March September 27

VICTORY to LIVERPOOL DOCKERS

Make the TGWU FIGHT!
Defend student grants – fight tuition fees

Simon Deville

THE WHOLE strategy of the National Union of Students’ leadership over the last few years has been based on being ‘realistic’ in terms of what students can expect to accept or whatever attacks the gov-
ernment decides to launch on students.

The other strand of their strat-
egy has been to oppose any kind of student demonstration, mobilisa-
tion or occupation. The only dem-

onstrations they have organised have been essentially wrecking tac-
tics, when students have organised demonstrations independently of the NUS leadership.

NUS leadership argued that the only way to influence political de-
bate was for them to have cosy deals with Tory MPs.

Levels of Student Grants were frozen, then cut, as loans were in-
creased. At the same time the Labour leadership of NUS had abandoned even token demonstrations against cuts in education.

Anybody who that NUS needed to be ‘realistic’ to have any influence, have meant that NUS has been so inelastic in defending the inter-

ests of students that most are forced to try to live on incomes far
below benefit levels. Many stu-
dents find they are expected to live on a combined income of grant and loan that doesn’t even cover their rent.

As funding has lagged far be-

hind the increase in student num-

bers, it is often not possible to borrow essential reading material from libraries as less and less books are
available.

The right wing logic of the ‘New So-

olutions’ grouping who control NUS has led them to op-
posing the idea that students have a right to edu-

cation.

Instead they have called for a ‘Graduate Tax’, in which students get individual
tolls.

Apparently, graduates are sup-
pensed to all gain high paid jobs and are therefore in a better position to
pay for their education. Whilst this may be true for NUS leaders, many

of whom find high paid jobs as La-

bour Party bureaucrats or MPs, many working class graduates leave to return to the dole or shifty,

low paid casualised jobs.

The Labour government has
gone even further than the Tories or the Dearing commission would have dared over the funding of education. Their proposals are to abolish grants altogether and re-

place them entirely with loans – on top of which students are expected
to pay £1,000 towards fees.

Those without wealthy parents to help them are likely to be faced
with the option of going to univer-
sity and ending up £12,000 in debt at the end of their course, with lit-
tle prospect of finding one of these mythical high paid jobs.

Bizarrely, the Labour leader-

ship, Dearing and New Solutions have all tried to sell their own vari-
ant of making individual students pay for their education as promot-
ing access to Higher Education. It is difficult to see precisely

how the NUS leadership have been able to get away with claiming to represent the interests of students or how they have remained in the leadership of NUS.

New Solutions have now publicly opposed tuition fees, and have talked about organising a national demonstra-
tion. This will be ex-
tremely difficult given the role they have played in undertaking and de-mobilising opposition to attacks on students.

Their acceptance of a graduate tax and the abolition of student grants has paved the way for the current proposals. Whatever their reasons for opposing fees, the NUS leadership should not be trusted in any way to lead a fight in defence of students.

Clearly, a new leadership must be built that is capable of leading a fight to defend students’ interests.

Currently the Campaign for Free Educa-
tion is the only national campaign of any significance that has tried to launch such a fight, but it has so far failed to reach the wide

layers of the student movement that are needed.

The Campaign for Free Educa-
tion must actively see its role as uniting the whole of the student left, encouraging all sections to play a role in its leadership, anti-
nonsocialist and democratic way.

All attacks on students have been phased in, in a way designed
to minimise resistance. The current Labour proposals will not affect cur-
tent university students, but will be phased in for all new students.

To try to overcome this the Cam-
paign for Free Education needs to achieve active involvement and par-
ticipation by those affected by the proposals – it must focus on organis-
ing in the FE sector and amongst secondary school students.

In order to buy off any opposition to their plans, Labour have an-
nounced new funding for Higher Education prior to Labour Party confer-
ence. No one should be fooled that such proposals will be any more than a one-off that can be clawed back once they have got new policies through.

No way back

If grants are abolished there will be little chance to bring them back, and once tuition fees are introduced new proposals will not be about how they are reduced: the tendency will be to expand them.

We must fight for the idea that education is a right and an essential part of welfare provision, rather than a service that individuals pay for.

If these changes are introduced we will be starting to bring the same Thatcherite logic into Further Education, with the same profoundly anti-

nonsocialist and democratic way. All attacks on students have been phased in, in a way designed

Ozbay family must be

allowed to stay

Terry Conway

"THIS IS a sad and inhuman story of my family. We are the Ozbay family. Originally from Turkey, we were subjected to abuse and fied to Northern Cy-
prus.

"We are a Kurdish family and in Cyprus the police and soldiers beat my husband and put him in prison. When they took my mother, my brother was
who only nine was crying too

much. The Turkish soldiers beat him on his legs.

"We finally managed to es-
cape to England. We have been here for three years and the Home Office want to send us back to Cyprus. We have no

home, no money and friends and we are very afraid. Is it right to treat them in this way? Please help us if you can, we are desperate people."

Ali Ozbay, 15 year old

Kurdish refugee

I have been involved in anti-
deportation campaigning for a year and a half. But I was

still moved to tears hearing the testimony of three young Kurds. I was at a public meeting in support of the Ozbay family.

They talked of how they and their family were tortured, beaten and abused by the Turkish police. It was clear they were not alone in their

outragues and was a painful pro-
cess.

The Ozbays are Alexi Kurds from Turkey who were subject to brutal PERSONS in a brutal regime. They fled to Northern Cyprus thinking things would be better there. Unfortunately the area is un-
der Turkish control and their night-
mare continued.

They fled to London 3 years ago and have become settled here. Now the Home Office is threaten-
ing to send them back to Northern Cyprus.

The family is Husney, Hanim, Ali and Vedat (15 year-old twins) and Serhat who is twelve. When they came to London none of them

spoke any English but now the boys are confident enough to talk about their case in public and to translate for their parents.

Hanin’s sister’s son was shot in January, 1991 and two years later her brother’s son was shot by Turki-

lish police. Hussten’s two nephews were killed in 1993 and his brother Hassan was so badly tortured that he is unable to use his arm.

His sister was beaten with trun-

chores seven years ago and her arm then turned gangrenous and had to be ampu-
tated. Their only crime is that they are Kurds.

Hanin stated “The police and the government in Turkey were persecuting us. They took my hus-

band away for 520 days and they

used to throw him back, his face and his feet were swollen from beating.”

“I’ve been tortured a lot too. The same torture went on in Cy-

prus. The police would come and take my husband away all the time, I

would rather kill myself than go back to those two places.”

The Ozbays have nowhere so far remained unrenewed. Local MP Jeremy Corbyn hit the nail on the head when he said that

he wished Jack Straw had heard the boys speak – even he could not have gone on arguing that this is all an act.

The campaign has gained massive support from the pupils and teachers at their school who are very worried about what will happen if they have to go back to Cyprus.

The campaign is opening the eyes of many young people to the brutal realities of British im-
migration rules. Calls at the meeting for an end to all immi-
gation controls received warm applause from an audience, most of whom were not at all regular meeting-goers.

Anti-deportation campaigns have often drawn in layers of people with political activity by-passes. While their in-

volvement stems from their relationship with those under threat they are often open to wider political debates.

The left needs to put more resources into this area of work – both to win the campaign itself and to tell the story of so many worthwhile struggles and to be able to talk to this broader audience.

Contact the campaign c/o St Mary’s Church, Ashley Road, Manchester M19 3AD, Tel 0171 263 2380.

30 years since the 1967 Abortion Act

Torchlight March

30 years since the 1967 Abortion Act

For a Woman’s right to choose

Assemble 6.00pm

WEDNESDAY

OCTOBER 29

ULLU, Mallet Street

London WC1

March to a rally at

Grenfell High and Iron

Square, Holborn
TUC goes quietly as Labour leads off servile bureaucrats

Brighton not rocked

IT takes two to tango. TUC prattle about "Partnership" ignores the vicious anti-union offensive by major "partner" firms like BA - was stronger.

The task must be to build the Trade Union Left Alliance as well as particular campaigns in defence of workers taking industrial action, against the anti-union laws, and on broader issues such as fighting cuts in the health service. Only on real foundations such as this can an intervention into Congress be seriously built.

Many trade union leaders are preparing to ditch their unions' policy on Labour Party democracy and vote at the forthcoming Labour Conference for "Partnership into Power", and the associated rule changes.

This is shortsighted even in terms of their own interests, as it will make it much harder for them to have any influence on party policy in the future.

Blair has already demonstrated very clearly that they are certainly not at the top of his list of confidants, but the habit born of a lifetime cooking up deals may lead to a majority giving away the mechanisms for a stronger voice.

Every last nerve needs to be strained to ensure that the rule changes are not carried - and that anyone who votes for them against the policy of their organisation is brought to account.

No tears for slaughtered monster

THE UNITED Kingdom is no more. All socialists, wherever they live or come from, should call this with boilin' hate by the Scottish and Welsh people to this imperialist monster.

The union has been responsible for the spread of destruction - both across the globe and nearer to home. How there is a chance to build something different?

Scotland's double victory was a milestone in the struggle, bringing a new sense of unity. But not the distraction of the royal funeral worried conflicting activi-

ities. Scotland's victory is a warning to all.

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Liverpool dockers: "We fought for decades for those conditions, and we won't settle for anything less"

GLEN VORIS from Socialist Outlook spoke to JIMMY NOLAN (Chair of Merseyside Port Shop stewards Committee), shop stewards BILLY JENKINS, HERBIE HOLLY and TERRY TIGHE shop steward and international coordinator in the run up to the massive demonstration planned to mark the beginning of the third year of the Liverpool Dockers strike.

SO: You are now coming up to the second anniversary of the dispute. How are the dockers responding?

JN: We have the same resilience as we did two years ago. However tough it has been very difficult.

At 500 dockers have stayed with the strike except two who died. One of them died on the picket line of a heart attack.

This shows the tremendous determination we have shown. We only received £5 per week on average before this strike. This is not strike funding and this has an enormous strain on us and our families.

BJ: The men and women have developed politically especially about international politics.

We get the strength to continue because of the international solidarity - we must repay the commitment of workers who have supported us by continuing the dispute until we win.

SO: What level of support have you received from your unions, the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) during the dispute?

JN: To put it bluntly, zero.

However, at the TGWU Biennial Conference in July, 9 motions were put forward to support us.

SO: On September 8th the 3rd International Dockers Day of Action took place. Support of the Liverpool Dockers. What level of support have you gained and is it having an impact on the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company?

JH: It's very difficult, as Blair made it quite clear at

the TUC Conference last week that "we need a flexible work
structure".

However, the Liverpool Dockers are calling upon this government to use its major shareholding (14 per cent) in the Mersey Docks to reinstate the dockers.

We are also demanding a call for a public enquiry into the millions of pounds of government and European money that has been ploughed into the Mersey Docks over the last 20 years, where we've seen 3 decades of public finance and the deregulation of our industry.

The port of Liverpool is stagnating as there are now 24 per cent less ships

CPSA/PTC: Say no to a Bureaucratic Business-Union

Darren Williams, (Branch Secretary, CPSA ONS Newport - personal capacity)

The long waged battle between the two biggest civil service unions, CPSA and PTC, has entered what may be its final chapter.

On Saturday, 13 September, both unions held special delegate conferences which were the last chance for branch activists to debate the proposed merger before an all-members ballot.

Instead of the wide-ranging debate which could have been had about the future of civil service trade unionism, the proceedings were relegated to, at best, symbolic interventions by the insistence of the two National Executive Committees (NECs) that each conference debate only one motion, proposed by themselves.

Our motion was the more absurd of the two: "This conference supports the bureaucratically biased merger with the PTC.

Given the thoroughly bureaucratic nature of the proposed rulebook, and its consistent disregard for union democracy, this shows a grotesque sense of humour, or a total detachment from reality on the part of General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom.

Although the announcement of the two unions could, potentially, create a formidable fighting force in the civil service, capable of组织ing all-out strike action in defence of jobs, pay and conditions, the proposals currently on offer suggest a very different scenario.

This proposed rulebook for the new union (to be called PCS) represents an attempt by the right-wing groupings currently running the two unions to institutionalise their bureaucratic style of leadership. The proposals are that national conferences and NEC elections should be held annually, as at present, but biannually, and that only one of the senior full-time officials should be subject to election.

Furthermore, dockers' status as the union's governing body is to be downgraded, making more frequent use of all-members ballots to validate their decisions. Judging by past experience, these motions would be a parody of democracy, with members voting in isolation, on the basis of one-sided information from the NEC, without having had any discussion at branch level.

All of this is in outright defiance of the workers' democratic policy. Motions passed at both unions' 1996 conferences spell out a detailed list of democratic safeguards, intended to provide the framework for the new constitution.

Instead of negotiating for merger on this basis, and bringing the results to conference for agreement, the NECs drew up a rulebook on their own terms and suddenly presented it to members for an unnecessary and meaningless postal ballot in January.

The misleading information given to members helped to ensure that the vote went the NECs' way, and then used the results to brush aside the inevitable censure motions passed at the 1997 conferences.

The CPSA leadership even carried out a second, equally meaningless, ballot in July, to give them further ammunition for the policy.

Activists at both conferences voted overwhelmingly against the NECs' motions, but they have nevertheless pressed ahead with the final, legally binding members' ballot, without changing one word of their proposed rulebook.

The left in both unions now faces a real challenge: to counter the NECs' propaganda and deliver a 'no' vote. To do this, they will need to convince many sceptical members that the left-right political divisions over the constitution are relevant to the battles to improve their pay and conditions and safeguard their jobs.

In the longer term, they need to show the people by practical example, for example, in the fighting leadership that civil service trade unionists need to reverse the stagnation in the last 18 years.
Two years of Liverpool dockers fight for principle

Greg Tucker

Two years after they were dismissed for refusing to cross a picket line, Liverpool dockers continue their fight for reinstatement. A successful International Day of Action has again caused millions of pounds of losses for shipping companies.

Despite all forecasts, the dockers have stood firm. Every Friday, their mass meetings vote to continue the action. Ballots have rejected offers of "redemp- dancy" money, though increasing numbers of the Mersey dockers are losing their homes as mortgage companies foreclose.

In partnership with the Women of the Waterfront, their organisation of pickets, marches and speaking tours have served as a beacon for a movement too often too ready to accept defeat. The dockers' strike is for others in struggle such as the Magnit and Hilling- ton workers and for cam- paigns such as the EuroMarch or the trade union official leader- ships to shame.

Despite continued financial support from workers in Britain, the two key players able to settle this dispute refuse to move.

The trade union leaderships continue to try in vain to keep the dockers out of court just as they gathering pace to break the law, and the Labour government refuses to use its influence as a major shareholder of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company (MDHC).

International Solidarity

Despite frequent obstruction from the IFT (International Trans- port Workers Federation) an impressive international dockers movement has been built.

On September 8, the Maritime Union of Australia defied government threat to bring troops on to the waterfront in the event of any strike, with all major ports stop- ping.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut every port on the West Coast of North America. The Danish port of Aarhus shut for 24 hours and in Copenha- gen, dockers walked out of their canteen after hearing Micky and Sylvia Tighe describe the Liverpool struggle.

Dockers at the Swedish ports of Gothenburg, Stockholm, Malmo, and Helstborg stopped all shipping to and from Liverpool and Sheerness. There was also action elsewhere in Europe, and in South Africa, India and Japan.

Liverpool has become a symbol for all dockers determined to resist the threats of casual labour, mass sackings, and the deregulation of their industry.

Despite managed profit returns it is clear that these actions are seri- ously affecting the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company. That they have been able to maintain their stance is down to a series of behind the scenes arrange- ments in which the major share- holder, the British government, must be implicated.

Under the Tories this was hardly a surprise, but after four months of a Labour government the dockers are entitled to ask why something has not been done.

T&G must be forced to act

The failure of the T&G and TUC leaderships to openly back the dockers is significant. At the TUC the dockers were denied a stall or even passage to enable them to get onto the conference floor for lobby for support. The TUC hid be- hind the excuse that the T&G would not officially ask for such facilities. Bill Morris refused to ask, saying "we are constrained by law". The T&G has given the dock- ers money -- though far less than would have been made available in an officially recognised dispute. In- stead it has tried to promote a settlement as an "honest broker".

Their inaction project has been to arrange for a study of proposals for a Labour supply company. Confi- dence in the study on the part of the dockers was not high -- given that the company employed to do the investigation was heavily impli- cated as agents for the Mersey Docks in the underwriting of Med- docker's shares.

The overruling of the Execu- tive statement at the T&GWU Bijn- mental Conference was a triumph. Nevertheless the conference was a lost opportunity.

The dockers' strategy of trying to go round the T&GWU bureau- racy has let the leadership off the hook. Whilst the dockers have been able to cleverly expose the role that Morris, Adams and co have played, the bureaucrats have not felt threat- ened enough to change that role. It is time for a real fight inside the T&GWU. The dockers' leaders have been frequently dismissive of the T&GWU's semi-secret "Broad Left", and rightly so. But clearly the left that does exist in the T&GWU must organise itself to go beyond fund-raising, important as that is, to place real demands for ac- tion on the TGWU leadership.

Finally TGWU members must demand the implementation of conference decision. If this does not work then there must be a cam-

Lend your support!

MESSAGES of support correspondence and contributions should be sent to: Bo Jim Daves, 19 Scorton Road, Liverpool L6 4AS. Please make cheques payable to "Merseyside Dockers Support Appeal Fund".
Scotland's Parliament wins popular backing

Power for the Workers?

Gordon Morgan
SEPTEMBER 11, 1997 - a significant date in the struggle to secure our beloved Scottish homeland from the Saxon yoke.

Certainly Wallace's victory at Stirling Bridge in 1297 is so remembered. The victorious referendum of 1997 which paves the way for a new Scottish Parliament has a less certain future.

We have been here before. In 1979 not only had we a Ye vote in the referendum, we also had an Act of Parliament signed by the Queen which specified the powers of the Scottish Parliament and a timetable to set us up. This time round there is only a White Paper. As we are wont to say, "there's moneys a slip twist cup and lip".

Despite the referendum being a cowardly invention of Blair and Mandela which was rightly castigated by all parties in Scotland, the actual result has been positive.

In 1979 51.6 per cent voted for a parliament - in 1997 74.3 per cent voted yes. In 1979 there was no possibility of powers to vary income tax - in 1997 64 per cent voted in favour of such powers.

In 1979 the parliament was de jure due to a wrecking clause demanding 40 per cent of the electorate (not people voting) support the parliament, only 32.8 per cent voted in favour. In 1997 there was no such restriction.

However, even with an out of date democracy which effectively disenfranchised around 10 per cent of the electorate, 44.4 per cent of those eligible to vote, the register voted for a Parliament.

At least a third more Scots have since been enfranchised and in 1997 than in 1979. In this part this refers to the rejection of the denial of a Parliament in 1979.

Since '79 the Scots have been politically opposed within the UK.

The democratic deficit which has existed since at least 1712 began to increase more to look like active contempt towards the Scots in the 1980s.

The depth of anger over Thatcher's decision to introduce the Poll Tax in Scotland one year earlier than England cannot be underestimated.

Perhaps the single most stupid event during the Referendum was the No campaign's decision to bring Thatcher to Scotland 2 days before the vote. This served to remind people why they wanted to make their own laws rather than have them imposed from Westminster.

In 1979 the SNP whilst in the end calling for a Ye vote, didn't campaign for the Assembly. What was on offer in 1979 was Devolution, a clearly subordinate body to Westminster. What is described in the White Paper is a more substantial body - a Scottish Parliament.

At least 550,000 SNP voters voted Ye in 1997. Labour also was split in 79 - Brian Wilson now a Scottish Office Minister led the No campaign. Whilst many in Scottish Labour remain unionists, they realise a substantial part of the Party would switch to SNP if Labour didn't deliver on its promises for a Parliament. Labour this time was united behind the Ye campaign - doubters reluctantly accepted that this was the best defence of the union.

So Labour claim the Parliament will at the one time extra democratic devolution, devolve power and defend the union while the SNP hails it as a major step on the road to independence for Scotland.

These conflicting views were subdued during the campaign and at the time of the SNP's canvassing were careful not to give negative images. Immediately the results were in the dramatic decentralisation of its SNP's Labour, led by Brian Wilson, began as normal.

Most commentators post-referendum believe the Parliament will inevitably become the focus for politics in Scotland, that rising stars will target Edinburgh rather than Westminster, inevitably powers will move to the Scottish Parliament - this is where the SNP are right.

Already evidence points to the correctness of this analysis. Donald Dewar soon tipped as Scottish Premier, many other MPs have declared their preference for Edinburgh - the jockeying for seats is on and will intensify.

The end of the United Kingdom is in sight, the future of Scotland in the UK is up to Blair, the most centralist politician we have seen in a generation.

What then are the powers promised to the Parliament?

Like the Welsh Parliament, the Scottish Parliament will have power over the central office budget (read no money from a Scottish Office and a Welsh Office). In Scotland's case this amounts to £150,000,000 per annum. This is 1.1 times the budget of the ex-straitcly Clyde Council. Unlike the Welsh Parliament, or Councils (even a Parish Council in Blair likened its sovereign powers to the Scottish Parliament will be a legislative body, it can make law.

The key service will be controlled from Edinburgh - it could abolish electoral registration, remove compulsion, properly fund the service.

The Scottish Parliament will have total control over Education. They could end student loans and properly fund the Scottish universities and grants aided schools could be abolished and overall provision extended.

In terms of Local Government everything will be under the Scottish council rather than borrowing consent. It could reorganise, sell powers, increase local fiscal constraints - grant local tax powers, facilitate new housing, repair the cuts in services. To improve food safety, protect small farmers and start to replace agriculturists.

Edinburgh can alter income tax by 3p in the pound. It can also control business rates and change local taxes, create new taxes, abolish some others.

The advantages for the powers which could be exercised by the Parliament - they clearly could have significant benefits as the experts for Scottish people if the parliament acts in the peoples interest. This depends on the programme and policies of the parties. The Scottish Socialists and Alliance (SSA) has an extensive range of policies which it will advocate the Parliament should secure currency and argue it will demand other parties implement.

The UK and Blair have not reigned all power. The Bill has still to be published and restrictions could be made to restrict for example the likelihood of those from left groupings going it alone. The drafting of powers may overcome Acts seen as attacking devolution. They in the main is done through reserved powers retained by Westminster.

Westminster intends to retain control over Foreign Policy, so called National Defence - i.e., troops will be available to suppress restless natives including Scots. UK government agencies, for example, housing, local policy, company law, social security policy and many others which are already run by ministers under the control of London.

Conclusions

Although anything not listed in the Bill belongs to the Scottish Parliament, there will be many conflicting interests i.e., devolution of these are already clear.

The White Paper proposes an electoral scheme based on Parliamentary and European boundaries. However the number of members in Edinburgh would reduce.

Other than for the first election this formula must be changed to ensure an adequate number of representatives including the Scots - without the UK income taxes were reduced, the grant to the Scottish Parliament would fall more than proportionately.

Demand for greater fiscal autonomy would grow.

The major conflict will relate to Europe. Essentially Blair wishes to secure a more significant role for the UK in financial and business interests in Europe. Having corporate control of the state and leaving local issues to the Scots may free his hand.

Scottish opposition to the European Union is high and can only be bought off with promises. The SNP is the only party committed to Scottish independence - this is one of the reasons the Scottish Socialist Alliance and other socialists will demand the Scottish Parliament take the powers to oppose the Bosses' Europe - particularly during the coming Scottish election.

September 11 was only the start, the fight for liberation - of human rights and self determination - will intensify for the foreseeable future.
Wales: Yes by a Whisker

by Our Welsh Correspondent

ON SEPTEMBER 11 the Scottish and Welsh votes were held, overwhelming for a Scottish Parliament with significant legislative and tax-varying powers for Wales.

The result was nearly 300 years of British constitutional history. On September 18 the Welsh people, with a clear declaration of their will, narrowly voted for a Welsh Assembly.

This heralds the greatest change in the governance of Wales since its annexation to England in the 17th century. The British state will never be the same again.

The decisive result in Scotland cannot be questioned. Support for a Scottish Parliament is clearly the sentiment of a near majority of people.

The Welsh result is far more contradictory and, taken superficially, would seem to pose the same questions as it answers. A more detailed analysis shows some extremely important patterns in voting and consequently consequences.

The Welsh result is, in some ways, the most remarkable of the two. The 65 per cent of those who voted for a Welsh Assembly remains almost the same as it was at the time of the 1979 referendum on Scottish devolution from proceeding then.

It is clear from the voting patterns that support for an Assembly is evenly spread in Wales. It is concentrated in the working class areas which suffered most under 18 years of Tory rule.

Contrary to the claims of No campaigners, it is not simply linguistically based, but a predominantly English speaking valleys and areas concerned as much to the victory as did Welsh speaking areas.

Indeed, Welsh speaking Ysbyty Môn (Anglesey) only narrowly voted in favour.

Working Class Vote

Majorities in favour were delivered in Labour’s working class heartlands. Neath and Port Talbot voted 2 to 1 in favour, Rhondda by a majority of 15,000 and Caerphilly by a majority of 6,000.

The final result of which Labour clinched victory, came from Carmarthen.

This includes important working class areas like Llanelli, the Gwendraeth Valley, Ammanford and Carmarthen town itself.

It registered a vote of 65 per cent in favour, based on a comparatively high turnout, allowing the Yes vote to scrape by a margin of 57 per cent to 42 per cent.

It is also striking that in every one of the areas in which Labour and Liberal Democrat voters combined for a No vote, or cast doubts on the proposals, the voting was overwhelmingly in favour. This is a firm rebuttal for Allan Rogers in the Rhondda, Llwynypia, Blaenau Gwent, Ray Powell in Ogmore and Alan Williams in Swansea, along with doubters like Densil Davies in Llanelli and Ted Rowlands in Merthyr.

Two areas with large working class populations which did register significant votes against were Cardiff and Newport. This reflects the perception of a growing Labour conscious in these areas, and in Cardiff, at least, a strong anti No Sentiment was to be noted.

The result also means that Labour Assembly would be a cloned version of the increasingly unpopular Cardiff Labour council.

‘No’ Campaign

The role of Llew Smith in the No campaign is particularly problematic, as he leading up to this question has done a great deal to discredit the Labour Leave.

The only Campaign Group MP in Wales and his stance has allowed opponents to lump together all his positions as “old style state centrist/socialist”.

This could have particularly damaging consequences for any effort to build a campaign against the next European Inter-Governmental Conference, to be held in Cardiff next year.

There is a considerable sense of illusory within both the Wales Labour Party and Plaid Cymru about the prospects for Wales in a mainstream European Union. Llew’s stand on the Assembly will make it all the easier for people to dismiss his arguments against EU as emanating simply from a London-centred, British nationalist perspective.

There are already calls for his deselection, with the most likely replacement being a pro-Assembly Blairite.

It is also instructive to examine the motivation of other key figures in the No campaign. Two Labour Party members from the Rhondda, Carys Hugh and Garry Roberts, achieved national prominence by being the first to launch a No campaign.

Carys Hugh excelled herself with rabid comments about Peter Hain and his African background and the suggestion that he should return there.

The decisive letter he paid the price on September 18, when defeat could so easily have been snatched from the jaws of victory. A thorough discussion of both the Assembly proposals and the conduct of the campaign is now essential in the Welsh labour movement – and beyond.

Yes to a London Assembly with real powers: No to a presidential Mayor

Veronica Fagan

EIGHTY per cent of Londoners agree that London needs a strong mayor and an assembly of councilors. The abolition of the GLC was deeply resented by the great majority of Londoners - and by all who deny the essential role of the English capital.

So it is a very good thing that Labour intends to introduce regional government to London once again. It is a brave step, which few on the right will welcome - unless there is a massive campaign in the next month to get something better out of it.

The window of opportunity is short as the consultation period on the proposals ends on October 24.

The most discussed of the proposals so far is that London should have an directly-elected Mayor and 25 elected representatives chosen from the existing representatives. Such a beauty contest has already seen two candidates chosen who "choice" might include Richard Branson and Lord Archer.

But it is far worse than that. The proposed Mayor will not be a figurehead in the way that local Mayors are in this country, but by far the most powerful person in the whole set-up.

Small assembly

There will be a small Assembly with representatives covering large areas - probably equivalent to the existing Euro-constituencies. The Mayor will have most of the power. He or she will have responsibility for drawing up the budget, which the representatives can then question. There is no suggestion however that they can put forward alternatives or even substantial amendments. Some "authority" that?

The Assembly will have some influence in the areas of policing, fire and civil defence, transport, economic development, arts and leisure and planning, many of which are currently run through quangos.

While the mechanism in each of the areas are well known, there is not clear how they will be run through bodies similar to the GLC. In the case of the police authority the members will be selected by the Mayor alone from the membership of the Assembly.

The lack of democracy in these proposals is breath taking - the Assembly has little power and the Mayor a great deal.

The Labour front bench have made it clear that there will be no more money for the Authority. Its funding will come from other bodies - which are currently doing the work. Without revenue-raising powers of any sort, there will be no chance of following in the best traditions of the old GLC.

That is of course precisely what Blair is so keen to avoid - a power centre that could put forward a different way of doing things to his own.

Beginning

Debate in trade unions and Labour parties in London is only just beginning - but the consultation period ends soon. The Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party, followed by some rather nebulous consultation with CLPs, gave the bureaucracy the wrong answer - so now the full time officials have had to issue a special Conference of GLP on October 12. It is not clear that this is intended to discuss alternative points of view - but it must dem-
Euromarch campaign still on the road!

Terry Conway

A RECALL conference on September 20 brought together the most influential marchers from the British leg of this summer's Euromarch, together with a larger group of supporters. As well as discussing the year's successes - in particular the meeting of marchers from across Europe in Amsterdam the day before the mass demonstration - it laid plans for the future.

Activity will continue on two main fronts. On the one hand, the battle against unemployment will be a key priority; on the other, the other key tasks in relation to European-wide campaigning will be pressed over the next year.

With the introduction of 'Welfare to Work', an aspect of this task has become more difficult, as there are more illusions in this project than the latest Job Seekers' Blame and Project Work.

It will be difficult to get massive support at this stage until the real nature of this scheme becomes clear. However, this makes it all the more important that the work starts now and a campaign is well in place when we are ready to start in realising the spirit is going on.

The links with disputes will clearly continue as evidenced by the presence of strikers from Liverpool docks and Magnet at the conference, both of whom received warm applause when they spoke of the current stage of their disputes.

Discussion also took place on the need to broaden our emphasis on job insecurity - kicking up the fight against the ever-growing introduction of short-term contracts for example. Several speakers referred to how Blair is attempting to teach over European leaders the importance of having a 'flexible', i.e. insecure, workforce.

Some discussion took place on strengthening the involvement of women in the campaign. In advance of the march itself some of the women involved met and discussed this issue. No one had quite understood at that stage the logistics of keeping the march on the road for four long weeks.

In the end many of the good ideas fell by the wayside. Given that it is harder for women - especially those with childcare responsibilities - to go on the road for long periods of time, it is not really surprising that more men than women actually took part.

Certainly there were many women involved behind the scenes who didn't take that step. However given that women are at the sharp end of the cuts it is necessary to find ways of stepping up involvement over the months to come in Europe.

Less debate took place around the need to relate to the demands of black people. Hopefully it will be possible to link up with campaigners in Scotland, who plan to work on many of the same issues and focus on the way they affect the black community. The rights of asylum seekers were taken up in the march slogans - this needs to be built on.

The meeting agreed to be involved in a series of actions around the single currency. Parliament will need to endorse the Amsterdam treaty - the timetable is not known but will become clear in the Queen's speech. A lobby will be called.

Action will be taken to try to bring together the different campaigns on the question of the single currency to ensure an international 'no' campaign when the referendum is called.

Probably the most important focus for the spring can be around the Cardiff summit in June next year. Plans are at a fairly early stage but there is already much Welsh referendum campaign.

It seems clear that the scale of mobilisation in Amsterdam cannot be repeated, but a major demonstration with delegations from Europe does look feasible.

The meeting elected an interim steering committee and agreed to a recall meeting by December. Other decisions on structure were deferred until that time.

Some from the Welfare State Network (WSN) Steering Committee expressed the view that they would set up a rival to this project and argued that it should organise under the WSN umbrella.

The majority did not agree with this suggestion but thought the two projects could be complementary. It was agreed that there should be discussions with the WSN Steering Committee.

The Euromarch brought together people of a wide diversity of backgrounds and political views who were able to work together and cooperate to build a very successful march and campaign.

The spirit that sustained that project is not always easy.

Matters against the plight of unemployed and cuts and a vision of international solidarity is the message that can not only continue to bind existing campaigners together but allow us to reach out to broader forces.

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Which way will Labour jump on single currency conundrum?

Alan Thornett

MAKE your mind up today about whether you want to vote Labour or not in the next general election. Are you going to vote for Blair and the Labour leadership over European Monetary Union (EMU)?

Since the election Labour has continued to rail about the abuse of EMU and their pre-election bluffs, 'we will take a decision on EMU at the time and in line with Britain's economic interests.'

This has always had more to do with electoral tactics than either the political realities of European integration or the logic of Labour's stance on Europe - which is full support for the EU and for further integration.

Joining EMU is a political decision and it is not rational politics to be in favour of the EU and further integration but to equivocate on entry into the first round of EMU.

Britain could pay a heavy price for staying outside the powerful Ecu zone which will be established once the first round of the single currency goes ahead.

There is little doubt that the Single Currency will go ahead as planned on January 1 1999. Key European governments which have been struggling to meet the convergence criteria laid out in the Maastricht Treaty are now expected to qualify on time for the first round.

The most important of these is Germany whose latest projection is that it will meet the 3 per cent of GDP criteria in time for the first round. This has been achieved by a combination of economic upturn and by excluding the health service borrowing requirement - on the basis that most of it is privately incurred.

Italy, one of the weakest potential members of the first round, also expects to qualify and to be left with a specific tax designed to reduce government debts. Italy is now close to the 3 per cent and expects to reach it by the end of the year. The current prospect is that at least half a dozen other countries including France, will meet the Maastricht criteria - creating a situation where eight members will qualify for the first round.

Britain will have to decide whether to apply by the end of this year. The final list for the first round will be decided by the seven member states of the Ecu zone.

In a move which pushes the whole project forward, European finance ministers have now decided to lock together the exchange rates of those countries who go into the first round, from that meeting in May 1998 - seven months in advance of EMU. From then onwards EMU will effectively be in place.

The recent call by Gordon Brown for a national debate on the single currency is the clearest sign yet that the policy from the election is under serious review.

Such a debate however will give the left the opportunity, at the least, to put forward an internationalist opposition to this single currency. It is an opportunity that should be seized with both hands.

Labour, like the Tories, have been doing the things necessary for the single currency ever since they came to power - keeping public spending down, with all its consequences. In addition they have effectively privatized the Bank of England, which is a partial step towards the requirements of EMU - an independent central bank to run the system.

If Blair walks out on the first round, which is not unlikely, the British economy will suffer. But if Blair walks into the first round, which seems likely, the British economy will suffer. In either case, the Conservative Party is in a better position to hold Blair to account after May 1998 - and may be difficult to do that and win it.

There is talk of Britain having a special deal for the single currency. That is ridiculous and the first round would require a referendum before May 98 - and it may be difficult to do that and win it.

The system that Blair will opt for the first round is difficult to say, but the pressure from business not to be sidelined is already very strong. His main problem is his commitment to a referendum. If he believes the first round would require a referendum before May 98 - and it may be difficult to do that and win it.
Fight on after Brighton to beat back Blair

Neil Murray

WHATSOEVER the outcome on the proposed rule changes at Labour Party conference, the proposals of Blair's project for the party will not go away.

If the proposals are defeated he will no doubt try again next year. If they are passed it is likely that he will try to build on this victory.

He may put forward further proposals to curtail the accountability of the government to the movement, possibly severing the union-party link completely and moving towards state funding of parties to release him from the need to raise money from the unions.

Blair is absolutely committed to making the Labour Party a main party of British capitalism in the place of the Tories. This demands the ties to the unions as the basic organisations of the working class are loosened as much as possible, if not completely broken. The current tamesness of the unions is no protection against this assault.

The precise mechanisms he will use are not known, but the project is clear.

What we have seen so far of the Labour government is but a foretaste. The victories on the Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly (even with limited powers) are to be welcomed, as is the restoration of trade union rights at GCHQ (albeit with a no-strike clause).

But the overall picture is clear. There will be pay restraint for the public sector, no change to the anti-union laws and no reprise on funding of the NHS or local council services.

An 'ethic foreign policy' will mean at best only cosmetic change, furtherance of the 'peace process' is intended to end the fight for Irish self-determination.

"Welfare to Work" type schemes mean replacing current workers with government-funded ones at lower rates. There will be no let-up on unemployment or the squeeze on benefits. We will be faced with rapid moves to a single European currency that has at its centre a statute book of trade unionism, but which sets limits on state spending. All this with glossy phrase about "partnership", "fairness", "flexibility" and a "New Britain".

As long as the Labour Party has ties with the unions it will not replace the Tories for Britain's bosses as the most reliable party of British capitalism, although they might prefer it at particular times like the last election.

Not safe enough

Both Blair and the bosses recognise that the Labour Party is not a completely safe pair of hands for capitalism as long as there is the risk of working class discontent being reflected through its structures and calling a Labour government to account.

Only in rare occasions, such as during the last years of the Cal- laghan government and for a few years afterwards, has this not been true. Despite the odd grin, the union leaderships have fully assisted Kinnoch, Smith and now Blair in overturning democratic and policy changes that went against the interest of the ruling class. That they were often ignoring their own union's policy made little difference.

These union leaders have, of course, constantly sold their influence in Labour Party debates, relying on the good will of Left (or not so left) General Secretaries. When things go wrong they have often rallied against "the unionists" rather than recognising that tensions exist within them and the need to organise against the bureaucracy.

The flip side of this is a syndicalist ideal that concentrates on disrupting and ignores 'politics', which equally lets the bureaucrats off the hook for what they are doing in our name.

Most General Secretaries have done their unions to minimise opposition to the "Partnership in Power" rule changes. Some in unions whose conferences opposed the changes outright are still working with the Labour Party to endorse them. This is the scale of the problem we face.

They know that the Labour government is going to offer something on union recognition and a minimum wage, so they shouldn't antagonise Blair by opposing the rule changes.

Blair's attitude is shown more by his insistence on "flexibility" and his lecture to the TUC that the extremely limited concessions on offer.

Moreover, the adoption of "Partnership in Power" will make it very difficult for the unions' influence Party policy in the future, making it a very short-sighted deal.

Thus any strategy for working class representation has to address not only what is happening to the Labour Party but also in the way in which the major unions are tied into the same basic social democratic politics.

The union leaderships must be called to account for the road the Labour Party has gone down. They are just as responsible for it as Blair.

Counter attack

The counter-attack that needs to be launched against pro-capitalist policies in the Labour movement has to be across both the Labour Party and Trade Unions, but also beyond.

It must encompass the disputes that both bureaucrats are committed to selling out or undermining and the campaigns that they ignore or pay lip service to, such as around racism and defence of the welfare state and the environment.

The fight within the structures of the Labour movement has to link up with these if it is to have any chance of success in the fight back the bureaucrats' offensive.

For the moment, whether or not Blair wins in Brighton, the fight is to force Labour to recognise and carry out working class interests.

For this reason Socialist Outlook supported the September 13 conference called by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups and attended by 150 people that discussed not only opposition to "Partnership in Power", but also the tasks of the Left after Brighton.

Unite, we do not think the adoption of the rule changes would just be a "swing of the pendulum" which could swing back. These changes are more fundamental than that.

Nor should the Left write off the unions, either in terms of opposition to the rule changes (where the battle will continue within union delegations right up to the vote at Party conference) or in terms of a future link up.

That is why the presence of union representatives on the platform on the 13th was important (even though some cried off for good or bad reasons). The recall conference on November 1 has to be built among both CLP and trade union activists.

While the proposed rule changes are far-reaching, their adoption is not a "purely representational" move. The Left should immediately give up all capacity to work with them. A long fight lies ahead, not as "business as usual", but to step up the struggle for working class independence.

That fight is initially in the Labour Party, around basic working class demands. But there may come a point, in the not-too-distant future, when the Left has to declare that there is little future to the fight in the Labour Party, whether or not it has changed its fundamental class character, and address the question of building an alternative "Party of Labour".

The extent to which forces are built up now, across the labour movement, to fight the bureaucracy, will determine the success of such a decision should it have to be taken.

The fate of the SLF shows that to be successful such a new party must have organised forces on the ground in advance of leaving the Labour Party.

It will also have to be integrated into the fightback that continues in the class against the Labour government if it is to reflect a more generalised discontent not simply of the currently organised Left.
Hard on the weak, soft on the rich, full of soundbites and fury

Harry Sloan looks at the record of the first four months of Blair government.

"WHERE does a gorilla sit in the cinema?" Anywhere he bloody wants!" The same could have been true of the new government.

Backed by the biggest Parliamentary majority since the 1930s, riding high on the good will of lions who celebrated the demise of the Tories, and able to ignore the absurd antics of a broken and demoralised Tory opposition and its new leader, Tony Blair's Labour team could have done anything they wanted.

The harsh fact is that they seemed to continue with Tory economics, Tory cash limits, Tory anti-union laws, Tory foreign policy, Tory tactics on law and order, and Tory attacks on the welfare state - all of them dressed up in the hypocritical and pointless gobbidee-dyook of "modernisation".

They seemed to bring unelicited millionaire union-busters like BP's Lord Simon into the government, even as they push through plans to keep the unions even further from any real control or influence on the party they have financed with ill-gotten funds.

The only promises and policies to have been cast aside since May 1 are those which hinted at any radical attempt to undermine the Thatcher/Major legacy of privatisation. The famous row over public services. Of course there have been a few scraps of reforms thrown to the union bureaucrats to gag any potential opposition. But these concessions have merely shown how much more could have been done so easily by Labour. The long-standing battle for union rights at GCHQ was ended at a stroke with the intervention of Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. But there is no sign of intervention on the Liverpool dockers' fight or other long-running disputes, despite the influence ministers could have.

There are vague promises of a White Paper on union recognition, but Employment Minister Andrew Smith has failed even to write a letter of support to journalists in his constituency fighting derecognition at the Oxford Mail. Those who argue workers haven't got a prayer of extending union rights under Tony Blair were offered little consolation at the TUC by the appearance of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The government made a big deal out of signing the European Social Chapter, but its puny provisions will take years to affect British workers. Promised action on a minimum wage has been shelved while a London Business School academic chairs a review.

There are so many examples of retreats on key policy commitments it is hard to sum them up. New Labour in government appears to have no memory of its stance in opposition.

Perhaps one of the most craven episodes was when Transport Minister Glenda Jackson, confronted by an independent report showing post-privatisation rail services in Britain to be far and away the most expensive in the world, attempted to denigrate the report and defend the Tory system of "regulation" which is pumping millions in state subsidies straight into the profits of train operators. Six months earlier, as a shadow minister she would have been arguing the opposite point of view.

Another swift about-face came from Glenda's boss, Environment and Transport Secretary John Prescott. He ignored all-party representations and glibly discarded Labour's pledge to end the universal "employability" council tax, when he opted to impose additional cuts of over £6 million on council services Oxfordshire, one of only three counties to appeal for the right to raise more in tax.

Robin Cook came forward with a high-falutin pronouncement on a new, moral foreign policy, only to turn tail and endorse continued arms shipments to the brutal Indonesian regime. Labour's complicity with the continued massive arms trade is leading the new government to echo the grumbles of previous Labour governments.

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GCHQ workers saw swift government action: no such luck for the Liverpool dockers after 2 years of struggle
Socialist Outlook

"Madd" Frankie Field at Social Security is honing his reactionary plans to save the state pension and remodel the welfare state along the lines preferred by the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile.

But Education Secretary David Blunkett has handed the delight of the Tory press — has led the charge of the Right Brigades, driving a viral wedge — to teachers and teachers' unions. His determination to impose £1,000 a year pay increases on primary school teachers, claiming with cynical incomprehension to be "widening opportunities" for higher education.

In a recent donor meeting of Tory donors while her name has not been revealed, but the last heavy-handed attempt to get at the private sector, teachers and the like to fund underfunded schools in deprived areas.

Tory plans to put the key points of Tory educational reforms as follows: The key point of the new education law, which may be opposed by the leaders of the campaign for the next general election, is that the government is determined to push through the changes to the education system in order to impose a market-oriented education system.

Labour sees itself as the only real alternative:

Labour is the only real alternative to the Tory policies, and the only one that has a real chance of becoming a government. It is not only four months since the Labour Party took office, but Labour's policies are no longer merely immune from government interference.

Labour's success is overturned by the "Tories" - They are looking for a new round of cuts, and the cuts are not just in public services, but also in their rights and living standards.

It's not yet clear how long the dead weight of bureaucracy will combine with naive, demoralisation and apathy at work, before its first anniversary New Labour could be facing its old enemy - the working class and its demands.

Some of the issues, some of the answers

Neil Murray looks at the Brighton agenda

Although the dominant issue at Labour Party conference will be "Partnership in Power" and the accompanying rule changes, there are also important issues of Party policy being raised.

Resolutions in support of the Liver- pool dockers and opposing arms sales to Indonesia are referred to elsewhere in Socialist Outlook. Other resolutions may be more important in relation to trade union rights, the economy, the welfare state and Party democracy.

The complete resolutions — the ones actually discussed — are only drawn up on the eve of conference, and every attempt is made by the bureaucrats to keep all attention from drop contentious issues. Even those which are endorsed are not unanimously endorsed.

There are more resolutions being discussed, which are of great importance, and which are of vital concern.

One of these is the National Union of Mineworkers, which has called for a national strike, in order to stop the further cuts in welfare and education. The miners are demanding a wage increase and an end to the cuts.

The miners are not alone in their struggle. Workers in many other industries are also fighting for their rights. The government's own figures show that unemployment is still rising, and that the standard of living is declining.

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Economics swamp ethics in drive for arms sales

Profits before principles

ROBIN COOK'S supposed commitment to an "ethical foreign policy" has not jumped the first hurdle as the government has refused to cancel arms sales agreed by the Tories even to the barbaric Indonesian regime - despite its involvement in a genocidal occupation of East Timor.

There is clear evidence that this war is carried out with the use of British weaponry. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) is certainly not taking this decision lying down. Support has already been gained from a wider layer of MPs than those traditionally thought to be on the left - and the protest at the Farnborough arms fair was the biggest yet.

Pete Firmin for Socialist Outlook interviewed Will McMahon, joint coordinator of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT).

SO: What has happened on the sale of Hawk aircraft since Labour came to power?

CAAT: The government said it was committed to an "ethical foreign policy" - it would not supply weaponry for internal repression or external aggression.

This was taken by many to mean that regimes doing these things would not be sold arms. This belief was further heightened when Labour called a meeting with the Governmental Organisations to elaborate on their stance in the summer.

However, CAAT, the lead organisation on the arms trade was not invited. It was the only organisation with a significant base not invited. Cook asked the NGO forum for critical support in implementing government policy.

He didn't say what the policy would be on the sale of Hawks. The next morning the front page of the Financial Times announced that the government would continue its policy of supplying Hawks to Indonesia.

SO: What is CAAT's assessment of the 'Ethical Arms Policy'?

CAAT: Our view is that if you can't stop arming Indonesia, the countries with repressive regimes are of immediate concern.

Britain appears to be pursuing arms sales to Turkey, a market previously dominated by the U.S. and Germany. Additionally, contacts with China are increasing at a time when the European Union may lift its political arms embargo. CAAT is looking at these closely.

CAAT's view on Britain offering Human Rights training to the Indonesian government is that it is both patronising and intentionaly naive. The idea that Indonesia does not understand International Human Rights law or its practice is wrong. They understand but are not interested. It is a fig leaf.

SO: Cook met with CAAT after the NGO forum. What did he have to say?

CAAT: He gave us the impression that the decision to continue the supply of Hawks was a Cabinet one.

In the usual phrase "there was a frank exchange of views". The government arguments are twofold;

1. Firstly that there were some 20,000 existant arms licences issued and it took office, and secondly that it would have to pay compensation to the arms companies if it revoked licences. However, only a handful of the licences are controversial.

2. The decision of the Conservative government to issue licences for sale to Indonesia was signed by the Secretary of State for Defence with the Labour government's consent to revoke the licences has sent a similar message, not withstanding Cook's discussions on human rights.

CAAT's legal advice is that the government would not be liable to pay compensation. We understand the government's own advice was less conclusive, but if it really wanted to put human rights at the centre of its foreign policy it should have been prepared to fight any compensation claim through the courts.

SO: What has happened since?

CAAT: Since then it has been reported that the Labour government intends to supply Indonesia with military equipment to ensure its control of its claimed oil fields in the South China Sea.

It is in the air that Indonesia may be ordering more Hawks. If this happens it will be a crunch moment for Labour's "ethical foreign policy", because they will no longer be able to hide behind the argument that these are existing contracts.

Since the continued supply of Hawks was announced CAAT has been mainly focusing on resolutions to Labour Party Conference. We have submitted amendments to a resolution welcoming the ethical foreign policy calling for the

revocation of the licences and an embargo on military training and arms sales to Indonesia. The debate on the resolution in parliament calling for revocation of licences is due on 3 October.

SO: Tell us about the protest at the Farnborough Royal Navy and British Army Exhibition?

CAAT: This was the largest ever anti-arms fair protest in Britain. Over 1,000 blocked the 3 gates. Hundreds turned out from the Kurdish community who are particularly concerned about Britain selling significant quantities of arms to Turkey.

In particular, he licence which got the support of about 130 Labour MPs. The issue is one of thefloor of the House of Commons and there has been no discussion in the Parliamentary Defence.

SO: Has CAAT done work on the issue of job losses in the arms industry?

CAAT: We spoke at a fringe meeting at the TUC and we are working hard on building union contacts within British Aerospace. We take the argument about job losses seriously.

SO: How do you see CAAT's task in relation to the Labour government?

CAAT: Labour's love-in with the heads of multinational corporations is reflected in the fact that Lord Hollick, previously a non-executive director of British Aerospace, is now Special Adviser to Margaret Beckett at the Department of Trade and Industry.

The DTI issues the arms licences, which should give people - and not the government's - the sense of the scale of the task we face. However, we also need to know that the majority of Labour's grassroots members support the CAAT position. One of our key jobs is to get them to speak up.

INSIDE COWLEY

Trade union struggles in the British car industry in the 1970s

This sequel by ALAN THORNTON to his book From Militancy to Maxism is a unique account of trade union activity in the British Leyland car plants in the 1970s. Its analysis of the conflict between rank and file and union bureaucrats under the last Labour government raises the question: Who opened the door to Thatcher's onslaught?

This 430-page, illustrated volume is due for publication in November at £11.50.

Pre-publication offer: just £7.55, plus £2 post and packing.

Make cheques to Alan Thornton and send to 14, Colyton Rd, London SE22 ONE

TUESDAY 30th September, 1p.m. in the Sussexe Suite at the Holiday Inn Hotel. Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett MP will be discussing 'Indonesia, Arms Exports and Ethical Foreign Policy' with Ann Chys McG.
Unhappy anniversaries

Roland Rance charts the bloody legacy of Zionism from its inception a century ago.

A HUNDRED years ago, in August 1897, 200 Jewish dignitaries gathered in Basel, at the invitation of the Viennese journalist and would-be playwright Theodor Herzl, for the First Zionist Congress.

Herzl had argued in aYellow Journal put forward by Herzl two years earlier, in his essay 'The Jewish State', for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and the Zionist bodies dedicated towards this end.

Herzl had already outlined the major characteristics of the conflict between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian people, which has continued for the past century.

"We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border" and alliance with imperialism ("We shall form a part of a wall of defence for Lebanon, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism")

The birth of the Zionist movement is one of the critical anniversaries being marked this year in Palestine. November marks the eightieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government promised 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'.

As British Foreign Secretary Balfour noted: "In Palestine we do not propose to create a Jewish State...it is the form of the negotiations designed to impress the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country..." The four great powers are committed to Zionism'.

November also marks the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations partition resolution of 1947. Following Britain's withdrawal from the Suez Canal Mandate after World War Two, and the transfer of Zionist allegiance from Britain to US imperialism, the UN voted to carve up Palestine into several small entities, which would form the basis of the Arab and Jewish states.

The decision ignored the fact that Palestinians were a large majority of the population, and even the Jewish state was more than half the population was non-Jewish. In the area allocated to the Arab state, only 1 per cent of the population was Jewish.

In the 1948 war, the new state of Israel expanded its borders and expelled about 800,000 Palestinian refugees from their homes and land.

Refugee camps

Fifty years on, these people and their descendants still live in refugee camps, isolated in the towns of the Middle East. In the Israeli state, discrimination laws were used to steal the land of Palestinian refugees.

Thirty years later, in June 1967, Israel again attacked the Arab states, occupying the remainder of Palestine, the Golan Heights, the Sinai Peninsula and the Syrian Golan Heights. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were once more forced off their land.

In the towns, villages and refugee camps of Gaza Strip, and in East Jerusalem, which was annexed illegally to the state of Israel.

For the past thirty years, the residents of the Occupied Territories have lived under harsh military law, while their land has been taken over for exclusive Jewish settlement. Hundreds of thousands of Israeli settlers now live in the Occupied Territories, over half of the land area is now officially set aside for exclusively Jewish use. A system of social, economic, political and legal separation between Jews and non-Jews has been implemented in the areas occupied by Israel.

Israel has introduced apartheid in these areas. Israeli settlements - in reality, towns with populations of tens of thousands - occupy most of the hilltops, dominating the Palestinian towns and villages in the valleys. The theft of Palestinian land has turned many peasants into wage labourers dependent on the Israeli economy.

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, which was established in the early 1960s by the Arab states, had some successful confrontations with the Israeli army, particularly after it was taken over by Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement in 1965. Notably, the battle of Karameh in 1969 demonstrated that Israel was now faced with a new and potentially enduring challenge to its control over the Occupied Territories.

With its slogan of "Revolution until victory", and its support for guerrilla movements around the world, the PLO offered leadership to the dispersed Palestinian people. Within a short period, it had become the almost unchallenged leader of the Palestinian struggle.

From the early 1970s, under pressure from its left components, the PLO attempted to implement its original national socialist charter and began to call for the establishment in Palestine of a democratic secular state. This call, which replaced the original demand for the establishment of an Arab state in the whole of Palestine, had the potential of attracting support from Israeli revolutionaries.

And indeed some of them did respond positively. Small groups of Israeli activists began to meet clandestinely with Palestinians, some even attempted to establish an Israeli section of the PLO. For twenty years, all such meetings - even open political or academic discussions - were illegal, and many Israeli activists served prison sentences for "contact with a forbidden group".

The PLO was strongly opposed to the refugee camps of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where it is established and run, education, health and welfare projects as well as organizing the political and military struggle against Israel. However, its radical rhetoric, and the aggressive response of the Israeli government to PLO bases in neighbouring states, brought the organisation into conflict with the governments of Jordan in 1970, and Lebanon in 1982.

Governments in exile

Thousands of Palestinian activists were eventually expelled to Tunisia, several hundreds of miles from Palestine, from where the PLO increasingly acted as a state and government in exile, rather than as an revolutionary liberation movement.

Following the Lebanon war, a reassessment inside the PLO of its military and political strategy ultimately led to the civil war in the camps of Lebanon. The debate, however, was posed in mistaken terms. The PLO leadershipposed a "political" strategy, which was in effect an appeal to the UN and world governments to put pressure on Israel to make concessions towards the PLO.

The debates opposed this with a "military" strategy based on an incorrect assessment of the lessons of the Lebanon war, and an attempt to build up a Palestinian regular army to confront the Israeli army. Neither side put forward a strategy of mass struggle, whether political or military, which alone would be able to challenge Israeli hegemony.

A strategy of mass struggle did, however, develop in the Occupied Territories, where the Palestinians had been building up independent national bodies despite the restrictions imposed by Israeli rule. After 1967, there were several waves of rebellion, notably in 1982 before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

By far the most important of these was the Intifada, which started in December 1987 and for a while seemed to threaten the continuation of Zionism, rule in the whole of Palestine. The Intifada was conducted and led by Palestinians under Israeli rule. Although it proclaimed allegiance to the PLO, it was not (despite the claims of the Israeli government) controlled from Tunisia. Indeed, the slogan of the Palestinian youth confronting the Israeli army was not "We support the PLO", but "We are the PLO".

The Intifada established the Unified National Leadership, which brought together representatives of all the political currents in the Occupied Territories.

The Intifada challenged more than Israel's continued rule in the Occupied Territories. It offered a model for struggle elsewhere in the Arab world, and it posed an alternative leadership for the Palestinian struggle. The PLO in exile attempted to assert its authority over the mass popular uprising, but was severely weakened by its support for Iraq during the Gulf War. This triple challenge, to Israel, the Arab regimes and the PLO leadership, created in effect a common interest between all three, which was eventually to lead to the 1991 Madrid conference and the 1993 Oslo agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the cynical pragmatist, understood that Israel's continued domination over the whole of Palestine would be better assured through a client Palestinian authority than through direct occupation. Despite Rabin's assassination by a right-wing religious Zionist, and the failure of the Israeli government under Binyamin Netanyahu, this remains the guiding principle of Israeli policy in the Occupied Territories.

Symbolic rule

Israeli troops have been withdrawn from most of the thousands of workers brought in from Romania, Taiwan, Thailand and other new immigration. The power of the Palestinian Authority is limited by Israeli sedentary settlements and roads, creating a patchwork reminiscent of South African apartheid.

Most Palestinians are denied entry into Israel. Their place in the Israeli economy has been taken by bureaucratic officials or alien workers brought in from Romania, Taiwan, Thailand and other new immigration. The power of the Palestinian Authority is limited by Israeli sedentary settlements and roads, creating a patchwork reminiscent of South African apartheid.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the Islamic fundamentalist movement are now the main suicide bombers to attack Israeli civilian and military targets. It is clear that we understand this. After the last such attack in Jerusalem, the mother of a four-year-old girl, Rana Shalhevet, said: "As long as we have this Netanyahu government for her daughter's sake. This is unprecedented in Israel. The ceaseless, unrelenting attack on the deepening divisions in society.

Now war?

While the government seems to be preparing for war - with Syria with Hizbollah in Lebanon, or in the West Bank and Gaza - it can no longer count on the unquestioning support of the majority of its own population. Such a war, if it comes, will cost more to the Israeli economy than the war of 1982 caused.

In both Israel and Palestinian society, the revolutionary groups are dormant, split, ineffective, and in despair. The peace talks will persist with its demand for "Two States for Two Peoples", although the development of growing urgency, any left critique and programme is sadly lacking.

Only a perspective which opposes the carve-up of Palestine, the partition of the Palestinian people and the separation of the peasants of Palestine can offer a way out of the current impasse. If the governments of forces means that the battle for socialism seems a long and arduous task - but one which must be waged if the whole region is to be free of domination by imperialism.
SOUTH-EAST Asian currencies have been under attack from speculators in recent months. Sony Melencio explains.

ON JULY 11, the halls of currency trading in Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore were hit by a mild shock brought about by unusually intense selling of the peso and buying of US dollars.

The next day, newspapers reported this as the de facto devaluation of the peso, or its depiction as the biggest and most devastating shock so far. The peso removed the previous system of “defending” the peso through state intervention on financial markets.

This capping of a series of shock waves which had been an outright market panic since the April devaluation of the Thai baht. This had had a knock-on effect on other south east Asian currencies including the Indonesian rupiah, the Philippine peso, and even the Singapore dollar.

In May, as an aftermath of the Thai devaluation, selling of Philippine pesos to buy dollars became more intense, and threatened to deplete the dollar reserves of the Central Bank. To protect the peso, the banks increased their overnight lending rates by nearly 100 per cent. By increasing the interest paid to currency traders holding pesos, the Central Bank hoped to stop more dollars from leaving the country and to stop the peso from falling further.

For a while it seemed to work. From May to June, the peso held steady, and the overnight lending rate was gradually reduced to 12.75 per cent. The collapse of the peso was avoided because the Central Bank had enough dollars reserves to absorb the supply of pesos.

President Fidel Ramos boasted of a “robust” Philippine currency and promised that he would never allow a currency devaluation, as the Thai government had. He would recall a few weeks later.

By June 27 and July 2, the market was again besieged by “peso dumping”. The overnight lending rates shot up to 24 per cent. Peso-dollar trading became more feverish.

The volume of currency exchange leapt from 10.15 billion pesos in May to 400-600 million daily, and overnight lending rates to 30-32 per cent in the days preceding the July 11 devaluation.

Many local capitalists, including those from the country’s top 100 firms, demanded that the interest rate be cut to manageable levels. The central government was uncompromising, concerned by soaring interest rates which made it unprofitable to borrow.

The banking sector said devaluation would bring stability. Exporters argued it would change the exchange rate in favour of their country.

Investors in the domestic market argued that their products would profit, because devaluation would push up the prices of imports.

The peso is down by 10 per cent for President Ramos. Devaluation was like an axe falling towards the heads of the consumers. Ramos’ posturing about the country’s “economic growth” would fizzle out and might jeopardise his party’s chances for the 1998 elections.

The government finally buckled to pressures from capitalist circles. Whatever the economic effect for consumers, Ramos knew that he had to secure the support of his main financial backers.

A few days before July 11, the government liberalised the terms on which six major financial institutions could bid for US bonds and other financial instruments. On July 11, the financial speculators outbidding themselves in frenzied trading. Billions of pesos were dumped into the market to acquire more dollars. Windfall profits were made.

Speculators who had acquired dollars before July 11, at an exchange rate of P26-40, were able to sell them on July 12 for P30-12. Ten percent profit overnight.

The six “universal banks” are known around the globe. They are Citibank, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, and HSBC, Barclays, and Morgan Stanley. They are awash with paper money, and trade in trillions of dollars and other currencies all over the world. These are just six of the giant financial corporations preying on the South East Asian market.

Short term

Together with 14 other international banks and financial institutions in the Philippines, the six “universal banks” do a huge amount of short-term lending to banks and industrial companies. Rather than being used for industrial expansion, these “portfolio investment” funds circulate mostly in the financial market, and are used predominantly for speculation.

This is the kind of capital that has primarily been stopped or so-called “squeezed out” in the Philippines. Without this inflow of speculative cash – and the millions of dollars that are lent out every year by more than five million overseas Filipino workers – Asia’s “sick man” could never have appeared to re-emerge.

The economic strategy of the present Philippine government strongly revolves around procurement of the precious dollar – even if it means attracting the financial vultures to prey on the Philippine economy.

Portfolio investments represent trillions of dollars that cannot find a use in the advanced capitalist countries. Their owners are on a constant look-out for profitable investments that bring in fast profits.

Carrying the can: the economic havoc caused by speculators will hit the poorest workers and peasants the hardest. According to the government, Third World economies has to assure investors a “risk-acceptable” through a stable exchange rate. This guarantee that the “principle” they sink into the economy can easily be converted into the profits they can take home or invest in any country whenever they wish. It is in the interest of financial managers that the exchange rate in the Philippines remains stable, why didn’t they resist to conspiracy to bring down the value of the peso?

To understand, we must look at the operation of the financial markets. This “industry” is incredibly speculative. Capitalism is rich because of the presence of surplus money-capital in big institutions where everyone tries to corner the surplus capital in the shortest possible deals.

One of the major operations on these mar- kets is speculation on exchange rates. Just like any commodity capitalist, financial specula- tors try to make profits by buying a currency cheap in order to sell it dear. In the case of the Philippines, they started to buy dollars when the rate was P26 to the dollar. They then dumped more pesos in the trading market to raise the dollar value.

The finance managers do this in a con- spiratorial way through agreements among themselves. A “trading spread” (usually a manageable 1.1-1.5% movement of the ex- change rate). But on occasions the trading gets out of the Philippine exchange competition, or when bigger financial institutions start to attack the trading market by heating up the competition in the trading floor, and the sys- tem fails.

Portfolio investments represent trillions of dollars that cannot find a use in the advanced capitalist countries. Some owners are on a constant look-out for profitable investments that bring in fast profits. One reason banks are unable to cut down the rate of interest is the threat of losing deposits to foreign banks. But there’s more to it than that.

The peso has been under attack from speculators in recent months. The government has liberalised the terms on which six major financial institutions could bid for US bonds and other financial instruments. On July 11, the financial speculators outbidding themselves in frenzied trading. Billions of pesos were dumped into the market to acquire more dollars. Windfall profits were made.

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Some economists will consider this as ev- idence that the “financial sector is gearing up to ship out their money back to their base country, or to some other more profitable market.”

In any case, before the Philippine econ- omy can recover from the inflationary process, the low-income groups. Inflation is likely to rise from 4.6 per cent to at least 6.1 per cent by the end of the year. As a result, the cost of living will increase, and the purchasing power of the peso will be reduced.

The price of crude oil has fallen 30 per cent in the international market, where trade is in US dollars, vultures in the Philippine petro industry are demanding a further increase in fuel prices from 50 to 75 cents per litre. And because the government recently deregulated the trade in oil products, there seems no way of stopping them.

Losers

It is not only the poor who are the losers in the peso devaluation. Capitalist importers, and most Philippine businessmen, stand to lose. While the devaluation will be profitable for some exporters, those corporations which have reduced their debts in their operations and exporters who use imported components will lose out.

“Pure money-capital” plays a role as the “slaughterhouse” of industrial capital.
French struggle fires German left

Europe hinges on Germany. Economic difficulties hamper the CDU/CSU Christian Democrat coalition's deficit-cutting torges. After two years of struggles in France, many German workers feel more confident of struggle. Our reporter DUNCAN CHAPPLE met Nick and Chris (not his real names) of the Fourth International's Revolutionary Socialist League, RSB, in their Munich branch office.

"There is a new period here after the struggles in France," starts Nick, one of the editors of the RSB magazine Avant. "It's really reflected in some of the factories. We had a demonstration recently where one of the banners read 'we must speak French with our bosses'. It is that something which has come out repeatedly in recent years, saying that we have to fight.

Christian, from the RSB's political section, adds that "the last six or seven years was at least by May Day demonstration organised by the social democratic union federation, the DGB. "The leader was attacked, with the crowd shouting out 'no pact with Capital! One of the radical student federations called a demonstration against social cuts in Bonn. The DGB did not want to support it. We made it over and outside all of the real struggle. The mood was positive and militant, with people forced to promise a general strike. There was a strong mood."

"The best people in the SPD opposition," Christian continues, "is that the SPD is going to be an opposition. The SPD government has had an impact in the discussions around choosing between the SPD's candidates for Chancellor. Some candidates look to the left and the other to Blair's Labour party" adds Nick. "Gerhard Schroeder, who is the top of the state of Lower Saxony, wants to be the new Tony Blair. Jost Oetker, the state Secretary of Lower Saxony, currently the party leader, looks to SPD's left-wing faction. The whole discussion depends on the state of the state struggle."

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Celebrate landmark victory for women's rights in Britain

30 years of legal abortion

Marian Brain

ON October 27 1967 legislation was passed that made abortion legal under certain circumstances in this country. As we celebrate those years we take this opportunity to look at the individuals, mainly women, and the social work that made it possible to change the law.

Stella Browne was one of the earliest campaigners for abortion to be seen as a right and not just an operation on a woman's body. She fought for the right to legalise abortion.

In The Midwifery in March 1927 Browne wrote about the formation of organisations for this reason. She argued that as there was not totally reliable method of contraception available, women should be able to control their fertility. The education of many women in matters of sex was only just beginning and it was unfair to penalise ignorance. She stated that abortions were part of the general planning and that they were the hand of untrained and unskilled individuals and often permanently injured the women.

Stella argued that prejudice against abortion was not due to medical science but was based on Christian canon law which stated that at the time of conception there was a right of baptism. She said that thinking on the nature of embryos and the idea that embryonic life should be considered sacred. She referred to the war and suggested that the world should be made fit for children to live in.

In 'Some Problems of Sex', written in 1916 she argued that the essential point of birth control was to establish the right of women not to have children.

But in 1934, the Annual Conference of Co-operatives in the UK became the first organised body to call for abortion to be legalised. Out of 1,130 delegates to the conference the motion that there were only twenty dissidents to the following resolution:

"In view of the very high maternal death rate and the evils arising from illegitimacy, the Congress calls upon the Government to revise the abortion laws of 1861, by bringing them into harmony with modern conditions and ideas, thereby making of abortion a legal operation that can be carried out under the same conditions as any other surgical operation. It further calls upon the Government to provide for the protection of women now suffering from imprisonment for breaking these antiquated laws be amnestied.

Euphoric

Stella Browne was euphoric about the success of the resolution and the reinstatement of the amendment that wanted to delete the call for amnestys for women in prison. In 1935 Labour Party women also supported the cause of changing the laws in relation to abortion.

In 1936, Stella Browne, Janet Chance and Alice James were amongst the 200 women who signed the Abortion Law Reform Association. Shortly after the law passed, Browne, together with Bertram, had formed the Workers Birth Control Group. Some of its members were hesitant about supporting abortion but Bertram with others did. Without the work of ALRA the Act would not have become law.

The anniversary of the passing of the Act is 26 January. The Abortion Act was passed just before the 25th of January. The ALRA movement and it has serious limitations, notably that it allows doctors, not women to make the choice.

It has without a doubt, changed the lives of many women. The ability to have a safe legal abortion, and to be able to control ones fertility is something that is worth fighting for.

The battles that we have fought to achieve abortion have been many, and there have been some set backs on the way. However the Act is still there, and we cannot under estimate the role of the National Abortion Campaign, and the tens of thousands of women and men who have been prepared over the years to take to the streets for the rights of women.
Grief for Diana – a sign of the times

Rod Marshall

NEVER have so many flowers been sold in a single week. Never have so many cuddly toys spent cold nights out in London and barely has it been seen such a national and international reaction to a single death. So just what can this be

Before you turn the page in expectation of a stereotypical leyfi ramble from me about a sticky end (how many more to go?), I should point out that when I woke early on Sunday August 31 to the news of Diana’s death I was genuinely shocked and saddened. Yes, you read it correctly, saddened.

To explain why I felt this way and why thousands of others went much further (so I didn’t go to the funeral or queue to sign a remembrance book) it is worth examining just what Diana was, and equally importantly what she represented.

Such an examination may also serve as a partial antidote to the Saint Diana iconography that is rapidly being established.

Of course, Diana was a member of the Royal Family and the mother of the heir to the throne of the British monarchy. However if it was precisely her estrangement from this hierarchy that appears to have caused so much public grief.

When her brother spoke at the funeral of her not needing a royal title his words were greeted by a spontaneous outburst of applause (at a Royal event of all places). The criticism of the Queen by the quietly thronging masses outside the palace was also testament to the fact that the Royal Family was being hardly judged for shirking Diana — there was even muted talk about blame for her death.

At the same time Diana’s oft quoted work for ‘good causes’ (leprosy, AIDS, land mines, sick children) fits perfectly with the Blairite spirit of 1997. It explains why, although his words were carefully prepared, Blair’s emotions may actually have been spontaneous.

In the same week that I had accepted an offer from Blair to be a roving ambassador for the British government. All of this is of course volumes for both parties in this arrangement.

The politics are those of “doing good deeds”, of personal morality, a hand of friendship and so on. A substantial helping of Christian ethics is of course a vital ingredient in New Labour’s programme of sound bites.

It is also the very definition of the sainthood Teresa Margaret who passing was (thankfully) almost forgotten in Britain in the wake of Diana’s demise.

So we were faced, in the aftermath of Diana’s death with a hefty dose of Christian morality at a time of continually falling church attendances, and apparent grief for a royal at time of unprecedented unpopularity for the royal family.

These ironies pale into significance alongside the popular notion of Diana as a victim and a martyr. Careful remembrance of the last few years will reveal that the Princess had become a shrewd manipulator of the popular press and had single-handedly cleaved herself to the position of the ‘princess of the people’ in comparison to the evil mother in law who spurned her.

Now I don’t intend to indulge in speculation about the trouble and strife in the Windsor household: but it is also obvious that Diana was badly treated by the notoriously odious Liz and Phil, not to mention the spiteful Queen Mother, and yes, her husband chucked on her.

This must have been painful. But thousands go through this and are unable to rise from their grief in the way that Diana was able to — the fact that she was mother of a potential future king and a member of the aristocracy in her own right had a lot to do with this.

While thousands of women struggle for independence from partners who have mistreated them, Diana’s independence was given to her on a plate. In fact her dispossession was at being forced out of the official ranks of royalty — she wanted to be Queen and was clearly aware of her popularity amongst large sections of the public.

What of all this popularity? It is clear that Diana appeared to be a face of humanity amongst the harsh realities of a dog-eat-dog capitalism. Yet she never moved from extending the hand of friendship to any criticism of the system that builds and sells land mines and weapons of mass destruction all over the world. The system that allows people to die of illnesses when cures exist that are over-priced for a fast buck.

No doubt Diana’s crusade against land mines will save lives and socialism should support this initiative.

But Diana, just a few days before her death, denied being involved in ‘politics’ after she had allegedly criticised the Tories.

So her much vaunted liberal leanings certainly had their limits, and this is hardly surprising given her social position. Yet in an incredibly illiberal British establishment Diana must have been a step too far. But for capitalism she was a friendly face just like Tony Blair and the star of the funeral, Elton John.

The involvement of Elton John in this saga is also telling. As an out gay man who has struggled to come to terms with his sexuality, Diana must have been provided perfect sanctuaries.

Acceptance amongst the highest reaches of the establishment. Diana’s supposed advocacy for gay rights (support for AIDS sufferers is not the same thing) therefore fit with the great strains that are being made to incorporate a gay sexuality into modern day capitalism.

In this way it is possible to see Diana as a perfect part player for a new generation of capitalist leaders — the generation of Blair, Branson and Bill Clinton.

Underneath the sentiment the persecution of lesbians and gay men continues, just as women’s oppression is hardly helped in reality by the graceful leap from the clutches of her family that Diana so skillfully managed.

Ireland: The Promise of Socialism

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The legacy of Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti and Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Takin’ Loud and Sayin’ Something

by Siddharta

THE DEMISE in August of two singers, Nigerian Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti aged 58 and Indian Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan aged 48 is a staggering loss to music and beyond.

They were schooled in the classical and finer arts but also innovators in contemporary styles, as much influenced as influential in the crossover between western and non-western auditories.

Fela Kuti had been described as the second funkiest man alive – James Brown denying him the top honour. Hailing from Abobutu, (north of Lagos) in south western Nigeria, his parents were important influences. His mother was a prominent anti-colonial activist and recipient of the Lenain Peace Prize and his father a churchman, and founder of the first teachers union.

He won a scholarship to study medicine in Britain but when in London enrolled instead at the Trinity College of Music. He could already play piano but took to the trumpet inspired by Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and others in the United States.

Back in Nigeria he was looking for a sound that fitted and stumped on the same sort of funky jazzy recipe as the gospel-soul influenced James Brown, which Fela dubbed Afro-Beat. His ability to bridge the gap between the pidgin English speaking masses and the more intellectual and politically conscious was cemented by a visit to the U.S. in 1969.

Here the Latin-Cuban-African and Jazz elements and melodies were finally fused with an empowering message that added to the potency of the music.

This reflected his exposure to radical groups and ideas such as the Black Panther Party and works such as Walter Rodney’s New Europe Underdeveloped Africa.

From his 1969 Los Angeles sessions album, an on-sale “Viva Nigeria” had the following lyric:

“War is not the answer/ War has never been the answer/ And it will never be the answer/ One nation indivisible/ Long live Africa/Viva Nigeria.”

His increased politicisation coupled with his growing popularity brought him into conflict with Nigeria’s repressive military regimes. Brarding the dictator as liars, and denouncing them as unpatriotic contributed to the frequency of beatings, raids and imprisonment.

One of his periods of imprisonment was in the Alagboso Close jail nicknamed the ‘Kalakuta’ (from an alternative spelling for the dark hole of Calcutta). On his release he named the compound encompassing his residence and club “The Kalakuta Republic”, declaring it independent of state authority and interference.

He also became a campaigner for the healing and meditative powers of marijuana, which he had been introduced to in the U.S. and which he and the other members of his republic liberally and openly consumed. This was to provide the justification for numerous police raids which were clearly disguised opportunities for harassment and intimidation. In one of those raids his mother was thrown from a window and subsequently died.

His spell in jail between 1964 and 1986 led to him being adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience. One brother, Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti, is a leading human rights activist and presently serving a fifteen year prison sentence on trumped up charges imposed by the Sani Abacha dictatorship.

In musical terms, his pioneering of Afro-beat involving a fusion of the Latin and Jazz idioms with African music encompassing both traditional and modern influences was unique and hugely successful. Afro-beat provided an alternative to the highlife sound that was ever running north west Africa and the Jawa and later Jaf Styles dominantly Nigeria.

The spontaneity of composition – often coming together live

These passages serve to highlight the immense significance of such social and culturally influential entertainers

through a highly emotionally charged voice what Indians and Pakistanis had failed to achieve any semblance of – unity! Born into a family of excellent singers, Nusrat ascended to the highest heights and early on was awarded the honorific Ustad (Master).

He took the Qawwals music based on Sufi Muslims spirituality and classical Punjabi verse to the world as Ravi Shankar had brought Indian classical music before him. The intensity and the poetry of his performances extended

Oluwikemole Anikulapo-Kuti

Olufela Anikulapo-Kuti

make, and its longing to return. These songs of praise appealed to all Muslims, while his interpretations of bhajans held Hindus in awe too.

Lyrics such as The Hindus call you Ram, the Muslims call you Allah, they are speaking of one and the same entity from Allah, that said, it stressed his themes of togetherness. The motif of love enthralled with shots of faith and the Sufi disdain for rules and rituals and their mean minded veneration infuriated and fundamentalist Islamic traditions. The ecstasy and abandon Nusrat evoked in his audience would have them dancing joyously even at said venues such as London’s Albert Hall where Muslim, Hindu and Sikh flocked to hear him.

His music also fared well at the hands of remixers who added Latin, bhangas and hip-hop effects to his tracks in efforts to modernise the sound. He proved the versatility of his sound through collaborations with renowned western musicians like Peter Gabriel and on film scores for Natural Born killers and Bande Queen, and translated his talent for the Bollywood (Indian commercial cinema) audience through work on film soundtracks without compromising his integrity.

Having wholeheartedly embraced his musical calling, Nusrat had ballooned in weight by his late 30’s and fought a losing battle from then on.

The resultant pressure on his body, and his prolific and intense emotional performances both live and in the studio seem to have contributed to his death of renal failure.

He was of an age with the post-colonial Indian subcontinent, a product of its previously combined experience and heritage, striving to reconnect links torn asunder.

These passages serve to highlight the immense significance of such social and culturally influential entertainers who were “Takin’ Loud and Sayin’ Something”.

Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
Mother Teresa, poverty's superstar, dies in private hospital

B. Skanthakumar

MOTHER TERESA loved the poor. She loved the poor so much that she never asked how they became poor or challenged the causes of their poverty.

She received millions of pounds in their name to make their condition more bearable—not to seek to eradicate it.

Mother Teresa cared for the dying and destitute in her homes. She never asked whether they ought to have been born in hospital instead. The curable and the incurable were all the same to her, and only the fortunate received painkillers.

Mother Teresa had great compassion. In 1984 in Bhopal, the leak of MIC gas at the Union Carbide plant caused the death of thousands, and she went to the aid of the victims. Her first words to the survivors and their families were, “Forgive, Forget, Forget.”

Mother Teresa was above politics. She was so apolitical that she never enquired where donations came from, or the character of those who gave. The Dwellers in Haiti, Robert Maxwell in Britain, the Hoxha regime in Albania were all beneficiaries of her beneficence.

Why was this Christian missionary tolerated and even encouraged by the Indian government and the Communist Party of India (Marxist)? I led administration in West Bengal where her Order is based? The answer is simple.

The profound perception that nothing could be done to remove the scourge of poverty, the epidemics of disease and ignorance, the malady of hopelessness and helplessness—only the symptoms could be managed.

In fact it was the fault of the poor—their karma—actions in their past lives which contributed to their present fate. Her doctrine was one which induces fatalism and apathy among its adherents.

Her world view resonated with medieval notions exalting suffering and pain as redeeming past sins and leading the tormented path to Heaven.

Why was Mother Teresa propelled into superstardom in the West? And what does she do beyond reproach even by the liberal-left?

In his excoriating polemic The Missionary Position, Christopher Hitchens argues that the rich world likes to believe that “someone, somewhere is doing something for the Third World. The great white hope meets the great black hole: the mission to the heathen blends with the comforting myth of Florence Nightingale.”

If Rudyard Kipling’s poem The White Man’s Burden spoke about the “civilising responsibility” of colonialism to its “new caught, and defy’d” Half-devil and Half-child—then remember that the missionaries followed the flag and were intimately bound up in that enterprise.

The Vatican recognised the value of the publicity Mother Teresa generated and the present Pontiff, John Paul II, saw her as an apostle for his own fundamentalist views on reproductive rights and same-sex sexuality.

In 1979 when Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, she used that platform to announce that “abortion is the worst evil, the greatest enemy of peace.”

The tragedy of 250,000 women dying each year from ‘back-street’ abortions is just one denial of the rights of women to control their own bodies apparently pale in significance to the devil’s work: contraception and abortion.

This was her message to the Bangladesh women who became pregnant in consequence of the mass rapes perpetrated by the Pakistani army.

Meanwhile her San Francisco franchise for gay men with AIDS mirrors the Spartan masochistic regime of her outlets elsewhere, with Christian teaching substituting for painkillers.

Mother Teresa herself has pronounced AIDS as “just retribution for improper sexual conduct” says Hitchens, which is not dissimilar to the Vatican’s own view.

Her much-praised homes in India are run with nineteenth-century ideas and instruments. Prayer and Christian comfort are available in generous doses when medication, hospitalisation and surgical intervention would save more lives.

A former lay worker at one of her Bombay homes told The Guardian that in his many years of experience, “there are cases where there are only two possible descriptions: criminal neglect and criminal assault.”

Yet Mother Teresa herself died in a private hospital, with a person she regarded as a team of specialists by her bed-side and round the clock care. Whenever she fell ill on one of her excursions abroad she was immediately booked into a private hospital. The best and most expensive care apparently did no harm to her soul but was off-limits to the poor.

She founded her own transnational, the Missionaries of Charity, operating more than 500 branches in over 100 countries and with a staff of 4,000 nuns and 40,000 lay workers.

As Christopher Hitchens notes, she was serving the “sponsor and donor, and not the needs of the downtrodden. Helpless infants, abandoned derelicts, lepers and the terminally ill are the raw material for demonstrations of compassion.”

Mother Teresa represented the odious belief that the poor are objects for charity and not subjects of their own liberation. She never sought to address the causes of poverty and oppression—because she believed it to be part of the natural order.
Where we stand

IN THE NINETIES millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships. This reflects the fact that humanity faces widening dangers. Ecological, militarist, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide mansist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of domination, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist, ecologist, militarily and internationally. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order gradually to acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them". The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary international we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

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WHAT'S ON

September

Friday 26 - Monday 29.

Welfare State Network March to Rally Labour Party Conference.

Fri 26

Hand in Copy of Emergency Plan to Downing Street.

Sat 27

March Begins with Rally At Labour Party HQ, South London, March to Trafalgar Square for Rally and Social.

Sun 28

Crawley to Gatwick Airport. Evening Social in Hove.

Mon 29

March From Hove to Brighton to Rally Labour Party Conference (12 Noon, Conference Centre).

For further Information Ring 0171 639 5068.

Saturday 27

Demonstration in Support of the Liverpool Dockers, Marking the Second Anniversary of Their Struggle for Reinstatement. Assembly 12.30 Myrtle Parade Liverpool for March to St. George's Hall.

Sunday 28

Labour Party Conference Called by University College London Hospitals UNISON Branch. Assembly Sp.m.

Monday 29 - Friday 3 October

Labour Party Conference, Brighton.

October

Wednesday 1

Day of Action on 2nd Anniversary of Hillingdon Hospital Workers' Strike. Mass Picket 7.30 a.m. At Hospital, March Assembles 11 a.m. From Colham Green, Colindale and Hospital (04 From Uxbridge Tube). Leaves 12 Noon to Go Past Hospital to Rally 1 p.m. Uxbridge Civic Centre.

Thursday 9

London Socialist Outlook Public Meeting: What Kind of Party does the working class need? Speakers: Socialist Outlook, Ian Driver (SLP member), Socialist Party (invited) and Labour Left Briefing (invited). 8 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Sunday 12

March for Unity Through Southall. Organised by Southall Migrant Group Unity. Assembly 1 p.m. Dominion Road. Southall for March to Southall Park.

Saturday 18

Welfare State Network AGM. 11.15am-5pm. Speakers include Tony Benn, South Camden Community School, Charringtown St., London NW1.

Sat 18/Sun 19

South Asia and the Diaspora 50 Years After the End of British Colonialism; SOAS, Malet St. Organised by the South Asia Solidarity Group. Further Details 0171 354 8744 Or 0171 713 7907

Sat 18

Hands Off Cuba National Demonstration. 12 noon at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park, March via U.S. Em-

bassy to Trafalgar Square for rally.

Wed 29

Trade Union Section to Celebrate 50 Years of Abortion Reform, Called by NUS Women's Campaign. Assembly 8 p.m. University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1, Rally 7.30 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

November

Sat 1

Recall conference hosted by the Network of Socialist Campaign Groups and others to discuss the way forward after Labour Party conference.

Thursday 6

London Socialist Outlook public meeting "Socialist and Women's Liberation", 8 p.m. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Sat 8

National Assembly Against Racism Conference

Saturday 15

Trade Union Section Under New Labour. Conference organised by Trade Union Links Alliance. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. University of London Union, Malet St., London WC1.

December

Saturday 6

Network of Socialist Campaign Groups Annual General Meeting, Leeds.

Saturday 6

Campaign for A Fighting Democratic UNISON Conference.

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Defend Labour Democracy!

Throw out Blair’s one-way “partnership” fraud

TONY BLAIR hopes to get his proposals on restructuring the Labour Party through Brighton conference. He will try a mixture of post-election euphoria, says to the unions and straight intimidation.

"Partnership in Power" would make the Labour government accountable to the wider movement. It would be almost impossible for unions or CLPs to get critical motions to Labour Party conference.

The NEC would effectively be replaced by a new body, the Joint Policy Committee, with an in-built majority, for the Cabinet Left MPs would be kept off the rump NEC.

Most policy discussion would be handed off to the National Policy Forum. This is an unrepresentative, unaccountable body on which unions would have only 17 per cent of delegates — as against 50 per cent at Party conference.

This outright attack on democracy and the unions input into policy-making is designed to prevent the Labour government being blacked in by the movement.

Tony Blair knows that his popularity won’t last. He wants to remove the channels of protest in advance.

Some on the Left (or not so Left) will push for a year’s delay on the proposals. They will not improve with age and should be shown out now.

Confusion and intimidation need to be faced down. Possible concessions to the unions on the minimum wage and union recognition should not be traded for the right to influence policy in the future.

Unions have been offered no favours — and should not make it easier for New Labour to attack them.

So where ARE all these progressive employers? Lucas Aerospace strikers at the sharp end