TORY CROOKS
SMASH
Welfare state
& GRAB
benefits from poorest

Tory plans threaten mass poverty – Editorial p3.
One law for the poor ...

By Helen Shaw

SICKNESS and Invalidity Benefits (IB) will be replaced with a new Incapacity Benefit in April 1997. In Peter Lilley’s words it will ‘concentrate help on those genuinely unable to work’ and will include ‘a more objective test of whether people can work’.

Vince Gillespie from Regard (part of the British Council of Disabled Organisations) said, ‘This is an appalling attack on disabled people. They are not only making it harder to claim IB but are also proposing to tax it. This ignores the fact, which the government has always ignored, that living with a disability is expensive.’

‘Many people with disabilities have particular needs related to diet and living arrangements which impose an additional strain on their income.’

‘We are being told all the time that the government can’t ask people earning £25 - £30,000 to pay more tax but they can do this to those on benefits.’

‘These changes are yet another attack on one of the poorest sections of society. Poor because of the low level of benefits but also because many disabled people could work but employers won’t give them jobs.’

‘The government keeps disabled people poor by condoning discrimination and then attacks them for being on benefits.’

‘We have already seen this sort of assessment procedure used for the Disability Living Allowance. It will particularly impact on those with crisis illnesses such as sickle cell, ME and mental health problems.’

‘I know someone with sickle cell who was admitted to hospital 14 times in six months but was denied the allowance because she was not in hospital when she went to the assessment panel.’

‘The same sort of treatment will now be noted out to people claiming the new benefit.’

‘The attack on disabled people not only comes from the new benefit rules but also from the massive cuts expected in local government. Local authorities are already struggling to implement Care in the Community and with further closures of day centres and reductions in social services disabled people will be forced into further isolation and dependence solely on totally inadequate benefits.’

Link up to defend the welfare state!

By Harry Sloan

THE THREE biggest unions in Britain lent official support to a conference in defence of the Welfare State on December 14.

Leaders of the TGWU, GMB and UNISON gave speeches stressing the need for a coordinated fight back by the labour movement against the Tory onslaught on pensions, benefits, grants and vital public services.

This gathering of unions comprising almost half the affiliated TUC membership also affirmed MPs Ken Livingstone and Bryan Gould, giving a taste of how powerful a labour movement alliance could be built to unite and mobilise the millions who stand to lose out from the new Tory offensive.

But while the conference discussed a fightback, back-room discussions among Labour leaders have been debating whether the Party should itself call for a scrapping of the benefits cut-off – one of the few benefits even the Tories have not yet attacked!

Any such concession to the Tory demolition of the welfare state must be categorically rejected. Instead the unions must force the Labour Party to lead a campaign against this attack on the working class.

Bill Morris root and branch defence of welfare rights.

This means the unions conducting a massive campaign to alert and mobilise their members, and organising the millions of unemployed, especially the 200,000 who stand to lose benefits immediately as a result of the budget.

And it means Labour constituency parties getting out into every area to win pensions, single mothers and the public at large. Their crucial rights are at stake, making the welfare state a central issue at every local election.

Union members must not wait for the likes of Bill Morris or John Edmonds to take the initiative: resolutions to National Executive demanding a real campaign must be passed by every union and Labour Party branch.

...another for the rich!

By Helen Shaw

Fingers in the till

INSIDER DEALER considers the lessons of the Roger Levitt case, and concludes that white collar crime is wonderful.

IT MUST BE GREAT being a financial advisor. You now have a legal licence to rip off whoever you like for as much as you can get away with, with no chance whatsoever of doing time if you are stupid enough to get caught.

Take the case of Roger Levitt, a man who built one of the most successful financial services outfits of the eighties. With typical modesty he named the outfit Levitt - Levitt Group. Big names, including Commercial Union, Legal and General and General Accident, rushed to do business.

Directors of Levitt subsidiaries included Sab Cae, the Olympic 1500-metre champion, turned Tory MP, and Adam Faith, the clapped-out pop star. As glorified sales reps, their tertiary rewarded work was to convince gormless fellow citizens to stump up millions on the promise of sure-fire massive returns.

It all proved OK and nothing was too good for the financial-advising classes. Roger was everywhere in a chauffeur driven Bentley, and propped up Castro by special pleading. When things went wrong, Levitt had an executive box at Arsenal.

The company even sponsored Lennox Lewis, the world heavyweight boxing champion. Mind you, some of the money may have been spent wisely; Levitt had an executive box at Arsenal.

When the Lawson boom became the Lawson bust, clever Roger kept the show on the road by coming £23m out of the rich and famous. Some £1m came from his own pocket, some £20m from his friends, and £3000 from Frederick ‘Day of the Jacal’ Forthyp, supposedly one of his best mates.

At first, it was easy-peasy to disguise losses of £13m. But eventually the company collapsed in December 1980 with losses of £24m, taking the punters money down the plug-hole with it. Happily, Barclays Bank, Midland Bank and the Inland Revenue got stung for £6m between them.

A three year investigation by the Serious Fraud Office followed. The first part of what was to be, because of its size and complexity, a two-part trial, was heard at Chancery Lane last month. The prosecution spoke of ‘fraud and dishonesty on a massive scale’.

But the judge had ruled that much prosecution evidence related to the charges due to be heard at the second trial, and was thus inadmissible at the first trial.パンicking, the SFO offered a plea bargain. Some 21 charges against Levitt and Mark Reed, the group’s managing director, were dropped. These included obtaining property and services by deception, forgery, false accounting and making misleading statements.

In exchange, the two men pleaded guilty to a single charge of fraudulently misleading the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulating Association, supposedly the City’s self-regulatory body that sees the small investor (and Fimbros) as a standing joke in good wine bars everywhere. So disinterested is the indus...
‘Gordon Brown economics’ no answer

Tory plans threaten mass poverty society

CHANCELLOR. Clarke’s budget is one more step on the road of destroying the welfare state. It is also a ferocious attack on the living standards of unemployed workers. The sheer scale of what this means can be seen in the following list:

- Unemployment benefits will be cut to just six months within two years. Hundreds of thousands of long-term unemployed will be forced to rely on other benefits which pay less. The unemployed will have to sign a ‘job seekers agreement’ aimed at pushing workers into jobs with poverty wages.
- Through the new ‘incapacity benefit’ and stricter medical guidelines, tens of thousands of people with disabilities will lose benefit totally or partially.
- A public sector wage freeze will be imposed for three years, in a period when inflation is bound to rise.
- Pensions will get a derisory 50p a week, or 70p for couples, to cover the VAT on domestic fuel. Pensions will rise to a spectacular £1.30 or £1.85 for a couple.
- Local authority cash will decline next year by 3 per cent in real terms - from what is already a catastrophic level. This means more redundancies, cuts and a pay freeze for local government workers. The council tax - the poll tax by stealth - will rise by at least 7 per cent on average next April.
- Because of the council cash freeze, money for primary and secondary education will decline 2-3 per cent in the next year: this means a worsening service and more teachers sacked, as well as a pay freeze.
- Money for housing will be cut by at least £150m: this means more homelessness and a further decline in the already devastated construction industry.
- Raising women’s retirement age to 65 by 2020 is a huge social step backwards, robbing workers of benefits they have paid for.
- Tax increases - on mortgages, insurance and through not raising personal allowances in line with inflation means worsening the living standards of every employed worker.
- Government spending will be reduced by billions in the next five years - meaning less investment in infrastructure and more attacks on the welfare state to come.
- To avoid vicious cuts to injury, student grants are being reduced (r) by 10 per cent.

The budget changes have to be put together with plans to abolish state sickness benefit and to phase out state pensions at any significant level.

What does all this add up to? The Tories are intent on destroying the welfare state in any recognisable form. This is a long-term process, but the speed of its implementation is dramatically accelerating.

The privatisation of social welfare is proceeding apace. What will happen after 50-year old welfare fading?

The response of the Labour leadership blustering about broken tax promises, is pathetic. Labour is hamstrung by its own ‘Commission on Social Justice’ which accepts the principle of abolishing universal social benefits in favour of means testing - in other words, condones the principal Tory argument about ‘self-help’.

Labour is also hamstringed by ‘Gordon Brown economics’, the chronic fear of being seen as the high tax, high spending party.

There is only one way out of this crisis which serves social justice and the interests of the working class: tax the rich! Tory policies have handed tax concessions worth over £20 billion to top earners since 1988 - almost half the present public spending deficit.

It is no accident that share prices shot up the day after the budget; big business

 Council tax freeze will put new squeeze on education spending for those hundreds of thousands deprived of invalidity benefit or pushed off the dole? Their families will have to support them, or they will be totally isolated. ‘Unpovertyd’ in this context means losing their homes and being pushed onto the street.

More than that, Clarke’s budget is a budget for slump. It is shot through with chronic social irrationality.

Take transport. It is just one example, but an instructive one. Cars owners have to pay more through petrol tax, motorway tolls and road tax. But public transport is in crisis because of lack of investment. People in rural areas are compelled to use cars or just not travel.

At the same time, existing public transport is collapsing. The London Tube is in appalling crisis, with tens of thousands stuck in tunnels for hours last week, and the Central Line at a standstill for six days.

“Those who say that a radical socialist programme is impossible have to explain why it is an immutable fact of life that society has to have people with huge personal fortunes while thousands live in the streets. We only have to have these things so long as we have a society which prioritises profits over social need.”

The only answer to these things is to have a society in which workers and the City know that workers are again being made to pay the price of the crisis, and that profiteers are speculators are still being protected.

But it’s not just a question of sharing out the existing wealth more equally: the capitalist system is now clearly acting to obstruct the development of productive forces that could solve the problems of world hunger, homelessness and unemployment.

Chancellor Brown’s budget is not the end of the story. The Labour leadership have to listen to the people they represent and to the requirements of a socialist society. There is a new mood in the country. In this, the railways have to be nationalised, the energy and water monopolies privatised, and in this country the old, the sick and those with disabilities will go to the people.
Ireland: no British solution
Sinn Fein turns right

By Liam Mac Uaid

IN COMMON with most people in Ireland, the IRA wants peace. It is prepared to end its armed struggle against British imperialism within a matter of days so long as a suitable settlement is reached.

As the moment the British and their Official Unionist allies appear to be holding out for a solution that is not on the horizon, the British as the dominant power in Ireland seems to have been outmaneuvered.

The present process in Ireland illuminates a number of the political questions. Most of the people in Ireland have been released as a result of the peace process in the British parliament. The question is whether or not the Irish people can achieve the peace that they have been striving for.

The peace process in Ireland is not to be seen as a bunch of liars. It is the result of a long and complex process. It is not new, but it is the result of a long and complex process. It is not new, but it is the result of a long and complex process.

The most important part of the peace process is the recognition of the British parliament. The British parliament is not new, but it is the result of a long and complex process. It is not new, but it is the result of a long and complex process.

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Tories lead Euro-offensive on health care

By Harry Sloan

THE TORY crack-down on public spending and the welfare state is part of a European-wide austerity drive that has triggered general strikes in Spain, Italy and Belgium and growing militancy in Germany.

But fourteen years of Tory rule has put British capitalism far ahead of its European rivals in the attempts to contain health service spending. Their brutal market-style 'reforms' are undermining the unique strengths of the British NHS.

Of course the British health service has always had its highly-visible weaknesses. As a result of the Tory squeeze, the share of national wealth spent on health care is lower in Britain than any of the established market economies, with the sole exception of Greece — where the 5.5% figure is growing at pace of a later development of health services.

The lion's share of Britain's apparent 22% real terms increase in NHS spending since 1979 has been consumed by Family Health Services (General Practitioners).

British hospital budgets have grown by only 11.6% in 14 years, an average of just 0.8% a year — far short of the estimated 2% and increase required to keep pace with growing numbers of elderly people, and rising costs of new medical technology.

Waiting lists

Almost alone in Europe, British hospitals have traditionally coped with inadequate budgets by 'rationing' care through the use of lengthy waiting lists for treatment.

The one million-plus currently queuing for operations in British hospitals almost certainly exceeds the total in the rest of Europe put together.

But 14 years of cutbacks have also reduced Britain to the lowest level of provision in Europe, with just 3.63 beds per 1,000 population, below Greece at 5.1, Germany at 7.17, France at 9.9, Netherlands at 11.5, and way below Finland's 13.

However there are real strengths in the British system which have not been copied elsewhere in Europe, and which the Tories are now putting at risk through their market reforms.

As a tax-funded system, delivering health care for the most

TUC march for the NHS: British spending is lowest of advanced economies

This year of change at the points of use, the British system is far more accessible for the poor and more efficient than the complex French system, for example, which insists that patients pay up front for any treatment they receive, claiming back part or all of it much later.

The French system is the most expensive in the EC (costing 9% of gross domestic product in 1991), but also levies the highest personal costs on patients. Individual charges on patients have increased from 15.6% of the health budget in 1980 to 19.2% in 1991.

Despite its relatively high costs, the standards of French health care are not noticeably high: a consumer magazine survey of French casualty units late in 1992 described 200 of them as 'dangerous'. Low pay and poor career structures for nurses — which triggered a wave of unofficial strikes in 1988 — have led to a chronic shortage.

French health workers look on incredulously when told of British waiting lists so long, too, to German health workers, whose insurance-based system tends to prolong and maximise medical treatment rather than ration it.

Compulsory

The German system, one of the oldest in Europe, first established in 1883, is based on compulsory insurance, with contributions levied at the workplace, with state cover for the unemployed and pensioners.

1,100 separate insurance funds, many of them covering specific local districts, provide the particular categories of worker, act as 'purchasers' of care. While the care is generally free at point of use, it is not cheap for the

Boosting bureaucracy: Bottomline worker.

Insurance premium rates have increased from 5% of pay in 1950 to over 12% last year; this autumn has seen angry union protests at moves to increase it to 13.4% to pay for residential care for the frail elderly.

Another problem is that each fund has to balance its own books, bringing higher costs and higher premiums for members in poor localities, with greater ill-health. The huge poverty and unemployment in the former East Germany means that the insurance funds are all running at a permanent

In Italy, if a patient has to wait more than four days for out-patient care, they are entitled to use a contracted private hospital, and the health service will foot the bill.

In the case of high-tech medicine, patients forced to wait more than a 'reasonable time' can even travel abroad to find treatment, with the bill paid by the state. The longest 'reasonable time' is defined as 120 days.

It is clear that Britain's waiting lists, like unemployment, are not fixed facts of life, but the outcome of political decisions and a capitalist system that is in deep crisis.

As the Tory government sets about tightening the screws still further on NHS funding, forcing a new wave of hospital closures hitting almost every major city, their example will be closely watched by governments and employers throughout Europe.

A firefighting this attack on the most popular of the public services would strengthen the fight against all austerity policies across the continent.
Timex to Tuzla: first delivery of Workers Aid

The first International Workers Aid (IWA) convoy arrived in Tuzla on 8 November. Tim Wise, a member of the Bosnia convoy team which also included Fourth Internationals Jenny Mees and Mick Woods, sends this report.

We drove the last 8 km to Tuzla by ourselves, which was a great thing to do.
We were all extremely happy at seeing the sign 'Tuzla' – a long, dangerous journey had finally come to an end. We passed through the Bosnian army checkpoint before the city. The guards were very thin all they wanted was food. They were not interested in cigarettes.

We drove into the centre of Tuzla and luckily found the UNHCR building. We were even luckier to run into Steve Tannick from the European Community Task Force who booked us into the Tuzla hotel. He was amazed that we had made it thinking we had burned back to Zagreb. IWA had arrived!

After a well deserved sleep we met Steve again and he introduced us to Mr Mariinko Jakovljevic, of the Radlaniski Institute of Tuzla. Many months before he had sent the first fax from the Tuzla miners asking for help. Mariinko was translator and main organiser of our stay in Tuzla.

Miners
Our first appointment was with the Trade Union delegation from the famous Krka Miners Syndicate. After the formal introduction, we drank plum brandy (after 11 days in Tuzla we all got very used to it). We then discussed a joint plan for the distribution of the aid. Then the mayor of Tuzla came to meet us and gave a welcoming speech.

As we walked around the town on that first day, we suddenly noticed the harsh living conditions of the people of Tuzla.

In the evening we met local miners, electricity plant workers, journalists, TV and local people.

The next day we unloaded the trucks at the main warehouse of the Krka Miners. While unloading, damage caused by HV coolant guards in Vites became apparent.

Many of the personal packages had been thrown around and items stolen. Water damage to parcels had also occurred and the names of people destroyed. This would prove to be a great problem later on and also as some people did not receive their parcels.

During the unloading many children helped out. I gave all of them a Timex T-shirt for their help. It was great to see these T-shirts being worn - Timex to Tuzla has officially occurred.

Terry and myself went for a press meeting with the mayor which was filmed by television Tuzla and shown that night. In the evening we all went to Radion Camelon and were interviewed. This radio station has only been on for about one and a half years. It plays a lot of western music and is a very popular station for the cold and bored youth of Tuzla.

On Thursday we visited the Krka mine below ground. I did an interview with a miner and filmed parts of the mine entrance and also the meeting with the mine manager.

In the afternoon we visited the huge T.E. electricity power plant. Before the war it powered the whole of the Tuzla region and even exported electricity to other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

Control room
I filmed the main control room which was a very depressing sight. On the wall was a large Megawatt output gauge. Before the war it registered 800MW and while I was filming it the total output measured 450MW.

During the fighting in Tuzla the Serbs had managed a direct hit from about 20km away into one of the smoke stacks. I filmed the men working shovelling coal onto belts to be put into the furnace. They earn 3.5 DM a month (£1.253DM).

On Friday we visited an open air mine Bramaovic about 20km from Tuzla. We had another meeting with the union and gifts were given to all of us. I filmed and interviewed local peasants digging for coal for the winter.

In the afternoon we visited the 2nd brigade – the miners of the Bosnian Army. This brigade consists of the whole of Tuzla as it overlaps Tuzla mines. It consists of the Bosnian army, the Serb and Croatian regiments. The fight for the same cause – the right to live together in a free peaceful world.

Soldiers in the Miners Brigade walk 35km to the front line, where they have minimum food, no coffee and no cigarettes. Fighting with the Brigade have a mixture of firearms – shot guns, rifles from world war two, AK47's and just 10 bullets each. Aged between 18 and 25, they wear a mixture of different uniforms of very poor quality with holes in their boots.

When we got back to Hotel Tuzla we found out Terry's truck had in fuel line cut. We'd lost most of the fuel. This was understandable – diesel in Tuzla on the black market costs between 25 and 40 DM per litre! Sugar costs about 3.5DM and coffee 80-90DM a kilo.

On Saturday I interviewed the mayor of Tuzla. He is of very strong character and an extremely modest man. The people of Tuzla love him and he walks around the town with no armed guards. We visited an orphanage where the children come mainly from the Srebrenica area. Many are between 3 and 9 and their parents have been killed. They are all very disturbed and hungry.

It had snowed for the first time in Tuzla. Winter was coming early as we had a large farewell dinner with the trade unionists and the Mayor.

From being in Tuzla for those 11 cold nights, I can honestly say that these people are fantastic. They say that we are heroes. But they are the real heroes.

They are fighting aggressors with sticks and stones and will be forced into the Dark Ages very soon.

The winter has arrived with force. It is up to us to stop this. The international community and in particular the United Nations don't care, the aggression continues. What can we do? We are all in paradise!
No Historic Compromise with Imperialism

In the last three years a series of key liberation struggles have entered a phase of negotiations and even negotiated settlements - Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador and Ireland among others. These negotiations and peace deals have opened a widespread debate on the left internationally about whether this represents victory or defeat for the liberation forces, and even in some sections of the left about whether a new modus vivendi with imperialism is possible. Here PAUL CLARKE opens the discussion with a personal contribution to the debate.

Each situation has to be analysed individually, but it is hard to deny that a pattern is emerging. Sinn Fein in Ireland, for example, specifically refers to the peace processes in South Africa and Palestine as a model for what they are attempting. No analysis of specific peace deals is thus possible without reference to the overall balance of class forces internationally. Indeed this is precisely the context in which the leaderships of national liberation movements place their own strategy and tactics.

Imperialist victories

Since the late 1970s a tremendous offensive of imperialism has been taking place, in response to the emergence of the long wave of economic crisis which became obvious to all during the 1974-5 economic recession. This offensive combined a savage attack on the working class in the advanced capitalist countries, an attempt to restructure the global economy to the detriment of the working class and the oppressed, and the militarisation offensive in Reagan and Bush which targeted third world liberation struggles and the post-colonial states.

The imperialist offensive threw the international working class movement and liberation struggles onto the defensive. And it succeeded, during the 1980s and early 1990s, in imposing some harsh defeats. But none of these victories for imperialism succeeded in stabilising its economy. World imperialism has a tremendous interest in trying to pacify "unstable" sectors of the world in order to get out of its own crisis.

These processes can be illustrated in relation to the events in Central America and the Caribbean. The victory of the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979; the general offensive of the Salvadoran FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) in January 1980 and the emergence of the Maurice Bishop New Jewel movement government in Grenada posed immense dangers for imperialist stability in the region. All of these countries are very small, but the political dynamic in the region, which included a revolutionary guerrilla struggle being waged in Guatemala, threatened to destabilise Latin America and the Caribbean.

The response of US imperialism was of course to unleash counter-revolutionary war: US advisors and military aid in El Salvador, the contra rebels in Nicaragua. These moves wrecked the Nicaraguan economy and the FMLN guerrillas to a standstill. There would be no easy repetition of the Cuban experience. The leaderships of both these revolutions were posed with immense new problems about how to continue the revolutionary process.

The outcome, as we now know, was the defeat of the Sandinistas by the UNO coalition in the 1990 elections and the peace deal negotiated in 1992 in El Salvador.

The international context facing such struggles was a very different one to that which had existed in the 1959-60 period when the Cuban revolution was won and a workers state consolidated. Then, for its own reasons, and within a general framework of "peaceful coexistence", the Soviet leadership had been prepared to underwrite Cuba and to militarily defend it. By the 1980s, and especially with the advent of Gorbatchev, Soviet aid to liberation movements was radically curtailed. The advice given to Nicaragua was not to follow the Cuban example and make a radical break with capitalism.

Even as late as the mid-1970s the Soviet leadership was prepared to act differently. In 1976, when southern Angola was invaded by South African troops, Russian pilots flew thousands of Cuban troops and Russian military advisors to the country to drive the South Africans out. The US, traumatised by the recent defeat in Vietnam, dared not intervene.

But the militarisation offensive of Reagan and the rise of Pentagonism radically changed the international context in which such struggles were fought. South Africa and Palestine do not however fit easily into such a picture of the worsening international balance of forces for liberation movements. The mid-1980s township insurgency in South Africa, and the Intifada in Palestine in the late 1980s, threw reaction in both regions onto the defensive. For both the apartheid regime and the Israeli leadership, a peace deal became urgent if the conditions for capitalist stability were to be maintained. In particular, the recession in the South African economy and the impotence of foreign investors represented an immense pressure on Pretoria to do a deal. And under Bush, Israel's Washington benefactor became increasingly politically embarrassed by perpetual crisis in a part of the world which it regards as crucial to its strategic interests.

Nonetheless, in both these arenas the liberation movements had taken a heavy toll in terms of repression and were themselves faced with great problems about how to continue the struggle.

theory + practice

is an occasional supplement to Socialist Outlook which takes an indepth look at key issues of socialist analysis and strategy. Each issue examines a subject of importance to socialists in greater depth than is possible in the paper itself.

The next issue - out in February - will be an examination by Latin America, a long-standing central leader of the Fourth International, of the implications of the post-war political system in Italy.

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Negotiations & peace deals

Before examining specific negotiations and peace deals, it is important to consider some of the general principles which guide revolutions in such situations.

There is nothing unprincipled about negotiations or peace deals as such. No trade unionist who refused to engage in negotiations with the bosses would be taken in the least bit seriously by the owners. Several points of course, no trade unionist who agreed to disband the union in exchange for ending a strike would be taken seriously either.

This general point can be illustrated for example by reference to the 1973-5 Paris peace talks between the Vietnamese leadership and the United States. Sectarian forces denounced these peace talks as a 'sell-out'. This turned out to be absurd when just two years later the Vietnamese army marched into Saigon.

In fact, the peace talks were about creating a face-saving formula to enable the United States to withdraw the vast majority of its troops from the country. Whether formal concessions were made by the Vietnamese Communist Party to achieve this objective, the peace deal did not amount to surrender. The crucial thing was that the Vietnamese insurgent forces kept their weapons, did not disband their forces, but held back the struggle for a short period to enable the Americans to withdraw and 'keep face'. Far from being a 'sell-out', the withdrawal of US forces put the seal on a military defeat that the US had suffered. Indeed, every victorious liberation struggle has ended with negotiations. It is not the fact of negotiations but the real content of what is agreed that matters.

Neither is it wrong to make compromises if these are necessary to achieve the main goal. For example, the Evian agreement which ended the Algerian war imposed harsh economic conditions on the incoming FLN government. A big price was paid for French withdrawal. With historical hindsight, it is difficult to see that a better deal could have been achieved. Moreover, no national liberation struggle and no revolution, however glorious, can collapse into right-wing social democratic politics. All negotiations with an enemy include bluff and deceit on both sides. This is the art of negotiation. The 1973 Paris peace accords between the Vietnamese and the USA certainly included bluff and deceit from the Vietnamese: whether the US negotiators were aware of it is another point. So deals cannot be solely judged by their formal terms. The key question is what the revolutionary forces or liberation movements do in practice: but of course practice also involves what they say about them.

The classic case of a negotiated peace carried out by revolutionary forces was of course the Bres-Lisovky peace deal negotiated with the Germans by Trotsky, on behalf of the Soviet government. This deal involved huge concessions, including territorial concessions, by the Bolsheviks. It was characterised as robbery and an imperialist disaster by the Russian government. It was basically attacked by the 'left' in the Bolsheviks, notably Bukharin, who demanded a continuation of revolutionary war against Germany and argued it was betraying the German workers.

But Lenin and Trotsky insisted that allowing the Bolshevik government to collapse would be betraying the German workers. After a fierce faction fight, the peace deal was sanctioned by the Bolsheviks. But the Soviet government never made any concession on their revolutionary objectives.

On the contrary, they used the peace negotiations to carry out revolutionary propaganda, and Trotsky even distributed revolutionary leaflets to German troops at the negotiation site.

A new deal with imperialism

The debate in the international left on imperialism goes way beyond these questions of negotiated peace and deals. It involves the whole strategic question of how to confront imperialism today. This debate was sketched by a massive collapse to the right, under the impact of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the defeat in Nicaragua and Angola, the destruction of the Salvadoran FMLN leader Joaquin Villalobos that El Salvador 'cannot be considered a capitalist country'.

The idea that, freed from the conflict with the Soviet Union, American imperialism can be made to see that it is in its interest to adopt a benevolent attitude to the 'third world', is actually the height of utopianism. For the simple fact is that it is not in the interests of US capitalism, in a period of crisis, to extend largesse to the third world.

This kind of theory replaces a materialist-economic theory of imperialism with an idealistic geo-political one that at the heart of imperialism was the confrontation with the Soviet Union.

In fact the notion of a 'third way' for the third world had much more going for it in the 1950s and 1960s. Then, bourgeois nationalism in the third world was much stronger. It was possible for the ruling layers in some third world states (for example the oil exporting new arrangement with imperialism, which gave the indigenous ruling classes a greater share of imperialist super-profits. Naturally, the benefits of these new arrangements stayed largely in the pockets and Swiss banks accounts of domestic rulers. But the living standards in many third world countries did improve. Some more radical nationalist governments did develop the material infrastructure of their country with some benefits for the masses - although this was never a 'non-capitalist' model of development.

This relationship of forces has now totally collapsed, under the weight of the world economic crisis. A new third way is thus dead in the water.

This debate has great relevance, for example, to the discussion about what kind of measures should be implemented if the PT (Workers Party) should come to power in the 1994 elections in Brazil. Indeed this discussion concentrates the whole debate about moving forward against imperialism today.

The question of power

A revolutionary movement can only become the government party, or at least participate in government, with the perspective of a more or less rapid mobilisation of the masses to take power. This is not because of some doctrinaire imperative learned from textbooks or a line-by-line study of Lenin and Trotsky; neither is it because of an abstract sectarian model. It is because of the dynamics of the class struggle.

A revolutionary movement in the government signals alarm to the bourgeoisie and the mobilisation of counter-revolution to overthrow that government. It means a race between the movement, the mobilisation of the masses, and that means challenging the economic power of the bourgeoisie and getting in a way to deepen the self-consciousness and mobilisation of the masses, including measures of workers control, and, for elementary self-defence of the masses and their social gains, arming the working class.

The precise timetable of socialisation of major industries is not the issue here. The Bolsheviks carried out their major nationalisations in 1918, far too early in the opinion of Lenin, under the impact of working class mobilisation and seizures of bosses' property. The dynamic of the class struggle demanded it. For Lenin, it was
Either repression of the mass movement or support for the capitalist status quo is unacceptable. But he never hid the fact that he considered that the revolution represented a peaceful transition to socialism. He was not surprised that the capitalist class would resist, and in 1961 he predicted that a counter-revolutionary movement would emerge. He was right.

In any case, the assumption of the PCI that the dominance of the capitalist class would be transformed into socialism was unrealistic. In the post-war period, the PCI was able to gain some successes, but these were largely tactical gains and were not sufficient to change the fundamental nature of the Italian economy. The PCI was forced to confront the difficulties of a capitalist society and the challenges of building a socialist state.

The PCI understood that the struggle for socialism would be long and difficult. They recognized that the capitalist class would not give up easily and that the struggle would be fought on many fronts. They were aware of the importance of building a strong political organization, mobilizing the people, and developing a strong economic base.

The PCI was also aware of the need for international solidarity. They recognized that the Italian revolution was part of a broader struggle against imperialism and that the PCI could not achieve its goals without the support of the international working class. They actively worked to build alliances with other organizations and movements and to provide support to those struggling against imperialism.

In conclusion, the PCI's strategy was based on a clear understanding of the nature of the Italian revolution and the challenges it faced. They were able to build a strong organization and to mobilize the people in the struggle. Although they did not achieve their ultimate goal of establishing a socialist state, their efforts laid the foundation for future struggles and contributed to the development of a strong left-wing movement in Italy.
South Africa & Palestine

The mid-1980s upsurge in the anti-apartheid movement culminating in a twenty-year struggle of the black masses which made old-style apartheid unworkable. The National Party leadership under de Klerk has moved radically to destroy this old system. Parliametary democracy on a universal franchise is being introduced. If this process is carried through successfully against the resistance of the right wing and Inkatha, however, the central core of the system - racial capitalism - will survive intact. When ANC leaders say that expectations among the masses are too high, they understand the reality of the situation. Formal democracy will not meet the needs of the masses for jobs and housing and the township system will remain intact. The debate between revolutionary and non-revolutionary sectors of the mass movement revolves around the goals of the movement. From this perspective there is nothing necessarily unprincipled in negotiations with the government to introduce formal democracy. The real debate is not negotiations versus non-negotiations: the crucial issue is whether or not to make an 'historic compromise' with racial capitalism - i.e. to call off the struggle. It is this question which has led sectors of the popular movement to refuse to participate in these negotiations. The peace deal underway in Palestine poses parallel problems. Rabin's Labour Party government has produced minimal concessions not to dismantle the national oppression of the Palestinian people, but to guarantee the Israeli state. The object of the exercise is to demobilise and call off the Intifadah struggle. Even if the deal is imposed, there is no question of evicting the Zionist settlers who have taken 60 per cent of the land in the West Bank. There is no question of bringing back the majority of Palestinians who live outside Gaza and the West Bank. There is no question of any change in the status of the Palestinians as subordinate to the Zionist state. Once again the issue is not failure of the movement, but call for negotiations; the issue is whether or not to make an 'historic compromise' and call off the struggle.

New Era of Democracy?

A central mystification of the Gulf war 'new world order' is that we are in an epoch of the peaceful resolution of disputes to bring about 'democracy'. The forward march of democracy thesis is based on the idea that democracy is making ten-league strides in eastern Europe and in the so-called 'third world', all this propelled by the good offices of the United States. It is true that the US sees stability being ensured in some countries by toppling old dictatorships - for example in Zaire, Malawi and Haiti. But this is entirely contingent and tactical. It does not apply, for example, to the army dictatorship in Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country; nor does it apply for the people of Kurdistan, whose democratic right to have their own state is fiercely opposed by the US. Dozens of similar examples could be given.

We are not living in a new day of bourgeois democracy, we are living in a world of deepening crisis, of militarisation, of growing racism and xenophobia and widespread attacks on democracy and democratic rights. And we are living in a world where the harshness of the international class struggle is deepening, precisely because of the depth of the economic crisis of world capitalism, now in the grips of its longest-ever economic crisis. The tactics of the imperialist rulers in this period and experimentally, are in uncharted waters. Every form of capitalist rule combines repression and concession with an ideology designed to secure the 'consent' of the oppressed. 'Democracy' and the 'peaceful resolution of conflicts' are key weapons in the ideological arsenal of imperialism because they correspond to key needs and demands of ordinary people - freedom and peace. Socialists of course are partisans of peace and democracy. It is precisely for this reason that we are opposed to any historic compromise with imperialism which is inimical to both.

Permanent revolution

The present wave of negotiations and peace deals involves not just profound strategic debates, but a shake-up and recomposition of the political forces involved. In each situation a right and a left will emerge which will determine the course of the struggle and class compromise. This represents, in a certain way, the end of a series of leaderships of liberation struggles, not only because of defeats but also because of the inherent limitations in their strategies, goals and alliances. For example, no analysis of the Middle East peace process can be abstracted from an analysis of the Arafat PLO leadership, which has always been a bourgeois nationalist movement, which has always been authoritarian and bureaucratic and which has never had a strategy based on the self-organisation and mobilisation of Arab workers in the whole region. In today's conditions of economic crisis and imperialist offensive, the political space for a series of former strategies and alliances is eroding - for example, the struggles based on an alliance with the Soviet Union or support from radical bourgeois nationalist regimes have largely collapsed.

For revolutionary and liberation forces in many parts of the world this means a profound strategic reorientation. A good example is the process now under way in the different wings of the Philippines Communist Party. Marxists have every interest in intervening in these debates and addressing those forces who reject an historic compromise with imperialism. Every such discussion involves concrete elements based on the specifics of particular struggles. But there are common guide lines which can be briefly outlined here.

The first is the understanding that the struggle for democracy is an anti-capitalist struggle. This directly implies the impossibility of a long-term strategic alliance with the 'national bourgeoisie' or a 'stagi' coalition of revolution. It also implies the necessity for the class independence and self-organisation of the working class and its allies.

The second crucial issue is the democratic self-organisation of the masses in struggle, and thus a rejection of bureaucratic militarism. Armed struggle, or armed self-defence, is a frequently necessary tactic in anti-imperialist struggle. But the effects of militarisation of armed struggle, or its elevation outside any democratic control, are always corrosive and result in bureaucratic degeneration and substitutionism. Rejection of an alliance with the 'national' bourgeoisie implies an alliance centred on the working class, uniting the oppressed. That cannot be done without the self-organisation, and championing, of struggles of women; and also by victims of national and racial oppression.

But that in itself requires democratic forms of struggle and mass organisation, not bureaucratic or militarist ones.

International solidarity

When those fighting imperialism go down to defeat, this represents something not 'local', but a crystallisation of elements of the world situation. The key force responsible for defeat is that which has made the biggest compromise with imperialism - the labour bureaucracy in the advanced capitalist countries.

Imperialism's world-wide offensive is facilitated by every capitalist country which makes it normal for socialists to have their own strategic views about the international struggle. But such views are entirely worthless if they are not supported by the masses without the fight against racism and the bureaucracy at home and the struggle to rebuild movements of international solidarity.

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Xmas Special Feature: Lest we forget …

Practising the splits

WHERE WOULD we be without the good old British sectarian? Who can imagine a public meeting without an irrelevant, rambling, point-scoring ‘intervention’ from at least one headbanger with staring eyes and a carrier bag full of unreadable literature? These unsung heroes and heroines have been a constant factor on the left – while campaigns, issues and organisations have come, split, and gone.

But where do they come from? Are sectarians born or made?

Our correspondent JACK DOBERMANN sniffed out the secretive, exclusive Academy which for decades has turned out some of our leading sectarian.

"BUSINESS is booming," grinned a snarly Professor 'Lefty' Garble, head teacher at the privately-run Academy. "With so little happening in the unions or the Labour Party, we are signing up new students almost every day."

Walking into Professor Garble's Academy – just a few streets from the main road through Hampstead, it is immediately clear that the new influx of students spans the social spectrum. The undergraduate car-park is filled by vehicles ranging from Paras and Scooters to clapped-out Skodas.

How are the students grouped and streamed?

"We have no problem dividing them into small groups," said Professor Garble. "They do it almost instinctively. The hard thing is to get them to talk to each other at all, and not walk out shouting abuse."

"Our worst mistake was trying to run a new Trainspott ing course, a few years ago," adds his colleague Eamon O'Connor, who lectures in Democ racy and Schismatics.

"It was a fiasco. We began with ten people – but within twenty minutes we were down to two feuding pairs. By the end of the first session all of them had fallen out, leaving just me and the last of the blokes who thought he was Lenin. Never again."

So how does the Academy manage to impart basic training?

"I was told that all students do a foundation course in Dogmatics. They study 'Labour Party – A Step Backwards' along with 'Unions – Who Needs Them?' and there are compulsory streams teaching Jargon and Nipnicking.

Professor Garble urges all students to study 'Democratic Centralism and Ways Around It' with specialist options on alternative internal regimes for smaller and larger sectarian groups: students can choose from Claque, Clubs, Bureau racy for Beginners, and Despotism.

The 'Principles and other Piffals' course warns against any fixation on politics, which can sometimes divert from important organisational wrangles and splits.

The popular 'Allegations and Inimations' stream examines techniques of avoiding head-to-head political debate while maximising discontent on both sides, drawing on a vast library of examples used successfully by Academy graduates in 40 years of wrangles.

Many students opt for 'Build Your Own International':

"At the last count we had seven students each claiming to lead their own Fourth International, one wanting a Filth, while his friend, having split from him, is already leading a Sixth International, with headquarters in Finsbury," said Professor Garble proudly.

"But on a more serious note British sectarians are very keen to avoid any international links. We have a busy 'Keep Out' class for those looking for reasons to keep foreign ex-thinkers at arm's length or to split from any that have got too close."

"Attitude is all-important for the sectarian, and the Academy offers specialist support groups. 'We recognise that many students come to us suffering from severe communication difficulties,' said Eva Mout, who also lectures in Expression Theory and runs an Exasperation class."

"Many are held back by their awareness that they have so little to offer. They shirk instinctively from repeating the trial and mundane, leaving themselves gagged. We call them Banal Retentives. And we tackle the problem through our 'Banal is Beautiful' workshops, which encourage students to latch on to unexciting issues, work them to death, and fashion them into a point of split."

"How does the Academy measure its success or failure? 'Success! Just look at our track record,' boasts Prof. Garble. "When I set up the first 'Wicked is Wonderful' discussion group in the 1950s there was really only one far-left group of any size in Britain in the left of the CP. Now there are several dozen – depending on how small you define a 'group'. Most of them have our graduates in the leadership."

"The Prof. was also invited at a new influx of right-wing sectarians. 'Right-wing?' I asked, puzzled. "Surely all sectarians are ultra-left?"

'Oh, no, the most important thing is that, like Grete Garbo, they must want to be alone, or at least to be in charge. Some of our most successful graduates have right-wing, taking top union jobs, for example. We teach them how to block inter-union links and rank and file control, even while we run courses urging left sectarians to denounce them!"

"And lots of steering com-

m ittees of campaigns consult us – on ways of keeping out left-wing political activists. We help them draft their de

nunciations. Of course I couldn't name names …"

As I walked back towards the exit, I noticed the impressive collection of portraits of great sectarians lining the wall. There were several images of the now almost legendary Gerry Healy, who founded the EIR in 1957 and whose political methods live on long after his death.

"He was a giant, a real guru of British sectarianism," sighed Prof. Garble. "He gave guest lectures here for years. After his death we ran classes in Healyism including role-play with satirical of Libyan currency, intimidation practice and mock expulsions."

Healy's constant rejection of any form of women's liberation lives on in Academy workshops on 'Positive Discrimination and How to Fight It' and 'Pentecost: A Bourgeois Plot'.

As I left, I passed a large group of students wearing homburgers and carrying flight bags; many had American accents. Apparently they jet over regularly for special training. Prof. Garble beamed with pride.

"The Spartacists have an initiative for crazy slogans. Who else would have run a left candidate on a slogan of 'Smokers' Rights', or picketed the Duke of Edinburgh with placards calling for 'a Scottish Republic as part of the USSR'? Their pro-Concord campaign 'Let it Land' is a classic of its type."

While Toby cuts throats rough education to the bone, the Academy is clearly coming in. At least this ensures that whenever a meeting opens up for discussion from the floor there will be plenty of cont ended for use up the time available.

Since filing this report Jack the WRP, and left Socialist Outlook to form a new Croydon-based Seventh International with his friend Martin.
Turkey’s dirty war – British union delegates detained

by Ann Wood

A BRITISH trade union delegation and two Kurdish journalists were detained after witnessing the Turkish state’s scorched-earth policy in Kurdistan.

"When we arrived in the village of Bink, the houses were in flames," said Mary Brodin of the NUJ. "A Kurdish woman screamed Run away or the soldiers will shoot you too!"

Surrounded by hooded soldiers waving loaded machine guns, they were marched out of the village into a field and held at rifle point for two hours. They were interrogated for 26 hours.

Torture

Necmiye Atilanoglu (20) and Nilgun Altug (29), journalists for Ozgur Gundem (Free Agenda) newspaper in Diyarbakir, were separated from the delegation. Both were subjected to psychological torture and accused of being members of the Kurdish guerrilla group, the PKK.

One of them was badly beaten. The Turkish security forces tried to force them to sign documents confessing their membership of the PKK. They resisted despite tremendous pressure.

After being denied sleep the delegation were sent to Diyarbakir Central Detention Headquarters, where they were held for three hours in a miasma in freezing temperatures before facing further interrogation. They were denied access to the British consul.

Humberstone Councillor Sarah Daily (UNISON) said, "Our treatment was nothing compared to the routine torture, beatings and murder meted out by the Turkish state to the Kurdish population every day."

After their release a uniformed policeman fired at Mary Brodin’s feet at Diyarbakir airport. "Although I feared for my life, I’d been a Kurd, the bullet would have aimed at my head."

The delegation refused to leave Turkey until the journalists were released.

During their five-day stay in Diyarbakir, 13 people were killed by government-sponsored death squads in broad daylight.

The delegation are convinced the Turkish state is waging a war of genocide against its 20 million strong Kurdish population.

Guy Chesterton (MSF) said, "No British person for the sake of their own safety or conscience should holiday in Turkey. Tourist revenue directly funds Turkey's ethnic cleansing."

Killed

Ozgur Gundem is the only newspaper in Turkey which reports the war in Kurdistan. Fifteen of its journalists have been killed in less than two years.

Any attacks on these journalists will be added proof that the Turkish authorities massively abuse human rights in Kurdistan and silence opposition with death.

Further information from the Kurdistan Information Centre, 071-290 1316, or the Ozgur Gundem Support Group 071 586 5892.

British guns back repression

IN 1982 Turkey was the second largest arms importer in the industrialised world. Its defence spending over the last seven years has reached US$10.5 billion.

The sales potential was thought to be so great that in 1982 Turkey became the sixth country in the world to have an overseas office of the Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) was established. The DESO is the part of the Ministry of Defence responsible for promoting British arms exports.

The build-up is linked both to territorial disputes with Greece and the strategic importance ascribed to Turkey by the US and its NATO allies in relation to the Middle East. Turkish airfields were extensively used by western forces during the Gulf War.

The British American Security Information Council report Fueling Balkan Fires – the Arms Race between Greece and Turkey states: "Such is the value the west is attaching to Turkey’s importance that it is prepared to ignore Ankara’s well documented record of human rights abuses...the struggle against the Kurdish separatists is seen in the verge of degenerating into a full-scale civil war...one-third of the 600,000 Turkish army is deployed in the south eastern part of the country to fight the Kurdish guerrillas."

Secrecy

British arms sales are shrouded in secrecy. An MP enquiring about military hardware sales to Turkey was told: 'It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to give details of defence sales business with other countries.'

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CATT) lists reported arms sales since 1983, including British Aerospace's surface-to-air missiles worth £150 million, 7,000 Marconi high frequency hopping vehicles and backpack radio systems worth £220 million and Chenoweth armourers and spares worth £290,000 from Gresley Ioniex Ltd.

The Partielle Human Rights Group visited Kurdistan in 1982 and subsequently called on the British Government and the EC to stop arms sales to Turkey. The predictable response from Foreign Office Minister Tristan Garel Jones was: "We are not considering an embargo on arms sales to Turkey...Arms sales to Turkey are subject to the standard export licence procedure...all applications are scrutinized in accordance with stringent criteria. These include an assessment of the recipient country's human rights record."

Further information from: CATT, 11 Goodwood St, London, N4 9HD. Tel: 071-581 0002.

Nigeria faces the return of the Generals

By Balach Marah

"WE WILL NOT condone or tolerate any act of indiscipline. Any attempt to test our will be decisively dealt with."

It was with these words that General Sani Abacha ended his broadcast to the nation on November 18 informing the Nigerian people of his military takeover.

The interim civilian administration of Ernest Shonekan, appointed by the former military dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida, was dissolved as were all national and state assemblies.

Nigeria’s two legal political parties, were also dissolved, undoing the carefully planned democratic transition thrown into confusion by Babangida’s repudiation of the June 12 electoral result (See SO 45).

Abacha’s takeover came as little surprise. He was seen as the real power behind the 83 day long civilian government.

In its place he has appointed a Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) which has a few civilians but is largely composed of Abacha loyalists.

The back-drop to the takeover was the spurtage in labour militancy over the astronomical price increase in oil and a Lagos Court ruling on November 10 which declared the Shonekan regime as being illegal.

Oil prices

Oil prices were increased by 700% to increase the revenue of the State and to satisfy IMF and World Bank demands to make Nigerian state owned corporations profitable in preparation for their privatization.

The High Court ruling was the last nail in the coffin of the Shonekan regime removing any residual fig-leaf of legitimacy.

The 3.5 million strong Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) began an indefinite strike for a reduction in the oil price hike.

Although Ken Kokori of the National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers was speaking for many when he said, "The issue in June 12 and we are ready to do anything to restore it."

West Africa magazine captured the atmosphere. "The strike virtually paralysed activities as workers stayed away from work. Banks closed, with business activities coming to a halt. Workers took to the streets, life boomed, erected barricades on major highways generally disturbing the flow of traffic...In most southern parts of the country, the cities became ghost towns while in some parts of the northern states workers were yet to join, either because the state labour unions did not have enough time to mobilise or because they did not believe in the strike."

Consolidate

Abacha had to move fast before the country became ungovernable in the interests of the capitalist class. He has been quick to consolidate his authority on the military high command, by transferring out Babangida loyalists and moving his own men in.

The bourgeois politicians are split over their next step. Some have welcomed the takeover and are now ingratiating themselves with Abacha.

Other civilians politicians are holding out for fresh elections in the New Year when they hope that their allies and themselves are returned.

At present the Campaign for Democracy (CD) which groups about 40 human rights organisations has been giving political direction to the pro-democracy protests.

Their demands have only gone so far as the restoration of the June 12 decision. A much more ambitious program of genuine multi-party democracy, opposition to austerity programs and a call for a workers and poor peasants party is needed.
Belgian battle against austerity

By Rod Marshall in Antwerp

THE STREETS of Antwerp in northern Belgium erupted in passionate anger on Sunday 28 in an energetic demonstration of 10,000 against racism and fascism. This demonstration capped a week which saw the biggest wave of mass action since the general strike of 1961.

Combination

What is unique to the Belgian movement is its combination of workers' strikes against the government's austerity 'crisis plan' and youth mobilisation directed at the far-right Vlaams Blok (Flemish Bloc).

The week beginning 22 November saw a one-day general strike which brought the whole country to a standstill, regional strikes and a school students strike against racism, which itself led to a 10,000-strong demonstration against racism.

The Antwerp demonstration not only protested against the Vlaams Blok, which has been making electoral gains with its calls for immigration controls and repatriations, but also against the growing wave of attacks on Turkish and Moroccan workers.

The rise of racism has to be seen in the context of the coalition government of the Christian Democrat and Social Democrat parties. This government has been selling the Vlaams Blok in restricting immigration and asylum rights.

This state racism has to be seen alongside government attacks such as cuts in unemployment pay, a pay freeze and higher taxes.

There is an obvious similarity to the situation in Britain, both in government attacks and the link between mass poverty, unemployment and the rise of racism.

Unemployment

A central call of the Antwerp demonstration was for full employment, showing a clear understanding between those unemployed and the rise of the far right.

It is clear there is a tremendous growth in the confidence of people to protest in Belgium. The general strike was an awakening of union militancy after years of relative slumber. Workers forced the two union federations, one Christian and the other Socialist, to call the strike despite initial resistance from the Socialist union leadership.

Plans are being made for a nationwide demonstration on 27 March 1994 to stamp out racism.

The network of school students committees formed out of the high school strike will play a crucial part in building this action, which is part of Europe-wide day of action which will link up workers and student across the continent.

Growing menace of Europe’s far right

By Steve Babbage

THE CENTRE parties collapsed in Italy's local elections two weeks ago. The PSI (Socialist Party) has all but disappeared as a significant political force and the formerly dominant Christian Democrats were reduced to fifth place.

Debate on the left was between the two wings of the now split Communist Party - the PDS (Party of Democratic Left) and the PCR (Party of Communist Refoundation).

But big gains were recorded by the rightist Northern League in northern cities, and the MSI (Italian Social Movement), the openly fascist party, in the south.

Defeated fascist candidate Alessandra Mussolini of the MSI polled 44 per cent of the vote in the second round of the local elections in Naples on December 5. Victorious candidate Antonio Bassolino received 56 per cent. The PDS won a victory in 149 towns and cities across the country gaining control of Venice, Trieste and Genoa.

The elections are considered a key test of strength in the run up to the national elections due in March 1994.

The surge of the Northern League just consolidates the gains made by this party over 18 months, in response to the corruption scandals which have led to 60 per cent of Italian MPs being under investigation for corruption.

But the new opening is the fortunes of the MSI comes as a direct result of the semi-collapse of the Christian Democracy, always the dominant party in the south.

Corruption

Italy's deep economic crisis and the corruption scandals have thus opened a new opportunity for far-right and fascist forces. Euphoria over Italy's democratic revolution has to be tempered by this fact.

The pattern of far-right gains is not restricted to Italy. White Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National in France gained no seats in this year's general election, this was because of the electoral system. In fact it got over 10 per cent of the vote, and continues to build a substantial political base, including in some sections of the working class.

In Germany the far-right Re-
WHO'S AFRAID OF THE JAPANESE DINOSAURS?

Paul Clarke reviews
Rising Sun
Michael Chrichton, Arrow Books, £4.99

MICHAEL Chrichton is the author of Jurassic Park, and true to form his latest book is now also a movie with Sean Connery and Wesley Snipes. It's a detective story. It's also an outburst of rampant anti-Japanese hysteria, apparently toned down in the movie. Central police characters John Connor and Peter Snively (Connery and Snipes in the movie) investigate a murder on the 45th floor on the Nakamoto building in LA. But an unfolding campaign of obstruction and non-cooperation from the Japanese corporate types frustrates them. It's not that the Japanese have something to hide. They are protected by US political and diplomatic officials who are in their pockets. That's how powerful Japanese business has become. They're buying "our" industry, "our" real estate, even "our" movie industry.

HEAVY-HANDED

Top politicians who aren't directly in Japan's war effort should be killed. So wake up America! And if the heavily-handed message isn't quite clear, Chrichton adds his own Afterword calling for a national crusade against the yellow peril.

There's a deeper argument. If America is being bought-up by Japan, it's because we've become weak, feeble and lazy. The Japanese are succeeding because they are industrious, clever and determined. But they have a right to buy our industries - weren't they the ones who financed the budget deficit in the Reagan years? American anti-Japanese outrage isn't new. What gives Chrichton's version its clout is that he puts his finger on real aspects of Japanese business culture - ruthless competition, chronic obduracy and respect for authority, fierce company loyalty, overthrowing set

WHERE WE STAND

Feminist faces Fatwa

By K-Govindan

ONE AGAIN last week Muslim fundamentalists took to the streets of the Bangladeshi capital, Dhaka, demanding the death of the feminist writer Taslima Nasreen. On 24 September a group of clerics known as the "Soldiers of Islam" passed a fatwa (verdict) of death and offered a reward of 30,000 takas for execution of sentence. Nasreen's offence was to pen a novella called Laja ("Shame") which attacks the discrimination faced by the Hindu minority in Bangladesh.

Following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India, on December 6, 1992 and the anti-muslim rioting that followed, many Hindu temple and Hindu in Pakistan and Bangladesh were targeted.

Outraged by this fundamentalist backlash, Nasreen wrote a novella revolving around a Hindu family in Dhaka which was part reportage and part fiction highlighting the traumas they underwent. This book sold 60,000 copies in a six-month period before it was banned by the Government. This in a country with a literacy rate of only 32% was remarkable.

The anger these Muslim clerics felt arose as well from the fact that Nasreen tackle

EXPLOITED

Exploded: Bengali women

Bengali women

32% was remarkable. The anger these Muslim clerics felt arose as well from the fact that Nasreen tackle

EXPLOITATION

She has exposed the sexual exploitation of women in Bangladesh society tracing it to both patriarcialism and the gender bias of religious laws. As a trained gynaecologist she has not shied away from making explicit references to sex and sexual org

Studies and left intellectu

Exploitation

The Bengali government, headed by a woman, Khaleeda Zia, has denied "torturers Nasreen any police protection. Students and left intellectuals have organised mass protests condemning the fatwa and writers in West Bengal have organised a signatory campaign to raise public awareness of her situation. Nasreen was凰然: "I am not afraid. I am only sick of the lie we are living now: if I die, I don't fear death. But I want to die only after writing more."

Further Information, AlIiance Against Militarism and for Democracy in South Asia, 54 South Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB1 1RT

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-earned 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.

Societal 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 radical trade union high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shake the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the influence of the working class and organised, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one by one, using the powers of the state. In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the depressant politics of 'new realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensives against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformation, seeking more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule. Socialist Outlook rejects reformation, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that none of the demands of the working class - for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy - can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of socialism, can these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically de

WHERE WE STAND

E repellent, not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class - the over-whelming majority of society - to topple the corrupt and reaction- ary role 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 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 and campaigns in 40 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 aten tion 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, women, lesbians and gay 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 emancipation.

But propaganda alone, how ever good, will not bring social ism. The fight for power which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle must be taken into the unions, the La

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 for common objectives while remaining clear about their differences.

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

YES, I want to become a Socialist Outlook supporter.

Name ____________________________
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Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1169, London N7 2UO.
What’s HAPPENING

DECEMBER
Friday 10
Leicester AFA fundraiser at The Mag with Cornershop and Mambɔ Taxi
Saturday 11
OPEN TUIZA AIRPORT! International Day of Action. Details page 6. Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems AGM with Jeremy Corbyn and Caroline Tonge 11am-3.30pm London details 404 Camden Road N7 0SJ
Monday 13
Globo-cop: the New World Order Socialist Outlook discussion Speaker: Bala Kumar 7.30pm Stationers’ Park Community Centre Mayfield Road off Weston Park N8
Picket trial of 4 BNP thugs Leicester details 550433
Wednesday 15
Socialist Outlook Xmas party special showing of film on Burnside Strike 7.30pm Union Club 725 Pershore Rd Birmingham
Wed 15 - Fri 17
Liberation! supporters’ course
Thursday 16
Their Future or Ours? Liberation! public forum 7pm Davenant Centre Whitechapel High Street Whitechapel lube
Sat 18 & Sun 19
Liberation! editorial meeting
Saturday 19
Blood Sunday demo London
FEBRUARY
Monday 14
Anti-imperialist Strategy Discussion Speaker: Sarah Parker 7.30pm Stationers’ Park Community Centre Mayfield Road off Weston Park N8
Fri 18 & Sat 19
Re-thinking Worker Democracy Conference Centre Congress House Great Russell Street WC1 details CATS 404 Camden Road London N7 0SJ
MARCH
Saturday 19
TUC National demonstration against racism

FeedBack

Bosnia: should socialists urge UN to use force?

Dear Socialist Outlook

Alan Thorne is wrong to claim (SO November 13) that the call for the UN to open the northern route to Tuzla amounts to a call for western intervention.

Western intervention against Tuzla has taken the form of UN support for the Serbian blockade. In demanding that the UN open the northern route, we are demanding an end to what is effectively a Western blockade of Tuzla.

If this involves UNPROFOR cutting some of their Chetnik allies, so much the better (though since it was the UN, and not the Chetniks, who prevented the Workers Aid convoy from reaching Tuzla, the issue of UNPROFOR using force is anyway secondary).

Of course we demand that the UN withdraw immediately from Bosnia, but as long as the UN is there, they should be forced to mitigate the abuses of their occupation.

This is similar to calling for the British in Ireland to arrest soldiers guilty of violence against Catholics, while still calling for an immediate withdrawal. Finally, if the UN is forced to open the northern route under pressure from the European working class, then it is the working class, and not the leadership of the West, which is intervening to lift the blockade of Tuzla.

Yours
Attila Hoare

Alan Thorne replies: Attila Hoare demands the withdrawal of UN troops from ex-Yugoslavia whilst calling for them to use more force whilst they are still there. There’s a fair amount of confusion in that.

Just how many pro-Serb forces does he want the UN troops to kill? I am in favour of the opening of all routes into Bosnia, including, most importantly, Tuzla airport. But it is not so simple. Tuzla airport remains closed by a political decision of the UN – they could open it tomorrow but keep it closed to try to force (ie. starve) the Bosnians into a settlement.

This is not the case with the Northern land route through Zepanj and Orasje. This sector is one of the most active and disputed parts of the front line straddling the only neck of Serbian held territory which links Serbia with Serbian occupied central Bosnia and the Krajina. It is not controlled by the UN (as Tuzla airport by the way) since it is the most direct land route from Croatia and they are positively in favour of massive western intervention.

How someone opposed to western intervention, however, can have such a one dimensional concentration on this difficult route is much more of a puzzle.

@ Bosnia campaigns: see page 6

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DEBATE
Grants slashed, fees imposed

Students fight Tory rip-off

By Kathryn Marshall, University of Kent at Canterbury

In a shocking government leak as we went to press, it has been revealed that ministers plan to charge tuition fees for college and university students from 1995.

The recent budget will cut student grants by a third. The expansion of higher education is to be stopped. Anger at the grant cuts has produced a wave of student protest; even though the university term has ended.

400 students protesting against grant cuts at the University of Kent at Canterbury occupied the university registry after a meeting with the local Tory Party office. Students fees paid by local authorities will now be cut by 45 per cent, but just £50 for classroom-based courses. In the past the government has been increasing student numbers in order to take young people away from the expansion of state grammar.

New leaked government papers show that Education Secretary John Patten and Treasury Secretary Michael Portillo disagree only over what form fees should take. Patten favours charging fees only for the third year in order to encourage low-quality two year degrees. Portillo’s more hard-line approach suggests that students should bear the full financial cost themselves.

Already more students than ever before take part-time jobs. More students must borrow even larger sums in order to study. With fees, the average student will graduate owing £7,000.

Next year 13,000 university places will be cut. “Efficiency gains” leading in a mean that resources will have fallen 40 per cent in just six years. Already the government encourages colleges to consider charging students top-up fees.

The National Union of Students has been almost silent. Students’ unions must call an emergency national conference to organise the resistance. On their own, however, students cannot stop these attacks.

SMTUC conference boosts fightback

PLANS ARE well advanced for the next conference of the Socialist Movement Teachers Union Committee on February 5 & 6 at London’s Conway Hall.

The meeting will be called “To tackle the crisis – Unite to the Unions” will be addressed by Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and have been invited to speak: John Hume, QC, to talk about the latest round of talks at the talks over the Irish issue, Pauline and Jocalyn are to discuss. The event will be well publicised.

The conference will be an international event. The speakers will also address delegates on the increasing crisis.

Get your union branch to support the conference and send delegates. Make it a fighting start in 1994 by building the working-class movement we need.