No ideas, no principles, no socialism ...

Time for the bosses' second eleven?

Last week's Labour conference was a sickening spectacle. Empty platitude followed stomach-turning platitude, as the conference was turned into one long photo-opportunity for the Shadow Cabinet.

But singing 'We Shall Overcome' or 'We are the champions of the world' couldn't hide the basic fact: Kinnockism has no answers and no policy for change: it has all the substance of the middle of a Polo mint.

Kinnock has just one idea: to repackage the party into an acceptable face for the establishment, and thus get elected. Behind the the stage-sets and double-breasted suits there is nothing to meet the crisis of British capitalism or the problems facing working people.

Labour conferences in future will have to assess the fate of Kinnockite new realism; that fate is either to go down to defeat or to instal the most right wing Labour government ever.

Either way, a protracted media stunt is too feeble to push socialism off the agenda for long; Kinnock's 'Opportunity Britain' will go the same way as Harold Wilson's 'white heat of the technological revolution' - into the dustbin. The the left will be back, and socialism with it.
Labour Conference '91

Proving themselves to the City

by Sean Tunney

Labour Party's confidence is in Brighton this week — unless they decide to change that as well. So read the Tory posters surrounding last week's conference. Labour are desperate to show capitalism that it is safe. John Smith, in a speech promising on "squeezing the rich until the pips squeak", is having more City lunches than you or I have had hot dinners. In addition, Waltsford Road's porgy on the left has dramatically gathered pace. The whole conference was stage managed to an unprecedented degree.

Yet as Kinnock races Major to the centre ground, so there needs to be something to separate Tweedledum from Tweedledee. What was the "big idea" which would galvanise the party, which we all told would be unravelled in Kinnock's speech? Old style weltschmerz.

"Labour will modernise the Health Service. The Tories will privatise it," said Kinnock. And it was not just the NHS that Labour pledged to defend. On Friday, Bryan Gould announced a house building programme for the homeless. And there were pledges on pensions and benefits.

At the same time we heard the familiar refrain from Margaret Beckett on Monday that all the black she will be met as the economy will allow. The point is that the economy won't allow. Even the industries privatised since 1979 are not going to go back into public hands.

Moreover, this week saw the confirmation that Labour policy will be for full European economic union in five years' time. This was especially true of Leonora Lloyd who came runner up with 556,000 votes.

Labour Conference '91

Other decisions of Conference

NEC elections

The results were not the disaster for the left that the media were predicting. Although Gerald Kaufman was elected, Skachek's vote went up by 14,000, to put him third. Bevin's vote went down by 9,000. Some of the left did collect votes for the loss of J. Richardson. The truth is that her recent positions had made it untenable for the left to vote for her, while the right dropped her. But, the fact that both the CLP and the Trade Union sections elected only men was a massive argument for the need for quotas with power.

The reserved women's seats, the three left-wing women candidates gained sensible votes, considering that they had little union backing. This was especially true of Leonora Lloyd who came runner up with 556,000 votes.

Labour power

Arthur Scargill proposed a motion which argued for the phasing out of nuclear warheads in fifteen years. This was defeated. A motion supporting the use of nuclear power was also narrowly defeated. The Pergamon strikers

A motion opposing Maxwell's sacking of 23 NUJ members was passed overwhelmingly on a show of hands. The conference also called on him to "concede the principle of re-employment" by giving the 23 two year track-pay. Free trade unions

The only motion attempting to unblock the trade unions from the Tory anti-union laws was defeated without a real discussion.

Women's representation

It was decided that only by 1995 will women need to hold at least 40% of the seats at decision-making levels of the party, although the PLP will be exempt from this. CLPs will be required to send women to conferences at least every other year.

However, the resolution that women's places on the NEC should be elected by Labour Women's conference was defeated. This makes the decisions tokensmism. It ensures that the women voted onto the NEC are still not accountable to women in the party.

Freedom of information

A Labour government would bring in a Freedom Of Information Act. There would also be a statutory right of reply to factual inaccuracies in the press.

Labour and Racism

Conference moved to "locate racism within Europe and to push for the institutionalisation of immigration controls within the spirit of civil liberties."

Disabled people

A motion was passed to introduce a bill of rights for disabled people, and to "take measures against discrimination against deaf and hearing impaired people and unincorporated convictions and the Tottenham Three"

There was unanimous conference backing for an independent inquiry into the cases of the Tottenham Three and an end to convictions based on uncorroborated confessions.

Marital rape

A motion was passed to call on a Labour government to criminalise rape within marriage.

Sara Thornton

Conference supported a "review of Sara Thornton's case and those of other women jailed for killing violent partners.

Regional Assemblies

Conference agreed with the proposal for Regional Assemblies, first for Scotland then for Wales and the English regions.

Local government

Conference called on a motion to rescind surcharge and disqualification. It also opposed a motion congratulating the Anti-Foil Tax Federation, which also called for the revision of current implementation of FOIL Tax.

Motions were passed asking for the next Labour government to dissolve the NHS internal market and to scrap the NHS. It was also asked to "consider" closing down pay beds in the NHS.

House building

A motion was agreed to give every homeless person a house, to be financed by relaxing restrictions on the US billion capital receipts currently held by councils.

Defence spending

A motion called for defence spending to be reduced to the average level of other European countries, for the second year running.

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What they said

On Walton

Lesley Mahwood:

"Eric Heffer was elected on the programme of 47 sur- gred, Depressionists. We would have betrayed his legacy if we hadn't stood. We should stand and organise in the Labour Party not leave it.

On socialists and the Labour Party

Peter Taaffe

"This conference is totally unrelated to the real mood in the country."

"We are not about to engage in any ultra-left adventure. But we are not going to be held by a few lines. If that means working outside the Labour Party, then so be it."

"I wager that Terry Fields and Dave McAllister in the election whatever happens..."

"We will not stand above all in Scotland... If the leadership are not prepared to fight the SNP, then make way for those that will."

"Every Militant supporter is expelled, then so be it."

"Tony Benn:

"We hear from the media... An entirely new Labour Party has been born."

"At the very moment when the socialist banner... been banned. You listen to the speeches. It's all reappar-..."

"The number of speeches about the rich and poor... we've had pledges on health, education, and hous-..."

"Every one of them..."

"What I am saying is the Labour Party hasn't changed at all. It is still the only represent-ative of the interests of those who work for a living."

"What socialists inside and outside the Labour Party have to be associated with is those policies which answer..."

The biggest crisis capitalism has faced since 1945.

"People will wonder... what do Labour Party Socialists think..."

"The working class..."

"The Labour Party Socialists the largest group in the Labour Party."
Where's the peace dividend?

The nuclear cuts announced by George Bush - the standing down of nuclear bombers and the scrapping of some missiles - are motivated by America's urgent need to save cash. The US budget deficit is forcing a reorganisation of US military forces worldwide.

There is no question of any unilateral or even bilateral disarmament on the part of the US. All the most modern and devastating US strategic weapons, especially Strategic Air Force, stand intact. This poses difficulties for the Soviet Union in matching the cuts, since its own missiles are mainly land-based, of the type being scrapped by Bush. And there is no proposal to do away with Star Wars.

Bush wants the US military to be 'leaner and fitter' - but still capable of rapid intervention in the third world, and utterly dominant on a world scale.

But that is where the difficulty lies for the US. In the battle for dominance among the imperialist powers, America has played the military card heavily. It hopes to maintain its world leadership role through military power, even though it is declining economically compared with Germany and Japan.

The quandary is how to make the reductions in expenditure while keeping military supremacy.

In any case, this is not the dawn of a non-nuclear future. It is especially not a new dawn in Britain. The differences between Labour and the Tories on defence have narrowed to almost nothing; the 'peace dividend' is not available under a Neil Kinnock government. Both the Tories and Labour want Britain to be a small country which wields a big stick, especially having the prestige of being a nuclear power.

Socialists must seize on the new world situation to push forward the demand for massive reductions in arms spending. The campaign for an 80 per cent cut in the defence budget is a good place to start.

Paper promises are not enough

by Sam Inman

'WE'LL CONTINUE to make a bloody nuisance of ourselves', promised Peter Purton, speaking from the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCGL) at the campaign's fringe meeting at Labour Party conference.

He spoke of the historic opportunity that lesbians and gay men in the party now had. Good paper policy is all very well, he said, but 'we're greedy -- we want full equality.'

Around eighty people turned up to the meeting, making it the best attended for some years.

Robin Cook MP, Shadow Health Secretary, spoke about the policies that Labour were offering -- the repeal of Section 28 (to be part of a Local Government Bill in the first year of office), abolishing specifically gay offences such as Section 50 of the Criminal Justice Act (1991), the democratisation of homosexuality in the armed forces.

He went on to talk about Labour's promised equal opportunities legislation, which would outlaw discrimination of lesbians and gay men. He also promised a review in discrimination in parenting, adoption and immigration law.

Anne Gibson, National Officer of MSF and Diana Holland, South East Regional Officer of the TGWU gave a trade union perspective on lesbian and gay rights. Both talked about tackling victimisation, education of straight trade unionists, and listening to lesbians and gay men in the union.

The biggest controversy at the meeting, however, was around people's attitudes towards 'gay power', an anti-gay action, organised by Brighton Area Action Against Section 28 at the beginning of Kinnock's Thursday speech to conference. The protesters were angry at the party leadership's attempts to sweep policies on lesbians and gay equality under the carpet.

What attitude should lesbian and gay socialists have towards such actions? The meeting was passionately divided between those who thought that this was 'neither the time nor the place' for such actions, and those who believed that such action was necessary to keep lesbian and gay issues on the party's agenda.

Dav Alkens, speaking from BAAAS28, reminded the meeting that when Clause 28 was announced, initially the Labour frontbench supported it. It was only through active pressure from the lesbian and gay movement that this policy was reversed.

Fighting the battle of the fringe

Clearly the current purge is more important for some than others. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy fringe meeting traditionally signposts the way for the left to vote during the week.

This time, the platform wanted to discuss democracy without mentioning the witch-hunt. It was left to the floor, including Audrey Wise MP, to demand that this was addressed.

However, for some it seemed attacking the left was more important. In direct contrast to his speech the night before, Ken Livingstone MP made it clear who the real enemies were -- the Socialist Movement (SM).

He painted a fantastical picture: Four years ago, the left was united around Labour Left Liaison. What split it apart was the idea that you could work with the Socialist Movement. Tony Benn had left and could not reply -- but then so had most of the audience.

Sunday, however, also saw the SM in a rather different light - organising to support workers struggles. 100 people went to the SM Trade Union Committee/Labour Party Socialist (LPS) meeting, 'Unshackle the Unions'.

In a spirited speech, Dennis Skinner endorsed his parliamentary vote against the Tony laws. Miners' leader Peter Heathfield exposed Thatcher for calling on Russian workers to take strike action without a ballot.

Other speakers reminded us the importance of the ambulance workers action, polls showed that even Tony voters supported secondary action.

Arina Cigouff, a Pergamon striker, argued from experience on the need for international secondary action. She emphasised that the 'critical battle is in the unions themselves to oppose the laws'.

Monday saw the launch of the new left paper, socialist. Tony Benn said that the SM should provide 'a place for homeless socialists, especially after the next election'. The organisation needed a paper, he argued. It would provide a framework for the left to exchange opinions. Also, in the run up to the election it would be a forum for those who support Labour but also want to see a better society and not a better managed status quo.

He rejected the pessimists who thought it had been launched at the wrong time: 'There is definitely a space for a paper like socialist. Indeed, he argued, it will not comple

Other speakers reminded us of the small and the role of the Socialist Movement (SM) in keeping the Labour Left united. The meeting showed some of the problems faced by Militant, who concentrated in the Labour Left and not on the paper.

A positive aspect of the situation was that the Broad Left was calling on the Independent Labour Party to keep their Labour membership, she argued. However, this was on the condition that the Broad Left would not become part of the Labour Party. We are the Labour Party.'

Mr Kinnock's Showcase

Jimmy Knapp: 'Not too keen even on primary strike action'

Both Mahmood and Taaffe were, typically, resolutely optimistic. Said Taaffe: 'This conference is totally unlinked to the real mood in the country.'

That is why he said, Militant supporters would be looking away from Labour in the future (see box).

Finally, Wednesday saw 100 at the Labour Party Socialists meeting "The General Election and the Case For Socialism". Tony Benn strongly defended the role of LPS.

As Steve French, speaking for the Campaign Against the Witch-hunt, said: 'First the left should defend socialist's right to membership. That is crucial but not enough. It needs to bring those people around the Socialists for Labour campaign, around demands which link those inside and outside the party.'
The treatment for which 56% of patients have to pay!

In the third article of our ‘Women in the Unions’ series, DAVIDA LLOYD, National Co-ordinator for the National Abortion Campaign (NAC), explains what needs to be done in campaigning around abortion rights in trade unions today.

LAST YEAR a late-night TV programme showed a film made shortly before the 1967 Abortion Act was passed. It featured interviews with a number of women. One was a working class woman with eight children who had tried to hide her pregnancy, and one abortion. Her doctor had told her she was in good health and there was no need to worry.

Another was the wife of a company director. She had two young children and had decided she could not manage a third. A Harley Street doctor arranged for her to be given two preparations to induce abortion. She took them home and then had to borrow money.

This brought me vividly what I had always known in theory — that the rich have always been able to get abortion. If they could not get them in Harley Street, they went abroad. Poorer working class women got more children, or badly-batched backstreet abortions, which often left them with health, disease and injury in their wake.

It is no coincidence therefore, that it was socialist women and labour movement organisations — the Co-operative and Labour Party women’s sections — who led the campaigns for legalised abortions from the 1960s onwards.

Free of charge

When NAC was founded in 1975, trade union and Labour women quickly took its demand for abortion on demand, available free of charge on the NHS, into their organisations. One of the first achieved results was the 1979 demonstration led by the TUC against the anti-abortion Corrie Bill. This was the first pro-choice march which would be led by a trade union federation, and was the result of a lot of hard work by many hundreds of trade unionists.

Despite the clear defeat of the anti-abortionists’ attempts over the last five years to attack time-limits, the fight is a long way from being over. Secondary schools have just recently received unselected sets of five plastic foetuses from the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and glossy education packs from the other anti-abortion organisation, LIFE. Meanwhile, NAC can only afford to send out its school kit to those who can pay for it.

The introduction of the new abortion pill, RU486, has led to a tremendous outburst of activity on the part of the anti-abortionists. They’ve sent letters to the chairs of all health authorities, and also issued instructions to all their supporting doctors to boycott the French company producing RU486 — even when this means changing patients’ existing prescriptions.

But NAC’s income cannot keep up with its expenditure, never mind countering the current anti-abortion activity or continuing the very positive campaigning work of the past year. NAC has held two major meetings this year, both with a different anti-abortion speaker.

One meeting was about RU486 and its speaker was the Polish Women’s Association. We want to increase the number and range of our meetings, and hold them around the country to ensure that women everywhere can attend them. But these sort of activities are extremely expensive, so will involve a good deal of fun-raising.

NAC is also planning a membership-drive, especially in trade unions. We have a number of important unions in membership at a national level, with no or few branches affiliated. This is something that needs to be tackled urgently. It can be done best with the help of activists from the unions in question. We hope to use our conference on 26 October, and the ‘Women in the Unions’ national meeting on 23 November to set up a group to lead this work.

Support

Britain is now one of the few countries in Europe without abortion on demand. Opinion polls show that 81 per cent of the public support a woman’s right to choose. The time is right to use the help of the trade unions and labour movement in the coming year to launch a major push and achieve at least one victory.

Currently, on average statistics, 40 per cent of women have abortions at some time in their lives. Around 56 per cent have to pay for them. We want to campaign for better sex education and contraception provision to bring the abortion rate down, and for improved NHS provision. For ourselves, our sisters and our daughters, the campaign must continue and must succeed.

For further information contact NAC at Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London, WC2B 5AL. Tel: 071 405 4001.

Women in the unions

Fighting for our rights!

Sat 23rd Nov, 10-5

Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1
Tories grapple with NHS albatross

By John Lister

The health service's不仅要命的， last and most unpopular fruits of neate Thatcherism, are now a serious elec
toral liability for John Major and his government. Despite a desperate repetition of promises that he does not intend to privatise the NHS if the Tories win a fourth term, the latest opinion poll for the Sunday Times shows that only 25% of voters consider the service to be"the best it has ever been in Britain". As many as 62% think he is lying. Those who are already privatising of Tory interests are scarcely likely to be convinced by the words of one of the government's own hand-picked political appointees, NHS Chief Execu-
tive Duncan Nicholl, as he breaks the traditional 'non-patience' convention of civil servants and finds his way to the Tory propaganda effort. Voters have memories on the NHS. Many remember 1975 in-
cluding that if she were elected she would reduce prescription charges. Then they voted 20p within 6

months they were 45p: now they are £3.45!
The Tories also used to deny that they would impose charges for health care but then when they have bad charac-
teristics, preferred dental check-ups, with soaring charges for dental treatment.

In 1983 and again in 1987 Thatcher cynically insisted that the NHS was "central to the 'brand'".Medical elec-
tion was followed by drastic cuts that and dozens of beds in hospital beds.

The biggest ever 1988-90 winter crisis triggered by nurses, and was followed by the Thatcher review that led to the worse and working schemes now endorsed by the NHS and Community Care.

Not one of these proposals - which include hospital out-pots and the internal market - has ever been good to the electorate. Already the first six months of the government's special task force on health reform have reduced our health service to a shambles.

Further, the conference should adopt a responsible comm-
mittee with a mandate to carry out its decisions. By contrast, the TUCCGC, on which TUC General Council members sit, is designed to prevent any initiative outside of their control.

In practice, the majority of TUCs operate outside the 'legal' framework laid down by the TUC. In-
volvement in campaigns against the Poll Tax or the war - or anything outside TUC policy - breaks the TUC's rules. The only reason that there has not been a crackdown on such activity is that it is so widespread.

Trades Councils must exploit TUC's U-turn

by Sam Stacey

The TUC's recent U-turn on the withdrawal of recognition for Trades Councils is a major opportunity for the unions. We can be sure that the General Council will come forward with proposals in the forthcoming review which will hardly enhance the independence of the Trades Council movement.

They have decided to retain the electorate for the Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee (TUCJC), since it was elected at the 'official' conference earlier this year. Once this is rectified, it is clear how the review process and eventual structure of the Trades Council Input into this will be organised.

The TUC General Council was defeated as a result of its un-
democratic action - taking a decision at last year's Congress and denying Trades Councils an oppor-
tunity to express their views.

However, when it comes to putting forward proposals for the organisation and revitalisation of the council, it will not be easy to achieve as broad an agreement as was the case. It is impor-
tant that the left in the Trades Council movement go clear on their current views.

The conference of Trades Coun-
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trol of the council themselves. A return to the past - where a TUC bureaucrat dictates topics for discus-
sion, ruling out anything outside TUC policy - would be unacceptable.

South African socialist comes to Britain

by Patrick Baker

The launch of the British edition of Socialist Action is an attempt to establish a socialist group that is not the "new-racist" inheritors. But the South African socialist movement has not been so easily won.

With the situation that has for so long been a serious base in the black community on the South African struggle for class politics in South Africa.

WOSA has now built a serious base in the black community on the South African working class. Many question their strategy for de-
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More details will be the next issue of Socialist Outlook.

Revelation

A recent revelation of the Trades Councils is the U-turn in relation to the breakdown of the union's working in the localities. Given that many trade union branches are moribund, it is not surprising that only one union finds there are still enough trade 
unions to negotiate with the Trades Councils. This is very much due to the efforts of the unions themselves. But they can strive to coordinate efforts to develop a more active role in the Trades Councils.

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mittee with a mandate to carry out its decisions. By contrast, the TUCCGC, on which TUC General Council members sit, is designed to prevent any initiative outside of their control.

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Outlook

Privatisation - Irish style

by Kevin Keating, Peoples Democracy

The biggest news story throughout September in Ireland has been the scandal revealed in Greencore, the first major company to be privatised by the 26 county government. The privatisation programme of the Dublin government is in disarray, as more and more shady deals and corrupt practices are revealed.

So far it is known that the chief executive of Greencore (formerly the Irish Sugar Company), Chris Comerford, and four other executives were set to pocket profits of over 7 million. The most damaging and politically embarrassing factor however was the swindle occurred when the company was entirely state-owned and they were directly responsible.

In 1988 the board of Irish Sugar, directed by Comerford, approved a loan of 1 million to four executives. Michael Tully, Charles Jazgar, Charles Lyons and Thomas Keogh - to buy out 49% of Sugar Distributors, for 32 million.

The state, through the Irish Sugar Company, had owned 51% since 1975 and it was Irish Sugar's main marketing and distribution network. 15 months later, Irish Sugar bought those same shares for 9.5 million.

Thieves fall out

The Irish public might never have found out about this scandal, except that Comerford et al fell out over dividing the loot. The 49% share had been bought by a company, Gladbrook, whose ownership is hidden behind a string of at least eight companies registered in Jersey. It was only when Comerford went to the High Court in Dublin, claiming against his former cronies' ownership of some of these companies, that the scandal began to unravel.

A culture of corruption

For Irish workers, the Greencore affair seems not just the unacceptable face of capitalism, but it's only face. There has been a plethora of scandals in recent years and the general attitude to the current inquiry is cynical.

There has been the collapse of the 'Larry Goodman Group' of beef exporters, in which hundreds of millions in public funds was lost in export insurance and other scams. Then the 'Gallagher Group' collapse, a deal involving millions in small retailer savings. Both Gallaghers and Goodman were prominently linked with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael minister Charles Haughey.

Fianna Fail government ministers and deputys have been involved for years in county planning decisions and land sales. These have netted untold millions to a private clique of speculative speculators. In fact, Dublin county council had no time for other business during its last six year tenure.

In a month in which a rooftop protest at Dublin's Mountjoy jail was brutally suppressed, Irish workers will not hold their breath to see if Greencore's board join the inmates in their legal conditions.

The likelihood of the inquiry netting the entire web of Greencore accomplices seems remote. To disclose ownership of the offshore companies would need a court order in Jersey. This could only be granted if criminal proceedings were underway.

Given the government's direct stake in overseeing the sugar company and distributors and that the consultants responsible for overseeing the sale of Greencore found nothing amiss, it would seem that dubious dealings with offshore companies are common. So it probably came to light purely by chance and Comerford's good fortune.

The trade unions

The unions have played a sorry role in the affair. There has been complete closure from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Not even the ICTU was put off by the inherent conflict of interest. Given that the ICTU is locked into a ten year joint economic programme (The Programme for Economic and Social Progress) with the government. This involves a minimal three year pay deal that the government wants to renegotiate.

The ICTU also quietly dropped its opposition to privatisation without any confrontation. Another factor in their silence is that Billy Allie, the general secretary of the country's biggest union and an ICTU leader, is also a Greencore director.

The working class had been reeling under the government's austerity offensive and the breakdown restructuring of the public sector for the IMF/EC single market. The one positive result of these scandals is that they may reverse the government's tolerance of crooked politicians and their business friends.

In the last local government elections, the two main bourgeois parties lost heavily to left and 'protest' candidates. The political crisis is so deep that neither Fianna Fail nor Fine Gael could form a stable government if a general election were held.

Latest revelations

The privatisation policy was dealt a further blow when it emerged that the chairman of Telecom Eireann, Michael Smurfit, was involved in the sale of land to the company. Doubly the value of the sale was paid to a company in which he was involved.

This latest scandal also involves the consultancy firm Na-ral顾问s. They were then offered the contract to investigate the privatisation of Telecom, the biggest and most profitable of all. Both Smurfit and NCB have interests in the companies which sold the site to Telecom.
**Fighting for class politics in Egypt**

A crucial factor in the success of America's Gulf War was the lack of active mass opposition in the Arab world. Socialist Outlook talked to MOHAMMED, an Egyptian marxist about the struggle for working class politics in his country.

Q. What was the response in Egypt to the Gulf War?

A. Egyptian president Mubarak gave his full support to the war, and this was very important to the war, and with this support - the basis of the 'Arab umbrella' - imperialism's intervention in the region would have been politically difficult. Mubarak was key to giving an Arab face to this intervention.

Described for the outside intervention of opposition to the war were different views, but it was the support in the mass, a people that are illegal which creates difficulties in their organizing against imperialist policies.

Q. These anti-opposition laws, are they just against socialists and communists?

A. These anti-socialist laws have existed in Egypt since 1936 - neither Nasser nor his successor abandoned them. Nasser, a petty bourgeois nationalist figure, was a genuine supporter of communist and socialist ideals.

The situation is different for the Islamic fundamentalists. The Muslim Brotherhood Party, Party of Islam, is now semi-legal. They are in alliance with an organization called the Muslim Judicial Council, and they are the Labour Party. In fact it is a right wing, semi-fascist Party.

In fact, it was Sadat, president after the death of Nasser, who began to reduce repression against the fundamentalists as a counter-weight to the left.

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**Post-apartheid**

**Safeguarding white privilege**

by Charlie van der Merwe

"WE MUST have a democracy which protects minorities".

So said Staffel van der Merwe, the new Secretary General of the Country Party, speaking about the government's proposals for a new constitution for post-apartheid South Africa.

The over-riding principle (is) to create a true democracy where the will of the majority will prevail, but not at the expense of the minority.

In a masterpiece of Orwellian double-talk, Mr van der Merwe said that the proposals are based on some fundamental principles - the popular participation, not of minorities, but minority parties, at every level of government. Then there is the protection of human rights; an independent judiciary, and revising the constitution with the greatest measure of legitimacy.

How will legitimacy be established? Van der Merwe is quite clear about this.

The legitimacy of the new constitution is of cardinal importance. We have said openly that there is a white referendum. There must be a valid testing of the will and wishes of the whites. Voting in the referendum will be on separate racial rolls. Because to 'secure the legitimacy of the constitution, it must be shown that it is supported by all groups and minorities. But if you can't show that a majority of whites support it, how can you live under the same roof as the right wing?"

**Superficial break**

Superficially, the proposed constitution appears to make a complete break with the apartheid past. The word 'race' does not appear once in the entire document.

The concept of 'homelands' as a principle is abandoned. But those territories like the Transkei, Ciskei and Bophuthatswana, which have been recognised as independent by Pretoria if no-one else, would have to agree to be re-incorporated in a unified South Africa.

But apartheid was not only about race. It was a society which established the unequal division of wealth. At Allister Sparks put it in the Observer, 'Apartheid has produced the most unequal society on earth and this constitution would set all those inequalities in concrete.'

The government's constitutional lawyers have drafted an ingenious document, which in main directs the ANC from coming to power. It consists of a maze of 'checks and balances' with some powers devolved from central authority to the regions. This will ensure that in a union with a predominantly white population, they will be able to retain their privileged way of life.

But the key to the proposed constitution is that the proposal for a two-chamber government. One chamber, the lower house, will be elected by universal franchise. The second chamber would have equal representation from all communities. It would not be an acceptable party, with the power of veto over legislation from the lower house.

De Klerk and Mandela: ANC react strongly to 'post-apartheid' constitution.

The government will consist of a multi-party cabinet, and the executive presidency will be replaced with three-person executive council. This could mean for example, a executive triola consisting of Mandela, De Klerk and Botha...

Constitutional Affairs Minister, Gerti Viljoen, was quite frank about what this could mean when addressing a press conference in September. He said that the ANC could conceivably win an election with an 80% majority and still find itself outnumbered two to one in the triola presidency and the multi-party cabinet.

Mandela and the ANC have reacted strongly. Speaking at a graduation ceremony at the University of Witwatersrand, Mandela characterised the government's proposals as a scheme to prevent the will of the people being realised through democratic government - a system that will entrench minority privileges by ensuring that any majority party is powerless to make any significant changes, powerless to remove minority privileges and, in many ways, powerless to rule.

The ANC has renewed its demand for a multi-party conference and for an interim government to 'oversee' the transition period.

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Romanian
miners rebel
against
marketisation

Ten days ago thousands of miners from the Jiu Valley poured into Bucharest to besiege the government of President Iliescu and Prime Minister Petre Roman, who has since resigned. Patrick Camiller, a member of the New Left Reformist editorial board was in Romania last year. Paul Clarke and Sam Inman talked to him.

Q. Just over a year ago the Romanian miners were defending the National Salvation front government, then under attack. Last week they came to demand the overthrow of that government. What has changed?

A. In June 1960 the miners came to Bucharest, a short time after the election. At this time the miners were not accepted by the government for the right-wing opposition, the National Liberal Party and the National Peasants Party, or by some radical students. The opposition occupied Universitate Square, the central crossroads in the centre of Bucharest for two months after the election. When it was wound down it cleared the police, there was a semi-insurrectionary attack on the government by the right-wing opposition - attacks on government buildings and the TV station, a key symbol of the anti-Communist revolution. At that time the miners from the Jiu Valley saw a threat to their government by the miners of the Romanian National Peasant Movement, a government which was promising to defend their social interests, and to some extent actually doing so - against the rising bourgeois elites and their international allies. What has changed since then is that the government has accepted much of the national and economic programme of the opposition. The marketisation of commodities is on a wide scale. The impact of foreign capital and social services have been wound up. A big privatisation programme has been launched. This has seriously worsened working conditions. They have been housed 40 per cent less than this year, as a result of inflation and lack of adequate compensation in the workforce.

Q. How do you analyse the National Peasant Party and the National Liberal Party?

A. These two parties are the historic right-wing parties, which continued to exist in emigration during the Ceausescu era. For many people they had become a faint memory, but in the last elections returned from emigration with the December 1989 revolution. They organise the miners into their own party, the National Peasant Party, as its name suggests. It is a small base, a small party. It did get a lot of peasant votes during the last election, in the main the peasants have given short shrift to its programme of de-collectivisation. National Peasant Party supporters are trying to retain rights to ancestral land, decentralise, and have been seen off by local peasants.

Poland: will it be capitalism or democracy?

In Poland today, even Jacek Kuron, former Solidarity leader and minister of labour, is no longer repeating his usual motto - 'democracy is impossible without a free market'. More and more leading political figures are discussing the difficulty of introducing capitalism while workers have effective rights to organise and fight back against privatisation. Here Zbigniew Kowalewski discusses the threat of dictatorship in Poland.

Jacek Kuron recognises that there is a real contradiction between the maintenance of democracy and the introduction of capitalism. His opinion, and his party's, the Democratic Union (DU) led by former prime minister Mazowiecki, is that it is nonetheless necessary to ensure that these opposites are united.

The main party of the right, which belongs to the 'Belovezha camp' (the name of the presidential palace), and at least some leading members of the liberal democratic Congress, are much more practical. According to them, it is seen that society does not support capitalist restoration and that it is not possible "During his visit to the USA, Walesa asked the authorities what their reaction would be if a state of siege were installed in Poland"

But Aleksander Hall, a leader of the DU, is right when he says: 'We must look truth in the face. In Poland, socialism can still count on a real social base...socialist views are clearly part of the Social Democratic movement, particularly the trade union...The danger of a return to socialism will grow as property relations change. Social inequality deepens, business failures increase unemployment and the state reduces its role as a protector...The dynamic of this conflict will develop inevitably.'

The process of capital restoration has not yet got beyond the phase of the primitive accumulation of capital, on the basis of the decomposition of the command economy. The dynamic and legitimacy of this process is running out of steam more rapidly than it establishes new relations of production. The capitalisation process is weak and essentially based on small business. Its political representatives are not well organised, but are already engaged in intrasolidarist struggles which are tearing it apart.

In July, a political scandal blew up. During his visit to the USA, Walesa asked the authorities what their reaction would be if a state of siege were installed in Poland and power was taken over by a Council of National Security, before the economy and state institutions disintegrated.

Questioned on this subject, president Walesa confirmed that he would have to use force of social and political tension and political tensions escalated into anarchy and major strike.

Addressing the workers and trade unions of Solidarity, Walesa said that in Poland nothing was working any more because of the evil influence of the communist nonentities, because of hopelessness of parliamentaryism, and because of the system and unresponsiveness of the new elite.

Impasse

'People are suffering and risk a political explosion. How do we get out of this vicious circle? Let the people decide,' President Walesa replied. He was speaking before the third trade union congress. Walesa denies that solutions. He has set up an army division at his disposal.

"The charges are that they are not working any more in the context of the new elite. The charges are that they are not working any more because of the evil influence of the communist nonentities, because of hopelessness of parliamentaryism, and because of the system and unresponsiveness of the new elite."
Rumanian workers need independent unions
forthcoming, primarily because of the
pressure of the USA.

A. As I already said, the Salvation
Front's original idea was that of 'market
socialism', a system of national plan-
ing with state industry, co-operatives
and a significant private sector. Soon
after their election victory, it was made
pretty clear by the IMF, the West
European governments and especially by
the Americans that this was unac-
sceptable.

They insisted instead on a rapid
process of privatisation and marketiza-
tion, and lock, stock and barrel aban-
donment of a socialised economy. It was
made clear that no opening to the world
economy was possible otherwise. These
pressures led to the programme of en-
ding public subsidies.

The IMF promised in return $1 billion
in aid. But this money has not been

The National Liberal Party, its tradi-
tional base has been in the intelligentsia,
particularly in Transylvania. The
Liberal Party has entered a protracted
period of crisis, with a section of its
youth trying to push aside the old
guard, and adopt a programme like that
of European Christian Democracy, in-
stead of the inward-looking nationalism
of the old guard.

Q. Does the privatisation
programme push towards the
restoration of capitalism? Is there
an alternative?

A. I already said, the Salvation
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ding public subsidies.

The IMF promised in return $1 billion
in aid. But this money has not been

The Romanian working class remains
strong, based on mining and other ex-
ttractive industries. This core of the
working class were the first to fight back
against the Ceausescu dictatorship, in
1977. Whatever the restructuring of the
economy, these industries and this
working class will survive. There is a
long struggle ahead.

Q. What are the prospects for
such a renewal of the European
left?

A. The way East Germany was ab-
sorbed into the Federal Republic, with
the subsequent drive to destroy the
traditions of the GDR, was a major blow
not only to the living standards of the
GDR masses, but also to the left in
Europe and internationally. Two or
three years ago it seemed that the USSR
might be able to intervene in world politics
as a much more powerful and
independent actor than has since been
shown to be the case. The possibility of
a German-Soviet core to the recomposi-
tion of world politics no longer exists.

In my opinion the form of the demise
of the old system in the USSR and east-
ern Europe represents a major defeat for
European socialism; this defeat exists as
an objective fact, irrespective of your
attitude towards it.

It is now a question of working out
the premises for a new beginning for
socialist politics on a European scale,
preparing a refoundation. We can see in
such forces as the Movement for Com-
munism in Italy, and in the
similar types of division in Spanish
Communist movement. Revolutionary
socialist forces have to participate in
that refoundation process in a non-sect-
arian and non-dogmatic way, while
keeping their fundamental principles.
British bosses, Japanese methods

JAPANISATION is now taking British industry by storm.

Spearheaded by the hope of emulating the profits of Japanese manufacturing giants, and longing for their supposedly submissive company unions, British employers are appeing their management methods.

But despite the rhetoric of 'jobs for life' and 'equality between management and shopfloor', the reality is clear enough. Japanisation means no unions, speed-up and massive job cuts.

The Japanese offensive now hitting the British car industry has come not just from Japanese manufacturers (Nissan, Toyota, Honda and others), but also via the USA. American car giants such as Ford and Chrysler introduced what has been dubbed 'management by stress' during the 1980s.

Their workforce were given a simple choice — accept Japanisation or face closure. Most accepted. And the proposals had a sugar coating — workers were promised respect, long term jobs, a say in their work. This won the active support of union leaders.

But workers soon found out what really lay at the centre of the Japanese management techiques. Workers have to take part in 'constant improvement' — where the workers themselves participate in suggesting how jobs can be cut by loading more work on to each employee. And genuine trade unions have no place in such plans.

Negotiations between management and unions are replaced by either a single union deal or by a 'council', where non-union workers have as much influence as union representatives.

Sunderland

In the Nissan plant in Sunderland, where the engineering union AEU has agreed to a new deal, the role of the unions has almost been wiped out. And, as Tony Johnson explains below, Rover's proposals for its Cowley plant will massively weaken the traditionally strong manual workers' unions with their network of shop stewards.

If these new threats are not understood and countered by the left, Japanisation could begin to deal massive blows to the British labour movement, inflicting the kind of structural defeat that Thatcherism failed to impose in the 1980s.

The procedure also includes an 'optional' binding arbitration clause — an option that right-wing union officials are likely to jump at.

The procedure also includes an 'optional' binding arbitration clause — an option that right-wing union officials are likely to jump at. But as well as attempts to weaken the trade unions' base, there are clauses strengthing the 'team' and 'continuous improvement' concepts essential to Japanese management methods.

'All of us will be expected to participate in Discussion Groups, Quality Action Teams, Suggestion Schemes, and all other activities to continuously improve processes and company performance' the document states.

'Continuous improvement will be a requirement for everyone... Teams will consider all alternative ways of satisfying customer demand,' it goes on.

Full flexibility of labour is a theme running through the entire document. It makes clear that 'Full flexibility relates to work procedure and between jobs, areas and all categories of employee will be the norm'.

Absolute control

So the company will have absolute control of which employee does what job, destroying one of the crucial powers of shop stewards in the process — and length of service is no longer a factor.

Other ideas have clearly been imported from Toyota and Nissan. Overtime will now be controlled by the company; in Nissan workers are bound to finish their schedule, regardless of whether a breakdown occurs.

Temporary employees can now be hired at will; in Toyota's Japanese plants, a core workforce is employed and temporary workers are hired for peak periods.

Such 'temporary workers' will have no holiday rights, undermining working conditions, and would be a useful reserve army for Rover management in the event of disputes.

Promise of jobs

When the closures of the South Works at the plant was announced in 1988, workers were told, in similar words to those used in the New Deal, that there would be a job for those that wanted one.

Early this year, 350 manual workers were forced to go. Just as the New Deal was announced, another group of staff were made compulsorily redundant. So much for Jobs for Life.

And the unions' response? Some leaders have agreed that Rover's finances are in such a poor state, there is no alternative but to negotiate on the deal. They go on to concede defeat before the battle has started, arguing that unless the unions negotiate, the deal will be imposed.

But there is another alternative — a united fightback by car workers. Rather than negotiating, the deal should be rejected, and the TGWU and other unions should organise a conference of stewards from Rover, Ford, Vauxhall, Peugeot and other companies to resist the employers' offensive.

A fighting organisation, linking up unions on a national and international level, offers the best chance of a successful counter-offensive to defend workers' rights and conditions.
USA collective action can beat japanismation

By PATRICK BAKER

THE US LABOUR MOVEMENT now faces the biggest ideological threat in 50 years. Not since the 1930s have the employers so successfully challenged the role of unions in the American union movement.

Then, employers such as John D. Rockefeller and Charles Schwab championed such concepts as 'constructive collaboration' and the 'representation of employees'.

In reality, this meant that workers in each plant were pitted against others, rather than united in a national union. But these attacks were defeated by the United Auto Workers union (UAW) in 1937.

Now, respected unions in the USA have faced a new, similar threat with japanismation – an attempt to pit worker against worker. The effects of the 'team concept' are now just too clear from experience in Japan.

A study by the Sebyo union federation in 1986 showed that by then, only 7% of workers would look to their union representative to help with any problem.

Easy prey

And the American unions were in no condition to organise their members to fight back when Japanese 'management by stress' began. Bureaucratised and centralised, the UAW and others were easy prey for employers hungry for increased profit margins.

By 1988, the 'team concept' had been introduced in every Japanese plant in the USA, as well as large numbers of plants run by General Motors (GM), Chrysler, Ford and others. The system had been accepted without a fight by the UAW in the 1987 round of national union contracts.

The agreements stressed a number of key concepts. First, that workers were to be interchangeable – most job classifications were dropped. Second, any idea of 'seniority' was to be given less importance.

By 1992, 23% of the UAW's workforce was employed by Japanese, Korean and Mexican car manufacturers. But even as productivity rose, the union faced a challenge from below.

The UAW was so emasculated that it could do little about the new management techniques. The union's capacity to organise had become severely weakened.

Japanismation Thailand: Mitsubishi/Car workers

Bureaucratised and centralised, the UAW was easy prey for employers hungry for increased profit

played, workers at GM replied. Well, the team leaders are appointed by management, then they share out the jobs and responsibilities.

The precise definition of jobs had two aims – that all 'wasted time' should be eliminated; and that any change in methods must never lead to any worker slowing their pace. Any such change must be agreed by a supervisor.

Thus the director of Mazda, when asked what room for flexibility existed, replied 'We make allowances for people who are left-handed'.

Absolute control

This inflexible system, where each job is precisely defined and is organised to require the minimum amount of training possible, had one principal aim: absolute management control. And this control means that not only can 'troublesome' workers be rapidly moved, but also that production can be immediately recognised.

When referees are interviewed, they are not asked about the qualifications of the potential worker for 'team' factories. Rather, they are questioned as to their attendance record, their readiness to follow orders, and their attitude to management. There is no incentive for workers to study for qualifications, only to practice, so that the job can be done at maximum speed.

Another key concession made by the United Auto Workers was to agree to the use of sub-contractors, as long as the core workforce had a 'guaranteed job'. In principle, this sounded like a reasonable deal – a concession in return for job security.

But the result in reality was the reverse. Workers were divided into two categories – the regular workforce and the sub-contract workforce. The latter, which grew in size, was generally non-unionised and had no protection or less entitlement to state benefits.

And the workers, who finished with a lower level of unionisation and protection, had gained nothing in terms of control of the job. While their responsibilities had increased, the responsibility for judging whether the work was acceptable never went below 'team leader'.

Work to rule

This absolute control by supervisors and team leaders meant that the role of unions in controlling working conditions disappeared. The possibility of having a 'work to rule' no longer existed since the rules were determined by the supervisor. And the tension on which the system was based, any worker slowing down could be spotted immediately.

As a manager of Toyota said control of anomalies becomes easy. It is enough to introduce improvements, concentrating on the line which is stopped and the workers who have stopped it.

Achilles heel

But the interconnection of the system and the tension on which it is based are also the Achilles heel of the 'team' plants. While they can mean greater management control if there is no union, or a very compliant union, they also make the system extremely vulnerable to collective action.

Individuals who refuse to carry out orders can be rapidly removed. But if one whole sector stops, they can quickly halt the whole factory.

Or if whole teams refuse to obey the team leader, they can force management to accept a new one. Manufacturing work had a point when they commented 'unions have more power than before'.

But the precondition is union organisation. This is why the companies implementing japanismation insist on 'sweetheart deals' with compliant unions or set up 'company unions'. And it is why the cornerstone of the labour movements' response must be to strengthen union organisation and solidarity between workers in different companies.

Happy Days at the Ford Factory

You have seen a Ford contract... truly?
Postmodernism: the cultural logic of capitalist crisis?

In 1981 Paul Clarke wrote an article attacking 'postmodernism', arguing that it was 'modernism gone rotten'. In reply Terry Murphy insisted that the key to understanding postmodernism is to be found in Frederic Jameson's 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', and that this is based on a particularization of capitalism that marxists should agree with. Here PAUL CLARKE replies to Terry Murphy. In our next issue we publish a substantial article by Murphy explaining his views.

TERRY Murphy's reply poses the question of whether there are definite periods of capitalist development and whether there are cultural trends which, in however a relative way, 'correspond' with these phases.

My answer is yes, indeed my article was based on a notion. The question is not whether there postmodernism exists as a philosophical and cultural trend, but what our assessment of it should be.

The fundamental points seem to be that postmodernism is a useful analytical category, corresponding to the well-defined phase of capitalism that has missed this assessment, conflating it with post-stagnation.

"the irrationalism of postmodernism ... corresponds with this new period of capitalist crisis, restructuring and reaction"

But just occasionally someone turns up who can suddenly synthesise what has gone before and turn it into something truly new and revolutionary. Such a person was Miles Davis.

For those brought up on the Clash and Sex Pistols (or worse still new Kids on the Block) who never had the opportunity to listen to his music, try the album *Kind of Blue* for the classic Miles Davis, and Bitches Brew or Jack Johnson for the modern period. A back-track sampler try So What? on Kind of Blue, Blues for Pablo (Miles Ahead) and Human Nature (You're Under Arrest).

Yuppies: a symptom of the post-modern age
Still getting in the last word!

NEVER A YES MAN
The life and politics of an adopted Liverpudlian.

by Eric Heffer.
Published by Verso.

Reviewed by Steve Smith

MANY socialists inspired by Eric Heffer's exemplary fight against the New Realist tide would have puzzled over the fawning obituaries from the Ian Aitken/Alan Watkins coterie of Cosh Street hacks. But this clearly understates the universally recognized personal qualities of the man, which shine through in his posthumous autobiography and last political testament.

The book takes us through his trade union militancy in Liverpool, his record as a leading left-wing parliamentarian and even his short-lived experiences as a member of Her Majesty's government.

One of the most revealing and original parts of the book is his account of the post-war birth of Liverpool's heretical political culture. His devotion to the Labour movement saw him rise to prominence, from where he saw newsmakers such as Tony Mulhern, Terry Harrison and Pat Wall cut their political teeth.

After expulsion from the CP ('one of the best things that ever happened to me') he was active in the Labour left Socialist Fellowship, setting its newspaper, the original Socialist Outlook. Both the organisation and the newspaper were proscribed.

After this he had a flirtation with a short-lived group, the propagandist 'Socialist Worker's Federation'. But he rejoined the Labour Party in 1957, this fateful step leading to his 27-year-long membership of the House of Commons.

Harold Wilson offered the rising parliamentary star a job in the 1964-70 government, but Eric preferred to side with his class in struggles such as the seafarer's and the dockers' strikes.

He later took up Wilson's offer as Tony Benn's deputy in the Industry Department in 1974, but was predictably sacked for speaking out on the Common Market. Benn survived in the cabinet and Eric accused him at the time of having 'grovelled' to Wilson.

His changing relationship with Tony Benn, with whom Eric was destined to be compared by historians, is one of the book's many insights. Their comradeship was frequently strained right up to the 1981 Depute Leadership campaign, which Eric at first hesitated, wrongly, to support. But once convinced of Benn's principled fight in the party, their relationship became far warmer and Benn accordingly provides the foreword to the book.

Eric's comments on the feud between Benn and Michael Foot are a delight, as is his pen portrait of Neil Kinnock as an opportunistic and petty-minded tyrant, ('At times he throws out his chin like Mussolini').

Novelists Eric Heffer had his fair share of faults - he was in his own way a traditionalist with some conservative views - which may explain his relatively slow response to the demands of the newer social movements. In another era of working class politics, his beloved wife Dori, who shared his militant outlook, may have possibly played a more than just a supporting role recorded in the book.

But Eric was also a pioneer - he opposed troops in Ireland and supported the anti-Stalinist struggles of East European workers long before they became fashion among the left. As someone who voluntarily left the party in the wake of a previous witch-hunt of Bevanites and trotskyites, Eric lays down clear advice for today's militants.

Thus Peter Taaffe and Lesley Mahmood, who claimed her recent candidature was to preserve the tradition of Eric Heffer, would do well to ponder his words.

'Some argue that the time has come to set up a new socialist party. This may at some stage be necessary but not for as long as the trade unions remain affiliated to the Labour Party and give it its working-class base.

'The argument for a new party is, to some extent, sterile. It looks for a short cut and there are no short cuts.'

Equally, Eric died as a supporter of the Socialist Move-
No meaning for the United Front

Paul Lawson’s article on the unified front (SO7) rightly criticises the SWP and Militant for their undemocratic and sectarian approach to united action by the left. However, in the process he removes all meaning from any united front, reducing it to a campaign and denying any relevance towards the unions and the Labour Party.

He claims that since mass revolutionary parties do not exist, and because reformist leaders no longer claim to be fighting for socialism, demands that reformist leaders break with pre-capitalist policies serve a purely propaganda function and are not serious proposals for joint action.

Yet the united front approach developed by the early Comintern was not primarily based on the claim that reformist leaders were fighting for socialism.

Communist parties did not simply demand that ‘socialist unity’ implement socialism. It was based on the fact that vast numbers of workers regarded socialism as the only real alternative and that this demand for socialism needs in whatever form it materialises’ (that means far more than the Comintern). The Comintern parties argued for joint action around concretely the interests of the class.

The same basic approach applies today, even if we have to be flexible in our methods. But then so did the early Comintern.

Not all the CPs were mass parties.

Needs help?

In response to my article on the Left and GBH, Paul Clarke accepts that ‘art is a highly mediated product which cannot simply be assessed in terms of political correctness’. I agree entirely with this, the problem with Clarke’s response to my article is that it goes on to assess a piece of drama exactly in those terms.

I did not suggest that political criteria should be discarded when we come to discuss a work of art, rather that such criteria should be applied in a way which avoids the totalitarian approach which Clarke readily adopts in his response.

To claim, as Clarke does, a definitive interpretation of GBH is exactly what Stalinists did with all culture. I would like to thank him for supplying Socialist Outlook with such an effective example.

The message is clear: can anyone doubt that this man needs help?

Steven Taylor, London

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What’s wrong with Harry Sloan?

Harry Sloan’s ‘What’s wrong with the British left’ (SO8) itself illustrates the kind of struggle with the British left. Take for example his disingenuous reference to ‘trends’ such as Labour Briefing, which seek only to act as a pressure group within the Labour Party.

Writing supporters might feel justified in asking Harry whether Briefing became only a pressure group within the Labour Party before, during or after Socialist Outlook worked under its aegis for several years.

More interesting is the implication that Briefing’s supporters, despite encompassing many people who have broken with small left groups in order to find a wider audience and field of activity in the mass movement, are excluded from the enormous responsibilities of building a mass revolutionary alternative to reformism.

Harry’s amnesia crops up again when he dismisses the ‘siege mentality’ of ‘Leninism’, ‘stalemate’ and syndicalism in the traditions of the post-war British left.

The SWP and the Militant are fairly taken to task here. But left out is any discussion of the traditions of the IMG, a tradition which clearly has major influence in Socialist Outlook itself.

When Harry asks ‘what’s so different about Socialist Outlook?’, it would be useful to learn what lessons he draws from its own traditions.

Does this matter? I think it does. Any tendency unable to draw from the lessons of its own traditions is doomed to repeat its mistakes.

And if you are going to (cor- rectly) denounce sectarianism on the left, you must be prepared to practice what you preach.

On page 15, however, we see an article headed ‘Greens hurl to the right’ alongside a picture of Charles Windsor captioned: ‘Prince Charles: friends in high places for the Greens’. Is that the kind of united front dialogue that marks Socialist Outlook out as different from its sectarian competitors?

Mike Phipps, London

Errors in China review

Louise Holloway’s review of my book on China (SO4) annoyed me greatly. Our different views of China, political criticism was to be expected. But the review criticises the book on a sloppy reading of the book, and an even sloopier view of Mao.

For brevity’s sake I’ll only take up a couple of points. Louise accused me by saying that she can find little evidence for my claim that the civil war was not fought as a guerrilla war, but as a set-piece battle against two regular armies, with the mass of the population as mere spectators. ‘I actually wrote between two regular armies’.

Any decent history of China will distinguish between the anti-Japanese war (1937-45) and the Civil War (1946-49) between the CCP and the Kuomintang, not as small guerrilla bands.

If Louise doesn’t know such a basic fact about Chinese history, why is she writing about it?

And when she says that she ‘wonders whether Hore sees the revolution in a positive light’, I can only conclude that she didn’t read the book.

The third chapter begins ‘Historical preconditions and determinants of revolution in a million strong peasant army smashed together the old ruling classes, broke the power of Western imperialism and laid the basis for a new social order’. (p4)

I did indeed go on to say that she made possible the most efficient exploitation of the workers and peasants. And there is no contradiction between the two. That is the common pattern that bourgeois nationalist revolutions in the ‘Third World’ have followed from the Second World War onwards.

It is one of the great strengths of the theory of bureaucratic state capitalism that it can explain what has happened in places as diverse as Algeria, India, China and Cuba in terms of the rise of a new ruling class politically independent from imperialism yet tied to the world economy and the discipline it imposes on them.

For the rest, the review simply repeated the old Maoist myth that Mao had a coherent and successful strategy for revolution which relied on organising peasant rebellions.

That myth was literally fatal in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Chinese revolutionaries died in the attempt to emulate Mao, and the shattering of the myth by events in China since 1978 has played a major part in disorientating the revolutionary left internationally.

It is astonishing to see that myth repeated today in a supposedly Trotskyist paper. Earlier this year, October Review, a Hong Kong Fourth Internationalist magazine, also reviewed the book. The review made a number of specific criticisms to do with emphasis and omissions, as well as arguing against the theory of state capitalism.

Yet it made none of the historical criticisms contained in Louise’s review. I suggest that the October Review comrades understand Chinese history better than she does.

Charlie Hore

Charlie Hore’s book The Road to Tiananmen Square is publish- ed by bookmarks and costs $6.95. Apologies to Charlie Hore for inadvertently omitting these details from the review.
Another judicial farce - Dessie Ellis on trial

By Dominic Mallard

Dessie Ellis was originally charged with 'conspiracy and possession of explosives'.

Unfortunately for the British state, the act in question stipulated that the conspiracy must have occurred within the UK.

No evidence

It was agreed in court in February this year that no evidence existed that Ellis had ever been here. So two new charges were thought up.

But this was rather embarrassing for the Dublin government, since it breached the terms of the extradition agreement.

They insisted the original charge be reinstated.

In June this was done. And Judge Swinton-Thomas - judge in the notorious Wrencher Three case - 'reinterpreted' the law. The act didn't totally mean the defendant had to be in the UK, he decided - just that the offence took place there!

Ellis' trial at the Old Bailey will clearly be a legal farce. British 'justice' will be exposed once again as a system where the government can be moved as many times as necessary, if the British state wants a conviction.


BBC unions weakened by ballot

By Dominic Mallard

Balloting of union members at the BBC on conditions of service has left the unions weakened. Already there are rumours of impending derecognition. As of 5 October, BBC management has imposed its conditions of service.

Members of the NUJ voted by a narrow margin of 54 to 46 per cent to reject the conditions of service on a not particularly turn-out.

The union's leadership is not regarding the result as a ballot for across-the-board industrial action. Only three out of 60 NUJ chapels in the BBC unequivocally voted for action.

In the three in question, NUJ Caversham (BBC Monitoring), Bush House (BBC World Service) and TV Centre, are all large chapels. Many chapels which accepted the conditions are small in membership.

Constituencies

In the main BBC union, BECTU, members were balloted in six 'constituencies', depending on their specific working conditions. Three constituencies actually accepted the BBC's conditions.

Two rejected the conditions but did not sanction strike action, although they did vote to take solidarity action should workers be victimised for rejecting the conditions.

Only one constituency voted to reject the conditions and then went on to vote for strike action.

Demoralised

At a time when many union activists are demoralised with this picture of national gloom, it is vital that socialists in the BBC unions build on what local successes there have been.

At BBC Monitoring, management have been forced to backtrack over the issue of Repetitive Strain Injury.

Tagging

They have also been forced to climb down on the question of 'tagging'. This is a categorisation of output from BBC Monitoring required by the Foreign Office.

A government instigation, management had attempted to turn a trial period of tagging into a permanent feature of work. They backed down after NUJ members refused to cooperate.

New union for offshore workers

HAVING been ignored by existing unions covering North Sea workers, the newly formed offshore workers committee, OILC, last week announced that it would form a new trade union to organise offshore workers.

The decision came after an official inter-union meeting failed to involve OILC in discussions to set up a new sub-committee of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

This new sub-committee will cover all offshore unions. It will not, however, have any negotiating powers.

OILC, which has been fighting for a single unified federation of offshore workers, has been consistently ignored by the official unions.

This latest decision to further exclude OILC was described by Ronnie McDonald, Chair of OILC, as "unacceptable".

Meetings in Glasgow and on the platforms in the Forties, Claymore and Brent fields, all called for OILC to move ahead with the new union proposal.

The new union will only organise offshore and will not be fighting a membership war with existing unions.

Women, war and resistance

Ireland and the Middle East

A day of discussion for women on campaigning for peace and self determination

Speakers include:

Bernadette McAliskey; Reem Abdelhadi; Haifa Zangana (Iraqi Women in Exile); Camilla Power (Women's Peace Vigil); Nihal Aktas (Patriotic Women's Union of Kurdistan)

at London Women's Centre, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, off Kingsway, London WC2B

Saturday 26 October, 11am

Organised by Women against War in the Gulf and Women in the Troops Out Movement

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Organise for Poll Tax amnesty!

by Adrian States, Camden Against the Poll Tax

CAMPAIGNERS from all over the country are organising for an amnesty for all those affected by the Poll Tax. They are calling for the writing off of all debts and for freedom for 'Poll Tax political prisoners', jailed for demonstrating against the tax.

The national demonstration and women's picket on October 19 are focusing on those still in jail for demonstrating against the tax in Trafalgar Square last year. 13 demonstrators are still inside after defending themselves against police attack and will not be released until at least next year. And there is an increasing number being jailed for non-payment, many of whom are there simply for being poor.

In England and Wales, 5.7 million summonses for non-payment and 4 million liability orders had been issued by July. 68 people had gone to jail by September. And Labour is outing the Tories in jailings - the councils allowing this include 14 Labour and seven Tory authorities. Meanwhile, around 28,000 people were having Poll Tax deducted from their income support by May. And in Scotland, the latest collection rate is just 15%!

Although the Tories have announced that the tax would be abolished from April 1993, the resistance to this attack on the working class is likely to remain. Councils are pressing ahead to raise the poor for money that they do not have. It is crucial that anti-Poll Tax campaigners around the country are maintained and built for the year that lies ahead.

With this in mind, a national conference 'Finishing off the Poll Tax' has been organised. It aims to discuss and share experiences and ideas to take the movement forward. Practical and general discussion will be combined with a series of workshops.

The conference promises to be quite unlike the Militant-dominated All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation, which often prefers rally-style events. Activists hope that the conference will be a refreshing change, that could lead to a campaign free from bureaucracy and sectarianism.

An important issue facing the movement is the question of cuts in local authority spending. Local anti-Poll Tax groups should be linking up with resistance to the cuts.

In Camden, like many around the country, the authority is Labour controlled, starved of money from central government and too afraid to fight for more funding.

The result has been cuts in nurseries, school and housing repairs, and the slashing of teaching and social service jobs. This forms the backdrop to £20 million worth of cuts next year, coupled with a £10 rent increase for council tenants.

It would be seen as the closure of seven libraries, the loss of adult education and school meals and further Town Hall redundancies. These are the very council and voluntary sector services that the poor and vulnerable rely on to survive.

With a general election in 1992, the Poll Tax and its effects are bound to play a key role in the campaign. With 17 million people paying, despite intimidation from bailiffs, its importance cannot be overstated. The Poll Tax and the destination it is causing must be stopped and an amnesty declared.

New Serbian attacks on Croatia

AS WE GO to press, the Serb-dominated Yugoslav federal army pressed home new attacks on Croatia, surrounding Croatian capital Zagreb and threatening to destroy the historic coastal town of Dubrovnik.

These new attacks came despite an apparent agreement at the European peace conference in the Hague for a new ceasefire, and a political solution which would give Croatia and Slovenia eventual autonomy.

Agreement

This new agreement brokered by Lord Carrington is not worth the paper it is written on. Time and again Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic has signed cease-fires which were ignored by his forces on the ground.

The Serb attack on Croatia is no small-scale 'police' action designed to divorcise Croatian independence. Serbian forces have shot up and razed Croatian towns and villages, in order to starve Croatian civilians of food and supplies, and to create a 'Greater Serbia'.

Towns in which Croats have lived for centuries have been in practice incorporated into Serbia.

Last week Milosevic staged a coup in the collective presidency, the council of republican representatives which has risen in place of a single president. This coup amounted to a refusal to recognise the legitimacy of decisions of the presidency. The whole basis on which the new Yugoslavia was established after the second war - that of representing all the nationalities - is being destroyed.

Rumours that Bosnian-Herzegovina is also being dragged into the conflict as Serbian force drive through the republics towards Croatia.

There have been many attempts by civilians there to impede the army's progress by building barricades and obstacles against tanks.

Upper hand

In the military struggle Serbia, because of its domination of the army and airforce, has the upper hand. But in the long term the prospects for Milosevic and his regime are dim.

The Milosevic regime has attempted for five years to keep its grip in Belgrade by whipping up nationalist fervour. This regime is a government of ex-communist bureaucrats presiding over a collapsing economy. Mass demonstrations and strikes last May mobilised mass support.

The weak point of the opposition in Serbia was its capitulation to Serbian nationalism. There signs this could be changing.

Large numbers of Serbians, and those from other nationalities, are deserting from the army. The movement of Serbian mothers demanding their sons not be sent to fight is a dangerous sign for Milosevic.

Nationalism

Milosevic's Greater Serbia project has driven Croatia into the arms of resurgent nationalism. Croatian nationalism, especially in the ethnic community, has always been utterly reactionary.

Croatian president Tudjman is an extreme right-winger. The latest fighting has done immense damage to the cause of workers unity and socialism in Yugoslavia.

But the only way forward now is to recognise the right of Croatia and Slovenia to self-determination, and the right of the Albanian population in Kosovo to resolve with Albania if that is their wish.

Any temptation to socialists to defend the unity of Yugoslavia against 'nationalist reaction' is today false and reactionary. Tudjman may be openly pro-capitalist but neither will Milosevic oppose capitalism.

Amnesty for non-payers and Poll Tax prisoners

Demonstration

October 19

Assemble 7pm Caledonian Park, Market Road N7 (nearest tube - Caledonian Road), March to Trafalgar Square for rally 4pm.

Women's Place 11.30am to 12.30pm Holloway Prison, Parkhurst Rd N7.

Finishing off the Poll Tax Conference

October 28/27

Manchester: Town Hall. Registration fee £5 to NW APT Forum, PO Box 8, Eccles, Salford M30 097 1584.

Transport from London - B return from Dave Morris, Tor-
Tottenham APT, 72 West Green Rd, London N15 802 9804.

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