

Socialist OUTLOOK

USA, Britain, France: fight back against the bosses' offensive

World war on welfare

THROUGHOUT the world, working people, the unemployed and the very poorest are facing an onslaught as right wing governments seek tax cuts by slashing front-line welfare services.

In the USA, the Republican-led Congress has voted through draconian cuts in the Medicare and Medicaid services which deliver health care to the elderly, and opted to slash Federal spending on social security, education and other vital services. The objective of the \$270 billion cut over five years in health spending is to finance a \$250 million tax hand-out over the same period, designed to buy votes for the Republicans in the coming Presidential elections.

In FRANCE, the right wing offensive unleashed by President Chirac and his government led to last month's public sector general strike, with walk-outs by 2.5

million workers, including two thirds of teachers, hospital staff and council workers; protesting at plans to freeze wages, cut jobs and attack pensions.

And in BRITAIN, Chancellor Kenneth Clarke, the key to any possible revival of flagging Tory electoral fortunes, is piecing together his budget.

Once again, cynical tax-cutting bribes seem the best hope of buying back lost Tory support among the middle classes.

Tory ministers have already agreed strict limits on public spending that will tighten the squeeze on health services, education and housing, and redouble the attack on the unemployed and social security claimants.

The British fightback is not as developed as the French: but the Tory onslaught is being resisted.

Campaigns are fighting cuts and closures in the NHS, and the FACE campaign against education cuts is gaining strength across the country; last month thousands backed



the NW TUC march on the Tory conference in Blackpool, which centred on defence of the welfare state. And on Budget Day, November 28, the Welfare State Network is

coordinating a lobby of parliament.

Fighting now to defend key elements of the welfare state in Britain not only challenges the Tories, but strengthens the

base from which trade unionists and socialists must put demands on a new Labour government for a complete change of course.

Editorial comment p2.

What we think

World-wide war on welfare

THE FIGURES may be bigger, but the formula will be grimly familiar to British readers: the Budget cuts now being proposed by the Republican-controlled US Congress would slash at least 10 percent (\$2.7 billion, £1.8bn) from federal education spending.

Much of this would come from the federal assistance programme for poor children, which states rely on to pay for 'special needs' help for teachers. School lunch programmes would be cut, along with multi-lingual teaching, anti-violence programmes and job skill training.

In California alone the school cuts would be at least \$260m next year. Republicans adamantly defend the cuts as a device to balance the Federal budget, and facilitate tax cuts for the 'middle class':

'It's definitely a belt-tightening year, but this only puts a scalpel to education, not a meat-axe,' insisted one spokeswoman.

Meanwhile Congress has also voted to scrap a 60-year old federal commitment to guarantee help to the poor, with the decision to abolish central funding of social security, devolving budgets to state level. A massive \$270 billion is to be slashed from the Medicare and Medicaid budgets over five years, forcing up monthly payments by US pensioners, while cutting \$250 billion from the taxes of the well-to-do.

The theme behind the Republican offensive is also familiar to British readers: the argument is that 'middle class' Americans - which is loosely used to mean all those who work - are paying too much tax, and that cuts in these welfare and education programmes would enable them to 'keep more of their own money'.



Their attacks on NHS and welfare state have weakened Tory standing in opinion polls

PHOTO: Mark Salmon

Of course it is a fraud. Taxes may be held down, but the costs of welfare services fall instead on each individual worker and family. Income taxes - progressive, in that the richest pay most - are minimised, but indirect taxes - which hit the poor hardest - are increased.

Profiteers

American workers earning reasonable salaries will find themselves obliged to shell out even more in insurance payments to the profiteering companies which run the privatised medical services: the 40 million Americans too poor to afford medical insurance face a worsening fallback service as state-funded

hospitals and clinics are threatened with cuts and closures.

The erosion of state schools will undercut the education of middle class kids even while it plunges those with the greatest needs into total despair.

The withdrawal of the federal safety net for social security will enable some hard-faced state legislators to buy a few votes by cutting state taxes even as they widen still further the gap between the haves and have-nots, triggering even more misery, social tension and crime.

Such policies, in the USA and elsewhere, are based on a cynical calculation - that the poorest millions who lose out from attacks on vital services

can be electorally discounted, so long as the support is enlisted of the middle and wealthy layers of society.

Widening gap

The Thatcher government in Britain pioneered this approach. But though the gap between rich and poor in Britain has been massively widened by tax concessions to the rich, and while state pensions have been squeezed, benefits cut, and services axed, the basic core of health and welfare services has been too popular for the Tories to launch an open assault.

Instead their attacks on the welfare state have helped reduce John Major's government to record low levels of

public support, while sections of the rural middle classes have led the ranks of those fighting cuts in education spending.

Opinion polls suggest that the US Republicans, like the Tories in Britain, may have miscalculated. The impact of Newt Gingrich's 'Contract with America' seems to have been to have boosted President Clinton's standing in the polls and undercut the Republicans, who recently won landslide support.

In France, too, the Chirac government has rapidly plunged to a new record low in opinion polls. The policies of the populist right always seem better to voters in sound-bites than they do when implemented.

But in each case the radicalism of the right wing in pursuing their agenda has produced a corresponding retreat by the opposition.

Bill Clinton promises noisily to veto the Republican cuts, but counterposes his own package of spending cuts and tax reductions, which would also foist new burdens onto working people while lining the wallets of the rich.

And Tony Blair, despite riding high on a tide of hostility to the Tories, has not only ditched Clause Four but embraced the principles and methods of the capitalist market system, courting business leaders with promises not to increase taxation.

Without extracting more money from the rich, Blair can do nothing to improve the situation of working people.

That's one key reason why his right wing team is incapable of confronting and challenging the Tory attacks.

The retreat can only be stopped by building a strong enough resistance at the base of the unions, the Labour Party and the local communities which are feeling the brunt of these attacks.

That's why the campaigns of parents, students and teachers against education cuts, the fightback of health workers and campaigners against cuts and privatisation in the NHS, and the solid resistance of the striking Liverpool fire fighters are so important.

Though each is limited in scope, by drawing a line in defence of welfare and public services, these struggles implicitly fly in the face of the dynamics of capitalism. They serve to link the poorest and the middle layers - the majority - in struggle against the politics of the wealthy few.

That's the bit that terrifies Tony Blair, and his timid co-thinkers around the world.

Fanatic slays war criminal

By Roland Rance

THE IRONY of the murder by a Zionist fanatic of Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin is that one of the Middle East's leading war criminals is likely to be remembered as "a martyr for peace".

As a young officer in 1948 Rabin forcibly expelled tens of thousands of Palestinians from their homes in Lydda and Ramleh. In 1967, as Chief-of-Staff, he planned and accomplished the occupation of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

In 1987-9, as Defence Minister, he was responsible for the brutal repression of the Intifada, giving troops the notorious order to attack the Palestinians with "force, might and blows" in order to make clear "who rules the territories".

Rabin's period as Prime Minis-

ter since 1992 has been marked by the Israel-PLO "peace agreement", which is an attempt to divide the Palestinian people by forcing the capitulation of the PLO leadership and its reconciliation with the Zionist project.

His murder reflects a - possibly unbridgeable - polarisation in Israeli society, and the extent to which its centre of gravity has moved towards the fundamentalist religious and nationalist right.

This was not the first political murder of a Jew carried out by Zionist extremists.

Among others, Dutch poet Jacob de Haan was killed in the 1920s when he renounced Zionism; Zionist leader Chaim Arlozorov was shot in 1935 because of his parallel negotiations with Nazi Germany and Palestinian leaders; peace activist Emil Gruenzweig was murdered during a Peace Now demonstration in 1983.

None of these murders was carried out by a "lone madman", as



The fatal handshake? Rabin with Arafat, antagonising the extreme Zionists

opposition leader Binyamin Netanyahu described Rabin's killer. Indeed, Israeli officials used the same phrase to explain the massacre of Palestinians in a Hebron mosque by an Israeli settler in February 1994.

In fact, all of these killings occurred when a climate of extremism had been fostered by the press

and the Zionist "moderate" right.

Observers in Jerusalem report that violence has been in the air for many months.

Israeli papers report that the Shin Bet had received reliable warnings of a threat to Rabin, and had even compiled a remarkably accurate psychological profile of a potential assassin, but Rabin had

refused to wear a flak jacket.

In a television interview recorded during the demonstration, Rabin's wife Leah was asked whether she was afraid for her husband's safety; she replied "Are you mad? This isn't Africa".

According to Tikva Parnas of the Revolutionary Communist League, the section of the Fourth International in the Israeli state, a civil war in Israel is unlikely because the "moderate" and parliamentary right has been severely shocked.

The Labour Party has been strengthened by the death of its martyr, and is likely to win the forthcoming elections through lack of a credible alternative.

None of this will come as any comfort to the struggling Palestinians, for whom Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu and now Arafat all represent their dispossession.

Murderous internal struggle within the ranks of the oppressor will not, on its own, lead to their liberation.

Why Tories cracked down on Hackney

By Roy Leach

THE INSPECTION blitz unleashed against every school in Lambeth and Waltham Forest has nothing to do with the needs of students and teachers. The move was announced just before the Tory conference in order to appease the rabid right.

All schools in the boroughs are to be inspected within six months - as opposed to the national programme of one in four over a year. It represents an intensive and unprecedented intrusion.

Why Waltham Forest and Lambeth?

Both are city areas with high levels of unemployment which, unsurprisingly, do not do well in exam league tables.

More importantly, they have both been tagged with the "loony left" label by the Tory tabloids.

Hackney Downs school has been taken over by an Education Association - a motley collection of government appointed industrialists and education "experts", including Michael Barber a former NUT bureaucrat and key player in the formulation of Labour's education policies.

In cases like this they have two options: either close the school sacking all the staff, or "save" it as an opted out school. Hackney Downs is to be closed - fully supported by



Will unions respond?

Labour's education spokesperson Estelle Morris.

If the offensive is not exposed for the political sham it is, then the inspectors will be forced to expose more and more "failing" schools.

Kick-start

This whole exercise is a crude attempt to kick start the governments stalled opt-out programme in two vulnerable areas where parent and teacher opposition to Grant Maintained status has been particularly effectively.

If this tactic works then it will be repeatedly used against areas that have already suffered from chronic underfunding of education, combined with the social problems caused by govern-

ment policies.

The inspections will have a devastating effect on teachers in the two boroughs.

It is clear how the inspection reports are intended to be used: the *Daily Express* (2.11.95) said the government policy that will weed out 15,000 teachers.

This is just one example of an increasingly desperate and virulent attack on comprehensive education in the run up to the general election.

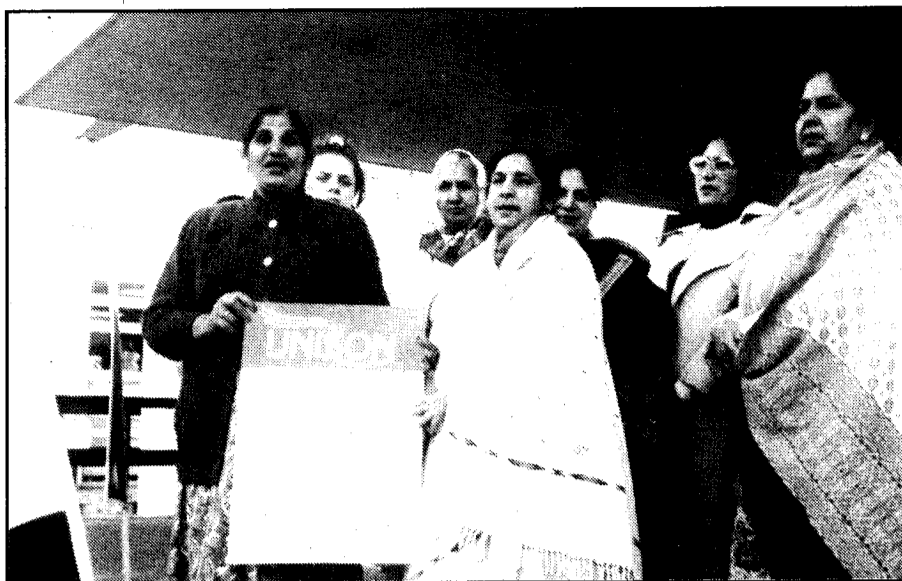
A strong and effective response is needed.

Yet the Labour Party has only attacked the timing of Lambeth and Waltham Forest inspections, not the principle or the motivation behind them.

The response from the local NUT branches has been determined, but calls upon the national union to support non-compliance have been met with stony silence.

The leadership limits itself to verbal condemnation of the inspections blitz, and only supports members after the inspections are completed.

If the teaching unions fail this test they will put thousands more of their members at risk, along with the locally accountable comprehensive education system which they and the Labour Party are supposed to be defending.



Fighting on against private profiteers in the NHS: strikers at Hillingdon Hospital are standing firm against wage cuts by contractors Pall Mall

Birmingham fights back

By Bob Whitehead

THIS time the Tories have gone in for the kill: £70m from the budget, a cut of 15 per cent in some areas.

More is threatened in the following year. In 1996/7 it would mean over £20m going from social services.

The leader of the council has called the prospects "appalling", but has assured the minority parties that Labour will be setting a legal budget. In other words, cuts. This is on top of the attempt to close three homes for the elderly in the current financial year.

A vibrant campaign has begun against the closures. Residents are refusing to be moved out and staff are re-

fusing to be redeployed.

The combination of hand-wringing and cutting is being opposed in the Labour Party as well, thanks to the prodding by left councillors and the Birmingham Community Conference. There will be an outdoor rally on December 16, with speakers, stalls and music.

Left councillors are beginning to draft a needs-based alternative budget. They are hosting a public meeting supported by the Labour Party on November 23 at the Council House on the day the settlement is announced.

Of course it is possible that the cuts may be scaled down - there is talk of selling the airport to claw in £30m. But the end result is unavoidable.

Even if the cap is removed, and an unacceptable increase in the Council tax is

imposed, there will still be unprecedented cuts, with the likelihood of the first compulsory redundancies since the war.

The "dented shield" policy has come to this. Even the equal opportunity unit and the womens' festival are "being looked at".

However, after seeing the problems the council is having with closing just three homes for the elderly this year, it is certain that there will be much greater resistance next year.

Birmingham Community Conference will try to coordinate resistance from the unions, the service users and the left in the Labour Party, as well as campaigning on health and other public sector issues.

Its first bulletin is being distributed around the city already.

North West marches to battle for welfare state

By Alec McFadden (North West TUC JCC)

THE 1995 Peoples March from Bury to the Tory Party Conference in Blackpool was dedicated to the campaign to defend the Welfare State.

Trade Union Councils from the North West and many others across Britain supported the march with donations.

It was the first march for 176 years to set off from Bury, in Greater Manchester, and can only be described as a colossal success. Thirty five people - young, old, students, civil servants, unemployed and pensioners - took part, marching through towns, cities, and villages of Greater Manchester and Lancashire on their way to Blackpool.

The reception everywhere was

tremendous, easing the marchers' pains, thirst and sore feet. In Bury, Burnley, Accrington, Blackburn, Leyland and Preston local Trade Union Councils, Labour councils and MPs came out to meet us and every evening they organised and spoke at our public meetings.

The chants echoed across the hills: 'Jobs for all, that's our call', and 'When do we want it? We want it now.' The favourite was 'Boots up Major's arse!'. When we marched into Blackpool we were met by hundreds of pensioners, trade unionists and students.

The march around the Tory conference was lined with supporters and well-wishers: over 8,000 was the estimate. At the first sight of Tory delegates, the football chant we all know too well was heard: 'Going down, going down...'. Even some young police constables began to join in.

The final rally heard a host of fine and emotional speeches, but the address by 71 year-old marcher Steve Stevenson won a standing ovation. He said "If we can spend millions on war, surely we can spend millions on the welfare of our people."

The theme of the whole march had been to attack the record of the party of the ruling class, which for the past 16 years has systematically attacked the fabric of the welfare state - eroding education, the NHS, community care, disability rights, housing and social security.

Our march was not only a protest at the evils of the Tory cuts, but a demand to raise expectations of the people for their future and the future of their children.

Sadly Labour politicians have joined Tories in telling us that our country is not able to afford the most basic necessities: the right to useful work and a living wage; the right to



Alec McFadden

PHOTO: Linn Hjort

a decent home; the right to a life-long education; the right to health care free at point of use; or the right to dignity in old age.

In July Tony Blair announced that the Labour Party was engaged in a 'root and branch reform of welfare state policy', in which there are no 'no go' areas.

Yet this year's Labour conference agenda featured a mass of resolutions stressing the need to defend the welfare state: three large unions, GMB, TGWU and UNISON have strong conference policies.

It is vital that they and all those affected by the Tory attacks add their demands for the rebuilding of the welfare state by the next Labour government.

To continue the fight, the marchers and the Welfare State Network

are combining in a Budget Day Lobby of Parliament on November 28. A big turnout will strike a further blow at those who would cut welfare or allow the Tory onslaught to continue.

Socialist Campaign Group Supporters
NETWORK AGM

SATURDAY
November 18
10.30-4.30pm
MANCHESTER
Town Hall

WELFARE STATE

FEATURES

Police attack on right to protest

By Kathryn Marshall

500 protesters against French nuclear testing recently took their anger to Chequers to coincide with a visit by Jacques Chirac.

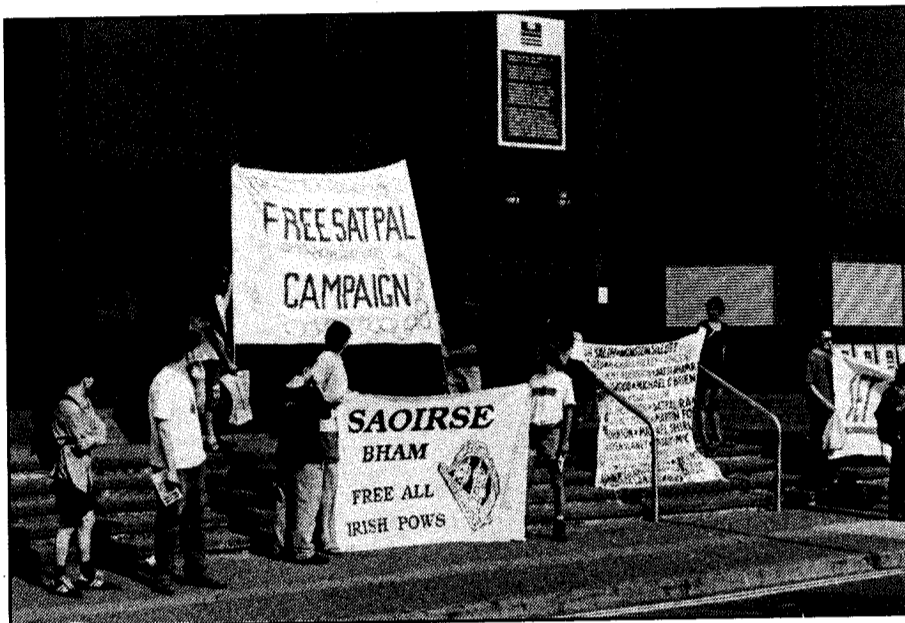
They took flags, banners, hooters, whistles and a desire to make a lot of noise.

Protests of this kind are designed to draw attention to the issue. They are peaceful—there are no planned riots, no attempts to torch buildings or to beat anyone up.

This event was organised by CND and Greenpeace. They try to maximise public support for their causes, which does not include starting brawls.

Despite this, demonstrators were met by mounted police. They were served with a written order to leave the land.

The Criminal Justice Act has created two new of-



Picketing Winson Green prison: Criminal Justice Act severely restricts right to protest

fenses—aggravated trespass and remaining on land after being served with a written notice.

Twelve were arrested. Several required hospital treatment after being injured by horses and dogs.

The Act strengthens the right of police to use strong-arm tactics whenever they please. They are now entitled to make arrests for attending a protest and staying "too long".

This attack on our demo-

cratic right to protest potentially affects campaigns right across the board—from action to defend the welfare state to road campaigns, through to animal welfare demos.

This occurs in a wider context of the attacks which were

reinforced and added to at Tory Party conference.

Home Office figures reveal that the Stop and Search legislation in the CJA is most regularly used against black and Asian people.

It serves as another feature of the government's racist legislation.

The "right to party" is under attack. Squatters' and travellers' rights scarcely exist.

More money is being spent on prisons, presumably to house these new categories of "criminals".

There is a need to maintain and step up campaigns so that the CJA does not win out.

It is also essential that the labour movement wakes up to the implications these measures have for them.

Labour movement leaders must be hounded until they acknowledge that attacks on democratic rights will not be accepted any more than a crumbling welfare state.

Debating the way forward on Ireland

FIFTY people attended a debate in Birmingham on Ireland organised by the far left.

Workers' Power and Socialist Outlook suggested that the Alliance for Workers' Liberty were mistaken in their welcome for the Peace Process.

They stressed imperialism's interest in disarming Republicans and smashing all forces who opposed their control over the six counties.

Socialist Outlook argued that "troops out now" and "self determination for the Irish people as a whole" should remain our watchwords.

No let-up in East Timor crackdown

By Paul Walker

TRUCKLOADS of armed troops and riot police continue to circle the streets of East Timor capital Dili as *Socialist Outlook* goes to press.

Indonesian police are continuing door to door searches. The uprising began in early September when a prison warden insulted the Catholicism of some East Timorese political prisoners.

Riots spread across East Timor continuing into September and October. On November 1 residents of Dili reported that the security forces were firing into the air to disperse small crowds.

The Indonesian military remain unrepentant: "I will continue to look for and capture the youth who are involved" said Colonel Andreas Sugianto, chief of police of the occupying forces.

Local parliamentarian, Manuel Carascalao, told jour-

nalists that about 23 youths who had been released reported torture with electro-shock batons.

The repression is intended to quiet the population in the run up to the fourth anniversary of the Dili massacre at the Santa Cruz cemetery.

Attention

Jakarta is well aware that the attention of the world's media will be focused on East Timor for the day. With the 20th anniversary of the inva-

sion coming up on December 7, and the situation tense throughout East Timor, the Suharto government is looking for new ways to present the conflict to a skeptical outside world.

Stirring up "religious conflict" is one option. It is unusual for the Indonesian press to be allowed to report religious conflict. In the case of East Timor it is encouraged.

The government has also encouraged Muslim organisations in Indonesia to side with the Muslim minority in

East Timor against the Catholic majority.

The leadership of the resistance are combating this tactic, pointing to the fact that such conflicts have only occurred in the last year after massive provocation by the Indonesian military.

A pattern of organised provocation has emerged. In every single instance there have been Indonesian intelligence agents on the ground to instigate the violence.

The CMRM (National Council of Maubere Resistance) published a statement in late October arguing that "Few conflicts in the world

are so clear-cut and simple as the East Timorese.

Here we have a people with a clear historical identity, invaded and occupied by another country without a prior and clear established claim to it.

There are no overlapping, conflicting claims on East Timor by the neighbouring countries. Only Indonesia stands in the middle between the people of East Timor and self-determination.

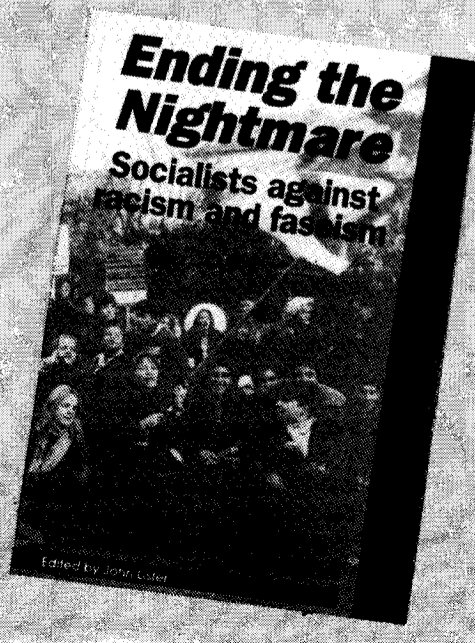
It is tragic that the Indonesian occupation forces are now irresponsibly attempting to obfuscate the issue by inciting religious conflicts"

Ending The Nightmare

Socialists against racism and fascism

Socialist Outlook has published this new collection of articles, including Ernest Mandel's *Learn the lessons of Germany*, to examine the roots of racism and fascism and outline a strategy to defeat them.

How strong are the far right today? Why are racism and fascism on the rise in Europe? What lessons are there for anti-racists from the experiences of the 1930s? Can the ethnic cleansers of ex-Yugoslavia be called "fascist"? For your copy of this 128-page book, send a cheque for £4.95 plus 75 pence postage, payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund', to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.



Solidarity day November 12

THE INTERNATIONAL solidarity movement has advanced plans for the anniversary of November 12.

Actions will be taking place across north America and Europe. In the Asia-Pacific area actions will take place in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and in Japan, where protests will be held in Tokyo and Osaka from November 7 to 10 to coincide with the next meeting of the Asia Pacific Eco-

nomic Co-operation Forum (APEC).

There will also be protests across Australia and in New Zealand.

In Britain there will be actions at three British Aerospace sites in Warton Lancashire (0161-834 0295), Brough near Hull (01482 470621) and Farnborough in Hampshire (01865 793820) on November 11 and a protest outside the Indonesian Embassy, Grosvenor Square central London on November 12 from 5.30pm.

RMT to strike against victimisations

Last week Tom Richie, the membership secretary of Manchester South RMT at Piccadilly station Manchester, was sacked for putting a notice on a notice board.

This follows the sacking of Chris Jones from Longsight Manchester British Rail depot at the end of September.

Weaken unions

This second sacking indicates a determination by British Rail to weaken unions in the Manchester area in the run up to privatisation. The sacking of four reps at Piccadilly three years ago was designed to break the union. It failed. Management are back for a second go.

The response of the RMT however will make management think again about their actions. The national General Grades Committee has voted for simultaneous strike ballots and action about all three

cases.

This is exactly the response needed.

The continued strength of the RMT remains a massive obstacle to the privatisation. The sacking of militants is designed to undermine this strength.

The inclusion of the reps sacked three years ago marks a significant victory for those activists at Piccadilly and elsewhere who would not let the matter drop. The four's victory at a tribunal earlier this year resulted in the RMT AGM voting for a strike ballot to be held - a decision that the GGC has now voted to carry through.

All RMT activists need to build a campaign to ensure that the GGC does not back off in the face of the inevitable management legal response. All militants in the trades union movement should prepare to maximise support for the forthcoming strikes.

Armed truce on London's underground

By an LUL worker

The long running dispute between the RMT and London Underground is closing.

The latest ballot result gave a clear majority for strike action. Nevertheless, despite the dispute's high profile, less than half the members voted. Many RMT members believe that nothing further can be gained.

This has left the union with two choices: either call off the strikes with an unsatisfactory outcome, or press ahead with a strike that we are likely to lose, possibly involving sackings.

So how has the position changed? How can workers who were keen for a fight earlier in the year have given up now?

Delays

Certainly the time delays created by LUL's legal shenanigans and re-balloting have not helped. But more important is the conviction by most of the workers that no more can be won in the dispute. They are also bitter about coming out on strike while members of other unions worked as normal.

At the same time, LUL have been taken aback at the level of support gathered by the earlier strikes. They have had to shelve plans to marginalise and defeat the RMT. So the outcome looks

more like an armed truce than an outright victory for either side.

It is too early to draw a full balance sheet. But it is clear that RMT members were not prepared to knuckle under. They wanted to "have a pop".

All out struggle is not an immediate prospect however.

Those members who have already been on strike are often the ones who are most determined to call it a day.

Executive

The RMT executive, the body that takes the decisions on strikes, have been willing to follow the lead of Pat Sikorski and the activist based London Transport District Council.

Nevertheless, RMT full-time officials such as Will Proudfoot use every media opportunity to tell the world that it is all over—undermining the strength of our position further.

Continuation of the dispute would have allowed management to "legally" sack dozens of workers by counting industrial action as "absence".

The best answer would be all-out action, preferably in defiance of the law. This goal is under threat by activists and many workers on the underground, but to attain it we need to build up unity and self-confidence further.

This round of disputes has taken the RMT a step or two forward in the right direction.

8,000 back TUC's half-hearted March Against Racism

by Simon Deville

Around 8,000 people joined the TUC Unite Against Racism demonstration in Manchester on 28th October, marking the largest anti-racist demo this year.

This demo could not have been at a more opportune moment, amidst preparation by the Tories for a massive attack on the rights of asylum seekers and black people more generally.

Even many Tory MPs have expressed unease about proposals to make public sector workers, police and employers responsible for carrying out immigration checks. However most of these Tories have been primarily concerned about the possibility of employers being fined for employing "illegal" immigrants, rather than the racism these laws will promote and institutionalise.

Anti-racists must welcome the fact that many trade unions now have anti-racist policies that would have been unheard of just ten years ago.

The fact that the TUC has organised two national demos against racism in recent years is a massive step forward. But this in itself is far from adequate.

That only 8,000 attended



A real fight against racism means more than a march every year or so.

the demo showed how much this opportunity was wasted. Any serious mobilisation by the trade union movement and anti-racist movement should be able to mobilise at least tens or hundreds of thousands.

The sectarian divisions within the anti-racist movement have created an obstacle to an authoritative movement that can make a real impact in the workers' movement and force its demands upon the government.

If the trade union movement is really to fight racism, one demonstration every couple of years is nowhere near adequate.

Public sector workers must start organising now to refuse to implement racist laws, and all workers should be organising to oppose em-

ployers carrying out immigration checks.

Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw has attacked the Tories for playing the race card. But it's high time that he, and the rest of the Labour leadership spoke up to oppose the battery of racist laws.

Scrap list

The Labour leadership has stated it would scrap the "white list" of British backed dictatorships from which no asylum applications will be considered. This must be supported, but New Labour has had little else to say about racist laws.

Labour has promoted itself as the party of Europe, and significantly, has had nothing to say on the racist Schengen agreement.

This agreement aims to

create a common European policy on the immigration based upon the worst aspects of each particular country's existing legislation.

Labour cannot fight racism if it is to be the party of "Fortress Europe". Trade unionists and Labour Party members must force a commitment to opposing all racist laws.

If the leaders of the labour movement are genuinely concerned about racism, their words must be changed into deeds.

Whilst all anti-racists must organise against as best we can in the absence of a unified national movement, we cannot let trade union and Labour Party leaders use anti-racism to win votes, unless they are prepared to actually promote concrete action themselves.

Network AGM: key test of strength for Labour left

By Simon Kennedy

AFTER the spin doctors' carefully crafted Labour conference in Brighton, the left continues to fight and organise.

There is a genuine and widespread discontent among the rank and file in the Labour Party at Blair's rightward lurch.

In the days of obligatory standing oaths it gets harder and harder to see the reality behind the photo opportunities, but there is real anger at the patriotism and Christianity that is now being passed off as a socialist vision.

There is very little enthusi-

asm for Blair's politics in the Party. There is a great deal of desire to get rid of the Tories.

The Socialist Campaign Group Network is emerging as a central organiser for the left. It now has over 50 groups around the country and is continuing to grow.

About a hundred discussed the way forward at the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network conference fringe.

It is taking the first steps from being a network to becoming a more organised political tendency. There are the signs that significant sections of delegates from both the CLPs and trades unions are looking for an alternative.

The Network AGM - to be held in Manchester Town Hall on November 18 - gives

us an opportunity to build on these openings, especially over the minimum wage and education policy.

These issues are central. They give us a chance to break through the electoralism that Blair's clique so ruthlessly exploits. Nothing could be a better vote winner than a minimum wage, giving millions of low paid workers a reason to vote Labour.

Education

The same is true of education. All levels of society are effected by the Tory cuts. The rapid growth of the FACE campaign shows the potential of this issue to link up those on the ground with a fight to put demands on an incoming Labour administration.

This is a job for the Network. It has to take up every opportunity to campaign on the issues that are affecting the daily lives of working class people.

By doing this it can achieve the dual task of reaching out to those fighting in the communities, and strengthening the left in the Labour Party and trades unions.

We must face facts. The right was able to win at conference because the left is weak. The labour movement has suffered more than a decade of heavy blows. The balance of forces is not with us.

But times change. By building campaigns on the ground and organising the left in the labour movement to put demands on our leaders, socialists can help change them.

The Nation of Islam: radical conservatives or heirs of Malcolm X?



Farrakhan's movement is building a base in Britain's black community: here at a protest against the murder of Brian Douglas

Photo: Paul Mattison

By Joe Auciello

AFTER THE Million Man march, Minister Louis Farrakhan has emerged as among the most significant leaders in the African American community, and the Nation of Islam (NOI) has become one of the most influential organisations in the country.

Farrakhan's prominence is genuine and earnest; his support is wide and deeply felt.

Journalist Salim Muwakkil has observed of him: "He remains the only black leader capable of attracting thousands to his speeches. Alone among contemporaries, Farrakhan is able to command the attention and

corral the energies of the so-called hip-hop generation". Ron Daniels has com-

The taint of anti-semitism clings: his vision of history and politics is inescapably mired in anti-semitism

mented: "What people have to understand is that fundamentally Farrakhan is the

mass leader in the African-American community. Barring none."

What are the reasons for his growing influence? Why is the NOI flourishing, especially when other Black organisations are

wracked by crisis and decline? How can a man whose policies are in many ways highly conservative become the champion of Blacks who are angry and fed up with oppression?

Conservative

While Farrakhan takes a conservative stand on a range of issues, he is openly defiant and unafraid to denounce the racist history and practices of

the US government in the fiercest, most uncompromising terms.

For this reason Farrakhan and the NOI have become the vehicle for a mass Black nationalist sentiment demanding the "freedom, justice, and equality" which is long overdue.

In some portions of his presentation in Springfield he sounded as conservative as any of the Republican candidates. "What's going on?" he repeatedly asked, denouncing the social ills and moral failures that, in his view, bedevil America - the increased visibility of gays, indecent dress among women, the prevalence of nudity in Hollywood films, condom distribution in high schools, the legality of abortion and especially the lack of parental consent laws to restrict abortion for teenagers.

He criticised feminism, rap music and videos, and grunge culture: "you young white people with your head full of dope and your damn guitar and your long hair...you don't know whether you're a man or a woman - an earring in your damn ear, one in your nose."

Khomeini

He praised religious fundamentalism, Christian as well as Islamic, especially that of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Yet this conservative emphasis on morality and self-improvement is not entirely negative. It is an antidote to the advertisers who have made the African American community the special target for liquor and tobacco sales.

CENTRE STAGE

The meaning of the massive march

By Joe Auciello

REVOLUTIONARY socialists should certainly support many of the Million Man March's demands, but overall the weakness of the nation of Islam's vision and programme are too integral a part of the call for a march on Washington for socialists to support it unreservedly, without criticism.

Nonetheless, it would be short-sighted to downplay the potential significance of the Nation of Islam.

The march seeks to mobilise some of the most oppressed sectors of the American population

against their oppression. Given the absence of leadership from the traditional civil rights organizations, this march could become the means by which Blacks raise their voices most powerfully for freedom, justice and equality.

Atonement

The Nation of Islam's call for "atonement" and the emphasis on moral improvement tends to reduce the appeal to those who are already convinced of this point of view. Telling women to stay at home is a further handicap; it reduces the numbers and promotes antiquated social relations between the sexes. Black men need to march side by side with Black women - not for them and not in

place of them.

Despite the Nation's fervent appeal for Black unity, no coalition for the march is seriously projected. "Unity", apparently, is to be achieved on the basis of the NOI's programme.

Malcolm X's strategy of separating religious and political issues to achieve the greatest unity and strength in action is an approach that would be of great benefit.

The contradictions of the Nation of Islam's march reflect the contradictions of the Nation of Islam itself: a conservative religious organisation whose defiant opposition to white racism and the US government wins it increasing support from radicalising African Americans, especially the youth.

The platform of the march

In an April 1 speech in Massachusetts Farrakhan made the following points.

1. The march is a protest against the oppression of Black people and a declaration of our "right to justice and our right to determine the future of ourselves and our people."

2. The march is a "day of atonement" in which the Black man will apologise to the Black Woman for his sins, his sloth, his personnel failures, and will pledge to live up to his personal responsibilities.

3. The march is a work stoppage and economic boycott. The date is set for a Monday so that Black men will not go to work that day; Black Women will support the march by staying at home, buying no products. This boycott will show the power of Blacks in the American economy - "this modern-day Babylon" - by refusing to participate in it for one day.

4. The march makes a political call to all black people to leave the Democratic and Republican parties, which have failed to address Black issues and needs, and to re-register as independents.

5. The march is a call to unity among Black people in the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality.

The NOI has helped to rehabilitate many individuals whose lives have been condemned to the margins of American society. Crime, alcohol, drugs, violence, produce wasted lives. For many the NOI has been the only available alternative.

Obviously there are limitations to the strategy of self-help. Blacks do not create the general social conditions under which they live, and no amount of individual rehabilitation will solve the larger social problem, although it may make individuals more effective in working toward a solution.

Farrakhan's analysis of the causes of Black oppression is deeply flawed. His is a history that derives largely from right-wing conspiracy theories typically touted by reactionaries like the Reverend Pat Robertson of the Christian coalition.

'Immoral Jews'

Both Robertson and Farrakhan see history not as the result of different classes acting in their own interest, but as largely the result of actions by evil, immoral individuals - especially Jews - who wield tremendous power in highly secret societies and who control world banks and governments in a massive conspiracy dating back hundreds of years.

Farrakhan explains that he is not attacking the Jews as a people, only those Jews who are exploiters and oppressors. Despite the denials, the taint of anti-semitism clings to his speeches because his vision of history and politics is inescapably mired in anti-semitic

sources, especially those of the "religious right".

Farrakhan denounces individuals and groups who are capitalists or who serve them, but in his account of world history, capitalism itself is not faulted. Herein lies the key area of Farrakhan's analysis.

Farrakhan eloquently and passionately describes the oppression and exploitation of Black people, and his hatred

American problem. Rather, we are seeing today a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter".

The ghost of Malcolm X still haunts Farrakhan and the NOI. Malcolm's criticism of Elijah Muhammad, the Nation, and of course of its political development sharply rebuke Farrakhan and the NOI of today.

In Boston in March 1994 Farrakhan berated the audience for admiring Malcolm. Malcolm's popularity, his endurance as a symbol of Black liberation, can be seen as setting limits on Farrakhan's own achievement.

Farrakhan: "you young white people with your head full of dope and your damn guitar and your long hair...you don't know whether you're a man or a woman - an earring in your damn ear, one in your nose."

for that oppression is unquestionable. But his efforts to liberate Black people will be misdirected as long as he misunderstands the roots of that oppression, which are deeply embedded in capitalism itself.

In this regard his perspective falls short of the insights Malcolm X had developed before his death.

In his political work Malcolm X collaborated with socialists who were collaborative with him, and he began to speak favourably of socialism as a goal for liberation movements throughout the world.

"We are living in an era of revolution, and the revolt of the American negro is part of the rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which has characterised this era....

Malcolm X

"It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the negro as simply a racial conflict of black against white, or as purely an

Malcolm's death

In Springfield he took an entirely different tack, likened Malcolm's break with Elijah Muhammad to a divorce between parents, both of whom he adored. In his account, Farrakhan portrays himself as a victim, and he minimises his own role in calling for and justifying Malcolm's death.

Farrakhan's importance is that he articulates the anger of Blacks against injustice, that he calls on Blacks to protest and fight for their liberation.

He inspires pride in his audience, a pride in Blackness, both by his word and his example. In Farrakhan his admirers see a living icon, a man not afraid to condemn America for its inhumane treatment of Black people.

The nationalist sentiment and the sense of solidarity in sharing a common oppression that Farrakhan ignites is the source of his appeal and growing popularity. As his



Protesting against homophobia at Islamic Liberation Party rally

Photo: Andrew Wiard

authority grows he is increasingly seen as the leader who can bring unity in the Black community and aid that community in closing ranks against its common oppressor, the white racism of American society.

The flaws in Farrakhan's beliefs are terrible and undeniable. Still, because of the masses he influences, his ideas and the growth of the Nation of Islam are increasingly significant.

Minister Farrakhan and the

Nation of Islam represent a contradictory phenomenon - a conservative force which, in opposition to white racism, captures a radicalisation going on in America today, the revolutionary spirit of the nationally oppressed.

How US left saw Million Man March

IT WAS the biggest all-black mobilisation in the US since the 1950s: a march which brought hundreds of thousands into activity for the first time — led by a conservative leadership unable to politically challenge that oppression. Revolutionaries in the US took a range of stances. These edited selections put forward the main views.

Socialist Workers' Party

THE SWP was once the fraternal section of the Fourth International in the US. In the 1980s, it broke with Trotskyism and now aligns itself with the Cuban Communist Party. Writing in the 9 October issue of *The Militant*, the weekly paper reflecting the views of the SWP, Sam Manuel and Greg Rosenberg comment that "a host of capitalist politicians along with leaders of national civil rights organisations, businessmen's groups and other middle-class organisations endorsed the October 16 march.

"Not a single demand is placed on Washington in defence of affirmative action,

against cop brutality, for a jobs programme, or any other measures to protect the working class in general, or black workers in particular, from the ravages of economic depression and the employers' offensive.

"The march emphasises the themes of reinforcing faith, family and country in an effort to 'uplift' Black men.

"While the march initiators' central purpose was — and is — to build the Nation of Islam financially and politically, a raft of political groups and individuals moving to the right found cause to associate with the action."

Socialist Action

SOCIALIST ACTION was founded by SWP members expelled for defending the SWP's Trotskyist continuity. It has fraternal links to the Fourth International, the worldwide socialist organisation which *Socialist Outlook* also supports. Writing in the October issue of *Socialist Action* Jim Harris explained that the march "does signify that a section of the Black community has tired of being taken for granted by the Democratic Party.

"The overwhelming majority of African Americans are working class. there is no Black component of the ruling class in America — no Black Rockefellers or Perots. In fact, no other sector of American society has less of a social or financial base for the blooming of capitalism; on the contrary, any mass mobilisation of the Black community tends to trigger an anti-capitalist

dynamic.

"*Socialist Action* encourages its readers and all fighters for social justice to support this important national event.

"Only coming events can answer the question of the future role of the Nation of Islam. In the meantime, we are optimistic and remain ready to reach out in friendship and solidarity to this important component of the Black movement."

Solidarity

SOLIDARITY WAS founded in 1986 by a number of political currents, including organised Fourth Internationalists and some comrades outside the Trotskyist tradition, who "promote the vision of socialism from below". Malik Miah, editor of the *Solidarity* magazine *Independent Politics* argues in the 25 October *Green Left Weekly* that the march was "one of the most important rallies in the history of the black struggle.

"Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, which initiated the march, tapped the sentiment among black people that we have to get our act together, something Malcolm X explained many years ago.

"The majority of people who participated went beyond Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. They went to stand up, not just for black men, but against racism in the US.

"The Nation of Islam is primarily a black sect. Its programme includes sexist attitudes towards women, and Farrakhan has made

many anti-semitic and anti-gay statements. But Farrakhan is not the leader of the black community. It is just that he fills a real leadership vacuum in the black movement at the moment and that's why people marched at his call."

International Socialist Organisation

THE ISO IS the US wing of the Socialist Workers' Party here in Britain. In the 13 October edition of the US *Socialist Worker*, the editorial notes that "Support for the march spans the ideological spectrum from the Rev. Jesse Jackson to Black conservatives.

"The march's message is unabashedly conservative 'We must repent of the laziness that has caused us not to be willing to take up our responsibility to do for self' Farrakhan wrote in a motivation.

"This amounts to little more than blame-the-victim rhetoric that echoes the right-wing's attack on welfare for destroying the Black family

"While it is certainly true that many — if not most — of those attending the march will not support the NOI's agenda, the event's politics still reflect Farrakhan's reactionary views.

"A march that targets the people responsible for racism, today — the corporations and their politicians — would be a step forward. The Million Man March represents a step backward."

CENTRE STAGE

From pessimistic analysis to ultra-left conclusion

Militant fails to define the moment

In *Socialism Today*, the monthly journal of Militant Labour, Peter Taaffe writes that Tony Blair's triumph at this year's Labour Conference and the scale of the defeat for the left represent a 'defining moment'.

According to Taaffe, there has been a historic realignment of British politics, with the transformation of the Labour Party into New 'One Nation' Labour.

Here DAVE PACKER argues that the left has suffered serious watershed defeats, but that this cannot be equated with a change in the class character of the Labour Party itself.

Had such a change occurred, it would represent an historic defeat for the working class.

PETER TAAFFE writes: "*Socialism Today* and its predecessor *Militant International Review*, have argued that the Labour Party under Blair was in the process of being transformed from a workers' organisation at bottom with a pro-capitalist leadership, into a wholly 'liberal' capitalist party.

"Brighton '95 confirmed this. The majority of capitalist commentators, either implicitly or explicitly, accept it.

"The only issue under dispute is whether the process has been completed, that the



How many Labour Party activists would split to join Militant's 'Real Labour Party'?

Labour Party has now exhausted any historical role as a vehicle for socialists and workers in the struggle against capitalism, or if it is still possible to halt the Blair juggernaut." (pp9-10)

He continues: "The decisions of the conference hold little encouragement for those on the left who, hoping against hope, believe that the Labour Party can be rescued."

The whole weight of Taaffe's argument is that the transformation has been more or less completed and is irreversible. Later in the same text, he writes that Militant Labour has been right about "the processes which have led to a fundamental change in the character of the Labour Party." (p12)

New party

Taaffe draws the conclusion: Militant Labour, with others, should take the opportunity and build a new party of Labour!

His argument is based not simply on the recent defeats for the left and the dramatic rightward shift of party policy, but also on Blair's successful structural and social changes to the Party:

"Left candidates are blocked and Howarth, one of the Tory authors of the Poll Tax, is welcomed on board. ... Thousands of socialist stalwarts have already gone (since the Clause Four defeat). ... Workers drop out and are replaced by a Blair 'levy' of politically raw types, many middle class ..."

Even more significant, according to Taaffe is that Labour's key defining feature

has been overturned. It is no longer a 'federation of different trends and ideological currents ... which allowed the freedom of Marxists and others to put forward their ideas and have such a decisive influence at different stages in history."

Given these fundamental changes in the character of the party, Taaffe insists that "A left transformation is now the most unlikely perspective for the Labour Party."

Of course this breaks from their previous analysis, held for more than forty years.

The article rightly emphasises the significance of the new rule changes and changes in social composition, but wrongly argues that these features define the class character of the Labour Party.

Crucially, the most important federal element, trade union affiliation, remains intact.

Militant used to understand this. It is clear that Blair wishes to sever the historic link with the trade unions and transform the Labour Party into a European-style social democratic-type party: but a deal was struck at conference guaranteeing (for the moment!) no further reduction in the unions' 50 percent share of votes.

Unbroken link

Blair achieved his victory because he was able to forge a new alliance with the trade union bureaucracy, although mostly on his terms. The trade union link has not been broken, and there is everything to fight for.

The great mass of the working class still see Labour as their party and will turn out

to vote for it at the next election in order to get rid of the Tories.

For Militant Labour to stand against the Labour Party will be seen as a diversion by the masses. Even the broad vanguard, who have few illusions in Blair, will see standing candidates against Labour as sheer folly.

Taaffe's analysis, crucial to his argument for building a new socialist party in the medium term, is unconvincing: he claims that the class character of the Labour Party has already changed.

He argues that a right wing Labour government, intent on attacking the working class, will result in demands on wages, education, and housing, but that Blair is preparing to 'ride out' any opposition.

He therefore needs to make the Labour Party 'safe' from any pressure from the organised working class, hence the attacks on democracy.

Prejudged

The problem with this analysis is that Taaffe is prejudging the outcome of struggles which are still unfolding or yet to begin.

If Blair really were strong enough to brush aside resistance, it would imply a weak or non-existent fightback, and little or no mobilisation of class struggle left in the unions: yet if these are not the very forces on which any 'new party of Labour' would have to base itself, who does Taaffe see as the target audience of his new initiative?

The whole project of building a new left party at this stage faces an insuperable contradiction: its political jus-

tification rests on an analysis - a claimed historic and irreversible defeat for Labour's left wing - which suggests the least favourable conditions ever for creating a class struggle organisation.

Despite Taaffe's pessimism, Blair has not yet succeeded: on the contrary, despite the treachery of the union leaders, the pressure of the masses will be felt directly by a Labour government.

Ruptures

At first the union bureaucrats will try to hold down the lid, exploiting the initial mood of 'give them a chance': but a struggle will at some point break through, and ruptures will probably appear within the bureaucracy.

How do we know? because this was the way previous Labour governments have run into conflict with the rank and file of the unions.

If we face this situation again in three or four years time, Taaffe's analysis of the Labour Party would naturally lead him to fight for the unions to disaffiliate. He writes that once Blair refuses to satisfy working class demands, ordinary trade unionists will decide to cut away:

"The cry could go up for unions to disaffiliate from the party, as happened with the New Zealand Labour Party in the 1980s. The ground will be

prepared for splits towards the left."

Will the leftward-moving sectors of the bureaucracy move quickly to split the Labour Party and affiliate to Militant Labour? Or will they be forced to place themselves at the head of a struggle to regain control of the Party and its leadership?

At first, at least, the latter scenario seems the most probable. Depending on the character of the new left leadership thrown up in this situation, the fight for the soul of the Labour Party would be on. Under these conditions it would be a sectarian diversion to campaign for the disaffiliation of the trade unions. The task would be to join that fight.

Whatever scenario unfolds in three or four years time, the task of the left today is to fight for a Labour government, but to continue the struggle against the Tories.

If it is to play a role in the unfolding process of Labour's realignment, and defend the trade union link, the left in the Labour Party must break from its narrow parliamentarist perspective and rebuild itself out of the coming struggles.

This means focusing on the battles in the trade unions, and fighting for the Labour Party to take up the struggles of the oppressed and the youth.

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ANALYSIS

Labour left fights on -- against the odds

By Nell Murray

THAT BLAIR would have a "good" conference was mostly predictable.

In any football match, if you have far more players, the match officials on your side, and have also removed your team's goalposts, then you stand a good chance of winning.

But to read press reports you would hardly think there was a challenge from the Left. Yet time and again there was a fight from the Left - on the witch-hunt of Liz Davies, on education, on the minimum wage amongst other things.

That the Left failed to win anything was primarily because the leaders of the main unions were committed to not rocking the boat - for them winning the election at whatever price took precedence over their unions' conference policy.

Several smaller unions voted with the Left throughout, and even in the others there was often a battle in the delegations over how their votes were cast.

To make sure nothing went wrong, the manipulation of conference reached new heights, such as the "planting" of an LCC executive member to move the motion on the minimum wage and then "reluctantly" agree to remit.

Blair's speech was a mixed bag. Of course, it got the obligatory standing ovation, but many were disgusted with its mixture of patriotism and evangelism.

The commitments made by Blair (and other front bench speakers) were by and large hollow, but it was significant that they were made at all, given the previous refusal to be pinned down.

Where vague commitments were made - on class size, railways, VAT on fuel, Compulsory Competitive Tendering - they were on issues over which there has been public protest. Even Blair feels that he has to pay lip service to popular demands.

Lousy

The Left had a lousy conference, but it was there, and it was fighting. The Campaign Group and Tribune rallies and the Labour Left Briefing launch were all big, and the Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network round-up meeting was attended by about 100.

The Network's daily bulletin went down well, and it now has about 50 affiliated groups around the country.

Significant sections of delegates from both the unions and the CLPs are looking for an alternative - a fight for which the Left must provide a lead, around issues like the



Scargill: exaggerated view of significance of Clause Four

Lynn Hjort

minimum wage and education policy, as well as providing an overall analysis of where Blair is leading the Labour Party.

Instant success is not on the cards, but without this preparatory work disillusionment will lead to despair when a Blair government fails to address the questions facing millions of working people.

Arthur Scargill's musings over whether to leave the Labour Party were as confused as they were a diversion from this task.

Scargill believes that it was

Clause 4 alone which distinguished the Labour Party from the Tories and Liberals, revealing the view that the Labour Party was at some time a socialist party, which it never was.

The real distinguishing feature is not an unclear paper policy - to which every Labour government has professed allegiance while in fact administering capitalism - but the links which the Labour Party has with the organised working class, which remain unchanged in their fundamentals.

Debating Labour's future

By the editors

THE LEFT, inside and outside of the labour movement, is hotly debating where the Labour Party is going in the wake of last month's party conference.

Over the next few months, *Socialist Outlook* is opening up its pages for discussion and debate about the issues involved: just how far Blair aims to go, the divisions within the party's mainstream, the response of the unions, and the fight for socialist policies.

Last month's meeting of the *Socialist Outlook* editorial board registered broad agreement on these themes, but at the same time we want to take forward this crucial discussion and deepen the understanding across the left of the tasks ahead.

Socialist Outlook's stance was outlined in our previous issue by Dave Packer.

The defeat of the Labour left was, Packer explained "unprecedented in recent history".

"It is clear that sharp tensions exist between

Blair's project to transform the Party, and sections of the union bureaucracy and Parliamentary Labour Party" but "these faultlines are not open ruptures today".

The unions won't "rock the boat until well into a Labour government when open fissures may appear under mass pressure from below." Packer went on to explain Blair's "desire to sever the historic links of the Labour Party with the trade unions."

Not ripe

The article concluded by warning that "the conditions are not ripe for the development of a new left party today ... the masses want a Labour government, not a split."

Socialist Outlook is open to contributions on these themes. To open the debate, we carry these contributions, which reflect the discussion at our last editorial board meeting.

Please keep contributions to around 400 words in length. Articles will be edited for brevity and concision. Send them to *Feedback*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

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By Fred Arkwright

THE RIGHT wing leadership of the Labour Party is increasingly emerging as the favoured option for the ruling class, with large sections of the membership welcoming this as a sign of Labour's "electability".

For socialists, when the bourgeoisie is prepared to support Labour, this should sound the alarm bells. The question is posed of what attitude we should take towards New Labour.

The ease at which Blair has been able to force through changes in the Labour Party is a reflection of the weakness of the left, but this hasn't happened in a vacuum.

These defeats for the left are not down to insufficient organisation over the last year but a reflection of significant defeats of the work-

ing class over the last decade.

Despite its victories over the working class, the ruling class has rejected Thatcherism, looking to European integration to re-establish an industrial base.

Blair's programme is to lead the bourgeoisie into Europe. This means integration into the whole project of the European bourgeoisie, including dismantling large sections of the welfare state, the creation of authoritarian regimes in which the police are given massive new powers, and the establishment of racist immigration laws that are uniform throughout Europe.

The Tory Party is divided, so Labour look the best bet for the ruling class.

The problem for Blair is something quite different. The Labour Party still has its links with the unions and will depend upon the support of large sections of the Labour movement bureauc-

racy to implement his programme.

The real test will come when Blair tries to implement his programme in office, the real defeat would be if Blair can smash Labour's link with the working class.

Reflection

It is true that the Labour Party left is weak. However, there has not yet been a historic defeat. The Clause Four defeat, despite being a significant setback, does not mark a qualitative change in the party. Any upturn in workers' struggle is still likely to have a reflection inside the party.

When struggles re-emerged in the mid-1980s - like the miners' strike - they attempted to find political expression in the Labour Party. Much of the far-left outside the Labour Party failed to challenge either the Bennite or *Militant* leadership of these struggles.

What both Bennism and *Militant* shared was a misconception that socialism could be achieved through bourgeois-democratic means, and on a municipal level.

Even when the Labour left did attempt to mobilise workers, it was as a stage army to support change through local government, rather than to rally workers to fight for their own class interests.

We must not make the same mistake this time. The struggles of youth and the specially oppressed will find a political expression.

That is to say they will have to find a way to implement their demands. Whilst the masses still look towards parliament to bring about change they will continue to test the limits of bourgeois democracy.

That means taking up the struggles of workers and the oppressed within the Labour Party.

DEBATE

Yeltsin may be back: but can Russia recover?

By Rick Simon

BORIS YELTSIN'S heart problems mirror the general state of the Russian economy and society.

Russia also has a fundamentally unhealthy body (politic) on the brink of collapse. Yeltsin's popularity is so low that even should he full recover after his re-emergence from hospital last week he has no chance of being re-elected President in next June's elections.

Given the new constitutional powers of the President, the politics of Yeltsin's successor is important. The odds of it being someone from Yeltsin's camp are slim: but first Russia's liberals have to negotiate next month's elections to the State Duma.

Yeltsin's destruction of the old parliament provided an opportunity to create a compliant legislature: but unfortunately for him the main victors in the December 1993 elections were Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Russian chauvinist Liberal Democrats and the biggest fragment of the old Soviet Communist Party — Gennadii Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF).

Protest at Argentine crackdown

LEADING members of left wing and trade union organisations in Argentina are in prison or facing arrest following a 500-strong demonstration of unemployed workers in the southern province of Neuquén on October 2.

The marchers had been demanding payment of benefits owing to them, but withheld as a result of President Menem's austerity drive.

The demonstration was violently repressed by police, and the local government has now unleashed a witch-hunt against the left, and especially against Trotskyist organisations whose members are accused of instigating the disturbances.

Horacio Panario, a leading member of the Movement for Socialism (MAS) is in jail, and warrants have been issued for the arrest of other members of MAS and the state employees' union ATEN. Also threatened with arrest are members of the Socialist Movement of Workers (MST), and Workers Party (PO).

Argentine socialists are demanding the immediate release of Horacio Panario and other left leaders, and an end to all legal proceedings against working class militants.



Staggering towards disaster: Clinton can't prop up Yeltsin forever

Since then, the main issue which has drawn together the disparate forces in the parliament has been the war in Chechnya. Even liberal supporters of Yeltsin, like economic reform architect Egor Gaidar, have been appalled at the handling of the situation.

The government has survived no-confidence votes, and Yeltsin avoided impeachment, but next month's elections look set to deliver a State Duma more opposed to Yeltsin's course than ever before.

The liberal forces are fragmented. Gaidar's Choice Party is the arch rival of Grigori Yavlinskii's

Yabloko ('apple') bloc. Liberals have been shocked by the exclusion of Yabloko from the elections under a technicality.

The main beneficiary will almost certainly be 'Nash Dom — Rossiya' (Our home is Russia), the so called 'party of power' established by Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin.

Chernomyrdin's links to the powerful gas industry have given the party its nickname 'Nash Dom — Gazprom'.

It has won over large chunks of Gaidar's base. Chernomyrdin, who has as-

sumed some presidential responsibilities during Yeltsin's illness, is the likely candidate for the Yeltsin camp for June.

Since 1993 Zhirinovskii's popularity has fallen and the CPRF lead opinion polls. With around 25 per cent they are almost certain to be the biggest party in the new Duma. Allied with the Agrarian Party, they will create a large bloc.

Meanwhile, the struggle for independent class politics is proving extremely difficult. Industrial action has been slowly mounting against economic collapse.

'White races' and the Quebec referendum

By Raghu Krishnan

RECENT racist and sexist remarks by Bloc Quebecois leader Lucien Bouchard — bemoaning how Quebec's birth rate was one of the lowest among the "white races" — did not endear non-whites and anti-racists in English-Canada.

Women were rightly outraged by this indirect call to place their wombs at the service of their "race".

But there is nothing to cheer in the federalist camp's attempts to score points for the "No" vote on the basis of this incident. After pushing through immigration legislation that divides immigrant families and explicitly favours applicants from the "white races" (and men), the federal Liberals are ill-placed to pose as champions of the "darker races" and women.

Relations between the Quebecois Francophone majority and Quebec's non-Francophone immigrant and non-white communities have always been somewhat

strained. There are many reasons for this, including English-Canadian control over immigration policy, and, until very recent times, and the dominant role of the Anglophone community and English in the Montreal area (and therefore in the province).

This has led to the separation and marginalisation of both the Francophone majority and immigrants to the province.

Suspicion

The two marginalised communities have been just as likely to view each other with suspicion and distrust as they have been to see what they have in common. And they haven't been helped by the conscious efforts made by the rich and powerful inside and outside Quebec to nurture this division in the interests of the dogma of a "united Canada".

Racism and xenophobia also play a role. In this respect Quebec is not very different from other Western nations, with their poisonous past and present relations with "Third World" and indigenous peoples. The defenders of an in-

creasingly strident and selfish Canadian nationalism are hardly qualified to be lecturing Quebecers on this score.

The period in Quebec history opened up by the "Quiet Revolution" of the early 1960s is best known for freeing the Francophone majority from the authoritarianism of the Church and for modernising government and society.

But the subsequent emergence of a sovereignty movement among the most progressive sectors (trade unionists, women's groups, students, intellectuals, artists) also reflected a burning desire to forge a new, socially just, secular, multicultural "Quebe-cois" identity and country.

These aspirations are now deeply rooted in Quebec society, particularly among the younger generations.

This aspect of the struggle for sovereignty is largely ignored in English-Canada. Unfortunately, even ostensibly progressive circles in English-Canada have grown accustomed to viewing the Francophone majority as irredeemably "tribalistic" — prompting many to oppose

However the former official trade union federation, the FNPR, has entered into a questionable electoral alliance, called the Union of Labour, with the Industrial Party of enterprise directors. This continues the time-honoured tradition of management-union collaboration. This bloc has no chance of overcoming the five per cent hurdle to gain representation in the Duma.

The Party of Labour, led by Boris Kagarlitsky and Aleksandr Buzgalin, for which the left had high hopes a couple of years ago, is now little more than a shell. Slightly more hopefully, the former miners' union, which has proved to be the most militant of the old unions, is standing its own candidates in mining regions.

The crisis in Russia will not be overcome but only exacerbated by the December and June elections.

And on the horizon looms former general Aleksandr Lebed, a likely presidential candidate, who favours an authoritarian solution. If the unions cannot provide a credible alternative, the outlook for working class action might be even bleaker than it is now.

■ Rick Simon is a member of the Labour Focus on Eastern Europe editorial board.

What's Happening

Until 3 Dec

'RECYCLE II' - a show of prints by Stuart J Bullen, the Greenhouse, The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St. WC1 11am-830pm Mon-Sat; 1pm-5pm Sun; Mon eve women only.

Thurs 9

MANCHESTER Socialist Outlook Forum on Bosnia 7.30pm Manchester Town Hall with speaker Geoff Ryan.

Sat 18

SOCIALIST Campaign Group Supporters Network AGM, Manchester Town Hall. 10.30-4.30

Weds 22

Ending the Nightmare - BIRMINGHAM. Public launch of book in memory of comrade Bob Smith. Speakers include Mary Pearson, Mohammed Idrish (invited). 7.30pm at the Union Club, Pershore Road.

Sat 25

STOP HOSPITAL CLOSURES conference sponsored by London Health Emergency. Speakers include Wendy Savage, Bart's Guy's and Edgware campaigns. 11.00am to 4.00pm ULU, Malet St. London. WC1.

DECEMBER

Sat 2 & Sun 3

PAPER making course held by Stuart J Bullen Details The Drill Hall 0171 631 1353.

Sun 3

MARCH to stop deportation of Ragbir Singh. Assemble 1.00pm at Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Rd. March to rally at Trafalgar Square. Called by NUJ.

Sun 3

Close of ERNEST MANDEL MEMORIAL FUND. Socialist Outlook readers and supporters plan to raise £3,000, as part of an international effort. Please make your donation payable to 'Ernest Mandel Memorial Fund' and rush to us at PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

How Stalin knifed the Spanish revolution

By Alan Thornett

THERE IS a debate going on about the role in the 1930s of the Spanish Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM).

Some critics of Ken Loach's brilliant film *Land and Freedom* argue that the crushing of the POUM, the theme of his film, was a side issue in the war.

Others argue that it highlights a sectarian squabble amongst the left. Both these criticisms misunderstand the dynamics of the war and the revolution as well as the key strategic problems from the Republican side which were being fought out at that time.

In fact Loach's subject matter goes to the heart of the problem: what was the strategic objective of the war from the point of view of the Spanish working class?

Was it a war to defend the bourgeois republic or was it a workers' revolution aimed at establishing socialism? It is this debate which lay behind the crushing of the POUM by the Stalinists, and it was this debate which held the key to the defeat of Franco's fascist revolt.

That revolution was on the agenda in Spain at that time can hardly be a matter of dispute. The fascist bid for power itself, in July 1936, was a direct response to a revolutionary wave of struggles which embraced the Spanish working class after the election of the Popular Front government in February of that year.

Mass strikes

The fascist revolt intensified this process, triggering mass strikes and the occupation of 80% of the land in the Republican zone. The issue was not whether to start a revolution, but whether to stop one which was already in progress — in the interest of Stalin's policy of promoting cross-class popular front policies.

The POUM which had been founded in 1935 was by late 1936 a mass movement of around 40,000 members. It was, however, along with the anarchists, politically compromised by its support for the Popular Front.

The anarchists had entered the Republican government headed by Largo Caballero, and Andreas Nin, one of the central leaders of the POUM, took a ministerial post in the Catalonia coalition government.

Despite popular perception, the POUM was not a Trotskyist organisation, though it shared with the Trotskyists an analysis of Stalinism. Nin was former Trotskyist and had been the leader of the Spanish section of the International Left Opposition.

He left the ILO for the POUM at its formation. Trotsky had lambasted him and the POUM for their support of the Popular Front.

Despite their compromised position in the government, both the anarchists and their trade union federation the CNT, along with the POUM (and the left of PSOE to some extent) had a radically different view of the progress of the war from the mainstream of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) or the Stalinists.

The Stalinists, from the outset, opposed social revolution and called for a democratic republic — as a part of Stalin's alliance with western capitalist 'democracies' against fascism.

They were supported by the mainstream of PSOE, and when Caballero became prime minister in August he argued that the Republic had to adopt a form of government acceptable to Britain and France.

"First we must win the war", he argued, "afterwards we can talk of revolution".

Vacillating

At the time of the rising, Stalin wrote to Caballero in September advocating an alliance with Azaña, the vacillating President and Republican Party leader, in the following terms: "This is necessary to prevent the enemies of Spain considering her a communist republic".

Both the anarchists and the POUM, despite their participation in government, took the sharply opposite view — the rank and file even more than the leaders.

They saw the way forward through harnessing the revolutionary energy of the working class, by embracing a military strategy linked to key social objectives such as the expropriation and redistribution of land. Nin asked in a speech in September:

"Has the working class in arms now to defend the democratic republic? Is the working class of Catalonia and Spain sacrificing itself and shedding its blood to return to the Republic of Azaña"?

The anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti put it this way: "We want revolution here in Spain, now, and not perhaps tomorrow after the next European war". He insisted that it was necessary to carry out the war and the revolution at the same time.

These diverging views were directly reflected in the approach of the two sides to the military conduct of the war, which was conducted initially by militia columns, formed along political lines, confronting what became Franco's army.

The columns played an important role in halting the initial fascist advances and in the first defence of Madrid — where Durruti, the most able of the anarchist militia commanders, was killed.

Aid with strings

As the war progressed the prestige and power of the Communist Party was increased by Soviet military aid, with its political strings firmly attached.

They advocated the formation of a regular army, called the People's Army, and the conduct of the war along conventional military lines.

The POUM and the anarchists militia were a direct obstacle to this. That is one reason why they were framed, provoked and smashed by the CP, operating hand in hand with forces of Stalin's GPU.

The POUM was outlawed on June 15 1937, and this marked the end of the revolutionary potential of the civil war. Andreas Nin was abducted by GPU agents, tortured, and beaten to death.



Land and Freedom: Ken Loach's film shows why Stalin saw the POUM as a threat.

By now the Moscow Trials were in full swing, demonstrating Stalin's thinking towards his political opponents. Kamenev and Zinoviev were executed in August, and Stalinist propaganda now routinely equated Trotskyists with fascists.

It is impossible to say whether a

war conducted along revolutionary lines would eventually have defeated Franco. But it is clear that Stalin's line was a disaster.

Despite his craven support for a parliamentary republic, the British and French governments persisted in their line of 'non-intervention',

while Hitler and Mussolini piled in troops to reinforce Franco's fascist forces.

Ken Loach's film therefore casts valuable light on the events which created the political cauldron of World War Two and shaped the politics of the rest of the century.

Gene genies bid to 'treat' gay men

By Peter Purton

TWO YEARS ago, a US professor announced that he had discovered the "gay gene"... well, nearly, anyway.

Unconcerned with the scientific ifs and buts, the media went to town. Not all were as upfront as the *Daily Mail* which said this offered "hope" that gays could be aborted before birth, but in general the approach was that this confirmed that homosexuality was a genetic defect and might, in time, be cured.

Now, the same trail blazer has refined his research. Whereas Dean Hamer's US National Cancer Institute study of 114 gay men suggested a hereditary link through the mother's side, he has now found that 21 out of 32 pairs of gay brothers share the same version of a genetic marker on the part of the X chromosome, known as Xq28.

He concludes that he has *not* found the "gay gene" but that he *has* found some evidence that this part of the genetic structure influences sexual orientation in *some* men.

Where does this leave us? The learned professor would surely be more usefully employed seeking cures for hereditary links to cancers, rather than to sexualities.

The research creates the possibility that some men are pre-disposed to be gay, but that there are other causes of homosexuality. To the layperson, it causes at least confusion — while to those predisposed to prejudice, like right-wing journalists, it is an early Christmas present. They will write inflammatory stories with a 'scientific'

underpinning.

Obvious questions spring to mind. Hamer's "discovery" denies lesbians a genetic cause, so what's the conclusion from that? Does the "gay gene" only predispose men to becoming gay?

What 'causes' lesbianism then? Does the small size of the sample mean we should be cautious about the findings?

In *The Times* Nigel Hawkes reports that scientist George Ebers found half of 50 Canadian gay brothers had the marker — not the two-thirds proportion Hamer predicts. Does homosexuality in Canada have a different cause, or is Hamer's sample off-balance?

Treatable

Some people argue for equality because sexuality is biologically determined, and that lesbian and gay men 'just can't help it'. This argument also allows other to claim we are sick.

deficient and — as we now see — ultimately *treatable*.

For those who don't want to be treated, because they are quite happy this way, and who argue that although no one *knows* what causes heterosexuality or homosexuality there is a reasonable case to be made, founded in a historical study of sexuality in changing social contexts, that the choice is socially conditioned.

Despite the claims of the scientists, scientific research — which is funded by rich corporation and individuals — is rarely politically neutral. But when the pioneer of this research ends up denying that there is a "gay gene", what has it all achieved?

Maybe they should have tried to find which gene pre-disposes people to become bigoted right-wingers... or maybe we'll just have to "cure" them in the course of the struggle.

■ Peter Purton is an officer of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

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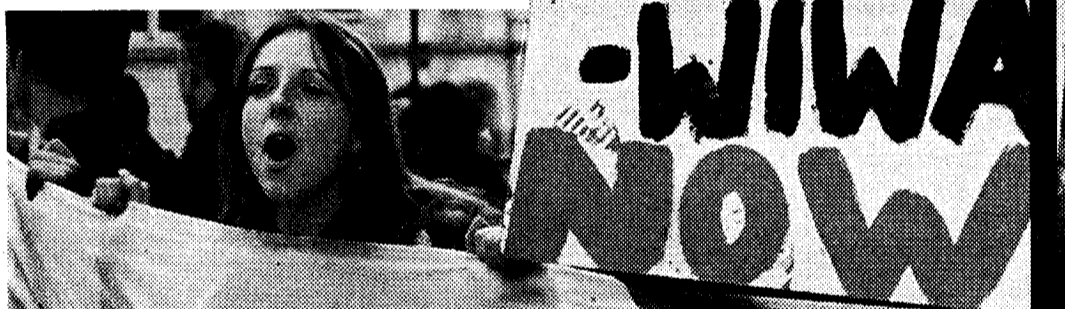
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FEATURES

Socialist OUTLOOK

Lift Nigerian death sentence!

Free Ken Saro- Wiwa!



By Bala Kumar

Ken Saro-Wiwa, writer and activist and eight other Ogonis have been sentenced to death by a military tribunal in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. "I was found guilty before I was even tried", said the 54 year old leader of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

Saro-Wiwa and fourteen others were arrested last year on charges of complicity in the murder of four pro-government traditional chiefs allegedly by militant Ogoni youths.

According to the Lagos based Civil Liberties Organisation, "The entire trial was riddled with procedural irregularities in a curious display of force and intimidation which manifested a clear bias against Saro-Wiwa and others."

An affidavit obtained by Saro-Wiwa's defence lawyer and populist politician Gani

Fawehinmi from a key state witness proved that the military authorities with the active support of the Nigerian subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell had intimidated and bribed the latter into framing the accused. Charles Danwi, a musician, said he was promised 30 000 naira and music contracts in return for naming the defendants and threatened with being a co-accused if he refused.

However the hand-picked tribunal was uninterested in the truth or justice. It went through the motions of a trial but the final judgement came as little surprise.

The motive behind the victimisation of the MOSOP activists has been to silence the best known representatives for the Ogoni people and to destroy the movement they built in defence of their human and livelihood rights.

MOSOP was formed in 1990 to campaign for political autonomy for Ogoniland, a region in the Niger Delta and for a fairer sharing of the revenue from the oil mined there. Until

it was forced to stop its operations in late 1993 through popular resistance, Shell mined half of the country's total oil production in Ogoniland.

Nigeria relies on oil exports for over 80 per cent of its annual income and the Ogonis have paid a high price for it.

Minority

The 500 000 strong Ogonis are a minority in the oil rich Niger Delta area where they occupy a mere 750 square kilometres of land. Since Shell in partnership with the national petroleum corporation began exploiting the oil reserves there, environmental problems have multiplied.

Pipelines criss-cross what was once agricultural land even invading the homes of people. Oil spillages occur frequently because of the age of pipes and lack of maintenance.

One scientific report estimated that between 1982 and 1992 alone 1.62 million gallons of oil were spilled by Shell in twenty-seven sepa-

rate incidents. The soil is so contaminated that no crop can grow. The rivers and streams are so polluted that fish can't survive in them and the Ogonis cannot use the water.

In the mining of oil natural gas is also extracted. What Shell does is to burn it off. Continuously. For twenty four hours in a day, 365 days in a year and for the last thirty seven years. Not only does gas flaring destroy plant and animal life through acid rain, it has also had a devastating toll on peoples health and life expectancies.

A formerly self-sufficient economy has been destroyed. Food now has to be imported and many Ogonis leave their homes and migrate to other areas because jobs created from oil mining have gone to non-locals.

Nigeria enjoys US\$10 billion dollars in oil revenues much of it from Ogoniland but the Ogonis have an unemployment rate of eighty per cent and a literacy rate of twenty per cent. Schools and health clinics are scarce and

the infrastructure developed only to suit the needs of Shell.

When the Ogonis led by their youth rose up to protest at their impoverishment by Shell and the indifference of their government Shell called in the military who are nothing more than their mercenaries. With great brutality they have shot thousands killing upwards of 2 000 Ogonis.

They burn homes and rape women, driving the inhabitants into the bush and loot all material possessions. It is only the militarisation of Ogoniland and the detention of the MOSOP leadership which till now has prevented uprisings against the death sentences.

Even by the standards of its predecessors the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha and the Provisional Ruling Council is a nasty piece of work.

Its casual murder of its opponents, the banning of newspapers, political parties and associations, the continued detention of human rights activists and trade unionists rank it as the most oppressive re-

gime Nigerians have been burdened with.

Western governments play the duplicitous game of criticising its human rights record and frustration of the democratic process while happily trading and arming it. Britain has not stopped the lucrative sale of arms ranging from machine guns to tanks and is unlikely to back calls at the forthcoming Commonwealth summit for Nigeria's expulsion.

At the beginning of October Abacha had to allow the commuting of death sentences passed on some of his opponents due to worldwide condemnation and the threat of European Union sanctions including the freezing of Nigeria's assets abroad, no visas for the military and trade boycotts.

International solidarity with the MOSOP activists can force concessions from the military. On it hinges nine lives.

*Lift the death sentences!
Free them now!*