Capitalism fouls things up

Crude logic of tanker profiteers - see p2
Crude logic of tanker profiteers

By Dave Osler
OIL TANKERS and the free market don't mix. While the exact cause of last week's disaster in the mid-Atlantic is yet unknown, the big picture is clear.

Multinational oil giants have deliberately run down their fleets, hanging vessels voyage-by-voyage on the spot market, centred on London and Oslo.

But a boom in tanker building after the oil shocks of the mid-seventies has created both an ageing world fleet and substantial oversupply, driving down freight rates and encouraging owners to cut every corner they can.

Vessels are 'flagged out' - re-registered in low tax countries, where safety standards are only loosely enforced. Charter rates and East European ratings are hired, despite inability to speak the language as officers. Some are unregistered; certifica-
tion is available for cash on the back of dock port.

Owners even argue returns are so low, unless uncomical to invest in new vessels. With in-
surance companies picking up the tab for any spills, operators have every incentive to run run-abouts into the ground - sometimes literally. Artifici-
current rate of scrapping, the present world tanker fleet would last another 200 years.

Tragedy

The tanker involved in last week's tragedy, Liberian-
_owned and crewed by Filipinos, Greeks and Poles, il-
_ustrated many of these problems. In January 1992, the Braer crew wrote to the International Transport Workers Federation, claiming that they were under-
_paid and the ship was inade-
quately manned.

Press attempts to proclaim the Braer a 'good ship', offered by BHR Maritime Services as 'a quality operator' are simply 'bollocks', a senior shipping journalist who wrote just such a story told Socialist Outlook. It even

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Sub-contrasts responsibility for running many of its ships to specialist ship management companies.

B-H is essentially an 'asset play' outfit, formed to cash in on the temporary boom in secondhand ship prices in the late eighties. The main cause of the bull market was Norway's recently abolished K/S system, which gave excessive tax breaks for purchases of vessels. Under the K/S system, the vessels were considered assets for tax purposes, thus allowing owners to declare them as investments.

Despite the high prices, Braer's owners made a profit, but the ship was now an expensive asset to maintain. The Braer's operators were faced with a dilemma: keep the ship running and make a profit, or sell it at a loss and start over.

Investors

Norwegian and US investors used B-H to raise money on the New York stock exchange to buy ships, work them at a profit, and sell up at the top of the market. But when the bubble burst, B-H was losing money almost as fast as it was making money. The Braer was working for US oil company Ultramar, which reacted to the incident by promptly arresting a B-H ship discharging at one of its refineries as security for its lost oil.

'Independent' owners like B-H own 64 per cent of the world tanker fleet. Oil companies control 18 per cent, with state oil and shipping concerns holding a further 18 per cent.

So, how long will the world's tanker fleet, including the 1975-built Braer, survive? It is estimated that some 1,563 vessels of this type will be in service by 1997.

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Science of 'artificial operation'

'Knowledge regarding the precise circumstances and structural effects of actual tank vessel accidents is so inadequate that any assessment of design alternatives will produce results that are dependent on the chosen assumptions and accident criteria - artificial rather than actual criteria.'

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Robust

Modern tank vessels are less robust than their predecessors. It goes on: 'Existing design standards should be strengthened to ensure proper corrosion protection, dimensions of structural members and use of high-tensile steel.'

'Increasing naval architects traditionally have not designed tank vessels ... to withstand collisions and groundings. Design based on possibility of accidents, a practice common in many industries, should be considered for tank vessels.'

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The Braer's machinery reportedly failed after water got into its fuel tanks. There is considerable mystery as to how this happened. Unscrupulous suppliers commonly contaminate fuel to increase profit.

So what should the left be saying? As long as it is necess-
_ary to move cargo by sea, dis-
_asters will inevitably happen. Shipping is unavoidable a dangerous game. An estimated 80 per cent of maritime accidents are down to human error. Little could have stopped the master of the Exxon Valdez being drunk on duty.

But it is necessary to rigorously enforce safety, and hang the expense. Compendially, French oil giant Elf Aquitaine unilaterally implements its own tight safety vetting procedure for chartered vessels in place of the standard industry formula. There must be adequate provision of rescue services. Yet many sailors have gone out of business in the last decade as the provision of what will always be a stand-by service has proved unprofitable.

Astoundingly, the UK now has no dedicated salvage tugs, and relies on smaller harbour tugs like the one which even-
tually reached the Braer. Sub-
_stancial areas of world sealanes are simply no longer covered.

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Independent

An independent survey last year concluded: 'Unless remedial action is taken, there will be a further decline in the global availability of salvage resources.' This is a clear case of market failure best remedied by state intervention. The French government stations two large salvage tugs, Abelle Lan-
guedoc and Flandre, off its north-west coast. South Africa maintains two of the world's largest salvage units, Wulnrad Woltemade and John Ross (a name synonymous with shipwreck everywhere, it seems).

France and South Africa also force laden tankers to stay fur-
ther off the coast than a master looking for a fast passage might choose, increasing the amount of time to mount a rescue.

'Coffin ships'

What seafarers call 'coffin ships' have to go. While the Braer was making the head-
_lines, 17 Russian and Greek seafarers perished in their lifeboat after abandoning the 30-year-old Coty 1, 4,000 dwt Panamanian flag bulk carrier, taking a consignment of cements from Greece to Sicily, in heavy seas.

Lloyd's Register statistics show that 250 were killed in 34 casualties in bulk carrier-type ships, notorious for poor main-
_tenance, in the seventeen months from January 1990.

An emergency replacement programme could put tens of thousands of unemployed shipbuilding workers across the world back in a job. Unfortunately, after the Tories' vir-
_tral destruction of Britain's once powerful - and once nationalised - shipyards, very few of them will be in this country.

Dave Osler is a regular contributor to leading shipping and all dangers, has received many awards for his outstanding coverage in 1989 and 1991.
**Only mass action can defend the miners**

The refusal of the coal and rail unions meeting on 6 January to take any action to defend the miners was a disaster. Their decision to go back to their own executives to consider a work ‘stay away’ (originally on 15 February), and meet again on 12 January, has the hallmark of a dangerous foot-dragging exercise with little sign that action is being seriously contemplated.

The danger now is that all the possibilities contained in the great popular movement generated by the original announcement of the pit closures - reflected in the two mass demonstrations of 100,000 and 200,000 - will be forever wasted.

That movement deepened the crisis of the Tory government, began to change the political situation and gave real hope that the years for retreat could be reversed at last.

It was a chance for the unions to begin to turn the tide. The left was right to demand that the next logical step should be for the TUC to call a one-day general strike to build the movement towards more sustained action. A late call by the TUC got 200,000 people on the streets under banners of the trade unions and Labour Party.

The NUM has done well in the courts and has shown the actions of the government in closing the pits to be illegal. But this battle cannot be won in the courts alone. Nor can the government-controlled review procedure be seen as the answer either. The recommendations it makes will be based on political criteria, not economic or industrial ones. They will close as many pits as they can get away with.

**Stayaway**

A major new impetus is now needed in the campaign. An officially-backed work ‘stay away’ by the mining and rail unions would be a big step forward, but it would have lended, as they were on the day of the big weekday NUM demonstration.

The public sector unions have talked of co-ordinating strike ballots and strike action. Such action would get a massive response, and would rock the Tory government to its foundation.

The TUC should stop its vague talk about ‘rolling campaigns’, and lead and co-ordinate such a strike movement. We need a fight in every public sector union for joint action — in defence of jobs and against the pay freeze.

The mining industry cannot be separated from the public sector as a whole, and if the miners are to win a convincing victory they are unable to be able to do it alone. A militant public sector fightback is the key of defending mining jobs as well.

The solidarity movement which has sprung up in the announced pits is very important and must be strengthened by the NUM and trade unions and Labour Party.

SO GEORGE Bush, as his parading gesture, is threatening to bomb Iraq again. His logic, and that of his flunkies in the United Nations Security Council, is absurd. The US has declared a ‘no fly’ zone in southern Iraq; and the Iraqis have put ground-based missiles on their own territory, which is of course a threat to the US.

This comes at a time when the US is engaged in a gigantic international military effort. US marines occupy Somalia, a huge fleet sails the coast of Yugoslavia and the bombers in Saudi Arabia and the Tomahawk missiles on US ships in the Gulf are prepared again.

The targets are ideologically well-chosen. Saddam is a pravice despot, Somalia is starving and strife-torn, Bosnia is the victim of Serb ‘ethnic cleansing’ and worse. Enter the cavalry to enforce the New World Order of peace and justice.

Or so it seems to those who refuse to examine elementary facts. The US intervention in Somalia is aimed at confronting growing Islamic fundamentalism in the Horn of Africa. The US would love to enforce a military presence in eastern Europe. And pressure on Saddam serves to buttress and strengthen the pro-US reactionary alliance in the Middle East.

**Expelled**

Contrast this willingness to intervene in defence of ‘peace’ and ‘justice’ with the role the US over the 400 Palestinians expelled by Israel, stranded on the freezing mountains of the Lebanese border.

It is the US which has wielded the big stick, publicly and privately, against any attempt to get the UN to act on the issue. Peace and justice Bush style is highly selective. But there is little point in trying to judge US intervention ‘issue-by-issue’. The pattern of US intervention is unmistakable; emboldened by its success in the Gulf war the US is acclimating the world to the persistence of its overseas military interventions.

This is part of the long-term strategic game that Globocop is playing. US economic strength is declining and competition with Japan and Germany worsening. World-wide military intervention is the one weapon which Globocop can wield that no other imperialist can match. And with it goes diplomatic, political and ultimately economic gains.

At the same time, left-wing and anti-imperialist opposition to US intervention is at a rock-bottom low. The movement against the Gulf war was big, but not really mass. The tradition of opposition to imperialist military adventures must be rebuilt.

From that perspective, the left has to wage a battle against illusions that Western intervention will solve the problems of the countries in any country. Blaming Iraq didn’t remove Saddam, it inflicted untold suffering on the Iraqi and Kurdish masses. What is stifling the ability of the people of Bosnia to resist ethnic cleansing and mass rape, is not the lack of American marines, but the Western-imposed arms embargo that hits Bosnia but has little effect in Belgrade.

The fruits of military activity in the last days of the Bush presidency has been said to signify an attempt to straightjacket Clinton, continuing a series of foreign interventions. Maybe. But Clinton has distanced from not one of Bush’s overseas adventures; there will be no change in US militarism from that quarter.

**Globocop threatens Iraq, part II**

Bosnia, Somalia, next stop the Gulf!
Hard Labour wipes out pit jobs

By Dave Osler

WHEN IT comes to pit closures, latest Labour governments make Michael Heseltine look like an amateur.

Not for nothing did Lord Robens, former Labour MP and head of the old National Coal Board in the 1960s, once boast: "Under Labour, we shut pits at a faster rate than when the Conservatives were in office...a pit closure almost every week for four years was achieved."

Its much-vaunted first post-war Labour administration which undertook nationalisation of the coal industry on 1 January 1947, fulfilling the demand of generations of miners. The move was literally greeted with rejoicing across the coalfields.

No official strikes

The 1947 National Union of Mineworkers conference even carried a resolution declaring: "There are now no opposing sides in the industry". Too NUM would not make any strike coal, and any unofficial ones faced prosecution.

Yet the expropriators had not exactly been expropriated; instead, they were given compensation from the state worth far in excess of the miners' wages.

Moreover, Labour government and Conservative governments alike have ever since prioritised profitability over jobs and the actually necessary production of coal.

The Conservative Party returned to office in 1951, and after three years commenced widespread cut-backs in the industry. Over the next nine years, the workforce fell from 700,000 to 712,000 while the number of pits was cut from over 650 to under 600.

Yet the right-wing dominated NUM in this period did not look to industrial action to save jobs. They based their strategy on the eventual return of a Labour government.

Just a few months before the first Wilson administration in 1964, unions were led to believe that Labour wanted the industry to produce 200m tons of coal a year. But once in office, new mini-

modernisation of others. Joint production drives and productivity incentive schemes were designed to increase productivity by 4 per cent a year. Achieving such targets inevitably translated into more job losses.

Prime minister Harold Wilson said at the 1975 NUM conference: "What the government is asking for is the year before, what the government has the right to ask, the duty to ask, is not a year for sell but a year for Britain."

The NUM leadership took the bait and consistently tried to push through wage deals linked to productivity. In September 1974, for instance, 61.5 per cent of miners rejected one such scheme in a national ballot.

By 1977, Labour’s pay policy desperately sought to hold the line at a wage increase of under 10 per cent, a figure far less than inflation. NUM leader Joe Gormley again tried to sell the membership an incentive scheme in order to play ball with the government.

Despite being rejected at the union’s annual conference, the package was put to a national vote at the leadership’s insistence. The then energy secretary, Tony Benn, argued that the scheme should be given a “fair trial” on the grounds that it was managed to “avoid the evils of past paperwork schemes, which set men against men and lowered safety standards”.

Nevertheless, it was again rejected. Ignoring all democratic expressions of miners’ wishes, the government, the Coal Board and the NUM nevertheless went ahead with local productivity schemes.

By introducing massive differentials in wages between areas and breaking the unity forged in 1972 and 1974, the move largely created the divisions that became so tragically evident in the great strike of 1984-85.

By the end of the last Labour government, coal output had further slipped from 117m to 105m tons, and 22 more pits had closed with the loss of a further 11,000 jobs.

Part two of this article will examine Labour’s role in the 1984-85 miners’ strike.

A new Bill for Labour? ‘Clouritisation’ process gathers pace

By Paul Clarke

BILL CLINTON became Labour’s latest tactical surrogate last weekend as arguments rumbled over what conclusions to draw from his triumph in the US presidential election.

On one hand, newspaper reported a growing glamour for Clintonisation from the labour right wing. On the other, Centre-Left politicians addressed the ‘Clintonisation’ for wanting to turn Labour into a party like the American Democrats.

The source of the row is an article by Philip Gould, the former Shadow Communications Agency co-ordinator, and Patrice Heffern, the deputy director of the Institute for Public Policy Research and a former senior aide to Neil Kinnock, in the launch issue of Renewal, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee’s new quarterly journal.

The article, titled ‘Lessons from America’, argues that Labour must consider Mr Clinton’s success in ‘reinventing’ the Democrats image as ‘the party of the poor and of the past’ and forging a ‘politicisation of the Centre rather than the Left’ which can appeal to the majority of the population. It should be closer to the American model when Bill was shown to be incapable of producing victory.

The Clintonians will make gains because they are seen at the moment, as the only people with something radical, if extremely right-wing, to say.

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Strong support for NUM at Sheffield conference

by Alan Thornett

A CAMPAIGN for strike action in support of the miners, and full backing for the Greenham style camps to be set up at the gates of the threatened pits by Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) were amongst the decisions taken at a very successful solidarity conference on January 9.

The conference, which was called at short notice by the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and the National Miners Support Network was attended by 450 people delegated from trade union and labour movement organisations.

It had the full support of the NUM and a clear statement from the union which called for a one-day stay-away in defence of the threatened jobs and the mining industry.

Urging unity: Benn

Introducing the Statement in the opening plenary, Idowell Morgan from the NUM National Executive Committee, stressed that the only acceptable outcome for the NUM was that all of the threatened 31 pits would be kept open. There could be no compromise on this and no victory short of it. The closure of a single pit would be a defeat for the NUM he stressed.

Six other speakers were on the platform, among them John Hesdy, QC, who represented the NUM in the recent victory in the High Court where the Government was found to be in breach of the law.

Tony Benn stressed the need for unity across the movement in defence of the miners. Carolyn Sikorski from the RMT TUC spoke of the historic role of women in trade union struggles. Two speakers from WAPC outlined their plans for the camps on the gates of the immediately threatened pits.

The other speaker was Bob Crowe from the RMT NEC who had attended the recent meeting between the rail and mining unions which considered a stay-away in support of the miners. He said, to applause from the conference, that the RMT Executive would be meeting on Tuesday of this week and the Left would be proposing a ballot of the whole of the RMT membership in support of a one-day stay-away.

This approach, that any stay-away called should be organised as strike action in order to make it effective and not left vague or just to the individual worker, was echoed both in the discussions in the regional and individual union workshops as well as in the decisions of the conference.

The final plenary not only took resolutions from the workshops but gave a platform to speakers from a number of important strikes taking place at the present time: the Balington NALGO strike; women from the Annie Hall dispute; women from the Middlebrook Mushroom strike in Hull who are picketing super-markets; and Asian women from the Burnside strike in the West Midlands, who got a tremendous reception from the conference and a prolonged standing ovation.

In addition to this the conference voted to organise a re-call conference as soon as the next stage of the struggle becomes clear.

The conference represented an important steps forward for the miners support movement and provided the basis for some important new initiatives to be taken.

Polish miners strike for jobs

By Steve Kaczynski

POLAND was rocked last month by a miners' strike in Slubia, the country's main industrial region, on a scale reportedly exceeding even those held in the heyday of Solidarity.

The strike stayed surprisingly quiet - perhaps they feared a danger example. Workers and miners had been peace dealing between the government and the union leaderships made a return to work at the time of writing. The dispute had csr over for future structuring of the coal trade. Small-scale protests began on December 14, but escalated so rapidly that his death and the local media reported that 350,000 workers were on strike by Christmas - around one per cent of the country's entire population.

There were no indications of any scaling down of the walkout by coal, steel, textile and tractor factory workers in other parts of Poland, however.

The miners' grievances flow from the regime's current restructuring programme, which could cut the country's coal mining capacity by as much as 50 per cent.

The government has promised a "social guarantee" to mining areas: whether they are working or not, they are entitled to returns on their paper.

Solidarity leader Waczwak Marszewski has promised that strike workers will be paid if the government, when the dispute, that they do not agree to agreements or show solidarity. He may have to back up his words with actions pronto, as soon as, the pills of the Industrial Monetary Fund give the government, little room for manoeuvre.

Under Statist rule, the miners enjoyed a relatively privileged position. Nevertheless, they were at the forefront of Solidarity's cause in the early 80s, and many pay their and even their lives after the crackdown of 1981.

Ironically, a decade later it was former Solidarity chief Lech Walesa who, as national President, accused strikers of destabilisation, and it was Solidarity veteran Jacek Huron, now minister of labour, who threatened the working class with repressive measures.

Most of the strikers were from the Wieluń area, mainly NSZZ Solidarity, while others were from the far smaller but more powerful KPDZB and the Komuna union, linked to the anti-semitic Confederation for an Independent Poland.

The ex-Statist OPZZ confederation of official union leaders and threatened a general strike from mid-January but generally took a more cautious line. It did not stop a pro-government MP accusing ex-communist of instigating a strike purely of Solidarity origin.

The free market is coming apart in Poland thanks to the more positive parts of Solidarity's contradictory legacy. Socialists should keep to help as well as learn from the struggles of the Polish working class and link up the struggles in our two countries.

Bullets fly as mines fightback reaches Albania

By Steve Kaczynski

Miners in Albania, Europe's poorest country, struck last month in support of demands including a wage rise, shorter working hours and more holiday pay.

The strikers apparently joined by all workers, although information about a dispute is scarce.

On 22 December, according to the government called for crisis talks on the government and miners were under pressure to "economic reform and foreign investment".

Workers in the town of Gjirokaste, 35km north of Tirana, were on strike over the "economic reform and foreign investment".

Albanian state radio reported that a number of the 8,000 strikers at the Gjirokaste iron mine in the north of the country were on hunger strike against police "use of the assemblies of rubber bullets in an effort to drive them back to work. There were at least two injuries and several arrests.

An angry crowd at Gjirokaste alleged the mayor's office in December 20, throwing stones and chanting the name of an arrested striker leader.

The Albanian government threatened to use the full force of the law if there was not a return to work by January 25. Albanian radio has claimed general compliance.

President Sarri Berisha and his vice-president of economic policy were both praised in the West when they took power in place of the Stalinists who had ruled the country since 1944. Now the "democratic" mask has slipped.

Meanwhile, Neshinjë Hoxha, a relative of the country's longtime Stalinist ruler Enver Hoxha, who died in 1985, is to go on trial for corruption on the eve of power.

Solidarity with the Miners

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LOBBY
TUC General Council
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8am Weds Jan 27

LOBBY
SE Region TUC
Demand action to defend miners
Saturday January 16
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January 1933: how the Nazis took power

This month is the 60th anniversary of Hitler’s accession to power. Sixty years on, the spectre of fascism is far from dead, especially in Germany. In the first of this three-part series TOM HAGEN looks at how Hitler’s Nazi party took power.

On the evening of 30 January 1933 Berlin was taken over by tens of thousands of Nazi Brownshirts in a torchlit march to celebrate their leader becoming Chancellor. They were joined by thousands of members of the Stahlhelm (‘Steel Helmet’), the paramilitary force of the extreme right-wing nationalist German National Peoples Party (DVPT). Like everyone else, the street thugs of Nazism were stunned by the ease with which Hitler had come to power. For there had been no Nazi insurrection, no burning of Brownshirts and Blackshirts at barricades against the Reichswehr, police, the Social Democratic Iron Front or even against the Communist Red Fighters Front. Hitler had simply been appointed Chancellor of a coalition government in a perfectly legal way by the ageing President Hindenburg.

The response of the social democratic SPD and the Communist KPD was catastrophic. Spontaneous strikes broke out. Delegations of social democratic workers rushed to their party headquarters demanding a last ditch open fight against the Nazis. A minority in the leadership of the KPD demanded in a stormy meeting at the giant Karl Liebknecht House headquaters, far too late, a united front with the social democrats to crush the Nazis.

But the SPD leadership replied that civil war would only aid the Nazis; and the KPD leadership replied with the infatilist slogan ‘after Hitler, us’ insisting that Nazi rule would be a short interlude.

Sections of the right wing parties believed that Hitler would be a prisoner of the coalition, a pathetic delusion. For Hitler immediately ordered that the police and army collaboeate fully with the Brownshirts against the workers’ movement. The burning down of the Reichstag (parliament) building, probably by the Nazis themselves, was used as the justification for a witch hunt against all workers’ organisations. The powerful Prussian police force was put under Nazi control.

In this atmosphere of witch hunt, new elections were called for March 1933. The Nazis, sweeping all before them, won a staggering 17 million votes, becoming easily the largest Reichstag party. When the parliament met again, many of the SPD and Communist deputies were not present; either dead, already in concentration camps or having fled into exile.

Dead democracy

Parliamentary democracy was by March 1933 stone cold dead. Astoundingly the Communist International and the underground KPD leadership continued to claim that Nazi rule would be short-lived, and that the Communists would soon come to power.

How had this catastrophe happened? The Nazi victory combined three things: the winning over of central sections of the big German bourgeoisie to anti-parliamentarism; the building of a mass Nazi movement out of the ranks of the fronted middle classes and impoverished lumpen proletariat; and the insane tactics adopted by the SPD and KPD leaders.

But for all these factors to come together required the construction of a counter-revolutionary leadership with immense capacities of tactics, organisation, propaganda and subterfuge. This was provided by Hitler and the team around him. The tragedy was that Hitler faced a Communist Party whose leadership had been liberalismised by Stalinism.

Germany emerged from the first world war defeated and impoverished. Socialist revolution broke out in November 1918, and the two main socialist parties, the SPD and the more left wing USPD (Independent Social Democrats) took the power in Berlin, based on the strength of workers’ councils.

Capitulation

The question the workers’ movement faced was precisely what to do with the power; institutionalise the power of the councils, or re-establish parliamentary democracy? The right wing SPD leaders decided on the latter course, and the centrist leaders of the USPD capitulated, resulting in the split by Rosa Luxemburg to form the small German Communist Party. ‘We must commit suicide by revolution!’

But economic and social stability was elusive. Economically ravaged, Weimar Germany also faced huge reparations payments to the allies as a result of the war. The ongoing crisis reached a climax in 1923. By then the majority of the USPD had been won over to fuse with the KPD, forming a mass revolutionary communist party. In October 1923 the KPD, under contradictory orders from Moscow, flunked a pre-revolutionary crisis, calling off an attempt to seize power. The order to call off the rising failed to reach Hamburg, where the Communists engaged in a week of bitter street fighting, but were eventually crushed.

Germany’s default on reparation payments also led in January 1923 to the French occupation of the Ruhr. Managed by Germany’s continued instability, international imperialism decided on decisive action to bolster the German economy and stabilise the political system.

Thus in 1924, under the Dawes plan, the United States began to pump huge loans into German industry, and national and local government. For the first time since 1919 the SPD was ejected from any participation in government.

On the basis of these huge loans German industry began to revive. Moreover, loans to SPD local authorities enabled municipal works to be expanded. The number of unemployed fell, and ‘municipal socialism’ flourished.

From 1924 onwards the KPD, under orders from Moscow, began to adopt the insane theory that social democracy was the ‘left wing of fascism’ and the ‘main enemy’. Ultra-leftism in the KPD was also propelled by a genuine current of working class leftist, borne out of hatred of the SPD for its counter-revolutionary role in the 1918-19 revolution.

Right turn

This ultra-leftism was briefly abated in 1925-7, when the Communists made a ‘right’ turn, and joint activities were taken up with the SPD. Most successful was a joint campaign for the expropriation of the ultra-rich German princes; Hitler’s defence of the princes brought one of his worst political defeats.

But the short-lived boom conditions brought about by the Dawes plan did not lead to a leniency of the class struggle. On the contrary, big business attempted — along with the bourgeoisie in all major imperialist countries — to ‘rationalise’ through the fusion of firms into big trusts and by closing down inefficient plants.

Hitler’s movement was until the mid-1920s very small. His attempt to seize power in the 1923 Munich beer hall putsch was a fiasco, routed by a detachment of 100 armed police. Hitler, sentenced to five years in jail, served less than one, during which he wrote Mein Kampf.

By the mid-1920s Hitler had decided that the path to power lay through the winning of support among the leaders of the giant capitalist trusts. He had therefore to try to combine winning a mass base, using elements of anti-capitalist demagogy, with assuring potential capitalist backers that he would maintain capitalism intact; while defeating ‘Marxism’ — i.e. the KPD and SPD, and the giant ADGB trade union federation.
But this was not enough for big business, alarmed by the strong showing of the workers’ parties. Constant pressure to adopt more right wing policies was piled on Mueller.

Hitler now made a big political turn, towards a ‘united front of the right wing’. It was becoming increasingly clear that the big bourgeoisie was split on the key issue of parliamentary democracy and the Weimar republic. Hitler turned to make a common front with the leader of the DVP, right-wing, Hugenberg, who had the loyalty of the paramilitary Stahlhelm.

This united front, topped off with a huge joint demonstration of the Brownshirts and Stahlhelm in Hunsberg, gave Hitler immense prestige among the right-wing bosses, who began to see him as the leader of a serious movement who could defend their interests.

For Hitler, the united front tactic was a way to build a solid force in German politics which would split the bourgeoisie on the issue of parliamentary democracy.

While the alliance with the Stahlhelm forces was immensely unpopular with some of the more ‘radical’ SA Brownshirts streetfighters, contemptuous of old-fashioned right-wing monarchism, it was in fact a brilliant tactical move. Hitler had constructed a right-wing bloc in which the Nazis were the most dynamic force, the only ones capable of constructing a mass counter-revolutionary movement.

**Nazi breakthrough**

Mueller’s fall was a matter of time: the collapse of his government led to the 14 December 1932 general election in which the Nazis made their spectacular breakthrough, leaping from 850,000 votes in 1928 to 6.4 million. This represented the end of the new relationship of forces which had been established in 1928 by the upsurge of the workers’ parties. It also represented the effects of the 1929 stockmarket crash, and the huge economic crisis now exploding in Germany.

To prepare for this situation Hitler had made his turn towards big business, to the alliance with the Hugenberg right wing, and to building a mass rural base: a mass force and powerful right-wing bloc had been established for the seizure of the power for power.

On the other hand the SPD had been concentrated by the role of Mueller’s government and the KPD hamstrung by its crazy theory that the SPD was the ‘comrades of fascism’ and its refusal to make a united front with the SPD.

Now the SPD was excited from the grave and being encouraged by the Centre Party became Chancellor. Unable to get a parliamentary majority on key proposals, he began to resort to government by decree; Trotsky called his government ‘Bonapartist’, a form of authoritarian government, dispensing with parliamentary majorities, and leading to the decline of the SPD.

The SPD decided to ‘tolerate’ Bruning, not to defeat him in a vote of confidence, for fear of letting in the extreme right. In confidence motions, only the KPD and the Nazis voted solidly against Bruning.

**‘Third period’**

The KPD was now fully in the grip of the ‘third period’ ultra-leftism, which held no parties but the Communists were now part of fascism, and the SPD because of their left face the most ‘ultra-left’.

Now Thaelmann, Neumann and Preusslein, the key KPD leaders, unleashed ‘storm in the streets’. KPD fighters fought against Nazis and social democratic depots alike. Occasionally the KPD and Nazis would make a secret pact to disrupt SPD meetings. Local attempts to make common cause with social democratic workers were stamped on.

But the SPD held its grip on the big majority of class conscious workers. The KPD embarked on the crazy ‘red unions’ attempt to forge their own unions outside the ADGB and associated the ‘united front’ with SDP which refused to address demands to the SPD leaders, but urged SPD workers to join KPD front organizations – it was to put themselves under the leadership of the KPD.

For the leaders of big business, increasingly disenchanted with bourgeois democracy, Bruning’s Bonapartist regime was not right wing enough. Eventually he suffered the fate of Mueller, and was replaced by archreactionary von Papen.

The salami tactics of the right-wing bloc were now clear: compelled to allow support for some workers’ struggles, most notoriously the 1932 Berlin transport workers’ strike, when Nazis and Communists jointly staffed the picket lines and fought the police. The KPD also cynically supported the Nazi attempt to bring down the Social Democratic Prussian regional government, doubting the Nazi-inspired referendum on the ‘red wave’. With von Papen in power, and using a KPD attack on a Nazi march in Altona to call for a Prussian regional government, Prussia, Hitler’s road to power was open. But at the last free elections on the 27 May 1932, the SDP still polled more than the Nazis.

Now only a joint workers’ organisations for a united front to defeat the fascists could win the day. That call never came.

**Plebian base**

Hitler came to power because decisive sections of big business, fearful of proletarian revolution, abandoned bourgeois democracy. He came to power because he mastered an electoral right-wing bloc in which the Nazis were the decisive force, building a mass rural base for counter-revolution.

Once the bourgeoisie had abandoned democracy, only a left united front, with the KPD as its propelling core, could save the march of the fascists from ever reaching the road to socialist revolution. Bone-headed ultra-leftism and sectarianism predicted for a long time.

The craven role of social democracy was predictable. Add the usual Duhring line of the Stalinised KPD and it was the end. Moscow, brought the historic defeat of the world’s most powerful labour movement, the defeat of Europe’s Jewish majority, and made the second world war.

In our next issue: Trotsky, the KPD and the united front.
Ireland still looking for Mr Right

By David Coen

WHEN FORMER Taoiseach Charlie Haughey decided to do up his office a few years ago — on the public purse, of course — local wits dubbed the gleaming limestone building, scrubbed clean of Dublin smog, the “Chas Mahal”.

But the man’s less-than-spotless reputation was the main factor in his fall from power in 1993 and his activities in government continue to cast their long shadow over his Fianna Fáil party.

An inquiry into the complex connections between past Fiana Fáil governments and the collapsed meat empire of butcher Leo, Larry Goodman, even sparked off Ireland’s recent election after a conflict of interest between Haughey’s successor Albert Reynolds and coalition partner Des O’Malley of the Progressive Democrats.

Fianna Fáil lost 10 seats in Dublin as the larger urban areas swung more to Labour. The party, which has dominated politics since the foundation of the Free State, failed for the sixth successive election to win an overall majority and secured its lowest percentage of the vote since de Valera led it into the Dáil in 1927.

A longer-term process is at work as Fine Gael’s traditional base of small farmers, small-town bourgeoisie and urban working-class enclaves under the combined pressures of austerity, economic crisis and the declining influence of the Catholic Church.

Labour more than doubled its seats from 16 to 33 in the 166-seat Dáil and was in a position to dictate who formed the government.

Mixture

The Irish Labour Party is an eclectic mixture of different socialists like Michael D Higgins, republicans such as Eamon de Valera and the fiercely anti-nationalist Jim Kemmy, combined with radical petty-bourgeois elements who favour “modernisation”, and who formed the core of Mary Robinson’s support in the presidential elections.

The next government is almost certain to be a Fianna Fáil/Labour coalition, despite the newspaper editorials urging a “rainbow coalition” between Labour, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats.

Labour leader Dick Spring has been a fierce critic of Fiana Fáil corruption and one of two people wrongly expected him to hold out for the rotation of the office of Taoiseach with Reynolds, but he seems likely to settle for minister of foreign affairs and the post of Tánaiste (deputy prime minister).

Spring’s highly public but ultimately abortive courtship of Democratic Left was based on recognition that participation in a right-wing government would leave him exposed on his left flank.

The Workers’ Party lost its one remaining seat while the Green Left, which split from the Workers’ Party last year, is down from six to four seats.

The overall vote for the right-wing parties is still about 60 per cent, but the main difference between them means that political instability is likely to continue, adding to the opportunities for the left.

The fragmentation and shift away from the “civil war” parties can also be seen in the vote on constitutional amendments held on the same day as the general election.

Abortion

A woman’s right to information and to travel abroad for an abortion were both passed, but an amendment allowing abortion where the woman’s life was threatened (except by suicide) was defeated. Pro-choice activists had called for a no vote on the last issue, as it did not allow abortion in cases where the woman’s health was at risk.

One of the conditions of Labour participation in a coalition is that it will liberalise abortion in some cases and to try to get the constitutional ban on divorce removed, as well as liberalising the law on homosexuality.

Republican marchers face charges

Fight Casement Park frame-up!

By Tom Wilson

MORE THAN forty Irish nationalists in Belfast are being framed in a case related to the killing of two British soldiers at a Republican funeral in 1988.

The men will come before a jury on charges of being accessory after the fact to murder for the murder of two British soldiers.

The tragic sequence of events began when three unarmed Republicans, including Michael Farrell, were shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar. The bodies were found lying in the street, and the bodies were placed in a car and driven to England.

The bodies were later identified as Michael Farrell and John Walsh.

The men were shot dead by British soldiers.

Victims

Some days later the funeral took place of Kevin Brady, one of the men’s victims. The funeral was attended by large numbers of people, and the men were shot dead at the Derry Crematorium, near the Casement Park, just after the funeral of their victim.

Casement Park is a prison, and the men were shot as they left the prison.

New lie? Republican funeral

The body of one of the men was taken to the prison, and the men were later identified as Michael Farrell and Sean Kelly.

The men were shot dead by British soldiers.

The evidence of the men’s death was manipulated to make it appear that they were merely prisoners who were being shot by British soldiers.

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New ways of screwing the workforce

The Nissan Enigma: Flexibility at work in the local economy
By Philip Garrahkan and Paul Stewart

Reviewed by a Car Worker

THE NEW management techniques (NMT) affect, or so they say, nearly every working person. But where is the big debate about the non-norma-
lications? Where are the questioning academicians and the investigative documentaries on TV?

In fact the silence is almost deafening, and this is no accident. Strong vested interests resent any idea of a critical debate about those is-
ues.

Those vested interests and the lack of any serious questioning are well explained in this book, in relation to the pathbreaking Nissan plant in Sunderland. It was part of the settlement for building the Nissan plant in Sunderland rather than another depressed area.

The local and national media were uniformly sympathetic: the local coun-
cil gave Nissan control of a huge area around the plant.

Every hint of criticism was seen as endangering the plan.

The events were not by chance. Japanese companies work on the basis of joint control of component com-
panies, excluding their control of workers from the beginning. This is an important part of this control is to stop criticism.

Garrahan and Stewart see themselves as initiating a debate, one which is important for all of us. Breaking the wall of silence is a vital first step in combatting the attack on workers which these new management techniques represent.

Most workers will recognize something in the book happening to them: "teamwork", "quality" and the other fashionable parts of NMT.

In the academic world, so far only a few time writers and pro-NMT "experts' boasting their re-
sults are passed by prolixity in favour of NMT.

Passive acceptance

Breaking the pro-NMT monopoly in the academic field is the process of pushing down the pas-
sive acceptance of NMT in the unions across a wide spectrum from new realists to plain reformists who ac-
cept the ideology of 'profitability' and 'competitive advantage'.

The book explains that non-NMT plants are happy with the NMT regime; that the claims of democracy in NMT mean in fact 'participation without determination' and involvement without control.

It shows how workers are disciplined via 'quality', now in order to carry out an operation in a standard way they have to be disciplined.

Workers have to be simul-
aneously thinking of their own task, while checking their superiors and the tasks of others who are part of their 'team'.

Thus pressure in team working is part of what the authors call 'a regime of subordination'.

Garrahan and Stewart quote a company training manual which explains that 'there is no consensus' the team leader decides what is to be done.

In the company (hence the term, really the departmental com-

In this system there is no room for dissent. Workers who don't 'fit' in are shown the door. Today it is in-

What spoiled Harold Wilson?

Smeary Wilson and the Secret State
By Stephen Dorrill and Robin Ramsay

Reviewed by David Coen

HAROLD WILSON has been the subject of a retrospective rehabilitation of late, with a spate of material critical of the late prime minister - notably "Labour by default" at the Labour governmen-

There's little doubt these ele-

Yet the revision passsed did call on the Labour government of the period for action against

told to down the Tones was also de-

"Yet my knowledge is not the policy of Socialist Outlook to call for an in-

The book catalogues the "in-

The authors' thesis is that the period covered saw an internecine battle between MS and MI6 and its numerous hangers-

They may have too easily dis-

Any group that was thought to have compromised the intelligence and the security of the country, "restructured" to replace these diminished respon-

并向作者提供关于文本的内容信息，以便于进行问答。
Kenyan masses must break from nationalists

By Baia Kumar

The result of Kenya’s recent election — conceded after two years of growing popular discontent against the dictatorship and the plunder and socio-economic injustices of its newly installed government — is a victory for the opposition. The result was followed by the formation of a Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) opposition coalition, which will represent a challenge to the government. The government, led by President Daniel Arap Moi, has been in power since 1992.

The election was marred by allegations of electoral fraud and voting irregularities. The results were announced on August 11, 1992, and were widely dismissed as invalid by the opposition and international observers. The election was marked by widespread protests and violence, with at least 15 people killed and thousands injured.

The FORD government has been accused of human rights abuses, including widespread torture and extrajudicial killings. The government has been criticized for its failure to address the root causes of the country’s social and economic problems, including poverty, unemployment, and corruption.

The FORD government has also been accused of suppressing dissent and opposition. The government has used its security forces to crack down on protests and opposition activists. The government has also been accused of using state-controlled media to silence criticism.

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West Midlands

Demanding the right to march against Nazis

By Jack Starkey and Pete Bloomer

Labour movement activists in Walsall, West Midlands, have been campaigning for the right to march against racism. The campaign has been met with resistance from the local police and authorities.

The campaign has been supported by local trade unions and community organizations. The police have been accused of using excessive force and making arrests without proper justification.

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1,000-strong

Nevertheless, a planned rally at Walsall was attended by 1,000 people. The meeting, addressed by Clare Short MP and West Midlands Trades Union Congress chief, was a demonstration of solidarity.

Councillors arrested

Labour councillors John Rothery and Alan Paddock, and local Labour Party leader Pete Smith, were arrested when they tried to take up the pre-arranged meeting point in defiance of the police ban.

Other would-be demonstrators found their coaches and cars turned back on the motorway.

Thumbs up for unions?

Trade unions are no longer regarded by the general public as left-dominated and are now seen as more moderate than at any time since opinion polling began. The subject began 25 years ago.

According to market research commissioned by the BMA, traditional views of trade unions have shifted. Only 18 per cent of people (up from 14 per cent in 1984) now regard trade unions as representing the interests of the working class. A third (up from 27 per cent) see trade unions as representing the interests of the middle class. A significant number (up from 15 per cent) see trade unions as representing the interests of the middle classes.

The positive factor of 42 per cent compared with negative factors of 40 per cent in 1991, 40 per cent in 1984 and 42 per cent under the last Labour government in 1979.

Only 24 per cent agreed with the old Tory chestnut that unions have "too much power", the lowest figure ever recorded. Some 82 per cent opposed the government in the 1979 election. Popular perceptions of red unions were always wide of the mark. Nevertheless, these latest results reflect a rise in support for a new political option: a Party of Labour.

Other results are more encouraging for unions and their members. Some 53 per cent of the public agreed with the proposition that management is more to blame than the trade unions for Britain’s economic problems today. Only 14 per cent disagreed.
Mushrooming support for sacked women

By George Thompson

In November 89 women workers were sacked by Middlebrook Mushrooms at Patley Bridge near Selby, after an overtime ban.

The sacked women had been holding daily pickets at the Patley Bridge farm, but were prevented by the trade unionists from picking other Middlebrook farms.

They have also organized protests at supermarkets supplied by Middlebrook, which include most of the big ones - ASDA, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Marks and Spencer.

They have called for a boycott of Booker, Middlebrook's parent company.

The dispute has been supported by local Labour parties, NUM and miners support groups - many of the women are from mining families.

Wider support is urgently needed for the women's struggle. For information, donations and speakers contact: TGWU, Bevin House, George St, Hull.

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Burnsall pickets face scabs' acid test

by Bob Smith

The 19 Strikers at Burnsall,只不过是Two Browning Street (Honeystly), Smethwick, near Birmingham, who are continuing their peaceful picket into the New Year.

Three Xmas brutal attacks were made by the scabs, and the strikers (mainly Indian women) defended themselves.

West Midlands Police, notorious for their bigotry and racism, took it upon themselves to arrest two of the male pickets after one incident.

But they were released after the police failed to manufacture any credible evidence.

The scab violence continues however: pickets have been spotted, kicked, punched and GM Official Danny Parry was threatened with a Stanley knife.

Earlier in the dispute a scab attacked the picketer with an iron bar, he was restrained, but it was the pickets that faced a court case.

Acid has been thrown at GM officials and strikers cars. The police are carrying out an investigation (4 weeks already). Burnsall's has gals of the stuff. The police seem more interested in bothers the strikers about their color bruiner and caravan (donated by the victorious Alm strikers).

North Staffs Women Against Pit Closures and the NUM Scottish Pettchers, plus delegations from Trentham and Litteton NUM, have visited the picket. The strikers spoke with Peter Heathfield and Paul Foot at the Trentham NUM Rally, on Saturday December and received a large collection of their political beliefs at the HEM Heath (NUM) Social Club.

A Support Group to the struggle is being set up at the Indian Workers Association, Soho Road, Handsworth. Delegates are expected from Support Groups in London and Oxford.

Further information, donations and speakers: GMB, Thorn House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen B63 3HP. 021-550-6688

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Annie Hall picketing: the effect is shattering!

by Keith Sinclair

At a time when employers like to deny the impact of any picketing it makes a change to have an employer claiming that picketing has had a calamitous effect on the business.

Such, however, was the claim made by one Gerrard Henry in the High Court in December when he sought an injunction to prevent picketing of his shops in Beverley, Pocklington and York.

Henry had sought the injunction against three former employees, the husband of one of the women involved, and Hull Trades Council.

The background to the court case is this. Henry employed the women involved when he ran a company called Dedicately Different Clothing Company.

One of the women, Ann Kavanagh, was sacked by Henry two years ago. Ann Kavanagh took Henry to an industrial tribunal and was awarded £5,000 compensation.

Before the money was paid, Henry wound up the company, sacked the remaining employees, but continued to trade as "Annie Hall". The women involved are campaigning for the £5,000 award to be paid to Ann Kavanagh.

In November, a delegation of Annie Hall women joined a demonstration in Hull against pit closures. Since then, Hull Trades Council has been supporting demonstrations to discourage shoppers from using the Annie Hall shops.

Picketing in York and Beverley was stepped up for the Saturdays before Christmas, potentially lucrative shopping days. The protests were obviously

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Interested in Voluntary Work?

Voluntary HIV organisation for the north west, George House Trust, is currently recruiting as volunteers people with organisational skills to work in areas such as fund raising, campaigning, training, information and publicity.

If you are interested call us on 061 889 4940 before 5 February 1993.
Act now to back the miners!

WOMEN HAVE moved to the forefront of the fight to save the coal industry, with plans for Greenham Common-style camps outside the ten pits in most danger of closure.

The first such camps, modelled on the peace camps outside US nuke bases in Britain in the early eighties, opened outside Yorkshire's Markham Main colliery and Trentham colliery near Stoke-on-Trent earlier this week. Others were expected to follow in short order.

The move has been initiated by Women Against Pit Closures, with full backing from the National Union of Mineworkers. Women supporters are welcome to stay at the camps.

WAPC is also organising a demo through London on February 6. Details on page five.