WORKERS AID ROLLS INTO BOSNIA

Reports on Bosnia Convoy
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Bosnia: reject imperialist peace plan!

The United States and the European Community are pushing hard for the Bosnian government to accept the 'peace plan', albeit with a few amendments giving the rump of Bosnia access to a sea port. The plan would split the territory of Bosnia into three ethnic lines, and give the rump Bosnian state only 30 per cent of its former territory.

The Bosnian resistance should reject this plan. It would mean the death of multi-ethnic Bosnia and set the seal of approval on 'ethnic cleansing'.

The Bosnian republic of Yugoslavia was multi-ethnic, a republic in which Muslims, Croats and Serbs lived together. When Bosnia was invaded, many Serbs and Croats fought together with Muslims in the resistance. The Federation of Bosnia before the Serbian aggression was so mixed that the only way to create three ethnic areas was by ethnic cleansing. If Serb leader Karadzic has his way, the same thing will happen to Bosnian capital Sarajevo; dividing the city means a population movement to create an 'ethnically pure' Serbian area. The rump Bosnia envisaged by the peace plan will be, like the rump Palestinian 'autonomous' area, a 'Banlistra' - a tiny statelet dominated by its neighbours. Hundreds of thousands of people will not be able to go back to their homes and remain refugees.

The peace plan allows theethnic cleansing of the United Nations and imperialism. The aggressors, the prison camp guards, the torturers and murderers are to be rewarded with the fruits of victory. Multi-ethnic Bosnia is to be sacrificed at the altar of imperialist reapolitik.

WHERE WE STAND

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis. The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

Tory strategy has been to shackles unions with legislation, and thereby to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the idea of 'nationalisation' of 'socialist' policies. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformism, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class - for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy - can be achieved under capitalist society.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically determined workers state and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarianism of Stalinism, nor on the same, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx.

Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class - the overwhelming majority of society - to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of gay men and students, of youth - and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world. Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 49 countries worldwide.

Unlike some other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abdication from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right-wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every community and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism - in which various left currents can work together, while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what we see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in London. Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

YES, I want to become a Socialist Outlook supporter.

Name: 
Address: 
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Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1193, London N4 2UI

socialist outlook has been in the forefront of the workers aid to bosnia campaign, and supporters of the paper are on both legs of the convoy.

but the campaign raises the question 'why back bosnia'? a group of british artists and writers attacked the campaign and argued for neutrality in the war.

we say socialists should defend bosnia against the plans for a 'greater serbia' and a 'greater croatia' which would set up 70 per cent of bosnian territory. this is not because we are always for the underdog - we are always for the oppressed against the oppressor. we support the bosnians because the economic crisis of the stalinist system created competition between different republics. this opened the door to reactionary nationalism.

but the immediate cause of the war was the decision of the seddican milosevic leadership to stay in power by using the weapon of serbian chauvinism, and then their launching of a military attack on croatia and slovenia when they exercised their right to independence.

koslavac the first people to be attacked by the milosevic leadership were the ethnically albaniann population of croatia and slovenia in croatia and slovenia. we also defend the right to existance of multi-ethnic and multi-national states, of that is the will of their people.

before the war there was little demand from bosnian serbs and bosnian croats for a break up of bosnia. people who have lived side-by-side for generations, who inter-married and worked together, have been forced into conflict by first reactionary great serbian chauvinism and then by croatian nationalism.

we say defending bosnia and bringing material and political aid is an elementary defence of democratic rights, and thus an elementary duty for socialists. all socialist organisations, particularly the swp and Militant who have kept silent, should be challenged to back workers aid.

Why we back bosnia
Massive Support for aid Convoy

The Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy is up and running, and is already making major successes in mobilising support for the beleaguered people of multi-ethnic Bosnia.

The aim is to raise material and political aid for the Bosnian resistance now. The convoy is now in Europe and it is a new wing of the campaign. Orders are pouring in from Scandinavia. Sections of the Fourth International have played a major role in ensuring the success of this project. Enormous amounts of aid are being directed.

This campaign is laying demonstration of the possibilities of rebuilding working class internationalism. What we need in the coming weeks is urgent action to drive this campaign into the trade union movement and build local community support.

By Helen Shaw

THE WORKERS' Aid for Bosnia Convoy has had a massive impact both in Britain and Europe. It set off for France after its successful tour through Britain culminating in a visit to the TUC on September 9. The Convoy has split into two in order to visit more countries but even so it is not able to respond to the floods of requests coming in from all over Europe.

Full lorries

The organisers even considered not visiting some of the towns on the route as the lorries are full and the pressure of the schedule is tight. But this has not prevented an upsurge of support on the ground has been so tremendous.

In Brescia, Italy the whole of the left has united around the Convoy, including the communist party and 50 trade unions are giving support. They are organising their own lorry to come and join the convoy.

Sudanese lorry high and the convoy travels through Europe the teams are becoming more organised and cohesive.

So far the convoy has collected over £70,000 plus tens of thousands of pounds worth of material aid. The convoy has agreed to take 200,000 tons of goods collected by the Muslim Aid on the condition that it is distributed to all the people in the Hulah region. The convoy will travel down to Slovenia immediately and then return to collect more aid.

Jugernauts

The size of the convoy is growing all the time. It will be joined by two jugernauts from Scandinavia in Berlin on 15 September.

These two vehicles are currently touring round Denmark and Sweden in the same way the convoy travelled round Britain and will petition the TUC equivalent in Copenhagen before going on to Berlin. In Denmark they collected £8,000 and in Sweden £10,000 in addition to filling the lorries with goods.

In Courtrai, Belgium the Northern leg of the convoy held a very successful press conference and appeared on national TV.

In Hungary the National Miners Union and the Socialist Party have agreed to support the convoy and a series of events have been organised this week. The convoy route currently covers the following cities: Lille, Liege, Courtrai, Antwerp, Oberhausen, Hamburg, Cologne, Berlin, Vienna, Graz, Paris, Liege, Charleroi, Nancy, Strasbourg, Basel, Geneva, Brescia.

At the same time Irish Solidarity with Bosnia is organising support for the convoy. Irish postal workers have managed to get information distributed by the Post Office and members of the NUS have persuaded FEET to stop describing Bosnia as a 'Muslim' state but to refer to it as 'multi-ethnic Bosnia'.

Significance

Politically the campaign has had a huge significance. The co-operation of the French CP, support from the Hungarian Socialist Party and from the CP in Brescia for a convoy which not only brings material aid but carries a political message of support for the multi-ethnic state of Bosnia and solidarity with all its people represents a remarkable breakthrough for a campaign launched by small groups in Britain.

This campaign has practically pulled together strands of the European workers movement in a way unprecedented for many years.

Workers Aid for Bosnia Programme of Action

1. TO CAMPAIGN for the opening of the asylum doors to all victims of ethnic cleansing and those facing political persecution.
2. To help provide material assistance to refugees in Britain, housing, jobs, employment, food, clothing, welfare advice, etc.
3. To take direct action to stop threatened deportations.

Bosnia Action Checklist

1. GET YOUR local organisation to send a delegate to the Workers' Aid Oct 30/31 Conference.
2. Is there a Workers' Aid Committee in your area? If not set one up now.
3. Drive the campaign into the Labour Movement. Get your trade union branch, Labour Party, campaign organisation, women's organisation anti-racist group to affiliate to Workers' Aid.
4. Approach other people on the left. Ask them if they are prepared to support a Workers' Aid.
5. Make a personal donation.
6. Send reports of all local activities to Socialist Outlook.
Tube union militant victimised

Reinstate Patrick Sikorski!

By a London Underground Train Operator

PAT SIKORSKI, a well known RMT activist on London Underground, has been victimised and sacked from his job as a guard on the Central Line. Sack action is now planned to demand his reinstatement as well as that of sacked guard Ray Stelzer.

Pat is the Secretary of the RMT’s London District Council and has long been a thorn in management’s side. By sacking him, LUL management is sending a message to union activists that they will tolerate no opposition and intend to break the RMT.

Since their success in introducing the Company Plan, LUL management has been clamping down on all opposition and trying to stamp out the old culture of railway workers and trade unionism with it, instead they want an American-style business culture based on profit instead of service.

Managers are trying to install an atmosphere of fear. Nowhere has the tension been greater than on the Central Line.

When they sacked guard Ray Stelzer, with no serious charges against him, Central Line workers had enough. RMT and ASLEF activists called two unofficial meetings to discuss. Surprise, surprise, the phone lines between management and the union head offices started to buzz.

Circular

RMT head office sent out a bureaucratic circular denouncing calls for unofficial action. They said this was to comply with the law, but in reality they were not supporting the members and activists’ fight with management.

ASLEF head office were not so coy about doing management’s job. Derrick Patlick, ASLEF General Secretary, rang up the local branch secretary and told him to resign his union rep post or face sack by management. The threat worked leaving RMT activists to fight alone.

A few days later Patrick Sikorski was sacked. The Train Crew Manager at Leytonstone, Pat’s depot, took down notices about the Ray Stelzer meetings from the RMT notice board. Pat naturally protested against the interference. Four days later he was told he was on a “DB” (disciplinary board) for alleged threatening behaviour.

If you can be sacked for agreeing with a manager there wouldn’t be many workers left on LUL. So at the disciplinary hearing the charge was changed to putting up an unofficial notice over Stelzer’s case. Punishment - instant dismissal. Now you can be charged with one thing and sacked for another.

This point was not lost on management, who at the appeal decided he had been sacked for the original charge after all!

Afraid

Everyone on the job (with the exception of a few ASLEF activists for sectarian reasons) is clear that Pat’s dismissal is in violation for trade union activity. RMT sacked him because they are afraid of unofficial action and trade union unity.

Once the union head offices had dissociated themselves from local activists over the Stelzer case, the way was clear to sack Pat Sikorski. The message from the company is that militant trade unionism must be smashed.

RMT President Knapp: essentially the RMT pulls out all the stops.

The new union brought in August means that organising a legal strike takes five weeks. Management can go to the courts delaying things further, and use the delay to intimidate workers.

No wonder LUL are so afraid of unofficial action. In many situations unofficial action is the only way forward. We didn’t see the health unions distancing themselves too far when London hospitals came out on an absolutely illegal set of strikes. If one union can support unofficial action so can another.

Activists are campaigning hard on the Central Line and the rest of the Underground to keep the anger going strong. If we can get Patrick Sikorski and Ray Stelzer reinstated, it will be a blow to management and a call to “crawl on your belly” trade unionism.

Avon CPSA activists sacked

By Shaun Cohen

STEVE Goldfinch and Amanda Lane, who is the CPSA branch secretary, have been sacked from Bedminster Job Centre.

CPSA members there held a one day protest at the Centre advertising vacancies at JW Arrowsmith, where 120 workers have been locked out since April.

It is an attempt to intimidate union members in the run-up to market testing and privatisation. Management are worried by upcoming ballots by four unions – CPSA, INSF, NUCPS, MPSA – for a unified civil service-wide strike against market testing on 5 November.

On 2nd and 3 September, 11 Employment Service offices in the Bristol area took industrial action in support of the sacked activists with the support of the CPSA nationally.

Demand the union backs further industrial action by writing to CPSA HQ, 100 Falcon Rd, London SW11 2LZ.

Send protest letters to the head of Employment Services, M Fogden, 30 George St, London WC2H 7HT.

Edmonds faces up to Burnsall’s strikers

By Bob Smith

AFTER 15 months, Burnsall’s workers strikers have met John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB union which sold out the dispute three months ago.

After an embarrassing mass picket at the TUC conference that called for him to come outside and meet his members Edmonds agreed to go to the GMB’s West Midlands office 14 September to meet the strikers and regional officials.

Official support was withdrawn from the dispute by regional organiser Geoff Whardy because it was not possible to win it within the limits of the current anti-union laws.

Edmonds expressed his anger at how the GMB organsiess within Burnsall’s main suppliers, there was no call for a boycott, no mass pickets or requests for workers to not handle Burnsall’s components, many of which are used in the car industry.

The union claimed that if it broke the laws it could be questioned - that its funds would be seized by the government.

But the GMB also claim the strike cost them £200,000. Maybe fighting to win the strike would have been cheaper.

Workers at the plant were paid £120 or less each week, faced poor working conditions and a seven-day week.

The strikers are demanding that the union supports the 52 industrial tribunals and 12 court cases that have resulted from the strike and the repeated violent assaults staged against the picket line.

They also want strike pay restored, mass pickets of the factory, and a GMB call on other TUC affiliates to boycott Burnsall.

Cooperation

They are calling for the GMB to cooperate with the support groups, in Birmingham, London, Manchester and Oxford, and open an internal enquiry into the running of the dispute.

Send messages of support and request for more information to Balbir Singh, 82 Rosefield Road, Smethwick B67 6TX, tel: 021 565 5416. Mail donations to Burnsall Strike Fund, 27 Finvalse Road, Lickey Park, Birmingham.

TRADE UNION NEWS

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK No. 49. 18 September 1993, Page 4
Anger erupts over East End racist violence
Unite against the BNP!

By Helen Shaw

ASIAN youth Quaddus Ali lies in a critical condition in the Royal London Hospital, with possible permanent brain damage after being left for dead, following a vicious beating by a racist gang of eight on Wednesday 8 September.

Quaddus and two friends were attacked as they were walking in the street.

A vigil attended by 300 people outside the hospital on Friday 10 September ended in violence after the police snatched youths from the crowd.

The police typically claim they were attacked by angry youths and that ‘politically motivated’ ‘troublemakers’ unknown to community leaders ‘ hijacked’ the vigil.

They are trying to play down their role in causing the violence and at the same time play up the ‘good’ relations between the police and the community. Bengali youths do not share that view and perceive the police as their enemy.

The situation in the East End is volatile with sporadic violence continuing over the weekend. The Asian community are angry about the lack of action in dealing with racist attacks and police collusion with racists. Nine people appeared in court on Monday 13 charged with riot and assault. A defence campaign has been set up.

Real violence

This attempt by the police to smooth over the real violence and threat to the black community comes at the same time as the trial of two men accused of murdering Asian taxi driver Fazlur Mirza, who was robbed and killed in his car which was then pushed into the Thames in docklands.

The BNP is also standing a candidate in a council by-election in Millwall ward, on the Isle of Dogs on September 16, and canvass returns indicate that support for the fascists stands at 34 per cent.

Last October, in a by-election in the same ward the BNP gained 20 per cent of the vote.

Labour managed to hold on to the ward by a strong campaign co-ordinated by the left.

This time their campaign is hopeless, with only 4-5 candidates out each night compared to the BNP who are campaigning in groups of 20-30.

The BNP come on in estates in these large groups and as some of them canvass others march up and down chanting racist filth. Residents say they have seen their neighbours coming in and out and staying with the fascists.

The weakness of the left in the local Labour Party, the perception that Labour councillors are complicit in many of the unpopular housing policies, the racist policies of Tower Hamlets Liberal Council and the failure of the Labour Party to mount an anti-racist campaign has meant the BNP have been able to grow and increase in influence.

Labour councillors in Millwall are up to their necks in carrying out the Liberals dirty work for them. The Liberals have played on racist sentiment, their policies fuelling racism.

The BNP have been able to capitalise on frustration over the white influx in the area, housing and inadequate repairs and maintenance policies.

The response of the anti-fascist organisations has been poor and often defensive. Islanders Against the Nazis was formed last year and has met on an infrequent basis since then.

When the by-election was called they put out a leaflet on the estates without holding a meeting – it was obvious the leaflet had come straight from the SWP and even their local members had not been informed.

They wanted to hold a rally in Millwall park which was borted by two estates with mainly Bengali residents.

This action would merely give the SWP and then leave the local community vulnerable to the violence from the BNP after the SWP had gone home.

These sort of tactics will not unite anti-racists but instead create divisions and merely promote one particular organisation.

It remains to be seen who will win the by-election but even if the BNP lose, the size of their vote and vicious racist attacks will mean it is more urgent than ever to create a united anti-racist movement truly rooted in the community.

1993 Congress sees TUC’s Monks in retreat

Brighton Rot!

By Dave Osler

THE 125th Trade Union Congress opened in Brighton last week, exactly one week after the protocally titled ‘Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act (Commencement No 1 and Transitional Provisions Order) 1993’ came onto the statute book. The timing was a calculated insult.

Wages councils – the last remaining protection for the low-paid – have been scrapped, and the Bridgland Agreement preventing union poaching rendered a dead letter. Unions must now give seven days notice before striking, while a citizens’ right to stop unlawful industrial action in the courts has been instituted.

Workers will now have to contract in before union dues can be deducted by check-off. The financial implications for many unions, and ultimately the Labour party could be devastating.

Fightback

The possibility of building a fightback is scarcely figured in the proceedings. The major questions of the week were Labour-union links (technically not on the agenda) and the readmission of the electrics to Congress House.

John Smith cleverly devoted his speech to a major intervention in his drive to win one member one vote, without even mentioning the subject.

Two hours later he stepped on the rostrum and turned on the charm. Delivering a carefully crafted blend of Tory-bashing and praise for the unions, he offered the audience a charter of rights at work.

These were merely existing policies repackaged, but included a new commitment to protection from unfair dismissal from day one, abolishing the present two-year wait.

The gamble paid off. Garfield Davies, general secretary of the shopworkers’ union USDAW, duly announced his union would ditch conference policy and back OMOW.

Thursday saw a heated debate over the return of the, expelled over Wapping in 1988, and now part of the AEEU. The result had been stiched up well in advance, but nevertheless, standard procedures were manipulated so that nothing was left to chance. What price democracy when a cheque for £1 million-worth of affiliation fees is on the table.

During the debate a succession of general secretaries, including Bill Morris of TGWU, argued for the clear containment of discursive power at work.

The Timex struggle was ignored by TUC leaders

No bottle

No way said Alan Tuffin of UCW in the chair; a straight yes vote was all that was on offer. But no one had the bottle to challenge the chair.

Caving in to the electricians could prove a costly mistake. Now, with the Tories’ abolition of Bridgland, the AEEU will do pretty much as it likes.

It was left to the NUM to address head on the need to unshackle the unions. A motion calling for defence of the anti-union laws was surprisingly wide support, garnering 2,418,000 votes for to 4,757,000 with backers including Unite, UCATT and GMPU.

Socialist Outlook supporter Paul Davidson, a UCATT delegate, was a key speaker in support of the motion resolution. A minimum composite pledges continued nominal opposition was passed instead.
UNISON must build for November 11 demonstration

Market massacre threatens NHS

By Harry Sloan

THE STRIKE action by nurses and support staff organised in UNISON at London’s University College Hospital remains the focal point of the rolling, escalating crisis in NHS.

The impact of the action in opposition to the “temporary” closure of the UCH hospital site has been far bigger than might be expected from the relatively small numbers involved. Though strikers’ attempt to spread the action to neighbouring hospitals and beyond have had little success, they have retained official UNISON backing and courageously defined increasingly heavy-handed management efforts at intimidation.

The management tactics de-scended on September 10 to abruptly moving patients from their wards without notifying either the staff caring for them or their visiting relatives.

Lunch

An angry protest co-ordinated by UNISON but spearheaded by angry relatives and accompanied by TV cameras burst in upon a sumptuous management lunch. The episode helped highlight the gulf between the brutal cuts in front line services and the rich pickings to be had by top axe-wielding NHS bosses.

The UCH strike stands out strongly against a background of passive inactivity from UNISON and other health unions, despite the mounting evidence of a jobs massacre sweeping the NHS.

Despite the fanfare which greeted the merger of CORSS, NALGO and NUPE to form UNISON with nearly 500,000 health workers, there has been little leadership on offer at national or local level for members battered by cash-cutting, bounty-hunting management struggling for survival in the NHS.

A combination of incompetence, disorganisation and the bureaucratic preoccupation of top officials with preserving their own jobs has meant that the half-hearted UNISON call for a national demonstration on the NHS on November 11, which has the potential to focus and build on growing anger has been followed up by just one limp circular to branch secretaries - giving no details.

Meanwhile the market reforms are taking a brutal toll, with jobs and services under fire across the country.

The entire UCL. Hospitals unit, comprising UCH, the Middlesex and related hospitals in central London, faces total bankruptcy and closure as a result of the plan by cash-strapped Camden & Islington health authority to withdraw all contracts for routine acute hospital services. If these services were to close, the remaining, purely specialist, hospital services would be saddled with enormous unit costs and lose £10m in teaching grants, triggering a financial collapse. Services at risk include the busy casualty unit at UCH.

Storm centre

London as a whole remains the storm centre of the NHS cuts, since its high overhead costs coupled with the drastic reduction in budgets of many London health authorities have left many hospitals b yearned by the loss of contract income.

Casualty services are lurching towards closure in the wake of the NHS management drive to save money, and are being hit by the same ruthless market-style closures. Involuntary management has forced the closure of A&E services at Ashford Hospital; and outlying casualty units at Barnet General Hospital and Harold Wood in Essex have been hit. The Trust chiefs, facing a £15m deficit, are seeking a merger with the East London Regional Health Authority.

The mad scramble for survival in a chaotic market system in London’s NHS is complicated by the pretence of “planning” epitomised by the Tomlinson Report and a network of related quasi-bodies presided over by the London Implementation Group. Sweeping cuts in specialist services are expected from Health Secretary Bottomley some time in November.

Meanwhile waiting lists in much of the capital are rocketing upwards, well above the 150,000 mark, even before the impending autumn round of cash cuts.

But of course London is not alone in this crisis. Birmingham, too, faces havoc, with a massive shift of contract income away from the city’s central specialist hospitals, where local health budgets are also facing heavy cuts.

£24m shortfall

South Birmingham health authority alone faces a massive £24m deficit, of which £1m stems from the under-funding of acute hospital services, and another £2m from. the refusal of other health authorities to pay for the patients treated.

The city’s Accident Hospital closed in August, with the Royal Orthopaedic closing in December. Others at risk include the Children’s and the Eye hospitals, while brutal cuts are looming at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Elsewhere Newmarket General Hospital faces closure as brutal rationalisation plans are forced through by rival Trusts in the teeth of public opposition.

Bradford Hospital Trust is pressing ahead with closure of Woodlands orthopaedic hospital to save £50,000 a year. In Manchester, Salford’s two children’s hospitals are facing drastic cuts and across-the-board job losses to cut £1.5m from a £2.6m deficit.

Double deficit

Other units in trouble include Plymouth hospitals, where a £200,000 overspend doubled in July, raising the spectre of a £1m plus deficit, and Darlington, where 5 per cent of stall at the Memorial Hospital could face the axe to cut £3.5m over three years. Almost every Trust is now looking at ways of cutting jobs to save money.

But it is not all bad news. London’s Forest Healthcare Trust, based in Waltham Forest, has announced a first-year profit of £1.1m. However a closer reading of its annual accounts shows this follows service cuts totalling… £1.1m.

None of this appears to trouble the Order of St John of Jerusalem. She recently travelled to Islington’s Whittington Hospital to “open” a hospital wing which had already been in use for two years. It is not clear when she will return to officially close the ward which has already bitten the dust.

The fightback for our NHS must be stepped up as the cuts gather pace. Support for the UCH action can be built by opposing each and every cut-back in hospital and health services across the country. Demand UNISON build and other TUC unions support the November 11 demonstration!
Labour: the party that makes nothing out of a crisis

NEVER MIND the class struggle: this year's Labour conference will be dominated by the issue of Labou'r's links with the unions, and the attempt by John Smith to force through so-called 'one person, one vote'.

Labour leaders have chosen to respond to Tony Blair's offensive with this destructive proposal, after a year of utter failure to capitalise on the Tories' crisis. Significantly it is not just Arthur Scargill and the Trade Union left who have appreciated the threat of the modernisers. Even John Edmonds has highlighted how Labour's poor performance is related to the attempts to weaken the trade union and Labour link.

Non-debate

In the year since Labour carried out its non-debate on 'what went wrong' at the last election, the Tories have been through their biggest crisis since they came to power in 1979. This crisis combined the struggle of the miners and the deep-going Tory rift over Europe, has still far from healed.

It seems light years away now, but at various points in the last two years there has been a real possibility that Major's government would fall. The pits crisis alone opened that opportunity. If Labour had thrown itself into a massive campaign for the miners, if it had joined with the TUC in backing mass industrial action to defend the miners, if Labour had backed that campaign through parliamentary wrecking tactics, there would have been a massive response from millions of working people. Heseltine's final Houdini act to win back the Tory rebels would have been much more difficult.

But far from Labour capitalising on this and other crises, the Tories have been allowed to hang on and at the same time carry through some of their biggest anti-working class attacks since 1979. New anti-union laws, the new Asylum Act - about which Labour did nothing - the utter wholesale destruction of the NHS, further privatisations, the Child Support Act - the list is long.

Paralysed

In the face of all this the Labour leadership remains paralysed. Worse, the 'modernisers' have shifted Labour policy even further right, capitulating all along the line to the Tories' reactionary economic and social reforms.

Once again Labour leaders merely hope that Tony unilaterally on its own will deliver electoral success.

Gordon Brown has made it clear that Labour will make no specific promises whatever before coming to power; indeed, abandoning any commitment to sharply increase taxes on the wealthy makes such a position absolutely inevitable.

The cynically named 'Commission on Social Justice' is a fig-leaf for backing 1930s-style means-testing and abandoning universal social benefits, a cornerstone of the welfare state.

David Blunkett has made it clear that the party will not reverse the Tories' market NHS reforms. And Tony Blair wants to outlaw the Tories by being tougher than them on 'law and order'.

Labour's dire performance has even rounded Hain, Gould and other Tribune Group MPs into some modest attempts at rethinking Labour's direction. Labour's retreats are having a devastating effect on the structure and activism of the party. Much of the basic infrastructure of wards and constituencies, finances and electoral motivation lies in tatters.

Labour's mass base has been demoralised. Where was the Labour leadership when the miners needed them? Where is the Labour leadership when hospital workers strike? Where are Labour council leaderships when ruthless anti-working class cuts are proposed?

Disillusionment with the Labour leadership doesn't automatically win people to the left. The vast mass of workers look for an alternative at the level of practical mass politics.

The whole of the working class suffers because of the lack of a left alternative at the level of mass politics.

The regeneration of the left of the labour movement depends on a reawakening of mass working class militancy which is channelled into a fight in the Labour movement.

Class struggle

Without that class struggle component, left opposition in the Labour Party and Trade Unions is futile.

Any abandonment of the real struggle for the Labour left will only make the task of the new realists, in the unions as well as the party, easier. The fight in the Labour Party is part and parcel of the class struggle, not something apart from it.

This year's round of trade union conferences have shown a general, if modest, reawakening of combative feeling by the resistance of the miners, and the importance of a political expression through the TUC to link to rank and file trade unionists.

Socialist Outlook supporters will continue to build the Socialist Campaign Group Network as the best way of organising a left which fights the modernisers at every turn and which links up with those in the trade unions who have shown a willingness to fight such as around the attacks on public services.

The network has developed positively but if it is to flourish it must ensure that the struggles of trade unionists and campaigns such as Workers Aid for Bosnia are centre stage in its activities.

UN's Somalia slaughterhouse

By Chris Brooks

Last week a three-hour massacre of more than 100 Somali civilians, mostly women and children, grabbed the attention of the world.

They were notgunned down by Somali 'warlords', but by UN 'peacekeepers' - in this case American troops. But the killings weren't doing anything new. They have already committed staggering atrocities against non-combatants.

Something new has caused the hue and cry from the bosses press and the US Congress. The bosses now realise the UN cannot win. What was behind the UN's 'Operation Harm Hope'? Certainly not to disarm the warlords and to bring democracy to the country.

The US refused to support the holding of peace talks which discussed disarmament. Belgian troops have taken up arms from one armed faction only to hand them over to another.

The US invasion has the goal of ensuring none of the armed gangs alone controls the whole country. Somalia has valuable mineral and oil reserves. While the US doesn't need these reserves now - when they are facing an economic slump - they want to ensure that a strong regime doesn't prevent big business reaping super profits from Somalia in the future.

The other Western powers are coming to see that the US can't win. The Italian contingent has been withdrawn from the country and German support is waning.

Desperate to win a quick victory, the UN troops are using more and more indiscriminate force.

But against a population united against the invasion, the UN can't win. Already they have spent more than the cost of the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

Losing the war will be a massive blow against the American ruling class, who are trying to remain the centre of the world political system through a monopoly on world power.

To subdue Somalia will need far more than the 4,500 troops the US has there. Socialists have a simpler solution - get the troops out now!
Scourge of Labour's Clinton clones

SCARGILL SPEAKS OUT

AFTER BEING stitched up by the Daily Mirror and the Cook Report, ARTHUR SCARGILL is now the victim of another vicious journalistic attack, the 'unauthorised biography' of labour correspondent Paul Routledge, who portrays Scargill as a power-crazed megalomaniac. Here we publish Scargill's first full-length interview since the defeat of the miners' struggle. This full-length version is published exclusively in Socialist Outlook, a shorter edited article recently appeared in Tribune. Interview by DAVE OSLER.

SO THE Tories have come out of the pit closure crisis with more or less everything they wanted, I ask Arthur Scargill, seated behind the formlica table of a greasy spoon cafe near his London flat in the Barbican. 'Yes', he replies. Stony silence. Try another tack.

What conclusions can be drawn, then? Although still hesitant over his words, Scargill is immediately more expansive: 'The Labour movement had the best opportunity in 50 years to transform not merely an industrial situation and win an important battle for workers in struggle, but an opportunity to change the government of the day.'

'It decided to call upon the British people to give expression to the outrage shown on the 21st and 25th of October 1992, and take part in a 24-hour stoppage, it could have reversed the pit closure programme. It would have been made deeply felt by the government and, possibly, the government itself rolling out.'

But it didn't. 'Chalk one up for the boss class!' Not at all. Since last October this government has had to spend £450 million because of the resistance of the NUM. The calculation runs as follows. The High Court ruling that the pit closure programme was unlawful and irrational meant that British Coal paid out wages and running costs for ten

days of action which would involve a stoppage of work for 24 hours, before the TUC general council: 'Those words were chosen carefully. You have to recognise that some unions would be prepared to advise members to stay away and join the demonstration for 24 hours, while other unions slavishly adhere to the Tory legislation and ballot their members. That's matter for them. The object of the exercise was to try and get workers to stop work, and everybody understood that.'

'When I talked about workers power in Hyde Park, I wasn't referring to marching around London or leading acts with the church. I was talking about bringing workers out on the streets of Britain. The trouble with the Labour Party leadership and the trade union leadership, they're quite willing to applaud millions on the streets of the Philippines or in Eastern Europe, without understanding the need to also produce millions of people on the streets of Britain. When it does happen, like in the poll tax campaign, the first thing the Labour leadership does is to condemn it.'

There must have been debates on strategy on the NUM executive. Scargill is angry at what he sees as an implied attack: 'Well, if you can criticise the strategy, I'd be delighted to hear... No, no, I interpret, but surely other ideas were floated?'

'You have to understand that in October last year, the NUM members, had they been consulted about industrial action, may not have supported that call. But by the time that the ballot did take place, it was nothing short of an outstanding victory to win 60 per cent of them for industrial action.

'That wasn't achieved by just calling upon them to do something, it was the result of a massive campaign. We marched further than Mao Tse Tung on his long march, we've been involved with so many churches that I've been offered the Bishop of Durham's job when he retires. Yet what you need is not marches, demonstrations, rallies or wide associations, all of them important. What you need is direct action. The sooner people understand that, the sooner we'll begin the change things.'

Focus for solidarity

Wouldn't the occupation of one or more threatened colliery, not by three or four supporters of Women Against Pit Closures but by the workforce itself, have created a focus for nationwide Labour movement solidarity?

Scargill resists his contention that the NUM line was completely perfect. It's well-known that Arthur Scargill advocated occupation of the pits, which was not accepted at that time by the executive committee. As a consequence the campaign that was adopted was put into play.'

Scargill is insistent that trade unionism will continue to be a force in the mining industry: "There's a feeling that strength is determined by the size of a union. That clearly is nonsense.

250,000 marched last October, but not John Smith

It's well-known that Arthur Scargill advocated occupation of the pits, which wasn't backed up at the time by the NUM executive...
When the NUM had over a million members, it was at its weakest industrially and politically. It won its greatest victories when it had less than 300,000 members, in 1972 and 1974.

'There's no way workers will stop the economy running,' he argues, dating the start of action to the commencement of an overtime ban.

'Today, we've got about 30,000 miners in work, and yet the production is heavily concentrated in one-coalface pits. One coalface operates where previously there would be eight.' In some cases, Scargill points out, as much as £100 million worth of coal could be invested in one production unit: 'If you stop that operation, you're losing about 20 pits, say, 10 or 15 years ago. All too often miners, and indeed other trade unionists, underestimate the economic strength that they have.'

£2 billion cost

British Coal and British Rail unwilling to strike, even if each day's strike costs them £10 million per day. That's £40 million. Moreover, 6 million workers couldn't, or didn't, go on strike: 'You've got four months, you're a brilliant mathematician to work out the total cost of the two days of action. I conservatively estimate it at £2 billion.'

There are now major coal imports. Coal can be imported by an industrial country for the first time ever. The mining unions alone can no longer stop supplies. The world's coal industry, the workforce's hold on the industry is essentially diminished. 'If you've got an industry where you've got massive investments, will you bring in alternative supplies. You still lose the money on the strike.'

'Can anything be done to stop privatisation?' Take industrial action! If anybody can give me a better way to do things I'm prepared to listen... If the Trade Union Congress doesn't, sooner rather than later, give a positive lead and call upon its affiliates to support workers on strike, whether they be at Times, Burnall or the NUM, then it will become increasingly irrelevant as an organisation.'

Conversation switches to the Labour Party. Scargill argues that it should build its strategy on delivering to the goods in the working class, in terms of maintenance of the NHS, education system, and social services. If that means jacking up income tax, so be it. 'I would regard the whole of VAT with income tax, I would have no compunction at all about doing that. It's common sense.'

When were you last at Walworth Road? 'I've never been, I'm pleased to say.' A Mike Yardwood-style send-up of well-known telly documentary star Neil Kinnock follows, complete with cad Welsh accent.

'Relationship between the NUM and the Labour Party haven't been a problem. Relations between the NUM leadership and the Labour Party leadership certainly were at a low level, and that was clearly because of the Labour Party leadership's attitude.'

Scargill expresses 'disgust' with four Labour MPs who signed the Department of Trade and Industry select committee report on the coal industry last March.

Shame

'They ought to hang their heads in shame for what they did. They voted for a report which had a Tory majority, and which proposed an increase in nuclear power. They supported no action to stop the dash for gas, and they refused to call for a stop to coal imports. Finally, they adopted a measure calling for a change in working practices which in effect means a 10 or 12 hour shift and a six or seven day week.' All told, it was simply a green light to Hezzelthorpe.

Scargill is generally satisfied with the NUM group of Labour MPs, which he says has consistently supported the union's line. Yet one of its members was on the DTI select committee: 'Mick Chapman has not broken any rules; he's committed an error of judgement, but that's different.'

If the leadership of the Labour Party and the Labour Party has a problem, it's the same as the problem with the trade union movement and seek to condition the trade union movement to fit in with hardline socialist ideological views. You have to accept that there will be occasions when it does not necessarily give expression to views that are in line with yours.'

'But if you elect trade union leaders which give the sort of expression they should be giving and which we saw in the 1970s, there is no reason on earth why they can't have the decisive influence on the political party.'

So it would be a trade union party where socialists fight their corner, then? 'I don't see why you keep separating socialists in the Labour Party from trade unionists. That's a fundamental mistake. It's just as bad as separating right-wing Labour leaders that we've got from trade union leaders.'

US Democrats

What I don't want to see is a middle-class party emerging with ultra-social-democratic concepts, because it will become inlististinguishable from the Democratic Party in the United States. God forbid... I want to see a socialist party with trade union support. Don't forget, the Labour Party has got a clause called clause four.

Big deal. It's still in the constitution, maybe, but the clause doesn't give a toot. Scargill replies: 'They don't give a toot because people in the trade union movement have allowed them not to give a toot. But we've got a chance to stop that... If the Labour Party were to apply the same rigid rules that they apply to the Militant Tendency, there's a lot of people who are currently calling for an abdication of clause four who quite honestly would be better off with the Liberal Democrats.'

Hence a lot of New Statesman and Society editors: 'I certainly wouldn't have any pacts with the Liberals, I wouldn't have any realignment of policy that put us on a par with the Liberals, even though we're to the right of them at the moment.'

'Scargill revives his contention that the NUM line was completely perfect'

'If people are saying I don't have a right to my views in the Labour Party as a Marxist, I'd like someone to point to the constitution and explain to me where that is.'

The NUM line was 'completely perfect' and 'there's never been a time when there's not a conflict between the NUM and the Labour Party on the political line.'

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'Scargill argues that the NUM line was completely perfect'

'Scargill argues that the NUM line was completely perfect'
Choosing what to die for

In the Line of Fire

Reviewed by Liam Mac Uaid

CLINT Eastwood plays an American Secret Service agent in a frantic rush to save an averagely unpleasant President from a deranged professional assassin.

Set aside your scruples about cheering on a representative of the American secret state and enjoy one of the best thrillers of the decade thus far.

This film is as complex as Eastwood's last masterpiece, Unforgiven. As one of the bodyguards who got drunk the night before JFK was shot, he hesitated and did not put himself between the bullets and the President as he was trained to do.

He has become a misanthropic outcast and is pushing retirement age. The assassin, played by John Malkovich, torments him with this weak spot.

Two thieves dominate their relationship. Does Eastwood have the courage to stop a bullet for someone else? If so, why should he?

The implicit reply from Eastwood is that you decide for yourself what makes life worth living. You also decide what you want to die for.

Rough deal

The second strand is what you do after life has given you a rough deal. Malkovich dedicates his life and intellect to a futile gesture of revenge consumed with bitterness and a sense of life's futility.

Eastwood has a passion for jazz (and ultimately falls in love). He creates his own happiness in an often unpleasant world.

A first-rate thriller, interesting glimpses of the trade craft of the United States Secret Service, a bit of philosophy and outstanding performances. What more can you want from an evening at the cinema?

'Bleak humour'

'China Avant-Garde' at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford until 27 October

By Jodley Green

'CHINA Avant-Garde' is evidence of the rejection of Socialist Realism by China's contemporary artists.

The smiling faces and heroic poses of official art are seen here in blatant parody. Instead of the optimistic propaganda seen in communist art, the exhibition's mood is pleasantly desolate and despondent.

Most of the artists represent the human figure, especially the face - bleak renditions in which the face is anonymous, distorted by screams or the painter's technique, erased or given the blank mask of pop art. Elsewhere Mao's face is seen as a background subject or as an icon.

Modern Art movements, are drawn upon by the artists. Ye Yongjun's paintings are described as 'subverting' the image of Mao making him a decorative motif rather than heroic.

Superficial

But, as with American pop art - Young's main influence - presentation of mass media images as superficial can create superficial paintings which are more commentary on popular culture than radical critique.

These paintings are cynical, in which empty triumphalist slogans on political posters have been replaced by brand names.

There is humour - but it is cynical humour which laughs bitterly at the bureaucratic control of information. Relief from these alienated images is found in a portrait by Zhao Bandi which, although melancholy, is passionate and personal. Deng Yi's abstract paintings which appear as threads of woven colours are wonderful aids to contemplation.

But inevitably one returns to more disturbing images. They reverberate with the bitterness of a cynical society - this is not an avant-garde which seeks to change the status quo. Progressist art which seeks to do more than represent a sense of sorrow and futility seems to have been almost extinguished in China. A complementary exhibition of photographs taken of the democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square contains some optimistic images. It is the crushing of that demonstration which to a large degree explains the cynicism of Chinese artists working in the nineties.

Edward Thompson

Success and failure of the 'Old New Left'

By Phil Hearse

EP THOMPSON'S achievements as an historian and champion of the peace movement justly built him a huge reputation.

But Thompson was a key representative of the '1956' generation; he not only shared the strengths and weaknesses of this generation, he theorised and championed both.

The 1956 Hungarian revolution and Kruschev's secret speech - shook the British Communist Party to its core.

The issue of Stalinism was good centre-stage. People left the CP in droves, and the New Left took shape.

It was a turning point for British Trotskyism. Many CP intellectuals were won over by the then-largest (although still tiny) Trotskyist organisation, led by Gerry Healy.

But those who turned to Trotskyism were a minority. When the key New Left anthology Out of Anarchy was produced in 1962 only one of its contributors, Alan W. MacInyre, later right-wing philosopher lecturer at Essex, claimed allegiance to Trotskyism.

The dominant New Left politics were nationalist, anti-Stalinist and anti-social democratic; its political focus was the rapidly growing CND.

Some of the articles in Out of Anarchy are militantly anti-capitalist, not least that by former Marxism Today guru and ex-socialist Stuart Hall. But among these 'anti' stands, there was little coherent positive alternative.

The 1963 split in the New Left Review editorial board, over the significance of continental 'high theory', Marxism (especially Gramsci), was highly political. In retrospect this clash between Thompson and the Perry Anderson team was part of the transition and conflict between the 'Old New Left' and the 1960s generation which took nationalism and pacifism in the direction of militant anti-imperialism. As CND declined in the mid-1960s, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign emerged.

Thompson broke with Stalinism, but he never broke with popular frontism; it is the organising theme in all his political positions and writings. Neutrality and popular frontism were both large in his intervention in the early 1980s peace movement, with his theory of 'extremism', the idea that east and west were locked into mutually reinforcing nuclear 'extremist' 'modes of production'.

Thompson's overall theoretical and political positions were subject to complex and sometimes acrimonious debate in Marxist, to which Thompson never replied.

The Making of the English Working Class is above all a work which celebrates and does justice to the generation of ordinary working people who were the victims of, and fighters against, the horrors of emerging capitalism. As such it is an immense achievement. But the oft-repeated view that this and Thompson's other historical work is the most important work of the British Marxist historians is exaggerated.

Christopher Hill's work on the English revolution and the successful volumes of Eric Hobsbawm on the development of British capitalism are at least as important as Thompson's work.

In the face of militant anti-imperialism and Marxist theoretical development, Thompson, to use his own words 'talked in his tent', in the name of 'Reason'.

But his 'reason' was always a combination of socialist idealism and English radicalism, revealing the incomplete character of his break with the tradition of the British Communist Party. The promise of 1956, the potential of a renewed and revolutionary Marxism, had to be taken up by others.
Where is Sinn Fein going?

By Kieran McAnulty

RECENT months have seen a gradual shift of emphasis in the politics of Sinn Fein (SF). Not long ago it seemed that the republican movement was hell-bent on pushing the military struggle to the fore and relaying the political struggle to the sidelines. But in the past year key events have forced the movement to re-evaluate priorities.

First was the disastrous SF result in the 26-county election last November (1.7 per cent of the popular vote). Second was the negative backlash from the Warington bombing which killed two small children.

In the run-up to the North’s local elections last May, the SF leadership decided that major changes would have to be made if the movement was to make an effective electoral impact. SF pushed itself forward as a separate party with its own agenda, emphasising its role in the community, rather than just appearing a mouthpiece for IRA.

SF pushed up its vote to 12.5 per cent, just over one-third of the nationalist community, making it the fourth-largest party in the Six Counties.

Harsh truths

Sinn Fein has been forced to accept some harsh truths about the political realities north and south of the border. In acknowledging the difficulties faced by the party in the Free State, SF first tried to blame its poor showing in last November’s general election on media censorship and police harassment of party activists.

SF’s failure to relate to large sections of the Free State population was also an important ingredient. Much of the population regarded SF’s propaganda as irrelevant to their lives and gave their vote to the Labour Party which made the biggest electoral gains.

At the annual Wolfe Tone commemoration held on 20 June this year at Bodenstown, Sinn Fein executive member Martin McGuinness offered a sober assessment of the situation facing the party in the 26 counties:

‘No one can deny that, with honourable exceptions, we have generally failed to make a significant impact on the political map of the 26 counties. It requires a national focus by us and a fundamental change of attitude if the imbalance is to be corrected.’

He went on to say that not only should members be active on the national question, but they ‘should also be involved in every issue which affects our people...unemployment, low pay, poverty, women’s rights, and emigration.’

It represents a genuine change of emphasis by Sinn Fein then all socialists should welcome this.

If Martin McGuinness is to be believed however, Sinn Fein needs to do more than just propagandise about such issues in the columns of An Phoblacht, but needs to get more involved in the various campaigns, particularly through the structures of the wider labour movement.

Unfortunately on some issues SF’s involvement can only be limited, because of the mandates of its annual conference (Ard Fheis). A classic example is abortion rights.

At this year’s Ard Fheis in Dundalk, several motions calling on the party to support full abortion rights for Irish women were defeated. Indeed the party’s president Gerry Adams went so far as to say that any change in the party’s present policy would be the ‘biggest mistake it could make’. SF continues to support abortions only in extreme cases such as rape and incest.

The question begging to be answered is why such a change in policy would be a ‘big mistake’? During the November 1992 election campaign abortion was one of the key issues dividing southern Irish politics. SF could have done better, especially among young women, if it had taken a clear stand.

There are several reasons why SF backs off taking a radical stand on such issues. One is the fear that it may alienate its older and more traditional Catholic supporters, particularly in rural areas, and prevent disaffected Fianna Fail supporters switching allegiances. Another is the fear of the possible negative impact among the powerful Irish-American community which is important in financing the republican movement.

What SF needs to realise however is that the trend in Irish politics is towards a more secular and pluralist society, and towards a rejection of its more traditional and conservative past.

Hostile

The failure of Sinn Fein to become more involved in controversial issues is not all of its own making. A significant section of the labour and feminist movements in Britain and Ireland are hostile to Irish republicanism in general and SF in particular.

SF has shown in the past that it is, with the support of the left in Britain and Ireland, capable of a great deal. In 1980 SF established a women’s department and since then has been involved in campaigns to make contraceptives more available in the 26 counties and called for on the government to recognise break downs of a marriage grounds for divorce.

More recently the party supported the Gay Pride march in Dublin and welcomed the passing of the law which reduced the age of consent to 17 for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

Sinn Fein presents itself as a socialist republican party on occasions but is in reality a nationalist party with some left policies.

In the past Gerry Adams has argued that the party might be influenced by Marxism, but there are no Marxists within SF.

At the June 1979 Wolf Tone commemoration Adams argued: ‘We are not, and never have been a mere “Irish out” movement...We stand opposed to all forms and manifestations of imperialism and capitalism.

Disappear

More recently Adams has clarified this position, arguing that in the event of a united Ireland SF’s reason for existence would disappear. Irish politics would become more class-based and the party’s members would disassociate and join other organisations.

In effect SF would, in this scenario, be limiting itself to the national struggle.

It was in this context that the SF leadership issued the document ‘Towards a Lasting Peace in Ireland’ in February 1992. The stress in this document is on becoming part of any future discussions on a settlement; it seems to see discussions with the bourgeoisie nationalism of the SDLP as being more important than the role of trade unionists and social struggles.

Despite these shifts, there is certain realities which the left in Britain and Ireland must face up to. Sinn Fein is the only major organisation in Ireland arguing for immediate British withdrawal, the only one claiming to be socialist and anti-imperialist; and that therefore our basic stance should be one of supporting SF, while reserving our right to criticise when necessary.
No peace on offer in South Africa's "peaceful road"

By Charlie van Gelderen

The current situation in South Africa will test every political tendency. April 27, 1994 is scheduled for the first ever one-person-one-vote election. But to believe there will be a peaceful transition to majority rule is tocow illusions. An undeclared civil war already exists, disguised as a black against black war, with Butterlies's Inkatha doing the dirty work for the white ruling class.

The level of violence is appalling. Officially the death toll in political violence rocketed to 2,086 in April and 2,180 in May -- nearly 5,000 deaths in two months. The real figures are probably worse.

To quote Neville Alexander at the third WSOS National Conference last April, "Traditional social control is disintegrating, the bankrupt racist state cannot and will not reassert even its repressive order because many parts of the cities have become no-go areas for its civil and uniformed functionaries and because it suits its sinister agenda to promote so-called black-on-black violence."

The white far right (uneasily linked to Inkatha), with scant chance of winning a "voters' list" (Afrikaners homeland) through negotiations or the ballot box is actively gearing up for secession by armed struggle. Although a minority in the white population, it has considerable support in the South African Defence Force command structure and could, if estimated, mobilise 100,000 men at short notice.

Even if the ANC is allowed to come into power, it will inherit an even worsening situation, with cross everywhere in education, health, recreation and, above all, the economic sphere.

Unemployment has never been worse. The government admits that more than 50 per cent of the economically active population are out of work. In the Eastern Cape, an ANC stronghold, the unemployment rate is above 80 per cent for black youth. Less than four per cent of new labour can be absorbed annually.

What was once thought unthinkable has become normal -- white families queue up at soup kitchens; scavenging white workers and their families share hostels and accommodation in Natal with black miners; unemployed white workers live in so-called white squatter camps.

The ANC, PAC and other "peoples' organisations" are unable to offer any real solution. Negotiations for power sharing are held.

Deal protects ruling elite up as the short term answer. At the WSOS conference, Neville Alexander spelled out clearly the main thrust of ruling class strategy since February 1990.

For economic reasons and in order to gain a certain measure of political legitimacy...the ruling class has been compelled to scrap Verwoerdian apartheid. Dismantling apartheid for them meant no more than repealing the pro-white and especially the pro-Afrikaner affirmative action laws...

...so they could accommodate the rising black middle class and the skilled black working class within the continuing racial capitalist system -- without...afecting the real power relations between the bourgeoisie and the working class.

For the overwhelming majority of black people, the cosmetic changes to the system...make very little difference, for many...lead to a dramatic worsening of the quality of life."

From West Bank to World Bank

Reactionaries line up to quell Palestine revolt

By Roland Rance

LAST September, Israeli Prime Minister Rabin stated, "I would like to wake up in the morning and find that Gaza has drowned in the sea, but since that won't happen we must seek a solution." He now seems to have found such a solution.

The agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation is portrayed as a turning point in Middle East history. Indeed it is.

But, far from being the first step in a process leading to full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the agreement represents a significant defeat for the Palestinian masses -- whose victories in the 5 years of Intifada are now to be undermined by the Palestinian bourgeoisie and the external leadership of the PLO.

The agreement formalises the status of the Palestinians as a colonised people. Except for one but symbolic aspect, nothing in this agreement was not in the 1978 Camp David agreement which was denounced by the PLO.

Falling short

This deal, in fact, falls short of the principles agreed between Begin and Sadat, since it confines the area of Palestinian "autonomy" to the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho.

It does not end the occupation but replaces direct with indirect Israeli rule and co-opts the PLO to police the occupation on Israel's behalf.

The one symbolic innovation is Israel's recognition of the PLO. This major shift has not happened because the Israeli government has suddenly become convinced of the justice of the Palestinian cause. It is the price Israel has to pay to continue its control over the Palestinian people.

As the Standard commented, in this project the PLO is "Israel's surviving natural ally".

The national gains of the Intifada are well-known. It has united the Palestinian people against the Israeli occupation and established Israel's system of control.

Repression

In the early stages of the occupation, from 1967 until about 1970, Israel repressed any expression of Palestinian resistance with a massive army presence and established a network of local collaborators and informers. This allowed Israel to mediate the occupation through its local agents rather than through the army.

The Intifada...eliminated this collaboration obliging Israel to flood the occupied territories with troops. This has proved costly, not only financially but politically both at home and abroad.

In class terms, the Intifada represented a new stage in the struggle. It is based among the poorest and most deprived sections of the Palestinian people: the refugees, the peasants and day-workers unlike earlier booms of unrest, which were based largely the colleges and universities.

This can be seen in the class nature of many of the demands on the Palestinian bourgeoisie regarding work conditions, wages, prices, rents, women's rights.

This aspect of the Intifada inspired popular musings in other Arab countries, notably Jordan. It is opposition to this class struggle that creates the common interest between Israel, the PLO leadership, the Arab regimes, the USA and the World Bank.

These forces are now colluding in order to turn back the class gains of the Intifada. Israel has agreed to train a Palestinian police force; the World Bank has promised economic aid totaling $4 billion over the next ten years. These offers are an expression of a shared interest in supporting the new regime.

The success of the plan is far from assured, and Arafat faces serious opposition. Leading figures have resigned from the PLO executive and denied the legitimacy of Arafat's leadership.

The agreement has been denounced by the left opposition within and outside the PLO, by the Islamic movements, and by significant forces within Fatah: his only consistent support comes from the former Palesine Communist Party.

Meanwhile, PLO offices around the world are being closed down. In Britain the Palestine Solidarity Campaign maintains an embarrasced silence.

Socialists can be in no doubt that this imperialist agreement is a setback for the Palestinian people. Their struggle, however, will continue; we must deepen and strengthen our solidarity.
Twenty years after General Pinochet’s brutal Chilean coup exposed the bankruptcy of the cross-class politics of ‘Popular Unity’, PHIL HEARSE draws the political lessons for the left today.

ON THE MORNING of 11 September 1973, twenty years ago, tanks and aircraft attacked the Santiago Moneda palace, residence of Chilean President Salvador Allende. The nightmare of the left in Chile and internationally, a military coup against the left-wing Popular Unity government, was coming true.

Allende and his bodyguards came out of the palace with machine guns, scanning the sky for attacking planes. Within hours both Allende and the ‘peaceful road to socialism’ in Chile were dead.

The right wing and the army took their revenge against the left. In three days 30,000 trade unionists, socialists and communists were slaughtered.

A reign of terror which lasted more than 15 years under the Pinochet military government ensued, thousands were tortured or ‘disappeared’. Chilean workers were subjected to the most radical mone
tarist and structural adjustment policies in Latin America, one which created a wealthy middle class but drove millions of workers into dire poverty.

Popular Unity, including the Commu
ist, Socialist and Radical parties, had come to power in September 1970. Right from the start Allende tried to make con-
cessions to the right wing; his cabinet included more members of the declining Radical Party than the much bigger Com-
munist Party. Popular Unity committees organised for the election were dis-
band ed.

Gradual reforms

The policy of Popular Unity was one of gradual reforms in the interests of the working class. Many industries were na
tionalised and salaries substantially in-
creased. Free milk was distributed to the poor, and public housing greatly in-
creased. There was a surge of support for Popular Unity in the 1971 local elections.

But these successes for Popular Unity were purchased at a high price. Because the banks and big financial institutions were not nationalised, the government had to borrow huge sums to finance its projects and inflation rocketed. Ironically, the subsequent economic chaos antag-
nised the middle class, which Popular Unity had tried to woo by not going ‘too fast’.

The government faced a huge cam-
paign of destabilisation by the bosses. There was an investment strike. Wealthy farmers took their cattle out of the Andes into neighbouring Argentina, rather than sell them in Chile. The press carried out a huge campaign against the government.

As the economy got into worse 
trouble, foreign companies refused to in-
vest in Chile – all financial credit to Chile was ended.

In 1972 the gradualist strategy of Popular Unity went into bankruptcy. The determination of local reaction and impe-
rialism to wreck the economy made it impossible to win over the middle class.

The destabilisation process reached its head in the autumn of 1972 when a bosses’ strike was organised. Factories closed down; middle class truck owners went on strike, leaving transport para-
lysed. The country ground to a halt.

Popular Unity was itself divided. The right wing, led by Allende and the Com-
munist Party advocated a continued ‘go 
slow’ policy – what they called ‘consoli-
dation’.

But left wing, the left of the Socialist party and its allies, put forward a policy of ‘advance without compromise’; to push forward to socialism by mobilising the workers. They were supported by the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) outside the government.

The workers had something to say about the situation. Against the hoarding of vital necessities, they organised local committees of supply and distribution to break the stronghold of the black mar-
ket. Popular Unity base committees were revitalised.

Peasants started to fight for control of 
the land by seizures of parts of big estates. Most important of all, when the bosses’ strike started, workers in the industrial 
zones – the cordones industriales – set up 
factory and area committees of resis-
tance.

The factory and neighbourhood com-
mittees constituted embryonic organisa-
tions of workers power; the workers were beginning to take power into their own hands. Popular power was emerging in Chile.

Opposed to mass action

But the Popular Unity government op-
posed the self-organisation of the masses. As the bosses’ strike developed, the gov-
ernment denounced the cordones indus-
triales as illegal.

Instead of mobilising the masses, in-
tervening to support the actions of the 
workers themselves, Popular Unity called in the army to break the strike.

Trade union leaders toured the factories 
telling the workers to rely on ‘legality’; 
to leave things to the government.

Throughout the period of Popular Unity government the armed forces and the capitalist state remained intact. No 
attack was made win rank and file soldiers to the side of the government.

This revealed the whole paradox of 
Popular Unity; in the name of the work-
ing class and socialism it had captured 
the government. But the bourgeois state 
and its apparatus of repression stayed intact.

The army remained the final guarantor of the position of the right wing and the bourgeoisie.

At the beginning of 1973 pressure from the right wing built up. Middle class 
students from the Catholic University demonstrated against the government. The whole of the bourgeoisie clamoured for 
the army to intervene and overthrow the ‘Marxist’ government.

The military carried out hundreds of raids on factories, left wing offices, shanty towns, union offices and workers homes ‘looking for guns’.

On 29 June 1973 the Second Ar-
moured Division led by Colonel Robert 
Smoger attempted a coup. But only a 
small part of the armed forces joined in.

Troops loyal to Allende easily defeated the coup, as thousands of workers mobi-
lised on the streets. Popular Unity com-
mitees decided to distribute arms to the 
working class.

That evening over a million workers marched to the Moneda Palace. As 
Allende urged caution on the crowd they shouted ‘execute the plotters; the reactionaries hard, arm the workers’.

Last chance

For Allende and his government this was the last chance. The defeated coup 
pushed the right wing on the defensive. The 
workers were infuriated. They wanted guns. During the day they had occupied thier factories and wanted to keep them. It was a decisive moment.

But Allende and Popular Unity, in-
stead of mobilising the workers and 
crushing the right wing, decided that fur-
erther concessions were the only way out.

Allende invited a wide range of right-
wing figures to join his cabinet, in par-
ticular Christian democrats. On August 10 he agreed that the military also join the government.

By these hasty and desperate conces-
sions, Allende only signalled his weak-
ness to the right. The military became convinced that they could easily over-
throw him. On September 11 the blow was struck. Chile went into more than 15 years of the darkness of military dictator-
ship and brutal repression.
Teach Tories fresh lesson on testing

By Roy Leach

THIS YEAR'S boycott by teachers of the SATs dealt a major (though not decisive) blow to the Tories' plans to introduce an education market place. League tables of test results were to fuel competition between schools as parents exercised illusory choice between 'good' and 'bad' schools based upon the most unsophisticated (i.e. relatively cheap) of performance indicators.

The teachers' boycott, although driven by deep-rooted opposition to the Tories' education project, was presented in terms of workload in order to satisfy the anti-union laws, as a genuine 'trade dispute'.

Fragile alliance

Differences between the unions – the NUT at least raising the educational arguments in contrast to the NASUWT's and moderate ATL's exclusive focus on workload – makes their alliance very tenuous in the extreme. The challenge for the Tories was to make sufficient concessions to undermine union opposition whilst keeping their overall aims intact. This delicate task was entrusted to Sir Ron Dearing.

Sir Ron's interim report at the beginning of the summer holiday reveals him to be a more sophisticated operator than his supposed master, John Patten. Firstly, the time the SATs are expected to have been reduced in all cases – for Key Stage 1 (6-8-year-olds) from 12.5 hours to 6.75 hours and at Key Stage 1 'the overall time for testing of children of average attainment will be reduced by half.'

Secondly, the number of subjects to be assessed is also to be reduced to the core of science, maths and English for three years. The number of students in grades 2-8 to take into account the socio-economic background of students. For socialists it is the very notion of league table ranking which we are opposed to but there is a large slice of 'liberal opinion' which would buy the idea. Along with these proposed changes to assessment, Sir Ron proposes a number of changes to the National Curriculum itself. Here he has bad to walk the tightrope between right-wing clamouring for a 'return to basics' and the obvious overload of the curriculum for the teachers and pupils experience everyday.

Such an idea would appeal to many teachers and union bureaucrats who oppose the current SATs with their overt unfairness' and which fail to take into account the socio-economic background of students. For socialists is the very notion of league table ranking which we are opposed to but there is a large slice of 'liberal opinion' which would buy the idea. Along with these proposed changes to assessment, Sir Ron proposes a number of changes to the National Curriculum itself. Here he has had to walk the tightrope between right-wing clamouring for a 'return to basics' and the obvious overload of the curriculum for the teachers and pupils experience everyday.

His formula of a greater concentration on 'the basics for her tick lists' recording every element of pupils' achievement. In addition to these 'workload' issues, he also proposes an investigation into the idea of 'value added' as an alternative to crude league tables.

Unfairness

Sir Ron's interim report, Baroess Blatch, the Schools' Minister (depopulating for her 'tick list') writing (and Patten) accepted the recom-

Patten mendations and made one significant addition: 'The Secretary of State will publish only national aggregate results of the assessments of 7 and 14 year olds, but those results will not be published by school by school in performance tables'. This will also apply to the results in 1993 (what results? These were the boys' cotted tests! GCSE results will continue to be published in school performance tables'.

League tables

Does this mean that the Tories have conceded defeat? Of course not. The decision to publish league tables of results for Key Stage 2 (the new 11-plus) from 1995 and the recent offensive over numeracy tables show that at best, the focus has shifted.

Teachers returning to work this term were met with a glossy brochure detailing the procedure for next America and despite the fact that Dearing recommended there be a period of review.

Socialist teachers (mostly organised within the NUT, which has the positioning the boycott must continue) must force their unions to hold their boycott position whilst challenging the very notion of an education market and competition.

Solidarity with Colombian telecom workers

By Chris Brooks

In Colombia, human rights are violated every day: political murders, 'disappearances', mass executions, military involvement in every aspect of daily life, death squads etc. Since 1978, 23536 people have been killed.

Since 1966 the Liberals and Christian Democrats have taken turns to have the presidency operating this arrangement to stay in power.

The present Liberal government of President Gaviria follows the example of the IMF and the World Bank as did his predecessor Virgilio Barco who admitted himself that 50 per cent of the population lived in absolute poverty as a consequence. Some sectors have benefited enormously. In the '93-'94 budget the army received increased funding and personnel. The number of military and young people are forced to work on very low wages, often in inhuman conditions.

Short contracts

The majority are taken on with renewable three month contracts making them totally at the mercy of their employers. Those who join a trade union are immediately dismissed.

When workers try to fight back the government's reaction is swift and brutal. The workers in the telecommunications industry declared a strike against government privatization attempts and were immediately arrested and jailed. Officially they were accused of disrupting production, a charge which the government equates with terrorism. 14 workers from AT Telécoms have now been locked up for 160 days in the 'El Mosquito' prison in Bogota.

Their families are in Serious financial trouble as they no longer have any income and Colombia has no unemployment insurance or social security system.

The Gaviria government has adopted an anti-terrorist decree to combat drug trafficking and everyday street violence and recently it has become obvious that this new law is being used to prevent any form of social protest.

Social struggles are classified as terrorist activity and criminalised. It is an attempt to destroy the whole of the Labour Movement.

Assassinations

The consequences of these policies are clear: many trade union leaders have been arrested or assassinated. Additionally there has been a spectacular fall in the level of unionisation – 1 per cent by 1991 as against 23 percent in 1982. A committee representing the families of the imprisoned workers and the unions in the telecommunications industry are demanding the immediate release of the telecom workers. They have appealed internationally to put pressure on the Colombian government.

This appeal is in response to the criminalisation of social protest; demands an end to the repression of the Labour Movement; demands freedom of speech and freedom to organise, denounces human rights violations and condemns the right wing regimes of Latin America and demands an end to their support.

Copies of the appeal are available from Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London NW2 2UU
What's Happening

WANT YOUR event included? Send details by September 24 to What's Happening, P.O. Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

SEPTMBER
Wednesday 15
Feminists Against Censorship meeting 7.30pm Conway Hall Red Lion Square WC1

Thursday 16
London Health UNISON day of action
Joy Gardner Campaign public meeting 8pm African Caribbean Cultural Centre 6 Clarendon Rd N8

Monday 20
Lift sanctions against Iraq weekly picket 5.30pm Eton Office King St SW1 details 071 607 2503

Liberation now! editorial meeting 6pm London details PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

Wednesday 22
No Nazis in Hounslow? 7pm weekly details 081 572 8556

Scottish National Party conference opens Dumfries

Friday 24
Lobby FBU-Employer talks Fire Brigades HQ Albert Embankment

Saturday 25
Middlebrook Mushrooms demonstration through Doncaster meet 11am College Road

FBU recall conference

Sunday 26
CLP fringe meeting 10m Corn Exchange Brighton SOCIALIST Campaign Group supporters network fringe meeting 7.30pm Royal Albion Hotel Old Steine Brighton £1.50

Monday 27
Secrecy and the arms trade CAAT fringe meeting 7pm Old Ship Hotel Kings Road Brighton

Nobby Clarke memorial lecture by Dennis Skinner 7pm Brighouse Brighton

Troops Out Movement/ Friends of Brighton LP disco at the Concord Brighton

ARA fringe meeting 7pm Bedford Hotel Kings Road Brighton

Tuesday 28
Troops Out Movement fringe meeting with Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Billy Etherington Concord Brighton

Wednesday 29
BIRMINGHAM Socialist Outlook public meeting on Bosnia with Geoff Ryan 7.30pm Trade Union and Labour Club Pershore Road Selly Park

Tibet vigil 6pm-8pm weekly Chinese Embassy Portland Place W1 Oxford Circus tube

Thursday 30
Drop charges against anti-racist Sam Gravesend Magistrates Court

Bosnia’s Murders Brighton Socialist Outlook meeting with Geoff Ryan 6.30pm Cranbourne Arms, Cranbourne St off West St supported by Brighton Worker’s Aid

Angela Emergency Campaign public meeting 7pm Friends Meeting House NW1 details 071 957 7086

OCTOBER
Saturday 2
Save our student unions picket of Tory party conference

Sunday 3
People’s March against the Tories leaves Bradford noon

Liberation now! planning meeting 1pm London details PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

EVENING for Mordechai Vanunu with Harold Pinter, Julie Christie 7.30pm Hackney Empire E6 details 071 387 5096

Friday 8
People’s March against the Tories arrives 11.30am Bonny St Blackpool

Saturday 9
Mass picket Roelof & George Cow Lane off Oldfield Road Salford RIGHTING the employers’ offensive conference sponsored by Oxfordshire Trades Council 10am-5pm Ruskin College Walton Street Oxford 1201

CITIZENS’ Income and the left Socialist Conference 10am-5pm SDAS Thornhaugh Street WC1 £4.50/E

Saturday 16
CLOSE down BNPS HO! National demonstration called by ANL, YRE, Nolan Adams & Rohit Duggal Family Campaign 1pm Winns Common Plumstead SE18

ARA national demonstration central London

Green Party conference opens Hastings

Sunday 17
Worker’s walk-out at Hammersmith Town Hall in protest at compulsory redundancies

Chesterfield, freephone 0800 581611

NOVEMBER
Wednesday 3
Save our student unions! Demonstrate Manchester

Friday 5
Civil service-wide strike against market testing

Thursday 11
UNISON national demonstration against attacks on the NHS

Saturday 20
Campaign Against Double Punishment conference Chesterham Community School Hallwell Lane Manchester

Peace Education Conference 10.30am-4.30pm Friends House Euston Road London tickets £5/£3

HOME NEWS

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New Bantustans solve nothing

Intifadah betrayed

FOR SIX years the Palestinians have been waging an heroic uprising, the Intifadah, in the occupied territories. More than 1500 people have been gunned down by Israeli soldiers in that time. And after all this, after decades of struggle for Palestinian self-determination, the PLO leadership group around Yasser Arafat intends to make peace with Israel in return for almost nothing.

The new peace plan is not a 'breakthrough'. The outlines of the plan are 20 years old, and for most of that time utterly rejected not only by the left, but by the majority of Palestinian opinion.

The plan is for two tiny 'Bantustans' under direct Israeli surveillance. The PLO fighters will police them for the Israelis. There is no guarantee even of a Palestinian statelet, on Gaza and the whole of the West Bank, being the end-result.

'Limited autonomy' around Jericho and Gaza is not even self-rule in these two tiny areas. It does not even amount to a statet-in-formation. Most Palestinians live outside the territories occupied in the 1967 war. What of their future?

Plans like these have been repeatedly rejected by the mass of Palestinian opinion.

Of the hundreds of thousands in refugee camps in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon? Where will they go? What about the 13,000 political prisoners held by Israel in appalling conditions? When will they be released?

The Arafat-Rabin deal is opposed not just by the Islamic forces, but by all the more militant forces in the PLO; it has been rejected out of hand by the Popular Front and the Democratic Front. No wonder Arafat conducted his negotiations in secret.

In the end the plan will not work. The Palestinian struggle cannot be stifled by Arafat's bureaucratic manipulation of the PLO leadership structures, or a deal which leaves the oppression of the Palestinian people intact.