary System (EMS) and a Europe wide curb on government spending to rein in costly welfare states. Both North America and Japan have comparatively minimal social welfare programmes and larger, more efficient industries.

Though the ERM collapsed, the same programme is now being introduced through the back door, designed to bring the different states into line and further their integration, making the EU competitive with the other major blocs.

The ERM crisis and the subsequent attempts to defend the pound wiped out huge exchange reserves in Britain (at least £15 billion), with similar losses in France, Italy and the Spanish state. This exposes the weakness of national banks in the face of the floating capital of international speculators and bankers, of which $900 billion is exchanged daily (three times the combined exchange reserves of all the G7 countries).

It also brought into sharp focus the huge budget deficits building up in many European countries, making an onus on welfare spending inevitable. If the EU countries are to meet the new Maastricht limit of three per cent of GDP. The result of the Maastricht process is already making itself felt in the growth of mass unemployment, privatizations, speed-up, new management techniques, massive cuts in the social wage (even legally imposed limits to the levels of welfare spending), all of which compound the effects of the recession, and erosion of democratic rights.

This is why it is a major betrayal of the working people everywhere that the Labour Party and union leaders fully support the creation of the EU, using the pathetic fig leaf of the unforthable Social Charter as their justification.

Across the continent, the picture is the same. Workers' parties, whether social democratic or revamped communist parties, have been roped in to support the capital strategy.

This class collaboration has led to a further step away from any concept of socialism and open embrace for the capitalist market - a Euro new realism, which has failed miserably to provide any alternative to the capitalist crisis.
Living through violence

Pulp Fiction directed by Quentin Tarantino

Reviewed by Steve Smith

VICERAL and earring, but hip and hilarious, the brilliance of Quentin Tarantino’s work isn’t to be denied. It has transformed him from an unknown pop cultural train spotter into the world’s most talked about film director. His second film, Pulp Fiction has just opened to a chorus of critical hype. This will soon be multiplied by the release of Oliver Stone’s Natural Born Killers, which Tarantino scripted. His Reservoir Dogs debut is still running after the censors refused to release it on video.

Pulp Fiction is set in the director’s favourite world of the LA Underclass. It tells two jumbled-up stories of three characters and their lives of crime.

Samuel L. Jackson and John Travolta play two hired killers working for a dominating gangster godfather. Through trouble for him when he tries to broaden his horizons beyond cops and robbers.

Pop Culture

If Tarantino champions anything at all, it is a view that pop culture has taken over our lives that it is impossible to live outside its influence.

Our most basic interpretations are formed by it. Marxists should agree with him here — we need to engage with pop culture at every level, soap operas, blockbuster films, popular fiction, sport, pop music: everything. This is the culture of the masses, however heavily ideologically mediated it may be through the fiction factories of capitalism.

It is wrong to disregard its effects as “false consciousness”. The lack of any substantial contemporary Marxist body of theory on popular culture is a result of our current minority position among the working class.

Drowning

But Tarantino doesn’t just immerse himself in popular culture — he drown in it. He doesn’t write about the real world as it is lived, but as his own creation experience it through TV/video fantasy.

His scenario are the result of his carnivalesque appetite for post-war pop culture — this is expressed in the form of an electrically charged pastiche of the highest order.

Brilliantly funny dialogue and wonderfully exaggerated characters are the outcome. But because he takes no notice of his own on it all there can be no meaning to his lurid reproductions.

Violence

Tarantino’s films are also noteworthy because they run straight into j) the British moral panic about screen violence, and ii) the language-centred PC obsession of the intelligentsia on both sides of the Atlantic.

His films are violent. Of this there is no doubt. But to suggest that they lead to violence is quite another matter.

The ethical critique of Reservoir Dogs is very firm. Its violence is shown to have appalling consequences.

In Pulp Fiction things start to get gruesome — someone’s head is blown off just for the sake of an extended jokey scene about the difficulties of cleaning skull tissue off car upholstery. This moral atrocity is a shame.

Tarantino’s character exist in a sub-culture of misogyny, homophobia and racism.

His method is to satirise these prejudices in a highly intelligent manner without clearly signposting his opposition. This allows (problematically) his audience to interpret the context as they please.

But this doesn’t mean the opposition is not there: the language of the sub-culture is evoked by Tarantino to humili ate and expose the contradictions of its users, not as justification or encouragement.

Die on your feet — or live on your knees!

Germaine: An American Legend Directed by Walter Hill

By David Thomas

FIRST, an admission. I love films about the American west. The recent spate of films — Dances with Wolves, Unforgiven, Wyatt Earp — has been a pleasure. Unfashionable in the 1970’s, the “western” reached its nadir with the financially disastrous Heaven’s Gate. Thankfully it has now been rehabilitated.

Germaine is by any standards a very fine piece of work. It presents a searing indictment of the genocidal policy toward native American people. Removed from their land the Chiricahua Apache were forced to live on the Sac-拉萨 reservation. Anyone leaving was hunted down. Traditionally religious were destroyed. Holy men were seen as particularly seditives. Their attempts to raise spirits were often a call for opposition to the authorities.

Those familiar with the bastuist system in South Africa will recognise this description by Briton Davis, a lieutenant in the U.S. Army: “San Carlos was unanaomisedly our designation of it as ‘Hell’s Forty Acre’...it was almost continuously dry, hot, dust and gravel laden. Winds swept the plain, devastating it of every vestige of vegetation”.

Fighting back

Germaine fought back. His actions were reminiscent of La Paonencia’s words during the Spanish Civil War — “It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees”. He frequently asks those Apache who joined the U.S. army as scouts “where is your heart?”

The film is strongest in dealing with the resistance of the Apache. Director Walter Hill skilfully demonstrates that the violence of the Chiricahua is not indiscriminate but the result of years of oppression.

Murder

In a particularly moving scene Germaine (Wen Studi) explains that after the murder of his wife and children by Mexican troops “I stood hardly knowing what to do...I could not call back my loved ones. I could not bring back the dead Apaches but I could rejoice in revenge.”

In August 1886 Germaine finally had to surrender. Many of his supporters were seriously ill.

The state would only accept unconditional surrender. Germaine and his followers were exiled to Florida and

Getting off his knees. Germaine in 1884 gave up their homeland to the government. The promise of return within two years was broken.

The removal of the Apache to Florida is haunting. In a scene reminiscent of the Holocaust the Chiricahua were crammed on to a train for the journey south. This is an inspiring and moving film. I would commend it to everyone.

One caveat: if I have to go yet another film with a score by Ry Cooder I am going to scream!
Russian workers march against market chaos

THREE MILLION Russian workers marched in towns and cities across the country on October 27 to protest at growing poverty, unemployment and economic collapse. The attempt by President Boris Yeltsin and his government to force through market-style reforms amid the wreckage of the old, parasitical statist command economy, has brought predictable disasters.

One Russian enterprise in five is now bankrupt, with up to 12 million unemployed as the collapse continues. Tens of millions of workers are owed months of unpaid wages. The latest tally shows that government enterprises owed workers a massive 4.2 trillion roubles (about $1 billion) by October, with the debt rapidly increasing.

Some workers are still owed wages from the spring, while others are being paid in goods such as carpets or cloth for lack of hard cash, as the economy slides downhill into chaos. The October 27 protests were co-ordinated by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions, which claims 99 million members among the 66 million Russian workforce.

It coincided with a 'no confidence' motion in the Russian parliament moved by Communist and nationalist deputies against Yeltsin's Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. The motion was a petty majority, but fell short of the absolute majority needed.

For Russian workers, neither a nostalgic turn back to the 'good old days' of ossified, repressive Stalinist rule, nor the illusory promises of 'modernisers' to leap into a free-market capitalism offers any solution.

In the unions a right for workers' control of production, of planning and of the economy as a whole offers the only real alternative to the reactionary policies of Yeltsin and the rapidly reactionary grasping of the old Communist seekers to recapture their lost power and privilege.

Indonesia steps up repression

By K. Govindan

A WAVE of repression has been unleashed by Indonesia's military and civilian authorities against those critical of President Suharto. Tempo, Editor and Detik, two popular news magazines with a combined circulation of more than 500,000, had their permits revoked in June — an actio equivalent to a ban.

The press has always been subservient to the state and the military is taboo.

Bolder journalists have tried to take advantage of a declared policy of "openness" that tolerates some muted discussion of government. This shift in the late 1980s was prompted by demands from the growing middle classes for political breathing space.

Fragile

The fragility of this arrangement has been underscored by the swift response to revelations in Tempo of an arms deal made by the Suharto protege B J Habibie with the German government. The demonstrations which followed were violently dispersed by police and special military units.

Meanwhile the trial of four key activists of the illegal Indonesian Labour Prosperity Union continues. They are charged with involvement in labour organisation and orchestrating the protests that took place in the industrial city of Medan in April.

There have been numerous stoppages and protests by workers to mark their solidarity with the detained activists in spite of the risks they face — ranging from dismissal to arrest and torture by the military.

The government is now threatening draconian controls on Non-Governmental Organisations.

Focus

These have become a thorn in the government's side, and a focus for dissenters who despair of Suharto's kept oppositional parties.

Through their publications, seminars and activism the NGOs have highlighted human rights, environmental issues, women's rights and matters of social justice.

They have been vocal critics of the state, and, through their international contacts, have provided an important source of information elsewhere on struggles within Indonesia.

Under a draft decree an NGO will be illegal if involved in activities which threaten "public security and order" or receive "foreign assistance without prior approval of the central government".

The decree extends this to anything which can be deemed "of a damaging nature to the state or national interests".

While small circles of activists try to develop genuinely all-inclusive political formations the working class and rural poor continue the battle for survival.

Russian Left faces the future

by Boris Kagarlitsky

MOSCOW — Despite a great deal of work the non-communist Left has so far failed to establish a mass political organisation.

It is despite very favourable conditions. The government's neo-liberal policies have impoverished millions. There is a massive rise in anti-capitalist sentiment.

The Communist Party has shown itself incapable of taking advantage of the disillusionment. As well as having to carry through any serious internal reforms it has resorted to nationalist rhetoric in favour of "national capital".

The new left has to fill this vacuum.

In response the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) has grown quite radical in words, but lethargic in its actions. The bureaucratic leadership has done nothing to build the Party of Labour despite its formal support and has stifled all initiatives.

The complacency in the FNPR has been opposed by the United Social Democrats, and by many of the Party of Labour's activists.

Organisers face the future

— the best of whom have had to leave their posts in the federation.

A big division between left and right has also opened up in the Social Democratic Party of Russia, which works mostly in the alternative trade unions. The right wing under Andrei Galov is looking towards a unification with the "Democratic centre" — a similar process is occurring in the Socialist Party of Workers.

Not ripe

It now argues that conditions in Russia have "not yet ripened for real left politics", and is staking its future on sectors of the state and managerial apparatus dissatisfied with Yeltsin.

In these circumstances new attempts to achieve unification from above can only make matters worse, since the programmatic basis for unifying the new left movement remains unclear.

While the leaders of the traditional trade unions show nothing but cautious confidence for the Spring 1994 campaign movement shows how much the situation is changing.

If the new Party of Labour and the United Social Democrats are trying to shift from operating through leadership structures to "solidarity from below" it is on this basis that a new left movement in Russia has to be created.

A unification meeting is now due to take place on 26 November. The real aim will not be to establish a joint political organisation — a goal that must be addressed primarily by the Party of Labour and the United Social Democrats — so much as to lay the foundations for a mass movement "from below".

The future of the left movement in Russia now depends on worker and trade union activists.
Palestine: Hamas grows as left fails

by Roland Rance

DURING his recent visit to Israel, Bill Clinton reaffirmed the eternal US support for Israel. He also promised to maintain current levels of US aid military and economic aid, which has now reached $3,000 million a year.

This is evidence, for any who noticed, that the USA remains the prime strategic asset in the Middle East. It seems likely that Clinton's visit to Damascus, the first by a US president for 20 years, will succeed in its aim of bringing Syria into negotiations - thus scoring a much-needed foreign policy triumph on the eve of critical congressional and Senator elections.

Treaties

Following the agreements with Egypt, Jordan and the PLO, this would fulfill Israel's long-standing goal of signing 'peace' treaties on its own terms with the other Middle East regimes. Israel's agreement with the PLO, and the signing of the Declaration of Principles, have effectively co-opted the PLO to a supportive role in the policing of the occupied territories. This reflects the bankruptcy of the PLO's strategy, developed since the early 1970s, of attempting to integrate itself into the existing Middle East framework, and renouncing any revolutionary ideas or proposals which might threaten this framework.

Secular left

The Palestinian secular left - the Communist Party, the Democratic Front and the Popular Front - failed to develop an alternative strategy and continue to make pragmatic compromises with Arafat's Fatah, the dominant force in the PLO. This has ensured that the only consistent, militant opposition to the PLO's compromise with Zionism and occupation has been that of the Islamic fundamentalist, notably Hamas.

The continuing Hamas attacks in southern Lebanon, in the occupied territories, and in the heart of Israeli itself, show that agreements which explicitly ignore the central issue of the conflict - the dispossession of the Palestinian people and the carve-up of their land in 1948 - have no chance of success.

They merely serve to tie the various regimes together, against the masses of the region, in the service of imperialist control of its resources.

The growth of Hamas resembles that of the PLO itself during the 1960s and 70s. At that time, Israel was trying to reinforce the traditional tribal leaders, and the PLO represented a radical break with these conservative forces.

Through a combination of confrontations with the Israeli army in the occupied territories, attacks on civilians inside Israel, and dramatic 'terrorist' acts around the world, the PLO established itself as the authentic voice of the Palestinian people.

When the supremacy of the PLO in the occupied territories had become clear Israel abandoned its original aims and began to sponsor Islamic groups against the PLO. These groups were the forerunners of Hamas, which was not banned by Israel until long after the outbreak of the Intifada.

Worse conditions

Hamas continues to grow with the realisation that the agreement is worsening the already appalling conditions of the Palestinian masses.

Gaza is, in effect, the world's largest concentration camp. Close to one million people are crowded into a small area, devoid of natural resources, with no industry, little agriculture and virtually no source of income.

Most of the population are refugees, ethnically cleansed from their homes to make way for the establishment of Israel in 1948. They live in sprawling refugee camps, dependent on international charity for their continued existence.

Until April 1993, about 100,000 Gazans - headliners for some three-quarters of the entire population - were employed in Israel. Latest figures indicate that only about 9000 are now permitted to work in Israel. Over 90% of the population is totally destitute.

With the PLO's betrayal, and the failure of the secular left, it is no surprise that Islamic groups are thriving. Even those, however, show signs of willingness to compromise with the Israeli authorities in order to achieve some measure of social control.

The main victims of such an agreement would be Palestinian themselves - women, non-Muslims, secularists and the left.

Britain backs the dirty war in Turkey

By Aidan Day

One hundred Kurds have gone on hunger strike in protest at Britain's jailing of Kurdish Workers Party leader Kani Yilmaz. A further 89 non-Kurdish inmates at Rochester, where he is being held, have gone on hunger strike in solidarity and appointed Yilmaz as their spokesperson.

The Home Office has given in to pressure from Turkey and jailed him on the grounds of 'national security'. His deprivation of rights of appeal and protest.

The reasons behind this are not hard to see - as well as being a big buyer of western arms Turkey is a key strategic asset in the Middle East. The west wants to integrate it into its plans for the region. Stopping dissidents speaking in Britain is part of the deal.

This comes in the same week that Turkey is investigated for human rights violations.

Human rights

The European Commission of Human Rights has agreed to investigate what 17 year old Devin Berkley was thrown by police off a fourth floor balcony; in another case trade union activist Nabeeta Akcok claims her husband was killed by security forces and that she was subjected to severe torture at Deyrakdar police station.

The Commission is to investigate six cases of indiscriminate killings, murder, disappearances and torture.

This is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Turkish government is pursuing a brutal policy of death and destruction directed at Kurdish areas which includes the burning of villages and the expulsion of their inhabitants. The army has killed 300,000 people in its drive to eliminate opposition in the southeast of the country.

This barbaric war has a particularly ghastly reality for Kurdish women. The destruction of villages and forced displacement effects their lives most painfully and extremely. During military operations women are stripped naked and raped in front of family members and men. Arrested women and injured women guerrillas are tortured, raped and often murdered.

Kurdish refugees have to live in unsanitary internment camps with minimal or absent medical provision. Dozens of children die every day from preventable diseases.

The war is part of the government's final solution to the Kurdish question - the elimination of all linguistic and cultural diversity for the sake of a spurious 'national' Turkish homogeneity. This necessitates crushing all opposition. Hence the forced closure of the pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem and the imprisonment and murder of its staff.

The recent treason charges against eight Kurdish members of parliament is further example of the repressive nature of the regime. The eight are threatened with the death penalty for the crime of using the Kurdish language in a public meeting and suggesting that there is such a thing as a Kurdish people. Such a thing.

Elections

As was revealed in the March 27 municipal elections, the main parties have nothing to offer the Kurds but further repression. A poster of one of the big bourgeois parties declared "each vote for the DP is a bullet against the PKK".

The rise of Turkish nationalism in reaction to the Kurdish resistance has allowed the right to maintain its rule despite the extreme fragmentation of bourgeois politics following the 1980 coup. This explains why the semi-fascist National Action Party was able to double its vote to eight per cent. All the right-wing groupings employ chauvinist anti-Kurd propaganda.

Just when the austerity programme of radical restructuring needs a strong leadership the rule of the bourgeoisie shows increasing signs of weakness. The adopted austerity programme means mass privatisation, the closure of firms deemed unprofitable, tax reform, price rises of up to 100% and a semi-freeze on salaries. These may well provoke mass social revolt.

When first mooted Turkey's main trade union federation, threatened to call a general strike.

How long this brutal regime can hold on depends a great deal on how much longer the west is prepared to keep pouring in the weaponry of repression.
New campaigns against racist detention centres

Campsfield campaigners step up the fight

By Harry Sloan

TWO NEW campaigns against the Tory government’s imprisonment of asylum-seeking refugees have been set up to run alongside the fight for closure of the Campsfield House immigration prison, near Oxford.

In Portsmouth, the Haslar Immigration Centre Campaign has been launched, with support from the local Trades Council. It is planning a public meeting for December 8.

And in Hull, the Trades Council has also played a central role in the establishment of the new Asylum Seekers Support Group, which will cover prisons in Hull, Lincoln and The Well.

The Campsfield campaign is still planning to step up and reach out for support, with a Day School and a March to London on December 1 to deliver the petition for the closure of the centre and an end to the detention of refugees.

There have been two recent local demonstrations, the September 30 “Sing Down Campsfield” event and an October 29 protest against Campsfield and the Criminal Justice Bill.

The Day School, to be held in Oxford on Sunday November 13, will feature Steve Cohen of the Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, who has just published a pamphlet opposing immigration controls, and Charles Kakukiewicz of the Zaran refugees Association, COREJAD.

The first anniversary of the opening of Campsfield will be marked by a November 26 “1 year too long” demonstration. And four days later, marchers will set out from Oxford to London, holding meetings and socials on the way.

On Saturday December 3, this will include a noon demonstration outside the Harmondsworth Immigration Detention Centre in West London, and an evening social hosted by the Social Monitoring Group at the Dorset Centre, Green Road.

On Sunday December 4, there will be an 11am march with floats and drummers from Putney Bridge along the King’s Road to a 1pm rally in Whitehall.

Portsmouth campaign, contact Chris Richards, 0765 699435.

Hull campaign, ring Guy Chaverton, 0408-988775.

Campsfield Campaign, ring 0896-724452, 725044, 725062.

Day School: November 13, 10am-5pm, at East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St, off Cowley Rd.

Harmondsworth Detention Centre will be visited by Campsfield marchers

Brownshirts of the 1990s

Paul Clarke Reviews
Channel 4’s October 27 Dispatches on the BNP and Combat 18.

THE DAY Channel 4’s programme on the neo-Nazi terror group Combat 18 went out, a 17-year-old East End white thug, Nicky Fuller, was released after six months in jail for his part in a horrific attack on an 18-year-old Bangladeshi.

Student Mukhtar Ahmed was one of five Bangladeshis chased through Bethnal Green. Cornered alone in a dead-end, his face was kicked in and he was set upon.

So severe were his injuries that his scalp became detached from his skull.

Disorder

Fuller was bizarrely convicted only of violent disorder, carrying a maximum sentence of only 12 months.

Only one other member of the white gang has been found. Mukhtar Ahmed will bear horrific scars for the rest of his life. Others have died in the mounting tide of racist violence since the beginning of the 1980s.

But as Dispatches showed the attitude of the Home Office towards the organisers and inspirers of much of this violence, the British National Party and their Brownshirt flacks guards Combat 18, is one of a studied inaction.

Dispatches concentrated on exposing the lie that Combat 18 has been “proscribed” by BNP leader John Tyndall, showing film evidence that Combat 18 activists act as personal security guards for Tyndall himself.

Whatsoever the relations between C18 and the BNP, the BNP itself organises and inspires street violence. Deputy father Richard Edmonds and former Millwall councillor Derek Beacock – an old Nazi who started his career in Mosley – are just two of the most prominent with recent convictions for violence.

Relations between Combat 18 and the BNP leadership have been strained over the last two years, but not because the BNP deserts racist violence and terror against left-wingers.

Attacks

Combat 18 leader Charlie “Ginger Pig” Sargentipe didn’t allow his attacks against BNP leaders thought to have “grassed up” C18 activists, under police questioning.

Those attacked by C18 included Tony Lecomber, famed “mad bomber” of the BNP, done in the 1980s for trying to blow up the Workers Revolutionary Party in Clapham. Lecomber has other convictions for violence, but all this is per for the course in the Nazi underworld, stealing services against the blacks and reds doesn’t save you from your comrades.

The BNP recently took the initiative to smooth over the differences in the “nationalist movement”.

Combat 18 however is a particular problem because of its targeting of victims and attacks on homes. This has led to people having to abandon their jobs and even move town.

Yorkshire

Their terror is particularly widespread in Yorkshire. Combat 18 also plays a very special role for the fascists in organising football hooligans, and in theBlood and Honour Nazi rock movement.

The key group of football thugs which acts as C18’s organising centre is the “Chelsea Headhunters”.

Dispatches revealed the frightening extent of the Nazi network among the football gangs: people who beat the hell out of one another on a winter Saturday, but were against Troops Out marches and foreign fans.

Arms deals

Another aspect of the BNP’s dark underworld exposed by the programme is the activity of a sinister character called Eddie Whicker – well known to anti-fascist activists – in supplying arms to Nazi sympathisers. Whicker barely bothers to deny it, but of course he has never been prosecuted.

Those with an experience in anti-fascist campaigning will not have been surprised by any of the programmes revelations. Fascist violence, and C18 in particular, are no longer a marginal problem which the left can ignore. Terror tactics against the left, although deeply frightening for the victims, are small in scale compared with racist violence.

Self-defence of the black communities, actively supported by the wider labour movement, must be met by concerted efforts to deal with the C18 thugs.
WHAT'S HAPPENING

NOVEMBER

Fri 4
Build the Peace In Ireland! public meeting 7.30pm Camden Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square NW1 with Tony Benn MP, Liz Curtis, Gerry O’Hara and Margaret Enderby.

Sun 9
Women, Equality and Community Jewish Socialists' Group national day-school 10am-5pm Caixon House 129 St John's Way Archway London N1 1EC to JSB BM 3725 London WCIN 3X.

Sat 12
INTERNATIONAL Day Of Protest to remember 1991 Santa Croze massacre in Indonesia 12 noon to 1pm Indonesian Embassy Grosvenor Square W1 details CAAT 0171 281 0297

Seminars
- The life and resistance of Kurdish woman
- The threat to the Serbians
- The 12th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall

Liberation!

Sun 13
Conference against racist immigration controls called by Close Down Campfield Campaign 9.30am-4.15pm East Oxford Community Centre (0865) 7244526

Liberation!

Sun 27
After the Irish Censorship What Next? with Mary Nelis, Sinn Fein councillor, Halkevi Community Centre 92-100 Stoke Newington Road, London N16

Tues 29
Wellare State Network LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT meet 1.30pm by lobby gate

MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campfield immigration prison, starts in Oxford

DECEMBER

Monday 1
MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campfield immigration prison, starts in Oxford

Wednesday 2
MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campfield immigration prison, in Slough

Thursday 3
MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campfield immigration prison, arrives at Harmondsworth Immigration Detention Centre and Southall

Friday 4
MARCH to London, to mark one year of Campfield immigration prison, arrives at Westminster

Sat 10
Liberation! Committee Meeting 11am-5pm Birmingham

Sun 11
Liberation meeting 11am-5pm Birmingham

ADVERTS

Liberation! - the winter 1994 special anti-racist issue of the new revolutionary and internationalist youth newspaper is available, for two first class stamps, from Liberation! PO Box 1109, London N4 2U.

SOUTH AFRICA - which road to freedom? book by Neville Alexander. Send £7.95 cheque payable to 'Liberation Publishing Association' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2U.

FOLK music cassette by songwriter Pauline Bradley. Send £5 cheque payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2U.

HEAR Ernest Mandel speak tape available - Mandel on fascism - send £5 cheque/PDO payable to 'Bob Smith Memorial Fund' to PO Box 1109, London N4 2U.

Sylvia Bolgar

Sylvia Bolgar, an NUT activist and for many years Secretary of Camden Trades Council, has died aged 70.

After a lifetime of commitment to the workers' movement, which included her prominent role in the local Minorers Support Group in 1949-55 and the Camden Stop the Poll Tax campaign, she will be greatly missed.

Donations are invited to the Sylvia Bolgar Fighting Fund, PO Box 20, Camden Town NW1.

Socialist Outlook

Facing mass unemployment, rampant exploitation and growing poverty, a wave of mass strikes, and a war on hard-won health, education and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the working class, has been given determined, vindicated, leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shake the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeated politics of 'realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while dicing any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of peace Troops Out Movement conference with Michael MacDonnach, editor An Phoblacht, Mary Nellis, Sinn Fein, and Louise Turbrick, Troops Out Movement. 10am-5.30pm UU Mallet Street WC1 3SU, Noon demonstration at CAMPFIELD details 0865 726804

MANCHESTER Martyrs rally Longsight Library Manchester 2pm

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-bilities of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries world-wide.

Sectionalism

Unlike other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectional posturing and abstraction from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

So we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution.

The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while retaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

☐ Please tell me more about Socialist Outlook
☐ Yes, I want to become a Socialist Outlook supporter

Name
Address
Phone
Age
Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2U.
November 9: Students fight back

By Simon Devilio

THE DEMONSTRATION called by NUS for Wednesday 9 November could mark an important step forward for student activists. It should be built upon in every college — not just as an end in itself but as a means to building a mass democratic campaign against student poverty involving wide layers of students.

Last year the National Union of Students organised its first national demonstration against cuts in grants and student poverty for years. This was a result of growing pressure from within colleges.

The student left had managed to organise a demonstration of 10,000 students despite opposition from the National Union — members of the National Executive even phoned and faxed student unions to persuade them not to take part.

The union leadership has been following a “don’t rock the boat” policy, in the naive assumption that demobilising student militancy and concentrating on taking Tony’s MPs out for dinner will convince the government not to cut grants or attack student unions.

The complete failure of this policy has become blatantly obvious with the 30 per cent cut in grants, further cuts in resources and increased pressure for larger intakes of students.

If NUS is to really fight for the interests of students a complete break is needed from the strategy of backroom deals with right-wing MPs.

This can only come about through active campaigning within colleges.

Activist groups must be built, together with local mobilisations and occupations whenever possible, linking up with struggles in other colleges.

It is not just education that is under attack at present but many other welfare rights and provisions. The government is attempting to resolve the crisis by rolling back all the gains made through working class struggles this century.

Manchester United!

By Steve Hall

THE FIRST STEP towards a new regional liaison committee uniting trade union, labour and campaign activists was taken last month in Manchester.

The Build the Fightback Conference brought together over 60 leading activists from nine trades councils, North West NATFHE, the Socialist Campaign Group, Supporters’ Network and organisations as diverse as Big Issue, NASCA, Lancashire WAPC, the NW Travellers Association, Manchester Freedom Network, the M65 campaign, Liberty and the Shut Sellafield campaign.

It called for greater unity and mutual solidarity at all levels in the fight against the Tories and the bosses.

A liaison committee was set up with one representative from each supporting organisation to unite all the various groups into a common front against the Criminal Justice Act. This will restrict everyone’s ability to fight including trade unionists, who have so far done little to oppose this legislation.

Such a broad based committee will also draw in others into action.

A law is only a law if it is enforceable. Organised defiance will make a complete mockery of the Tory offensive.

The conference also proposed:

- An agreement to pursue unity at a local level on the basis of the experience of the North West Miners Support groups.
- Support for those on the left in the Labour Party and the Trades Unions who are fighting to defend Clause Four.
- A campaign around homelessness, open-cast mining and against the privatisation of the Post Office, rail, coal and civil service.
- Support for Trade Union News with unions and Trades Councils.
- To build for the Right To Strike Conference in Birmingham. To campaign for full employment by amongst other things a shorter working week, an overtime ban, early retirement and decent pensions.

The first meeting of the North West Liaison Committee is at 1.00pm on Sunday 13 November at the Bolton Socialist Club.