Thousands march for free education

Students lead the fightback

THOUSANDS of students marched through cities all over Britain on November 1 in protest against plans by the New Labour government to scrap student grants and impose £1,000 per year tuition fees.

In many areas the turnout was the biggest by students for 20 years, and is a promising preparation for the National Demonstration called for November 26 by the Campaign for Free Education – though the CFE march is being built by campaigners without NUS support.

But the anti-fees protest also has a wider significance: it is the first organised fightback by any group against the policies of New Labour, and it represents a challenge to the brutal Tory logic behind the government policy.

Platform speakers (including Diane Abbott MP) have warned that the attack on free education is the "thin end of the wedge". They are right.

The students are not simply fighting for their own interests: the reforms will mainly hit younger students still at school. Their prompt and militant rejection of Blair's policies underlines the need for the workers' movement to prepare now for action to defend the welfare state against Labour's lethal combination of 'unthinkable' new reforms and old-style Tory spending cuts.
Roisin: the ordeal drags on

Veronica Fagyan

THE GERMAN government are still seeking the extradition of Roisin Makalisky in connection with her 1995 conviction for murder.

Roisin is still in the mother and baby unit of a London psychiatric hospital, where she gave birth five months ago to her daughter, Loin- nir. Doctors have advised that she is not suitable to appear in court.

Roisin is suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of her experiences at the hands of the RUC in Castlereagh and the British prison system.

On September 30, stipendium magistrate Nicolas Evans refused to make an order for Roisin to appear in court.

He made clear that he would have granted the order had she been there, but would not do so without her presence and ordered her to appear for the next hearing.

Both Roisin's lawyer and counsel for the German government were prepared for the order to go ahead without Roisin in court.

...
United front can challenge New Labour’s policies

DESPITE enduring months of calculated silence – ending with a walkout and an end to Tory policies. Exit polls clearly showed a majority – even of first time “New Labour voters” supported radical policies.

They voted for redistribution of wealth from those most in need and privatisation and defence of welfare provision.

Even for those who understood what New Labour intended the first months of the Labour government have been an eye-opener.

Blair and his cronies have been proud to proceed with the Thatcherite strategy as the Tories. They have been gleful that they have got away with things that their predecessors could not. Even the apparent commitment to increased spending on health and education is just a masking of existing funds that are totally inadequate to sustain services already cut to the bone.

The catalogue of attacks is long. They have “liberated” the Bank of England from political control, and thus raised interest rates (and paved the way for Enlarged Monetary Union).

They have continued with Tory privatisation plans and further pushed the selling plans for Private Finance Initiatives in the NHS.

Young people and students have been in the front line whether through the introduction of student fees, the con of welfare to work or the new law and order proposals from Jack Straw.

Single parents lose their benefits and the unemployed are forced out of the pointless as those introduced by the Tories, but more grossly packaged. All this has gone hand in hand with a keep unity refusal to remove Tory laws such as those shackling the trade unions, and making anybody seeking destitute – policies they had opposed only weeks earlier.

With Brown’s latest statement on European monetary convergence – “not going in just yet but preparing the way” going hand in hand with an attempt to gag any dissident Euro MPs, the pattern is clear.

With the bosses

The bosses’ offensive is to continue, with New Labour proud to help the bosses prose

However while all this may seem evident to left activists most of those who voted Labour on May 1 remain mesmerised. We have the paradox of Blair being promoted as the world’s most popular leader – with opinion polls even Kim II Sung would have been proud of, while government policies attack every aspiration of their supporters.

Another crucial layer of voters are beginning to wake up and see what is happening but lack the confidence to fight back. The long night of Tory rule has left trade union organisation desperately weakened and political campaigns isolated.

It leaves the difficult questions: How do you build a fightback against the bosses offensive? What sort of organisation is necessary?

It is clearly not enough merely to continue to behave every inside the structure of the Labour Party – but neither is it possible to merely proclaim the existence of a new socialist party of the trade union movement. The problems inside the SLP are the result both of the lack of political preparation before the party was launched, and of the failure to build a democratic internal regime.

If declaring a new party based on one extremely well respected old clasm-warrior does not work, neither can you build an effective socialist organisation by recruiting one by one. Even the biggest “revolutionary” parties in Britain are feeble shells of what we need – in themselves unable to change events.

We have to relate to the mood that exists for new realignment. We need to build a united left – inside and outside the Labour Party. This must based on the practical demands working people are putting forward and the real actions of our class attempting to realise them.

Rival denunciations are meaningless – practical work is the only way to expose Blair.

The Euromark campaign showed the possibility for united action in Britain and Europe

Hague’s failed fudge splits feuding Tories

IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, this year’s Conservative Party Conference was a moderate success for William Hague. The party emerged at the end of the week more buoyant and seemingly united than it started.

For a brief moment it seemed as if he had done it. His sticking plaster seemed to have worked. It even on the central question of Europe. But almost immediately the wheeling and Blackpool the rows were erupting again with all their old ferocity.

Nevertheless, how many senior Tories will have reimagined the question of Europe from several months ago?

At Conference itself Hague had stayed on the high wire – backing off from the pre-announced formation of EPIU for at least two parliamentary terms and re- placing it with the vague ‘not for the foreseeable future’.

While this shift might have been seen as a step to the Eurosceptics, he also criticised the fact that Britain ever went into the Exchange Rate Mechanism – a defence of the other direction.

With the overwhelming majority of the Parliamentary Party (what’s left of it) determined to chart an anti-EU course on principle, the true could not hold long. This di- vide is not on some secondary is- sue that only comes up in obscure and internal party debates, but on one of the most decisive issues of British politics this century.

The wound is bleeding coarsely – the long term survival of the patient is in doubt.

In some ways it has seemed as if the Tories could only go upwards after the rout of the general election, the left in the country and its or- ganisation in tatters.

However Hague was not proving to be an effective leader of the opposition as the opposition against a New Labour government which once and again stole traditional Tory clothes and policies.

It seemed he is trying to learn lessons from Blair’s success in im- age making. His conference ad- dress suggested repackaging the party as more caring than their opponents.

Conservatives, he argued, had shown their “understanding and tolerance of people making their own decisions about how to lead their lives” and later that compa- nion was “not a bolt on extra to Conservatism, it’s at its very core”.

He was clearly upstaged by Portillo’s speech early in the week, which was similarly along libertarian lines – upstaged not only because Portillo is more charismatic but because he, not weighed down with leadership responsibilities, was critical not only of the party’s record or its leadership but its membership.

He got well by starting out by saying that the as the man who had lost Enfield Southgate on a 17 per cent swing he had no right to lecture anyone.

On top of the new direction for the party signalled by Portillo and Hague there were also plans to re-organise party branches. Discus- sions had already started around the leadership election which followed the ritual slaughter on May 1.

Drugging the Tory Party belat- erly into the 20th Century is not easy task, since the organisational forms and the lack of them – are not some oversight.

It is not because Hague was preoccupied with more interesting issues like the poll tax that he for- got to apply her clean broom to the Party structure.

Rather the absence of any na- tional structure at all, the as- cendancy of method of election and the overall lack of democracy and accountability are products of the origins and the class base of the Tory Party. While Hague’s plan, aided by the constant right-wing pressure to see relatively competent, they will no more be able to unite the Party than the fact it attempts on Europe.

And however it is the ques- tion of European integration and money union that not only William Hague but the Tory Party with him will fall and fall.

This isn’t necessarily to say that future electoral defeat will be as devastating as this one. It is to point out a lack of a Conservative Party arguing bitterly over Europe with the rest of the country they are not likely to win an election, however many squirms its opponents have made by that time.
Lessons for left in SLP failure

Crisis in the court of King Arthur

Dave Hudson

LAUNCHED at the wrong time, in the wrong way and with the wrong leadership, the Independent, or Independent Socialists, would be a feature of any healthy, socialist democratic organisation.

On the contrary, they are the self-inflicted wounds of a leadership in a state maintaining control by trampling on the democratic rights of its members.

Socialist Outlook criticised the premature launch of the SLP just prior to the general election. We made the point that the working class and its Vanguard would turn out only if the Labour Party was to get rid of the hated Tony Government, any candidates standing to the left of the Labour Party would feel greatly squeezed.

The left socialists should maintain a united front approach against the Tories, ensuring a hearing and a role for our Left for our criticisms of New Labour.

However, it would have been entirely possible for the SLP to recover from these other and these mistakes, if it had maintained an organic link with the Labour Party and its grassroots base.

The General Election was a defeated job. It was launched uni-laterally by a small group of people who had no contact with any other organisations.

Tokyo is an example of a working class movement that never had a chance to organise.

China Syndrome: Socialist politics in SLP led to recently published an article endorsing the Beijing bureaucrats’ 1989 Tiananmen massacre of workers and students

China Syndrome: Socialist politics in SLP led to recently published an article endorsing the Beijing bureaucrats’ 1989 Tiananmen massacre of workers and students

Great Expectations

"I think the other people who joined the SLP," writes Councillor Ian Driver, in a recent resignation letter, "had great expectations of the party. I clearly believe that the SLP would break the mould of old party politics in this country and provide a unique and much needed alternative to the present situation. Unfortunately, none of this happened."

Ian, along with many others a campaigner for democracy in the SLP, found instead a regime that revealed itself to be worse than the Labour Party. In fact it had more in common with the old Stalinist parties, or with the monstrous caricature that was the WRP.

"In particular a poster with the wretched slogan, "In a really sickened state," Ian writes, "by the lack of internal democracy in the SLP. ... political debate is completely stifled and, where members do succeed in discussing political policies, any ideas expressed contrary to those of the leadership are stamped on.

Ian, who is a respected militant and member of Southwark Council in South London, accuses Scargill and his control of a total disregard for democratic rights," and of "authoritarian intolerance." He complains of threatening letters from Scargill or his henchmen to members, demanding explanations for this or that misdemeanour.

Expelled

Members were expelled under the guise that they were never really members, or because they were being held in their offices (even when they wanted to pay). No evidence against them is shown, and any right to appeal is denied.

At the time Scargill is quite happy, according to Ian and others who have been forced out, to associate with disruptive elements who have resorted to violence against party members, or who have public

noisy speculators, the political

is just the first manifestation of this process. There are widespread differences in analysis as to the tempo, but for the first time since 1945 a recompilation of the workers’ movement is poised.

The economic conditions for Labourist reformism have been eroded by intensified competition on a global scale, with big capital expanding its empire of mergers and takeovers, demanding more deregulation and drastic public spending cuts. The Maastricht process and EMU are the political form of this.

This process is reinforced by the collapse of Stalinism which has reasserted itself as an open and democratic basis, the ruling class feels it no longer needs to concede vague welfare provision to the working class.

Blair’s New Labour government has been long in preparation for this scenario, and will lead to a dramatic collision with the working class. For the first time since the war, the conditions are being created for major splits within the workers’ movement.

Wake up call

It is essential that the left in the Labour Party and the unions end in sleepwalking. If a new party of the working class is to develop, it is essential to an emergency plan to give the ruling class a new direction.

This is the first lesson of the SLP failure. It involves the need for more organised people behind closed doors to have an inevitable bureaucratic restructure. Learning the lessons of the SLP means rejecting pompous (and sectarian) self-declarations either by vainglorious leaders, or a gaggle of tiny groups, with small forces.

A new party means bringing together, in an open and democratic framework and based initially on a limited action programme, broad class struggle forces from the Labour and trade union movement, the social movements, radical youth and the far-left.

It is only size, social and political weight which can impose a sense of responsibility, order and procedure on such an initially diverse political formation, not the bureaucratic back-bone.

Socialist Outlook believes such a party will only emerge out of small working class battles with the Labour government. But the existence of a broad vanguard of the class which is politically prepared for such an eventuality past-to-give leadership can ensure its success.

We would envisage starting such a party and argue within its democratic structure for the adoption of a more fully developed revolutionary programme.
Why unions sold out on Blair’s Partnership fraud

Pete Firmin

EVErything at Labour Party Conference was according to Blair’s plan. Conference delivered a ‘yes’ vote to ‘Partnership in Power’ with its demolition of Party democracy (with around 30 per cent of votes cast against).

Most contentious issues were kept off the agenda, even if they weren’t, then the movers agreed to remit rather than rock the boat. Blair himself delivered a very eloquent, cleverly crafted speech which ended with a victory lap.

The exception to this smooth running was the National Executive Committee’s axing of its Union link. Not only did Ken Livingstone beat Peter Mandelson by a substantial margin for the NREC’s vacancy, but the proportion of the vote obtained by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs’ slate increased from 31 per cent to 39 per cent.

Blair had the trade union leaders to thank for such a successful conference. John Edmonds of the GMB, speaking on Partnership in Power, said he didn’t support the proposals. When he asked to be voting against them, and went on to say, parroting Blair’s speech to the NEC, ‘we’re watching you Tony’.

Concessions

Union leaders did not want to oppose Partnership in Power in case they could not calculate it would endanger any concessions from the government on union rights. However, they then ensured that the composition on this issue contained nothing more than Blair – no figure on the minimum wage, nothing on the internal union law. The TGWU representatives at composing (Bill Morris among them) even insisted that resolutions on the Liverpool dockers – echoing the policy passed at TGWU conference – be excluded from the composition. The union leaders dropped their demands on the Labour government even before entering negotiations.

Where resolutions were debated which posed uncomfortable questions for the government – on steel, on Indonesia, on sales to Indonesia, Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in the NHS – union leaders readily agreed to remit them to the NEC.

Even a left union delegation, the RMT, eventually remitted their resolution on PFI in the rail industry, having been convinced that they should only put it to the vote if they could win.

They reasoned that remitting was better than having it voted down, ignoring the fact that remission means the NEC simply bins resolutions it doesn’t like. Instead, it would have had a reasonable chance of being passed.

The only close call for Blair was on Trident, where the vote went 53-47 against the resolution for scrapping it.

Beyond the stage management, the lengthy speeches by ministers, the now routine intimidation of delegates, does what this year’s Labour Party conference say about the state of the movements?

The adoption of Partnership in Power makes it virtually impossible for the labour movement to hold the government to account – it removes the ability of unions and CLPs to submit resolutions critical of the actions of the government.

It also ends the right of individual members to elect MPs to the NEC, and downgrades the NEC as compared to a new committee, the Joint Policy Committee, with an in-built cabinet majority.

Union leaders were happy to go along with this – and overturn their own conferences’ policy in the process – because it doesn’t upset the main link “they” are concerned about. Their ability to have cosy chats with Labour ministers remains unscathed. They dislike the ability of their membership to hold them to account just as much as Blair does.

General Secretaries

Some on the Labour Left refuse to recognise this conflict of interest, simply denouncing ‘the unions’ for their voting records in the Labour Party. This comes mainly from those around the Campaign for Party Democracy, whose concept of winning support in the unions’ usually consists of writing to General Secretaries.

They prefer to share platforms with left (or not-so-left) General Secretaries to linking up with, and being a part of, the oppositions within the unions fighting for a change of policy and attempting to call those leaders to account.

Some have taken the NEC result as a signal of a resurgence of the Labour Left, overshadowing the adoption of Partnership in Power. This view alone comes from, like Ken Livingstone himself, who said in advance that Partnership in Power would signal the end of the Labour Party.

The problem with this analysis is twofold. Firstly, it sees voting for the Campaign Group slate as a coherent force, whereas many are members who have become inactive because of despair at the drift of the Party.

Secondly, and more important, it assumes that simply organising to win the Constituency section of the NEC will change the balance of forces. This strategy is inconsistent even in its own terms – the CLP section of the new NEC will only be taken away by a body being downgraded anyway. Victory in the CLP section of the NEC elections would change nothing on its own.

In order to achieve such a result in the NEC elections, some are talking of the need for a very broad alliance indeed. They cite the joint effort with Labour Reform around Partnership in Power and say this needs to be repeated.

No policies

However, Labour Reform is not and does not claim to be an organisation of the Left. If anything it is a section of the old Labour right. They do not have policy positions beyond the ones they took on Partnership in Power, and individual freely admit they voted for the scrapping of Clause IV.

In order to enter into a joint election campaign with Labour Reform – which represents very little on the ground – the Labour party would have to drop any idea of campaigning on key policy issues. The work with Labour Reform around Partnership in Power was not without its problems. Labour Reform were not prepared to oppose the changes, but only to call for deferral because of lack of time to discuss them.

A section of the Left went along with this, not as a fallback position if outright opposition fell, but as their main argument. Deferral was, however, never likely to win support in the unions, and opportunities were missed to argue the case for rejection of the changes, leaving the General Secretaries in an easier task in their own writings.

Those who want to challenge Blair’s capitalist policies will put questions of NEC slates in their rightful context – the need to be part of the opposition to those policies through demonstrations, strikes etc. This strategy can also motivate those who vote for the Left within the Party to become active.

Union needs to be forged in action between Party activists and campaigns outside; those in single issue campaigns and other political groups.

The Labour left needs to find ways of openly participating in the developing debate around how to forge an alternative to Blair – an alternative that will be constructed in practice but must also have an organisational form.

Defend the Strasbourg 4!

Four Labour members of the European Parliament – Kon Danek, Michael Hindley and Alex Falconer – have been suspended from the European Parliament’s Labour Party. The Labour Party leadership demanded that all Euro-MPs sign an undertaking not to publicly discuss the system to be employed for the European elections next year. The four refused and were suspended, although they are still expected to abide by the rules.

Jack Straw has now promised to discuss the situation but hasn’t set a date for the talks.

Under the Milibank cash: Ken Coates

Four European elections eliminating dissident MEPs like the four and others, it will be much easier for him to centrally determine candidates for the next British parliamentary elections, removing the Left MPs at a stroke.

The four (apparently) soon to be joined by several more) must be defenestrated and given the option of basic democratic rights. Party members at all levels have the right to speak out against policy they disagree with.

Blair’s intolerance of any opposition must be met with a new wave of those who don’t agree with the criticism being made, such as when Labour forced the campaign for a ‘yes’ vote in the Welsh referendum.

The UK must attempt to assert across the labour movement (see elsewhere on UNISON to silence critic, and socialists have to defend the right to speak out and organise support.

Trade union and LP bodies should pass resolutions condemning the suspension of the four.
Fighting on for welfare state

DEFEATING health, education and welfare services will be the core of resistance to the new Labour government; and the only campaign which sets out to link and organise campaigning on all these issues, the Welfare State Network, held a successful national conference on October 18.

Over 200 activists and campaigners heard Tony Benn open the conference with a warning that the new state welfare system would take us back to the horrors of Victorian times, and calling for "the biggest national campaign possible".

There was lively discussion in workshops on topics including the Welfare to Work policy, fighting NHS cuts, defending schools, opposing student fees, rejecting "Pfizerisation", and redefining welfare reform, and building on the summer’s Eurocamp campaign to battle against unemployment through action.

A strengthened Steering Committee was elected, drawn from across the UK and Ireland, and the WSN pledged among other things, to organise a conference in defence of the NHS for campaigners and health workers on Saturday 2 March.

The WSN record of activity and political debate contrasts vividly with the sterile, bureaucratic posturing of Ken Livingstone’s ‘Campaign to Defend the Welfare State’, which meets only once a year in a tightly controlled environment dominated by platform bigwigs, makes no attempt to build local campaigns and which has steadfastly reified all the efforts of the WSN to establish joint work.

[Contact the WSN c/o 183 Queen’s Crescent, London NW4 4DS. 0271-639-5068]

Cash handout too small to end NHS shambles

Harry Sloan

LABOUR ministers continue to dig themselves further into the Tory-created crisis in the NHS.

The belated acknowledgement that Kenneth Clarke’s cash limits were set to cause a disaster in front-line services this winter led to the announcement of an additional, one-off injection of £300 million.

Although a welcome concession, and a considerable extra amount to be spent in just six months, we should bear in mind that the combined debts of Trusts and Health Authorities are projected at around £700m, and Health Minister Alan Milburn has declared that all these bodies must now balance their books by April 1 — effectively calling for deeper and more rapid cuts in almost every area.

Health Secretary Frank Dobson insisted that the extra money would be targeted to ensure that emergency services remained open through the winter months, and to spending the discharge of elderly patients from hospital beds.

Unfortunately the support of frail elderly patients after their discharge falls on council social services, many of which are still slashing back services as part of 1997/98 budget cuts averaging £2.5 million per authority. Some have already run out of money to support elderly patients in residential or nursing homes. Oxfordshire alone has a waiting list of 100, which is predicted to double as £1m is cut from social service spending over two years.

In fact nobody has yet received any of the extra NHS cash. A third of the money has been earmarked to pay off existing debts on GP prescribing budgets, leaving relatively small amounts in each region, for which health authorities had to submit detailed "bids" by November, consuming even more time and energy.

This process could leave whole areas receiving none of the extra cash, while even those which win out will get relatively little compared with the deficits they face.

Oxfordshire is £11m in the red, Worcestershire £18m, and individual Trusts are looking at massive "deficits" as Wellhouse Trust and Forest Healthcare in north London each face cuts of £7m and £10m.

These immense financial pressures are driving wholesale bed closures, cuts in waiting lists and complex Trust "mergers" which will close still more front-line beds. In South West London alone more than 200 beds have closed since last winter, bringing the danger of even longer agony on trolleys for patients requiring emergency admission this winter.

Meanwhile the defensive and sectarian attitude of the new government on health policy issues is underlined by the refusal to publish the report of the Independent Review into London’s NHS commissioned during the summer by Alan Milburn.

The report, completed on October 31, has been given directly to ministers, who have said they will not publish it until at least January, although it is expected that selective "links" to previous announcements (quite possibly the Guardian) which supports the closure of London hospitals will enable them to pass public reaction to any controversial proposals.

The delay will mean even more beds will already have closed before the report is unveiled: already the promised "moratorium" on London hospital closures has become a laughing stock, with Queen Mary’s, Roehampton, Guy’s Hospital and Queen Elizabeth’s children’s hospital all rushing towards closure while the Review panel was deliberating.

London Health Emergency has urged the immediate publication of the London Review, and warned of the dire consequences if any further acute hospital beds are allowed to close in the capital.

The fightback has begun. Over the last two years we have seen a massive wave of strikes and demonstrations across Europe.

French ferry drivers are back in the news again as Josip crias to wriggle out of the concessions made by the previous government last time round.

The Prodi government in Italy may have survived this time but this doesn’t mean all is plain sailing from now on either for them or any other European government.

Between April and June last year the Euromarxists against Unemployment, Job Insecurity and Social Exclusion marched across 17 European countries calling for jobs and welfare, culminating in a 50,000-strong demonstration in Amsterdam and forcing unemployment onto the European agenda.

The CGT, the main trade union federation in France, has called for a massive demonstration in Luxem- bourg on November 20 to demand real measures to combat unemployment - including the introduction of a 35 hour week across Europe.

Not wanting to be left behind again, the European Trade Union Congress (which includes the British TUC) has backed the call. The Euromarxist campaign, including the TUC's European TUC Centre on 01744 355889.
Socialist Outlook

FIGHTING FOR JOBS

Youth face New (Slave) Labour

Raw Deal for young jobless

George Thompson

April—by which unemploy- ment for six months or more will be forced to join Labour's employ- ment scheme, New Deal or lose their dole. The supposed aim of New Deal is to remove generation from the unemployment register but its likely result is to create a cheap pool of labour. The government is spending £3.1 billion on the programme, but very little money will reach the pockets of the young participants. Most of it will go in huge handouts to bosses to subsidize them for employing young jobless at pay little more than their Job Seekers Allowance.

It has been trumpeted that the jobless participants will have four options under New Deal, but this is a myth. Full-time education or training option for up to 12 months will only really be open to youth who have qualifications below NVQ Level 2.

Environment

Another option working full time is that the Environment- al Task Force is even less appealing when one of the stated projects will be reclamations of derelict or waste land (ie weeding). The third 'choice' is to work for youth service as a volunteer for voluntary organisations. Presuma-

ably the good causes promoted by these voluntary organisations do not include helping the young unemployed or fighting poverty.

The final option is working for the private or public sector. For at least six months youth can be paid as little as £60 for full time work— but still have no guarantee of a job at the end of a placement.

Labour's local authorities are willing partners in crime in New Deal hoping to get cheap recruits to make up for staff lost in years of cutbacks.

Younger care

Already under previous work- fare schemes like Project Work, UNISON has criticised jobless people being compelled to work in areas like elderly homes where lives are at risk if people are not properly motivated or trained to do the job.

Rodney Bickersruff, in a rare criticism of New Deal from a trade union leader, attacked the scheme which will not pay a minimum wage to youth. He was reacting against the real danger that current employees will be sacked and replaced by the cheaper young casuals.

Although the TUC opposed verbally Project Work it has nothing but praise for Labour's equivalent, even when its been locked out of discussions on New Deal.

The Left has also been slow to criticize it. According to a petition- tion of the Socialist Party dominated Left Unity in the CPSU gave it "a cautious welcome". Also some members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs have been taken in, including Alice Mahon, who believes it will provide 'meaningful work'. Although there is a huge swathe of opinion which currently sees New Deal as the best thing since sliced bread, that will not always be the case. Socialists should link up with other groups for the Employment Service who will be particularly hit by the New Deal.

It has brought the ES no more money for its work and is using the money to reverse previous cuts in JSA so young people have the resources to finance their own job- searching.

Trade unions should be able to have some input into well financed voluntary schemes which have always been under subscribed by the unemployed.

Cash starved local authorities and public services should be given the resources for the creation of decent paid jobs paid by higher taxes on bosses who have made vast profits by sacking people in recent years.

New Deal is a huge waste of money and a colossal waste of the talents of young people. Pressure should be put on the trade union and Labour leaders to offer them more than this raw deal.

Build on the success of the Euromarch

Alan Thornett

AN ENTHUSIASTIC Report Back Conference from the European Marches took place in Luxembourg on 4 and 5 October.

130 delegates came from campaigns in Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Swed- en, Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Italy. There was positive feedback from both the marchers themselves and from the demonstration of 50,000 in Amsterdam in June.

The conference discussed the future of the campaign and how the success of the Euromarch could be built on. It took the decision to set up a European wide network of the Unemployed and Excluded.

This will not be a new organisation but a coordination of organisations, campaigns and individuals who supported the marches to Amsterdam. It will be broad and inclusive and will operate on the basis of consensus. One of its priorities will be to campaign against the effects of the single currency and decisions of the European Union which create un- employment and affect the ex- cluded.

The conference discussed several international initiatives and the possibility of another major Europe-wide demonstration, perhaps in Germany in 1999 under the presidency of the EU.

Two mobilisations were agreed for the coming year. The first is to support the demonstration at the Luxembourg Jobs Summit on Nov- ember 20 this year supported by the European TUC, and the second to support events organised around the Cardiff meeting of heads of government in June 1998.

These are important initiatives. The Luxembourg demonstration is the first time that the European TUC has backed such a European demo.

True, they have called it on a national basis, but they are under pressure from the French CGT. The CGT has built the demo, and intends to take 20,000 people on it, and they are raising the issue of a 35 hour week.

The TUC in Britain and its af- filiates have been forced to support the demonstration — although what it will do is mobilise for it is another matter altogether.

The Cardiff demonstration is an equally important event. It will be the last major meeting of EU heads of govern- ment before the planned starting date of European Monetary Union (EMU) in January 1999.

The plan is to have an interna- tional demonstration in Cardiff and possibly a counter summit as well. The shape of this will depend on the alliance which comes together to organise it but the European marches will give their full support. In Britain, the debate on EMU is pressing. On the one hand we have had TUC leader John Monks launching a campaign to get Britain into it as fast as possible, while further progress has been made by the campaigns inside seven unions arguing against it.

In Britain there is another impor- tant initiative as well. There has been an initial meeting of the various campaigns against Maastricht and the single currency, convened by Alan Simpson. Most of the campaigns were there: GLAM (Greater London Against Maastricht), TUSC (trade Unions against the Single Cur- rency), the People's Europe Cam- paign, the Labour Euro Safeguards Campaign and the Campaign For an Independent Britain as well as the Euromarches.

The main decision at the meeting was on the need for an effective coordination of these campaigns against the single currency and the basis on which this should take place, on the basis of a progressive non-nationalist campaign, excluding the Tory right.

A further meeting has been arranged at which a political platform for such a non-nationalist coordination will be dis- cussed.
Women must still fight to choose

Susan Moore

LAST MONTH women and men across Britain celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act.

The passage of this act was the biggest ever step forward for a woman’s right to choose in this country. Millions of women died from back street abortions before this law, countless others suffered hideous medical complications, including sterilization.

However, even though women in Britain today will not die because they need an abortion, the situation is far from perfect. The 1967 Act does not give women the right to choose but leaves us dependent on the whims and prejudices of the medical profession. Two doctors must give their consent before a terminatation can take place.

When the Act was passed Britain became one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of abortion legislation. Today twenty four other European countries have laws giving women control in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy. While giving women full control of their fertility means fighting for these sort of laws without any time limits, the situation in those countries is a massive improvement on what we have here.

The reality is that a high proportion of later abortions occur because of inadequate provision and bureaucratic delays in the early months. A change in the law to bring us in line with other European countries would result in a significant reduction in late abortions. The law is not the only problem that women face. Provision across the country has always been uneven both because of the role that anti-abortion consultants have played in blocking women’s access and the different priorities of Health Authorities.

With deepening cuts and over stretched resources the situation is becoming worse – even in places that used to have decent facilities women are having to wait an unacceptably long time. The Labour government has shown two seemingly huge sums of money at the Health Service but they will be very unlikely to break the existing crisis including in abortion provision – often seen as a ‘non-essential’ service.

The National Union of Students Women’s Campaign called a demonstration in London to mark the anniversary of the Act. Three hundred turned out on a bitterly cold winter’s evening. Unfortunately the event was not wholeheartedly supported by the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) – if it had been it would have been significantly bigger. NAC itself had prioritised the March 5th – an advert in The Guardian newspaper celebrating the anniversary and the publication with Marie Stopes International of a book of women’s testimonies of their abortions. Both these projects are worthy in themselves but the failure seriously to mobilise for the demonstration was worrying. NAC has been successful time and again in defeating the anti-abortionists in their attempts to further restrict abortion rights because it has relied on the method of mass action. It would be a really defeat if it were to turn its back on this way of organising and rely on a lobbying approach.

Despite this weakness the call made by NAC in the advert, to commemorate the Act by fighting for it to be strengthened, is one that should be supported. The move of John Walker MP to speak signatures not only for an Early Day motion celebrating the passage of the existing Act but for a separate one calling for women to decide in the first twelve weeks to be welcomed.

Of course it should be the case that these changes are brought forward by an individual member of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs but by the Labour government itself. Blair may do anything he likes with this, and neither do any of the new women Labour MPs elected in May.

If the fight to improve the law is to be successful then women and their supporters will need to take to the streets in their thousands. Alongside this we need to demand that Labour ensures that every Health Authority is obliged to provide adequate facilities for women who need them.

Recent opinions polls show that the majority of people support a woman’s right to choose. We need to organise to ensure that that support is turned into active and effective campaigning.

Join the National Abortion Campaign – East Act now. Call 020 7923 4878 or write to NAC, Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E2 8BL.

Is something happening to the family?

Terry Conway

WHY have a number of politicians, including the leader of the Conservative Party, been showing off their unmaried partners? What was the message they were trying to convey? And if these were all single sex relationships? Were the papers, broadcasters and others just trying to find something new to sell us?

When William Hague’s message of support to the Gay Pride march and Michael Portillo says that the Conservative Party should be tolerant of single parents this is something that all socialists should take note of...

But the traffic isn’t all in one direction. William and Fiona may have shared a double room at Blackpool but the Tory leader has been careful to make us understand that they do not intend to marry.

This spin was not only a concession to Mr Hague and those others in the Tory party who were taken aback by this but to quell the unease among the overall libertarian direction of his stance.

Cherie may have represented Lisa Grant, and Tony might be happy to have openly gay – and now lesbian MPs – at Labour HQ but that comes to a vote on lowering the age of consent for gay men to 16 however it will be a free vote.

Some families are more interesting than others to Jack Straw and the New Labour moralisers over recent years, but so has remarriage.

In the early days of the lesbian and gay movements campaigns were extremely critical of the model of the heterosexual family. Today the demand for the right to gay and lesbian marriages has become stronger.

Early Marxists saw the family as integral to the capitalist system and therefore vital for socialists to undermine. Frederick Engels book Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State is both one of the best books on the family and a classic Marxist text.

Engels explained that the family was necessary to the system to ensure the reproduction of the labour force. He meant not only the actual birth of new working people but also their socialization, feeding, housing etc through out their lives.

Others, building on his work, have since explained how the sexual division of labour in the family is reproduced at the point of production itself – leading to a sexual division of labour there that further compounds women’s oppression.

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This important piece of legislation – introduced as a result of the victory of Euan Sutherland at the European Court of Human Rights – is very likely to be carried. Many MPs have made it publicly clear that they intend to vote against it but the leadership has done nothing to challenge this.

Free votes are very convenient when it comes to another issue of so-called conscience – the Labour will not introduce legislation to improve women’s rights without a huge public campaign. They don’t want to offend the Catholic Church, they don’t want to be seen to be too radical.

Nor is Home Office speech explained that he was determined to tackle the ‘family crisis’ facing Brit”.

But he is determined to tackle the ‘family crisis’ facing Brit. He is setting up a cabinet committee to deal with this issue. He explained that he wants a strong and secure society when we ignore its very foundation: family.” Under Jack Straw’s leadership, it is pretty clear what is in store from the committee – more damage from the stable that has brought us curefors for the under 10s and other supportive and enabling policies.

If there are mixed messages from politicians whether Labour or Tory there are contradictions too in the paterns of how people actually live their lives. Divorce may have soared class families in many different situations – that the family can be a site of resistance as well as of oppression. Black families are often torn apart by the system – whether by the system or by immigration controls in Europe.

All of these forms however can be used by the system to force us to behave ourselves at work and in society more generally.

Socialist feminists always argued against ‘familism’ – those who argued you should be outside the family outside the constraints of the system so you would attract others to radical ideas. Today more than ever the limits of this individualism are clear.

We have to campaign for change that will enable everyone to live in the way they choose – to have equal access to services, equal justice under the law and real choice.

While we are heartily in these battles in the here and now, real change at this level means destroying the system and profit motive.

No women’s liberation, no gay liberation, no human liberation without socialism!
Stop the UNISON witch hunt!

Simon Deville

TONY Blair's advice to the TUC to "modernise their structures like the Labour Party has" did not go unheeded. Within months UNISON's leadership has launched an attack on union democracy and has found support that well known friend of the trade unions - Rupert Murdoch.

Rodney Bickerstaffe sent a circular to UNISON Branches urging them not to support the lobby of Labour Party conference which was called to demand that the Labour Party defend welfare services in accordance to UNISON policy. Whilst this probably helped build support for the 8,000 strong lobby, it is clearly a move to stop branches campaigning for existing UNISON policy.

At the same time the UNISON leadership has attempted to target branches affiliated to the Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic Communist (CFDU). Numerous CFDU affiliated branches have had their accounts scrutinised in an attempt to show financial irregularities, though not a shred of evidence has come to light. Despite this the UNISON leadership are pursuing their witch-hunt. Full time regional officials in Leeds have taken away the branch's concern when it became clear the branch was affiliated to the CFDU. Incredibly a report into the incident has concluded that disciplinary action could be taken against the full time officials but against three members of the branch who support the CFDU.

At UNISON's last National Executive Committee Rodney Bickerstaffe announced that there was to be an investigation into the CFDU because it produced material on the Local Government "single status deal".

Account frozen

The Lewisham UNISON branch bank accounts have been frozen because of unspecified "financial irregularities". Because no specific charges have been made, members are now being told they are unable to defend themselves against the vague accusations. Many of them believe however, that underlying the charges are complaints received in defending jobs and services, its support for the lobby of Labour Party conference, and the fact that it has a considerable strike fund. This last aspect would cause most concern for the bureaucracy since it allows the branch more autonomy from the national leadership in taking independent action.

"Insider"

On the October 26, Rupert Murdoch's Sunday Times published a front page article quoting an "insider" which accused "hard-left militant extremists" of infiltrating UNISON and "illegally clipping off hundreds of thousands of pounds in a plot to hijack it for their own purposes". The article goes on to accuse the Nottingham branch of setting up a bogus racist group in order to justify funding for their anti-racist campaigns!

It is difficult to see which is more bizarre - the idea that Nottingham branch would need invent racism to try to justify anti-racist campaigns, or the idea that Nottingham council is going to fund anti-racist projects whilst making cuts in every other area. It is clear that the "insider" quoted in the Sunday Times is a regional or national official who is preparing the way for a witch-hunt of activists throughout the union.

The NEC meeting on December 10 will discuss the Leeds branch. This is not just an attack on the CFDU but an attack on any branch's right to campaign to change UNISON policy.

In a classic case Time article pointed to the funds allocated to branches, with the implication that the UNISON leadership are aiming to bring branch funding more and more under centralised control.

Equally as worrying is the fact that many of the current witch-hunts are against activists who are guilty of demanding that the union leadership carry out UNISON policy. If there is an unaccountable clique using UNISON funds for their own purposes it is the full time officials.

Minimum wage

They decided to pull out support from the Hillingdon strike after conference had instructed them to continue support until all the strikers had their jobs back. They decided not to fight for the minimum wage or for re-nationalisation at either the TUC or Labour Party conference.

The reason that the CFDU has been singled out by the bureaucracy is that it has been at the forefront of the nationalisation and privatisation, and has demanded that the union leadership should be accountable to the members.

UNISON Gas convener victimised

Bernie Hynes, a UNISON convener, a national rep and a Health and Safety rep for British Gas Service, was derecognised and had his facility time removed by management on the grounds that they had "lost all trust and confidence" in him. Bernie, a CFDU supporter spoke to Socialist Outlook

SO - Tell us about the background to your derecognition.

BERNIE - On October 26, management announced that they had withdrawn my recognition as a convenor, a national rep and as a Health and Safety rep.

Their pretext was a newsletter to Technical Sales Advisers that I sent out. It stated that a Technical Sales Adviser was told by his district manager to resign or be sacked.

Management are claiming that it is not within my remit to give this information to home-based UNISON members. Whilst UNISON asserts that it is not entitled to such action, it is clear that management had met with a UNISON national full-timer about my derecognition, without informing either me or the regional official. It has also been suggested to me that they are trying to dismiss me for this.

SO - How has the branch responded to this?

BERNIE - There has not been a branch meeting since this happened, but a lot of people are angry that one national UNISON official has colluded with management behind the backs of the membership to remove an elected representative who management find troublesome.

All the branch stewards have backed me up and applied pressure for them to find someone to replace me. At the next branch meeting we will be calling for the re-election of all the reps as a vote of confidence in the branch reps.

In particular we believe that it is probably illegal for management to try to impose a Health and safety rep of their choice upon the membership.

SO - Have you had much support outside of the branch?

BERNIE - We have had support from reps all over the country.

It is clear that a national official is trying to help management get their way, and has even implied that UNISON reps will not provide me with legal support.

It is important that as many branches as possible pass resolutions committing UNISON to defending me and defending my branch's right to decide who it wants to represent them.

The derecognition of union representatives was legislated by Norman Tebbit's 1983 legislation, we are also calling on branches to demand the repeal of that legislation, along with the rest of the anti-union laws.
Unions at the crossroads

Fred Thompson

SIX MONTHS into a Labour government the employers' offensive continues, unabated and encouraged by government.

The new Labour government has said it wants to teach the rest of Europe about the benefits of flexibility. For the workforce flexibility means casualisation and job insecurity.

The privatisation of public services continues, whether through Private Finance Initiative (or 'trust' value for money) contracts, or retrenchment in their entirety and they will be little movement on rights at work.

Schemes like waffle to work and the abolition of basic parent benefit are not only intended to reduce their spending power but bring down pay in general by forcing people to work on low wages.

When the outcome of the commission is finally announced, the nationalised industries will probably be regional, not apply to young workers and be pitifully low.

Despite the bluster, the deterioration of the NHS and education continue, and the announcement that Britain will join the single European currency, even if it is not put to a referendum guarantees that Brown will be held down spending permanently.

Meanwhile the union leaders are doing much the same as ever, in the long-running disputes (Dockers, Maplin, Teamcra, carpet) and the long-running disputes (Docks, Powergen, Crichley Labels, Preston Bus). There have been an insatiable drive with their willingness to fight on against the odds. But the leaders have done everything possible to undermine and sell them out, just as the TGWU did with the British Steel dispute. Ballos for strike action have been used as a mere negotiating tool. Nor are the bureaucrats demanding anything from the Labour government. At Labour Party conferences they ensure the resolutions on union rights contain nothing that would object to, and made sure nothing else was passed which might make him uncomfortable.

Complaints about Blair's lecturing tone at TUC did not prevent them making a week that didn't do to worry the government or the bosses.

The union leaders are concerned at the loss of members, primarily because it endangers their political power. Their answer is not to recruit by showing unions can protect workers against employers, but to draw up even more attractive packages of credit cards, insurance schemes and package holidays. Just as Real wants to sanitise the Labour Party, making it immune to influence by workers in struggle, there are signs that the employers, often in collusion with union officials, are attempting to head off any fightback in advance by sweetheart deals.

What should the response of activists be in this situation?

Firstly, we have to argue against the concept of 'partnership', which is essentially an extension of the concessions to the employers on pay, conditions and jobs and for a systematic industrialisation.

Where action is taken locally, it should be by trade official, whether legal or not.

Unions should organise national campaigns, including industrial action, against national attacks and set up in the Labour government to carry out their demands (e.g. national wages policy, collective rights). Where national action is not forthcoming, the left should attempt to coordinate regional action.

Public sector unions need to link up with service users, both to apply additional political pressure on their employers and to give confidence to their members to take industrial action.

The strike-unit laws are still one of the main roadblocks to any fightback, restricting the right to take action, and preventing its spreading to other areas.

We need to force their repeal, linking a campaign for changing the policy of the unions to support for all strikes, illegal or not, and for solidarity action. The new Free Trade Unions Campaign can play a leading role in this.

The left has to organise within each union against the undemocratic practices and continual sell out of the unions leaderships. These left led bodies have to be open, democratic and campaigning.

While they should contest elections, their main emphasis has to be the role of the social democratic and nationalist action. Where possible and necessary, they should initiate industrial action against the wishes of the leaderships.

The Trade Union Left Alliance can play a crucial role in linking up these bodies and those of other unions, initiating cross-union campaigns on policy, providing solidarity cover and beginning to provide an alternative leadership to that of the TUC.

The shape of things to come? GBM heavyweight John Edmonds backs off any flight with Blair

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A handbook for union battles to come

INSIDE COWLEY - Trade Union Struggles in the British Car Industry in the 1970s

by Alan Thorntt, Porcupine £11.95

Reviewed by John Mellyor

ANYONE who believes macho management and attacks on shop stewards began with Mr Thatcher and the victimisation of Derek Robinson should buy this book.

As you read the extracts of 1970s newspaper reports, stating that new investment in British Leyland was considered vital that "militant moderate union officials can destroy the Tantisyker power plant in the vital Cowley plant", you will see in a new light TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones's claim that he was transferring power to shop stewards.

Social Contract

Inside Cowley demonstrates conclusively the disempowerment of union leaders' enforcement of Labour's 1970s Social Contract in weakening workplace trade unionism and softening the union membership for the brutal offensive of neo liberalism in the 1980s.

Alan Thorntt worked in the Cowley assembly plant of BL from 1959, becoming a shop steward in 1963 and TGWU full time deputy convener in 1967. The plant was unique in Britain. It harboured a factory branch of the Socialists Labour League (later Workers Revolutionary Party) over 40 strong which played a leading role in factory politics.

In his earlier book, From Mility to Marxism, Thorntt chronicled the making of militancy at Cowley, the winning of key stewards from the CP and management's strategy for regaining control, centred on the imposition of Measured Day Work to replace the traditional piecework system, and thus removing the threat of shop stewards bargaining from the stewards.

Inside Cowley documents in abiding detail the decline of the Cowley workers, the attempts of the company to break the militant factory leadership and regain control over pay and production. Anchored in an analysis of events in Cowley, it is also an outline history of trade unionism in the car industry and wider in the 1970s.

1974 saw the birth of the Social Contract and the intensification of the management offensive. Removing Thorntt was seen as beheading the stewards' organisation, and he was duly set up on fabricated charges. The book traces the complex interactions between membership, stewards, union officials and management. The officials viewed militancy and the stewards' their own exclusion from the plant by the stewards as a challenge to their function of accommodation with the company. Their role was to develop and soften the attack on the leading stewards, although there were partial exceptions, notably Moss Evans.

Militancy in a car factory has performance to be sectional at times, and often has costs for trade unionism. Management and officials were able to exploit sections of the membership who ignored the benefits strong leadership had brought them, and sometimes, when unions surfaced from the workplace struggle of their husbands.

Media witch hunt

They used emblazoned ex-Tantisyker Reg Parsons, who had already been in touch with Jack Jones, to orchestrate an opposition in the shadow of a virulent media witchhunt against the left. Years later, TGWU full time officer David Buckle reflected on the crucial in "break the power of the Tarts - we did everything we possibly could to try to break the backs of these people."

The result was an important defeat for the left: the Regional Committee split the 5/55 branch, the power base of militancy, and substantially the vote of Unionists for election of stewards by workers. As the car industry's frenzied declined, the convener Bob Fryer and deputy convener Thorntt were removed and a new leadership emerged under Parsons was elected. It was nonetheless a partial defeat. Thorntt retained his stewards card and his base in the transport sector because of the depth of support among the drivers. An inspiring section of Inside Cowley deals with the fightback, a crucial episode in the history of trade unionism in the car plant.

By December 1977, against all odds, the left, including Bob Fryer and Alan Thorntt had gained the leadership of the new 5/293 branch and won key positions in the convenor elections. At the heart of the matter was the fact that the Buckle Parsons leadership opened the workforce to the management of events: these proved militancy was the best protection.

Grass roots

But if a key lesson of the book is that a strong base in the grassroots is indispensable another is that insufficiently. Lacking the resources to build adequate support at Districts and Regions and a leadership was soon under renewed attack from higher levels of the TGWU.

Filthy charges of "disruption" for challenging militancy, and of breaking union confidence by distributing branch bulletins on the go when management's media distribution inside the factory; the TGWU bureaucracy's Kangaroo courts; the attempts to ban the left from stewards' meetings; the manipulation of ballots, all bogged down. It hasn't changed a great deal. If some sections of the trade union leadership fought against the
buses with a fraction of the force of 140 blaring speakers we would be in Utopia today. But the story exemplifies, too, the imagination, determination and stamina of our best militants.

Trade unionism in Coventry was far from simply a factory affair. The Assembly plant branches were key instruments in supporting legal struggles - in the university, the hospitals and various battles for union recognition. The most notable of these were at Blackwell's bookshop and Randolph Hotel, the Ritz of Oxford.

The book charts how principled support for those and other conflicts did not pass unremarked. Events gave the lie to the suggestion of a 'dormant' branch, the 110 per cent strike in 1972 at the famous Sגלי component plant was unaffordable to all the important competitors, company viability was threatened and several workers were blacklisted. Today, the stories of the border workers and the drastic rundown of BLM's operations in Coventry are history.

The book might have benefitted from some account of the organisation's policies, the struggle to defend jobs and working conditions inside the plant, the essential background to the struggle described here. It has little to say about the development of the Socialist League, which Thornt's leadership has been fundamental in the break from the WRP in 1974. No matter.

A major strength of Inside Cowley is its insistence on the need to popularise experience to learn lessons from history. It has some useful points to make on the struggles to keep the WRP and Thorneyt's tactics. It demonstrates in numerous ways how the lessons of yesterday can help ensure today's counterattack by management to mobilise individualism at the plant level and find new collectivism in the working class.

Inside Cowley is a significant contribution to the story of workplace organisation and a valuable addition to the history of Trentonism. It is a chronicle of past struggles and a handbook for future battles.

The conditions for remaking militant trade unionism exist, the foundations are in place, the ground is fertile, the time is right to continue the battle and to build a new socialist future. Inside Cowley is indispensable reading for all trade unionists facing this challenge.

Very soon key stewards like Derek Robinson from Longbridge were pronouncing in Council reports "we can grab that extra bit of the world market and give ourselves the reputation we undoubtedlly deserve from abroad." Fighting off sustained attacks by the leaders of their own union, Coventry stewards had wage war on wider fronts. Inside Cowley documents in macabre detail how Edwards obtained the consent of convenors and officials for sackings and closures. Combine committee leader Derek Robinson built on Communist Party (CP) support for participation by leading a standing ovation for the HL stewards.

After years of living with the daily possibility of victimisation, Thorneyt's leadership at Cowley ended in anti-climax as he was sacked in 1962 for failure to renew his HGV licence. As he observed, those immersed in wider problems often neglect their own. By now, as Thackery developed, the ground was slipping from under the left. Thorneyt's dismissal opened the way for Jack Mundie's Sympathisers and the drastic rundown of BLM's operations in Coventry.

The book might have benefitted from some account of the protonol shop stewards' role in winning the 18 hour week and defending the rank and file and the point of production. This strengthened the ability of full time union officers to force them. In turn the three tier 'participation' structures at plant, divisional and national level sought - with some success - to imprint leading standards on plant production and recreate them as cheer leaders for competitiveness and speed-up.

Terry Conway

THE REJECTION by the sacked Liverpool dockers of the recent "final" offer of £18,000 from the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company - by 99 per cent - is a huge victory.

The result is probably unprecenedented in the history of the British Labour movement. It is also one of the few in the case for TGWU General Secretary Bill Morris, who had done all in his power to ensure the dispute was ended with a whimper.

The week before the ballot was held, the leadership of the Port Shop Stewards had been in London to meet with Morris. Not a word was breathed about any intention to ballot - or indeed about any new offer from the company.

No sooner had the stewards returned to the shipyard and held a mass meeting with the strikers than ballot papers started dropping through people's doors.

In doing this Morris was not only going against the pre-election resolution passed by the Biennial Delegate Conference but even his own Executive Committee.

The General Executive Council had passed a resolution that no action would be taken in relation to the dispute without the prior discussion with the Port Shop Stewards Committee.

The ballot was sent out using the company address list rather than T&G branch records - in contravention of the rules of the union and the rules.

Morris was clearly in conflict with the company, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

The timing of the ballot was such that the papers had to be returned before the next mass meeting was due. The papers were delivered to individuals' homes on Sunday October 18, and had to be returned Wednesday 22.

Stewards reacted quickly, and an emergency meeting was held on October 20 to ensure the offer was discarded collectively.

There was great anger at the role of Bill Morris in trying to stich up the deal. It is a far cry from his speech six months into the dispute when he claimed to be "most obliged to be part of history in the making!" Some people may even have voted against the offer on the basis of his manoeuvre which otherwise might have been voted on.

Since the result morale has been high. A successful picket was held in Dublin the following day, with 70 Liverpool dockers, to 1,000 pro-mass supporters who caused a massive traffic jam in the city centre. Future actions are planned in Dublin.

The dockers have called for a lobby of the leadership of the next meeting of the TGWU to demand that this discussion be included in the conference resolution and calls Morris to account for his actions.

Since the unexpected victory at the conference in the summer, the Port Shop Stewards Committee have given more attention than previously to developments inside the company.

However it has proved impossible to organise more than the need to call together their supporters inside the union to discuss how to implement union policy.

The need for such a step is underlined by the activities of the union's official 'Broad Left' to throw its weight behind the disaffected.

All trade unionists will take courage from this victory in the dock. Now is the time to step up solidarity for fronts to try to win the dispute. Organising in the TGWU must be a central part of the fight.

OUT SOON!

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With a foreword by Ken Loach
Chaos in the markets?

Andy Kilmlster

IT HAS BEEN GREAT fun over recent weeks watching capitalists go into productive nervousness as the financial markets rise and fall.

A month ago we also saw the annual meeting of the World Bank and IMF being disrupted by a vicious argument between currency speculator George Soros and Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad.

But what is the significance of these developments? Are they the beginnings of a lunch into instability for the world economy—or are they just the result of stock exchange gambling with few effects elsewhere?

The current currency and stock market turmoil has both short and long term causes. In the short run two things are important.

Firstly, there are problems in the financial sector in a number of Asian countries. Risky property lending in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia and a growing Thai trade deficit sparked off the initial selling of currencies.

Unsustainable

This has now spread to Hong Kong where the property market has also been booming in an unsustainable way. There are growing worries about the future ability of countries like Thailand to break into the higher value export markets in Europe and the US in areas like electronics.

The second short term issue is that there is a huge amount of speculative money now circulating in the global financial markets. This is because there has been a sustained shift throughout the last decade in the balance between profits and wages throughout much of the capitalist world.

Yet higher profits have largely not gone into productive investment, except in the USA, but have been placed in the financial markets. These mark-ups have been expecting a slowing down of economic activity for more than a year now and are increasingly worried.

As a result speculative activity in both shares and currencies is becoming more frenzied as traders jump from one bubble to another desperate to spot the areas which will fall last when the bubble bursts and avoid the others.

Asian economies are not the only ones which have been abandoned in this process. In May and June there was a speculative demand for, and then selling of, the Czech koruna which led to a massive devaluation and a vote of confidence in the Czech government which was won by just one vote!

In the same way we can expect to see share prices become increasingly volatile as the markets prepare for the inevitable realisation that the boom market of the last few years cannot last for ever.

However, there are some longer term influences which have played a more important role in the crisis in South East Asia. Four in particular seem especially important.

Firstly, there is the long running recession in Japan. Much of the development of the Asian economies has rested on Japanese investment. While this is continuing to some degree, the weakness of Japanese banks and the economy more generally has fed through to other Asian countries.

Secondly, there is uncertainty about the future role of China in the Asian region, both politically and economically. Competition from China will have major implications for countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Thirdly, questions have been raised about the future interest of the US in Asia. The USA is currently the fastest growing economy among the major capitalist powers. Increasingly it appears centred on its own regional economic bloc based on the NAFTA treaty and relations with Latin America.

There are deep divisions within the Asian countries about how to respond to this, with Mahathir موحمد arguing towards an economic break with the US and the formation of an East Asian Economic Community, a development, strongly resisted by others.

Fourthly, questions have been raised about the underlying basis of the so-called "economic miracle" in East and South East Asia. Influential US economist Paul Krugman wrote an article two years ago in the US journal Foreign Affairs, widely read in US policy making circles, entitled 'The Myth of the Asian Miracle'.

Krugman argued that growth in Asia has depended not on increased efficiency but on the mobilisation of more and more resources. Consequently it is bound to slow down dramatically in the future as the scope for such mobilisation decreases.

He drew an explicit comparison between East Asia now and the USSR and Eastern Europe in the 1970s. While Krugman's thesis are controversial, they point to an important change of mood amongst governments and businesses in the US and elsewhere. The Asian economies are seen less as a dynamic, modern, model, among such people in the way they were a decade ago.

All these factors have come together in the wake of South Korea. Widely trumpeted as a major success story in recent years, including by some on the left, the South Korean economy has experienced two market blackouts this year, with a third, the motor company Kia, only averted by taking the company into state ownership. The economy is plainly facing a crisis of debt and rampant corruption.

Even worse for the markets, the South Korean workers in January had the temerity to refuse to pay for the crisis by accepting worse conditions and wage restrictions. The South Korean example increasingly stands as a warning of what might happen elsewhere in the region.

Repercussions

The pressures are likely to be be resisted to Asia alone. US and British companies in particular are now sufficiently involved in the region to ensure that any widespread crisis in the Asian financial markets will have repercussions elsewhere.

What are the implications of this for the system as a whole? Does it mean the end of a more generalised crisis?

Here we have to distinguish between the currency markets and the stock market. Currency crises under capitalism are essentially redistributive. If some traders (either private or government) lose, others must gain. If the markets lose confidence in the currency of one country they may move on to another.

The events of the last few months do not mean that traders have lost confidence in the system as a whole, but that one particular region is viewed less favourably as compared to others.

Stock market crashes are quite different. In those cases the signal is that the capitalist class no longer believes that profits will be as high in the future as they did before. As a result they are prepared to pay less for a share of such profits.

Such a feeling need not be restricted to one region and it may lead to lower investment and spending in the present and contribute to the onset of a full scale crisis.

However, it is not inevitable that changes in financial markets have such an effect. A whole range of other factors interact with them and influence their effect on the economy as a whole. In particular technological change can make the economy more resistant to such crises.

The reason why the 1970 stock market crash did not fall in a dramatic way in Japan in the 1990s led to recession was largely the mass of bad debts held by the banking system at the time. This factor is not nearly so prevalent now, and outside specific countries a collapse in the financial markets is not so likely to lead to a general capitalist crisis on its own.

But that does not mean it is of no significance for socialists. The turmoil in East and South East Asia provides two important lessons.

Firstly, it disproves the view that capitalism can find a "miraculous" way of organising the economy which can eliminate the possibility of crises. The Asian economies like all others cannot escape the tendencies to disorder and stagnation which are endemic in the system.

Warning

Secondly, it is a warning to those who believe the view which is increasingly commonly expressed in the media that somehow the 1990s are different. That because of globalisation, or information technology, or some such development, we are now living in a boom that can continue without end.

The underlying features of the system in which we live have not changed in the last few months and we need not speed the long run trend indicated by the South Korean stock crash.

As the 'Asian miracle' moves to an end, and the realities of capitalist development become as apparent there as elsewhere, they will underline the need for organisation and activity from those who can offer a way forward in the area: the working class of East and South East Asia.
Smoke Gets In Your Eyes

B. Skanthakumar

FOREST FIRES originating inIndonesia have blanketed much of the region in thick smoke blocking out natural light and choking tens of millions of people. Coudes Martin of the World Wide Fund for Nature described the environmental and health disaster: "The sky has turned yellow and the air is filled with choking smoke." In Sumatra and Kalimantan where the fires were started the smog has reduced visibility to a few yards and people have come into contact with it coated in soot. Tens of thousands of Indonesians have been treated for respiratory problems, eye and skin irritations and children for asthma.

On September 30 there was an air crash in Sumatra with all 234 lives lost. Poor visibility and communication have been blamed. On the streets of Malacca, the world's busiest shipping lane, there have been a number of collisions including one which left 29 dead. The East Malaysian state of Sarawak has been particularly badly hit. Schools, offices and businesses have been closed due to thick smoke in its main airport and port. Many flights into and from regional airports in Brunei, Singapore and Malaysia have been cancelled.

The Air Pollution Index (API) in Sarawak state capital, Kuching hit a record level of 890. Anything over 100 is unhealthy, and over 500 is extremely hazardous. In the rest of the region the API averaged between 200 and 350.

Stunted growth

In addition to the short-term consequences on livelihoods, the cost to the agricultural sector won't be known for years. The absence of direct sunlight will stunt crop growth, reduce yields and decimate harvests in seasons to come. Food prices have rocketed placing fresh fruit and vegetables at a premium and there are severe shortages in fire affected areas.

Surgical masks are hawked on street corners and sold in city shops as the officially sanctioned protection against the pollution. In Indonesia the price of these masks captured from 500 from 4000 to 4000 rupiah putting them out of reach for many. In Malacca, the Indonesian Environmental Forum has been busy encouraging the selling masks available to the poor in the interior. It has set up a community action centre in Kalimantan where they are good at but also to begin consciousness raising campaigns on the causes of the fires and the important of forest conservation.

One Malaysian NGO activist, Siva Raisiah, pointed out that the masks "were designed to stop shoppers spitting on their patients, not to keep out pollution." Yet governments were encouraging people to buy and wear them just to soothe their fears. Health advisors believe a wet towel to be more effective.

Forest fires in Indonesia are an annual event. Even the trans-boundary air pollution isn't new and was particularly bad in 1987, 1993 and 1994.

In fact in spite of the world headlines and extensive media coverage, this hasn't been the worst year for forest cover lost. During 1982/83 some 3.5 billion hectares of forest were burnt in Kalimantan, an area around the size of Belgium or the Netherlands. In confronting the World Wide Fund estimates that so far between 500,000 and one million hectares have been torched. The damage is being done in rainforest which has greater species diversity per square kilometre than anywhere else in the Amazon.

The Indonesian Government initially began by blaming the El Niño weather front for delaying monsoon rains and creating drought conditions which have made the region a tinderbox, where fire starts with the least encouragement.

The tragic starvation deaths which have been reported in recent weeks in Irian Jaya (West Papua) can indeed be traced back to the absence of rainfall and the poor distribution of relief supplies to this province. El Niño arises from warm ocean currents in the Pacific and used to appear in cycles of four or five years. However, in the last 15 years, it seems they have become a yearly occurrence. One explanation is that global warming due to carbon emissions is the main reason. Ironically the present state of fires will add to those emissions, exacerbating the problem in future.

It was soon obvious that the alleged cause of the forest fires, El Niño, might in fact be a symptom of the fires themselves. There were human factors which explained why fires had begun in certain areas and not others. The Jakarta Post editorial on August 13 explained: "there seems to be no doubt today about the cause of these forest fires. They were deliberately lit to clear land and make way for new plantations, timber estates and new settlements under the government's transmigration program."

Even then the Indonesian government was reluctant to pin the blame on loggers and export-crop plantation agriculture in Kalimantan with which President Suharto's family and the military have notoriously close personal and financial dealings.

Instead it blamed subsistence crop smallholders, principally the indigenous Dayak peoples who practise slash and burn cultivation to clear land. This controlled burning has been a technique used for centuries without the present environmental harm.

The past 300 years has seen the clearance of native forests. One of the main causes was the introduction of coffee and palm oil plantations. The government channels huge sums of money into their re-settlement, and indigenous Dayaks comply of being marginalised politically and in the resource allocation by the settler government transmigration program.

Early this year tensions between the two communities exploded into bloody riots with many lives lost and much damage to homes and property.

Angry neighbours

Neighbouring governments responding to domestic public pressure were beginning to lose patience with the Indonesian government. President Suharto was forced to make a public apology for the smoke pollution.

In a sharp break with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) doctrine of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, the same regional media began publishing commentary critical of the Indonesian government's handling of the situation. The Singapore Straits Times published satellite images of Kalimantan which pointed out the areas where fires had begun and where well into September new ones were being started. These corresponded to logging and plantation concessions, including those owned by companies which had been in previous years not to burn forest.

A. S. Budiman of the Rubber Association of Indonesia acknowledged that the fires were "caused by incomplete clear felling..." and "the practice of burning in heavy machinery to do the job." Indonesia's Environment Ministry finally released a report in September identifying 176 logging and plantation companies in eight provinces responsible for starting fires and gave them three days to stop or face severe consequences. The company is among those companies are numerous joint-ventures of Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean conglomerates which accounts for the "softly, softly approach" of those governments in place of pressure on the Indonesians to take firm action against corporate interests.

Suharto's friends

On October 3, the Prime Minister revoked the licences of nine companies. Their shareholders read like a roll-call of Indoensia's richest men and President Suharto's closest friends. It remains to be seen whether the companies will stop operations. In past years they have f0uted bans and licence revocations imposed on them, secure in the protection they receive from their ties to the Suharto clan and the military.

In August Suharto personally opened a pulp factory in Kalimantan owned by his golfing companion Bob Hasan. Last year he had authorised a $126 million from state reforestation funds to finance the construction of Hasan's Kianti Ker- to paper and pulp plant in East Kalimantan. This decision is currently being challenged in court by WWF.

Indonesia is already the world's largest plywood exporter and aims by 2005 to become the world's largest Forest Products exporter while logging companies continue felling timber fastest growing non-indigenous bushes in place, creating havoc with the eco-system.

Primary forest cover has been reduced to 55 per cent of the country from 82 per cent in 1967. At the current rate of deforestation within a hundred years Indonesia will have no primary forest left. Arable land in Java is turned into golf-courses and hotel resorts or inundated by mining and re-clay mining bogs in Kalimantan are drained and turned into rice-fields.

Once peat sets are all they burn on and on and aerial spraying with water does not extinguish them. They can only be put out by a rise in the water table. This will only happen if there are sufficient monsoon rains which are currently reduced and accompanied with rainfall cover due to break-neck logging and land-clearance.

Which is where we began. The Indonesian regime is committed to the pursuit of economic growth as an end in itself, abandoning social welfare and poverty eradication to the charity of market forces. This model is not only imposed by international financial institutions but is also supervised by the national capitalist class.

How much more need be sacrificed on the altar of "Development" before a halt is called to this insanity?

How much more need be sacrificed on the altar of "Development" before a halt is called to this insanity?
Refounded Communists fumble their big chance

The Refounded Communist Party (PRC) has struggled to keep up with the political changes in post-communist Europe. In the 1990s, the PRC faced significant challenges, including the dissolution of the East German Communist Party and the rise of democratic movements across Eastern Europe. This article examines the PRC's efforts to adapt to these changes and its impact on the political landscape in post-communist Europe.

The PRC's early years

The PRC was founded in 1990, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. In the early years, the PRC focused on rebuilding its party structure and attempting to attract new members. The party's leadership recognized the need to modernize the PRC's ideology and appeal to a new generation of voters.

However, the PRC encountered significant challenges in this process. The party struggled to attract new members, and many of the old party leaders faced charges of corruption and abuse of power. The PRC also faced competition from other political parties, including the social democratic party and pro-market parties.

The PRC's electoral fortunes

In the 1990s, the PRC participated in several elections in post-communist Europe, including in Poland, Hungary, and Romania. In these elections, the PRC faced fierce competition from other political parties, and its electoral fortunes were mixed. In some cases, the PRC was able to win seats in parliament, but in other cases, it struggled to win any seats at all.

The PRC's foreign policy

The PRC's foreign policy has been characterized by a cautious approach to international relations. The party's leadership has sought to build relationships with other political parties and governments in post-communist Europe, as well as with other countries around the world. However, the PRC has faced challenges in building these relationships, including differences in ideology and political systems.

The PRC's impact on post-communist Europe

The PRC's impact on post-communist Europe has been significant, but it has also been limited by the party's limited electoral support. The PRC's efforts to modernize the party and attract new members have been ongoing, but the party's electoral fortunes have been mixed. The PRC's foreign policy has been characterized by a cautious approach to international relations, and the party's impact on post-communist Europe has been limited by its limited electoral support.

Despite these challenges, the PRC has continued to operate in post-communist Europe, and its members continue to work towards building a more inclusive and democratic political system in the region. The party's future will depend on its ability to adapt to changing political conditions and to continue to build relationships with other political parties and governments around the world.
THE ALGERIAN capital no longer sleeps, since the massacre of hundreds of people in the eastern suburb of Haouch Rais. The population is armoured for protection against whoever is responsible for the waves of violence in the country.

As a new wave of violence his Al- geria, the powers are beginning to doubt whether the Zeroual regime is capable of ensuring control for its own survival and on behalf of the regions of Algeria where the fundamentalists are active.

The Algerian elite may have been reassured by the US ambassador, who, in the wake of the latest massacres, confirmed his country's support for "military measures" by the Algerian Islamic fundamentalist opponents.

But only the élite will sleep safely. Outside those protected by the rich districts, the population of Algers are now on the night in their fields or on their balconies, armed in self-defence with stones, axes, kitchen knives and sometimes Molotov cocktails.

The Haouch Rais massacre came after months of systematic attacks on isolated villages in the regions of Tlemcen, Médéa and Béjaïa. All were planned and executed with all the horrible details you have heard about.

But the threat to the élite is as worried about this far-off threat as by the dozens of bombings in busy places. Urban terrorism regularly empties the busiest streets, and in the suburbs, cars and people give a huge number of alarms.

And yet, life went on. The parliamentary elections on June 5 were preceded by thousands of meetings, squeezed in between the bomb scares. And the beaches were packed with people all summer.

Privatisation begins

Despite popular distrust, and public discredit for massive fraud, President Zeroual succeeded in using the June elections to give a varnish of respectability to his regime.

Immediately after the results were announced and before the new government was formed, the most painful part of Zeroual's neoliberal economic programme was implemented.

A range of enterprises in the construction, publishing and retail sectors were liquidated. The most total privatisation of the chemical and electronic sectors. Everywhere, redundancies were predicted or announced.

Cut-offs from all over the world flock to Algers to divide up the remains of the state industrial sector. Most nationalised companies had been unable to overcome the isolation and withdrawal of foreign investment which began in 1994 when the Armed Islamic Group began attacks.

A few deals have already been announced. Dowco will take over a truck factory in Rasina and a television factory in Sidi Bel Abbès. The project is expected to invest $2 billion. Pfizer and other pharmaceutical groups have also announced deals.

The International Monetary Fund is insisting that land, too, must be privatised, something the regime has been nervous about attempting. The IMF is watching the privatisation of Alger- gia's remaining protective barriers around the national economy.

So far, the government has presented a reactionary programme, most of the parliamentary parties, except the Berber minority's Cultural Democratic Rally (RCD), expressed strong concern about the measures called for by the IMF.

Ali Ahmed's Front of Socialist Forces has gone on record with a 22-page letter on how to tackle the country's economic problems. This letter is expected to set fire to the government's privatisation plans.

Women and children are moved to safer accommodation, while the men spend the night patrolling, or standing sentry. Most have only sticks and knives. The vigilance is not very effective: seven people at the slightest alarm, throwing people into confusion.

While people used to accuse the army of being responsible for a part directly of bomb attacks in Algers, and a wave of rural massacres, starting in Médéa and moving now to Chraa and closer to the capital. Then came the terrible news from Sidi Moussa, an eastern suburb of Algers itself. More than 400 people had been murdered.

Their throats cut. Their bodies mutilated. The young women kidnapped. The cattle stolen.

Families of defenders of the country's "units of unity," as its security forces are called, are preparing to mobilise their central role in the mobilisation.

Obviously, these were expressions of defiance, but they could be groups of workers threatened by job cuts and the dismantling of the nationalised industries. Their presence is the vegetation of the literature, you increasingly hear people criticise the army for not having intervened. And in the streets, many people have resumed normal contact with the police, though the army is still distrustful and avoided.

Who is responsible?

It is hard to find the truth amid the cacophony of rumours circulating among a traumatized, sleepless population. The massacres themselves leave few witnesses. But it does seem that the army was not—the many people suspected— responsible for these latest massacres.

It is as far as the fingers point towards the communal militias, armed and controlled by the regime. They do seem to have been responsible for some other collective massacre of Algerians this year. But these latest attacks were concentrated in the capital region.

The strategy of the armed fundamentalist groups has changed. They used to impose their own brutal authority on whatever population they could control. But increasingly, their strategy has been to carry out punitive raids against the entire population that they consider to be "inactivists" (collaborators).

In this war against the godless, murder and pillage are justified. And virgin girls and cattle are legitimate booty.

These groups have taken refuge in inaccessible mountain regions like Chret and Zorgain. From these base-camps they organise punitive expeditions, local genocides, in order to render the world that exists is as different as the regime is proclaiming a military victory, and reassuring its political constituencys.

In this desperate situation the growing structures of popular self-defence are the only way to fight the type of aggression Algerians are suffering—from that it can be properly armed and structured.
Moroccan Jews seek asylum in Palestine

Roland Rance

THE RECENT bizarre report of several Israeli Jewish families seeking political asylum in the Palestine Authority is a graphic illustration of Israeli discrimination against non-Western Jews. Some twenty Moroccan Jews from the Jerusalem satellite town of Mevaseret Zion fled to Jericho in September, after armed police evicted them from their homes and a court order barred them from entering both Mevaseret Zion and Jerusalem.

Until the mass immigration of Jews from the former USSR, in the early 1990s, approximately half a million Moroccan Jews constituted Israel's largest Jewish community. However, they have been consistently economically disadvantaged and under-represented in Israeli politics.

East European Jewish culture and tradition have been considered normative in Jewish life from Arab countries such as Morocco and Yemen, as well as from Ethiopians and Indians, have faced official racism, with even their Jewishness (key to civil rights in Israel) considered doubtful. Following the establishment of the State of Israel and the expulsion of some 800,000 Palestinians in 1948, the new government urgently sought Jewish immigrants to repopulate the abandoned homes, villages and

The European Jewry had been severely decimated by Nazi murder, and although a number of Holocaust survivors reached in Israel, it was clear that Europe would not provide the mass immigration needed.

Since most American Jews showed no inclination to leave the Middle East, Israel was forced to look to the Jewish communities of North Africa and the Middle East. Relatively well off, and the Jews had never experienced European-style racism, the fear of them had been attracted to the Zionist movement. Israel determined to "receive" these Jews from their "exile." The experience of the Iraqi Jews has been confirmed by an Israeli court: Israel sent agents provocateurs to carry out bomb attacks on Jewish community centres, while Britain's client ruler in Iraq, Nuri Said, imposed restrictions on Jewish civil rights Not surprisingly, within a few months thebulk of this ancient, prosperous and influential community had fled to Israel.

Similar stratagems, though less well documented, are known to have been applied in Morocco and Yemen. On arrival in Israel, these Jews—many of them professionals, academics or rich merchants—were treated as backward and ignorant children.

For many, their first experience of Israel was a cumulative spying with DDT—an indignity never accorded to immigrants from the West. They were then resettled in former Palestinian areas, such as Lydda and Ramleh, or in "development towns"—newly-built slums in the middle of nowhere, often in exposed border areas.

Israeli political prisoner Mordechai Vanunu, who came to Israel from Morocco, with his family in 1963, told a researcher in an interview in 1986: "I came from paradise to the desert."

This process was carried out by a government-appointed Israeli Labour Party, which thus earned the undying hatred of generations of North African and Middle Eastern Jews. Mevaseret Zion was one such isolated border slum built for North African immigrants. Until the occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1967, Israeli-held Jerusalems was a small and remote part of the country.

However, in the past thirty years it has been encouraged to develop into Israel's largest city. Mevaseret Zion, no longer on the border, has become a fashionable dormitory suburb for wealthy Jerusalemites who do not want to live in the city.

As a result, many children of the immigration forlornly placed there forfty to fifty years ago can no longer afford the spiralling cost of housing, and are forced to move to other city slums.

This was the background to the squatting movement in Mevaseret Zion, which led to the evictions of the Avivi, Dahain and Buzat families and their flight to Jericho. Now, with the help of Yasser Arafat, they have contacted King Hassan and asked to return to Morocco.

Although it is unlikely that many of these families will join the group in the near future, the entire story shows how freedom, security and prosperity for Israeli Jews, no less than for Palestinian Arabs, cannot be obtained while Israel remains a racist state, wedded to a Zionist ideology of separation and apartheid.

Is this Mary the answer to Tony's prayers?

David Coen

MARY McAleese was elected Irish President with the largest majority in the history of the 26 County State, but the size of the majority cannot conceal the deep divisions in the Dublin ruling class revealed during the campaign. She defeated the Fine Gael candidate and great niece of Michael Collins, Mary Barretto, who came in with 29%. The "left" candidate, Adi Roche, supported by Labour, Democratic Left and the Greens, dropped from being a front-runner to a poor 7% of the vote on a turn-out of less than 50%, beaten even by Rosemary Scallon, better known as Dana.

McAleese is almost universally hated by the Dublin media—the arrival at her first press conference was greeted by hostile silence, very different from the cheers which welcomed the election of Mary Robinson.

By origin, a working class Catholic, born out of her West Belfast home by Loyaliste, she is disliked because of her traditionalist attitudes—she is anti-abortion and close to the church hierarchy—but even so more because of her Northern nationalist background and what she represents.

Garry Adams offered his support early in the campaign and this was the cue for a concerted attempt to damage her campaign by portraying her as a closet Sinn Feiner. At the head of the media pack was former leading member of the Workers Party and Sunday Times asset Eoghan Harriss, who played a leading role in Mary Robinson's campaign, but linking up this time with John Bruton's Fine Gael. Apart from questioning how a non-Irish person (sic) such as McAleese could become President, Bruton and Fine Gael were said to be behind the leaking of a couple of Iris Government documents showing, allegedly, that McAleese was a Sinn Fein Fellow Traveler.

The campaign misfired in the end: it irritated the republican instincts of Fianna Fail supporters and their doubts about the way in which Sinn Fein have been relating to politics in the South: the majority of people want Irish unity but it is not one number one on their list of priorities.

Sinn Fein is too closely associated in their minds with the repressive, Catholic orthodoxy which for so long dominated the 26 Counties and which has now broken down in a series of clerical scandals, 75 years after the foundation of the state.

What is now being demanded of McAleese is that she represent nationalist sympathies and "reach out" to Unionists, i.e. that she helps sell the removal of Northern Ireland to a (largely Protestant) nationalists.

Fianna Fail voters need to be brought round to the yes vote on self-determination, which the British hope, will lead to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and to a new 3 of the South's Constitution, replacing the Northern, more accurately, recognising the British claim.

So, paradoxically, the election of the most pro-IRISH unity candidate could prepare the way for a settlement which copper-bottoms partition.

The other significant feature of the election and the campaign which cements the Sinn Fein/Fianna Fail Alliance, the pivot of the pan-nationalist front on which is relying to force concessions from the British is the election of a small separatist to the base of the Republican Movement. The small proportion of the 26 County electorate which votes Sinn Fein supported McAleese to a vote.

Fianna Fail leader Bertie Ahern will in the end dictate what the "nationalist family" will accept from the British in return for appeal of Articles 2 and 3, but even so, mere in fighting skills won't save him from the political fall-out from the "peace talks."

Fianna Fail's (and Sinn Fein's) reason for existence is Irish independence and national unity. They have not delivered on economic development except with the aid of huge (and short-term) EU grants. Should they be seen to fail on the quest for unity, then the gradual erosion of the party's support since the Haughey era could become a flood. The Labour Party was the big loser in this election. McAleese would make a poor candidate, Adi Roche, a soft face-decoy standing on a platform of good intentions, was designed to repeat their "success" with Mary Robinson in 1990.

She made little impact, apart from a few calm-mannered remarks on opening the Presidential residence for music sessions. For most Labour supporters such sentimental blather...
80 years after Russian Revolution

Still a beacon of internationalism

Charlie van Gelderen

THIS MONTH we will be commemorating the 80th anniversary of the October Revolution. It is a good time to take stock of what it was all about.

It is especially important because, since the post-Stalin collapse of the Soviet Union, the legitimacy of the revolution is being questioned, not only by pro-capitalist historians but by many who call themselves Marxists.

The old myth that the Bolshevik seizure of power was inevitable and that street-corner conspiratorial coup has been resurrected in an attempt to discredit the leadership of the party of Lenin and Trotsky.

"To talk about military conspiracies instead of national insurrection, when the party was followed by the overwhelming majority of the people... was clearly an absurdity!"

A second myth was that the aim of the Bolsheviks was immediately to achieve socialism in Russia. But socialism involves the elimination of inequalities and shortages: Russia was a backward economy lacking some of the most basic material resources. The revisionist theory that it was possible to achieve "socialism in one country" did not figure in the Bolsheviks' canon until Bukharin and Stalin formulated it in 1924.

For Lenin, the historical role of winning power in Russia was to encourage the international revolution, and particularly the German revolution.

That the Bolsheviks were able to win power in Russia first was because the relationship of forces to the workers there was more favourable, and the revolutionary leadership more developed than in any other country.

The uncompromising internationalism of Lenin, Trotsky, and the Bolsheviks was reinforced in the first Soviet constitution, that of 1918. Distinction between "national citizens" and "foreigners" was eliminated.

Anybody living in the Soviet Union and ready to work enjoyed all the political rights, including the right to vote. The Scottish socialist, John Maclean, then in prison for leading a strike, was appointed Con- sul General for the RSFSR. This gave him diplomatic immunity — and he was immediately released.

The Russian Revolution did ignite the spark of revolution in Europe. In February 1918, the Austro-Hungarian fleet mutinied. In Britain, in December 1918, at a Daily Herald rally in the Albert Hall, Robert Williams, general secretary of the Transport Workers Federation, urged "preparation for revolution".

There were real revolutions in Finland, Austria and Hungary, Soviet power in Bavaria, a revolutionary crisis in Italy. Even that citadel of capitalism, the USA, was not immune. There was a general strike in Seattle. Lenin's prognostic appeared to be confirmed.

These events struck terror into the hearts of the bourgeois and their spokespersons.

In a confidential memorandum to the delegates to the Versailles Peace Conference on March 13, 1919, Lloyd George warned: "If Germany ever goes to the Spartacists, it is inevitable that she would throw in her lot with the Russian Bolsheviks... all Western Europe will be swept into the orbit of the Bolshevik Revolution... nearly 300 million people organised in a vast Red Army under German instructors.

The October Revolution also gave a powerful impetus to the development of national liberation movements in India, China and Indonesia, and to anti-imperialist movements such as Kemal Ataturk in Turkey. It is well to remember the internationalism which inspired the leaders of the Russian Revolution before it was crushed by the reactionary forces of Stalinism, and that pursuit of "socialism in one country" has meant, as Trotsky predicted, socialism nowhere.

It is this type of internationalism, a genuine commitment to widening the revolution on a global scale, which has inspired Che Guevara.

Today, it is the Fourth International which carries aloft the banner of internationalism which was so central to the thinking of Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolsheviks in 1917, and this is what we will be commemorating on November 7th.

Eysenck's reactionary ideas live on

Rod Marshall

THE DEATH of well-known psychologist Hans Eysenck will not stop his ideas bout personality and IQ living well beyond the hype and emotion of Diana's death which largely swamped news of his death in early September.

A measure of an enduring legacy is one that is apparent before the death of its creator — thousands of undergraduates on psychology courses are taught to use Eysenck's Personality Inventory (PI).

"Many people well beyond academic circles talk of extraverts and introverts, of people being neurotic. Many others have taken intelligence tests or talk of genetic influences. These 'common sense' notions, now advanced by numerous other psychologists have a lot to thank Hans Eysenck for."

So to do the far right and fascist groups. Not that Eysenck was a member of any such groups — he was far too clever to be that falsely associated and, after all, as a Jew he did flee Germany in the 1930s. So Eysenck is not a racist by definition, but he most definitely allowed his ideas — particularly those on the relationship between race and IQ — to be used by such groups.

Eysenck, born with radical writer Leon Kamin in 1981 (Intelligence: The Battle for the Mind) Eysenck's writing has often been cited by racists."Chairs, Chinese and Japanese are often thought of as being particularly deficient".

Eysenck's ideas are based on racist stereotypes and bad science. He demeans these "facts" that are "relatively easy to establish" in the form of IQ scores from white and black children in the US.

Eysenck is careful — very careful — to present the cases of these findings "coming from a range of possibilities: the much more difficult question is whether these differences... are the result of cultural factors and the outcome of deprivation or heredity determined and produced by genetic factors."

White Eysenck is careful not to rule in genetic causes as definite he is clearly ruling out environmental factors such as socioeconomic status or the fact that the language of IQ tests is better suited to white middle class children.

This is despite a wealth of research findings (eg, Lado 1969) which show that the language used in tests can exert huge and statistically significant influence on the outcome.

This studied ambiguity on the link between racial differences and genetic causes, coupled with clear argument in favour of genetic influence on IQ per se (writing the work of Rans) allow reactionary ideas to emerge from a supposedly eminent source.

The argument goes: "Yes, there are differences in intelligence between races. While genes cannot be ruled in for definite, genetics does cause IQ. Environmental factors and biased testing can be ruled out. This is not only bad science, as Kamin and others testify, but it is a racist approach masquerading as science. This is why Eysenck's work is loved so much by racists and fascists."

Perhaps more worrying is the extent to which his ideas have become accepted as some sort of common sense. I don't have the space to present here the wealth of evidence that shows that many forms of ability — far better measures than an intelligence quotient — are evenly distributed among different races. There is also a large body of literature on genetic effects of nutrition and stature that argues strongly for an 'interactionist' position, whereby genetic effects combine genetically with social and environmental factors (see especially our own book - The Genetics of Intelligence). It is regrettable that we tend to over-emphasise the role of heredity and personality — terms which subtly delimit us from an individuality which calls for individual responsibility — but puts agency in the hands of genes or other scientific concepts over which we have no control.

The reactionary notion of responsibility lies not in suggesting the need for individual agency, but in deliberately ignoring the very real social factors that prevent such individual agency being realised.

Eysenck's legacy therefore is to suggest that people are pre-determined to be of a particular type — intelligent or unintelligent, successful or otherwise.

These labels only serve to back up a society that rests on inequality between groups of people and yet kids people into the role of the type they are contained responsible individuals.

To that extent Eysenck's work is only fuel for the far-right, but welcome fodder for capitalism as a whole. No wonder so many of the notions that he coined and popularised are now quoted and used by leading figures in government today.
Look back in horror

Voices for Choice: Women recall their experiences of abortion in Britain 1936-1997, £3.30

Reviewed by Eilke Dee

"I could have gone to prison. There was the horror of what you were doing and the fear of being caught. Horrendous. Absolutely horrendous."

Here, Jane recalls her experiences of having several illegal abortions as a young woman in the 1960s, before the 1967 Abortion Act.

She is one of 30 women whose experiences of abortion before and after 1967 are described in this book published by the National Abortion Campaign and Marie Stopes International, to commemorate the 1967 Act.

It reminds us all why there must be no return to the fear and danger of street abortion, and is part of a campaign to move forward. NAC campaigns not only to defend the Act as it stands, but for abortion on request to be a woman’s right.

For a legal abortion to take place, two doctors must sign a form stating that "the termination is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the woman". This takes away the decision from women and puts it in the hands of doctors.

The book makes clear the difficulties women faced before 1967. Contraception was difficult to obtain for unmarried women and often failed. Many women tried gin and hot baths or pills bought by mail order, before turning to backstreet abortionists, or, for the lucky ones, doctors who would help.

Alice was 16. Her father gave her pills, and the hot bath with gin, then tried hitting her and pushing her down the stairs, before finally calling in the abortionist.

Several women tell stories of having soap and water solutions injected into their womb and being sent away or left alone to wait for the abortion to start.

Jane remembers, "I walked for two or three hours. I can remember walking around the streets, feeling bitterly cold and crying, but knowing that I had to keep on walking. Had to keep on the move. Just waiting for the pain to start." She was back at work the next day - she had to be. Other women ended up in hospital with infections and incomplete abortions. One woman spent three months in a mental hospital in order to have an abortion, and was coerced into being sterilised at the same time. And these are women who survived to tell us their stories.

An important issue for many of these women was the cost of abortion. Rosemary couldn't afford the £300 required for a Harley Street abortion in 1964, so paid £60 for a backstreet job. After bleeding for 3 days she went to hospital. "They discovered I had septicemia. If I hadn't gone there when I did I probably would have died."

The book fails to indicate what wage levels for working women than were like, but £60 is probably rather more in real terms than the cost of most private abortions now. Illegal abortion was both expensive and dangerous.

The book also recounts experiences of abortion after the Act, varying from distressing and frustrating delays and humiliating treatment to straightforward procedures in which women’s ability and right to choose was respected.

My main quibble with the book overall was with the slightly puzzling choice of "significant dates" that accompany the women's stories. Some are chosen for their significance in relation to women's reproductive rights, or as "the first woman to..." achievements, but the connection between abortion rights and Church/Pulpit death, the Queen's Silver Jubilee or even a recent "tragic car crash"(yes, that one) is hard to see.

But this is a minor point. As a whole, these recollections of experience add up to a compelling argument for a woman's right to choose. Alice says, "I don't think anyone should have to go through what I went through. Abortion should be every woman's right".

Order a copy for £3.30 (inc P&P) by sending a cheque to NAC, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E1 3DL.
Defending the right to choose

SOMETHING was disturbing me, niggling away at the back of my mind last week. I felt uncomfortable, but I wasn’t totally sure why.

Then, while reading a newspaper, the pieces of the jigsaw suddenly fell into place. Sorry, I should explain. On Wednesday evening, I was at a rally to mark the 30th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act when I heard the news.

Audrey Wise was speaking, talking about the pain of parents who have watched their young children dying of terminal, incurable, degenerative disease. These particular parents had felt confident to go ahead with another pregnancy after seeing the first two children die in agony. They knew that if screening indicated this focus would have the same prognosis they could get an abortion because of the 1967 Act. On that basis they went ahead and had a child who lived and was free from this illness.

Audrey told her story in a somewhat clumsy way—she often does. She had irritated some in the audience earlier by talking of the need for healthy, happy families. But it was when she talked of dying children that a young woman at the front became irate enough to interrupt her, accusing her among other things of promoting eugenics.

After a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing the meeting continued. Audrey Wise was very defensive and panicking in her response—seeming to imply that no one had the right to comment until they had been around as long as she. This was hardly calculated to pacify an audience predominantly composed of students.

But as the core of her indignation, I felt there was something valid. While being cross of many of the things she said I thought the attack was misplaced. I couldn’t stay until the end of the meeting. I was cold, tired and hungry and had to be up early the next day so I don’t know if there was a discussion about what had happened.

A couple of days later, reading the papers I chanced upon the story of the woman—with an incurable degenerative disease—who had won the legal right to die. It all fell into place for me then. Some people with some types of degenerative diseases have been fighting this battle for a long time and now someone has won in this country.

There are those in the disability movement and beyond who are hostile to these moves—who say those involved are being manipulated and pushed by a society that discriminates against people with disabilities. I disagree.

I want the right to choose when I die if I develop such an illness. I want that right to be available for everyone. Fighting to end discrimination against disabled people is a separate and vital issue. If I knew I was carrying a foetus that if born would face certain death in agony at an early age, I want not only the right to abortion, but also support from those around me. To mix this up with eugenics is to misunderstand the threat of those truly reactionary ideas.

Susan Moore, London

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Call Monks to order over EMU

GORDON BROWN finally made his statement at the end of October, postponing British entry to the European single currency until after the next election.

But even while outside the economic straitjacket of a currency controlled by Europe’s top bankers, there will be no escape from the austerity offensive ushered in by the Maastricht Treaty.

Elsewhere in Europe, resistance to Maastricht misery remains strong, as evidenced by a resurgence of action by the French lorry drivers, and recent strikes in Spain.

However Brown has made it clear that Labour still intends to join the new currency, and will therefore be looking for ways to ensure that the British economy “converges” with those which sign up for the Euro in 1999. Already Brown has effectively privatised the Bank of England, handing over control of key levers in the economy to the tender mercies of unelected bankers.

And he has upheld Tony cash limits on health, education and social service spending, triggering a round of cuts this year and more to come in 1998. With progressive taxation ruled out as a point of principle, Labour must look to keep a firm lid on public spending, if it is to prevent public sector deficits exceeding the 3% limit imposed by Maastricht.

These are precisely the reasons that major unions including UNISON and the TGWU have voted overwhelmingly against the single currency and the terms of the Maastricht Treaty.

But it is hard to see any evidence of their leaders arguing for this policy. Instead there is the bizarre spectacle of TUC leader John Monks apparently more enthusiastic for Monetary Union than the CBI, mounting a one-man campaign to force the pace towards the single currency.

Top union leaders have been heard to complain in private that Monks has no mandate for his line: but there is no sign of any fightback from senior figures on the General Council, who have allowed the TUC to be railroaded into a policy that could slash the services, jobs and living standards of their members.

UNISON’s Bickerstaffe seems happy enough to slip down his own members who take up a fight in defence of public services, but clearly lacks the battle to defend UNISON policy in the media or challenge Monks. Bill Morris of the TGWU is more concerned to do the government’s dirty work by breaking the Liverpool dockers’ strike than to uphold his union’s policy in the TUC.

This issue will not go away. While the Tories tear themselves apart over the Euro, the spineless refusal of union leaders and many on Labour’s left to oppose the Maastricht Treaty leaves Blair and Brown in the driving seat.

The demand must go up from trade union and Labour Party bodies for the rejection of the single currency to be coupled with a rejection of the Maastricht criteria, and for an economic policy based on full employment and a restoration of public services, funded from progressive taxation on big business and the rich.