Let's scrap the lot!

Private schools

Private medicine

Privatisation

Kick out the Tories!
CHRISTMAS DAY VIGIL: December 25 saw a vigil outside the notorious West Midlands police headquarters in Birmingham in support of the Bridgewater Four, and other innocent prisoners. Among the protestors was Anne Whelan (centre), mother of Michael Hickey, one of the Bridgewater Four.

Oxfordshire unions link up to fight council cuts

CUTS of almost £12m in Oxfordshire’s education budget – over £100 per pupil – are being fought by the Labour Party in alliance with teaching and public sector unions. The cuts arise from the Tory government’s hefty cuts in the standard spending assessment of Oxfordshire County Council, leaving a £25m gap.

In addition to the threat to education, with the prospect of further increases in class sizes and the sacking of up to five teachers from some larger schools, social service face damaging cuts in domiciliary care, and the fire service and libraries are also under the axe.

Oxfordshire MP Headline: The County Council admits that numbers of school pupils, and numbers of frail elderly requiring community care are increasing, meaning that more rather than less cash is required. But is pointed out that it had to spend most of its reserves to avoid cuts in 1994, and faces cuts from central government.

School governors across the county are threatening to resign rather than implement the new cuts, which amount to 7.5% of the current budget. Some of them joined a 100-strong lobby of the County Council before Christmas.

The council’s Labour group has linked up with teaching and public service unions to mount a campaign against the cuts, launching with a January 4 public meeting.

Gains for Lewisham NUT strikers

UNOFFICIAL strike action has won concessions from Lewisham Labour Council in the fight against education cuts.

NUT members at two secondary schools defied the Tory trade union laws in protest against redundancies letters due to be sent before Christmas.

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The council’s “dented shield” policy has been decisively rejected. Lewisham has been forced to ask the government for the full amount needed to maintain the current level of service. Their commitment to equal opportunities will continue without comment.

The action was sparked in part by Lewisham’s shabby employment tactics. Teachers know that the real battle is only just beginning. The response of those who took unofficial action shows what the NUT can achieve with a vigorous campaign of co-ordinated strike action.

Instead of sell-outs – like the Sats – the leadership of the NUT should be launching an offensive against a deeply divided and crumbling Tory government.

Fight the school test sell-out!

THE NEWS that the National Union of Teachers intends to ballot its members again, recommending them to cooperate with the Tory SATs tests will anger teachers throughout the country.

The boycott of SATs put national action back on the union’s agenda, in response to the Tory strategy of breaking up national resistance by the abolition of national pay bargaining, introduction of Local Management of Schools, opt-outs, and the City Technology Colleges.

The NUT leadership has refused to meet most demands for national, or even regional co-ordinated action. But the boycott of SATs stood in their way, allowing primary and secondary school teachers to unite in concerted action against tests.

The wording of the ballot is not yet known, but it seems likely that the NUT Executive may have difficulty getting the result it wants. The Socialist Teachers’ Alliance has already begun a vigorous campaign against the sell-out, although the short timescale for the ballot will make campaigning difficult.

NUT policy, unanimously agreed by Conference, is complete opposition to SATs and to League Tables.

By Gill Lee

Over 90% of NUT members who responded to the union’s recent survey disagreed with the Tory claim that the government’s move to meet teachers’ demands over testing and assessment.

Only about 20% of secondary schools and 48% of primary schools, where members are relatively isolated and open to pressure, returned SATs results last year, showing that in practice opposition to SATs is wider than the NUT’s own evidence indicates.

THE NUT Executive is justifying its about-turn by quoting Gillian Shephard’s ‘offered consultation’ and an assurance that the purpose of test results at KS2 was not the selection of pupils for admission to secondary schools.

But the NUT’s capitulation has more to do with the policies of Blair’s ‘new’ Labour Party than any concessions the Tories are likely to make. Right wing pressure within the NEC has been reinforced by David Blunkett’s recent statements supporting the publication of national test results, making it clear that an incoming Labour government will not willingly abolish SATs.

But the SATs represent a return to the 11+ plus. They are a wholesale attack on comprehensive education. They must be vigorously opposed – and scrapped.

Saturday 4th February 1995 10am-5pm
York Hall, Old Ford Road, London, E2 (Bethnal Green tube)

Plenaries and workshops

Speakers include: John Monks, general secretary TUC; Diane Abbott MP; Joan Lester MP; Plaka Khabra MP; Joan Ruddock MP; Jim Murphy, president NUS; Leela Ramdeen, Cardinal Heenan’s Committee for the Caribbean; Harry Cohen MP; Kashmir Singh, British Sikh Federation; Society of Black Lawyers; National Black Caucus; Indian Workers’ Association (GB); Ken Livingstone MP; Kumar Murshid; Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee
No new year resolution to Tory crisis

LASHING out viciously like a wounded predator, John Major's crisis-ridden Tory government is beginning the new year in the way it ended the old: piling on the agony for millions of the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Undeterred by a stream of sneaky scandals, and a succession of humiliating defeats in the courts in which ministers including Douglas Hurd and Michael Howard have been shown to have acted unlawfully and incompetently, the cabinet clings shamelessly on to the reins of power.

Brushing aside the appalling evidence of their unpopularity in the Dudley West by-election - the worst such defeat at the hands of Labour for 60 years - and even Daily Telegraph opinion polls suggesting up to 60% would vote Labour, they are hatching new schemes to rob the poor and benefit the rich.

Smearing from the parliamentary defeat they have suffered at the hands of their own back-benchers on Post Office privatisation and on VAT on heating fuel, Major's team is taking revenge by pushing through Rail privatisation, tax increases and the most sweeping attacks yet mounted on the welfare state.

Ignoring the panic which now almost universally predict his demise as leader in 1995, Major himself has decided to make an electoral issue out of 'patriotism' - described by Dr Johnson as the last refuge of the scoundrel - and opposition to any form of democratic assembly in Scotland or Wales.

Chauvinism

This reactionary line will appeal to some layers of English chauvinists in the Tory heartlands, and dovetail neatly with the overtly racist policies of Major's government: such rabid defence of the integrity and sanctity of the British 'Union' sits oddly with the Tory government's embarrassing impotence to decide and uphold its own policies within the post-Maastricht European Union, as shown by recent decisions on fishing rights, and rights of part-time workers.

Major's strength for the time being is precisely the depth of the divisions within his own party. The varying factions that want to see him removed have each other almost more than they now hate Major. Though the terms 'left' and right seem bizarre in the context of the Tory party, there are rival camps which are more easily described as 'centre left' and right with.

Each side has scored significant victories which underline their potential to disrupt the government: the centre-left killed off Post Office privatisation and VAT on fuel, while the right-wing Euro- sceptics won further victories and led a vote of confidence; nine of them have been punished by exclusion from the parliamentary whip.

The two wings of Tory opposition are themselves at loggerheads. Many of the

Major: from despairs to illusion?

Euro-sceptics are Thatcherites who angrily denounce Major and Heseltine for reining on Post Office privatisation, support VAT on fuel, and favour hefty spending cuts to pay for more tax reductions. The centre left includes Euro-enthusiasts, and their leading figures are the most pro-European ministers.

Major is therefore still able to play one group off against the other. Tory MPs campaigning to force a leadership election in November failed by only three votes to get the necessary number of signatures. But the reason these names were missing was because supporters knew their favourite potential candidates were not yet ready to step into the open.

The 'centre left' backs Kenneth Clarke or Michael Heseltine: while both were freshly tarnished with recent fiscaux, Clarke is the architect of the VAT disaster, while Heseltine steered the ship of Post Office privatisation onto the rocks.

The Thatcherite right's man in waiting is Michael Portillo, but he is more popular among party hardliners than among the general public, and there is no reason to believe that amid such widespread popular rejection of Tory policies Portillo could deliver any more votes than Major.

Straddling

The contest was postponed: but the crisis continues. Major awkwardly straddles the pro and anti-European factions, while targeting hefty cuts in welfare spending with the hopes that tax cuts will again buy enough votes for a majority at the next election.

And on many of these cuts, he knows he can count on support right across the Tory back benches. 1995 will be a year of frontal assault on the welfare state.

Of 250,000 unemployed men and women who face cuts or outright loss of benefits under Kenneth Clarke's new Jobseekers Allowance, which will replace unemployment benefit. Thousands more are being denied benefits every week under a crackdown by Portillo's Department of Employment and Peter Lilley's Social Security department.

Over a million claimants currently receiving invalidity benefits will be subjected to compulsory medical checks, a complex questionnaire and ruthless new criteria designed to strip tens of thousands of their entitlements under the new Incapacity Allowance.

With over 400,000 people now homeless in Britain, at least 50 projects for homeless people will have government cash cut off, with many more facing a 50% cut. Clarke's Budget cuts will slash housing association house-building

Bottomline: walking liability

The welfare state is a crucial battle ground; and welfare rights offer winnable issues to rally mass opposition to the Tories.

by 40%. And with 1,000 families a week having lost their houses through repossession in 1994, the Budget changes will strip mortgage payers who lose their jobs of state support to cover interest payments for the first nine months of unemployment.

Local councils all over the country are running out of cash to fund community care for the frail elderly, and this will get worse as each year the thousands more patients are added to the queue for care. Meanwhile pensioners are already being forced to spend their life savings and sell their homes to pay for their own care in private nursing homes in one of the most cynical of the Tory privatisation schemes.

Government-imposed cuts on council budgets are again savaging education services, with thousands of teaching jobs at risk. Students face a further squeeze on poverty-line grant.

Health authorities are still forcing the pace with plans for hospital closures and the threatened cost-cutting massacre of the Blood Transfusion Service. These cuts will all hurt, and hit hardest at those least able to fight back. They are all immensely unpopular. But in a sense they can all be seen as aimed at soft targets: Tony Blair's Labour Party, preoccupied with courting the prosperous middle class with endless pledges not to increase taxes or public spending, has shown no interest in fighting on any of these issues.

No answers

There has been no Labour campaign in defence of benefits; no Labour policy to tackle homelessness; Labour should have supported the Tory community care reforms and has done nothing to campaign on the issue; the Party's education policies are in total confusion, reeling from the double blow of the arrival of the dis- astrous David Blunkett and the notorious decision of Tony Blair to endow opt-out schools and the Party has been tongue tied on the NHS since Margaret Beckett took over in the autumn.

Yet in the last 12 months have shown that campaigning can force some retreats. It was not Labour's leadership but the vaulant campaigning by pensioners groups across the country which kept the VAT issue alive and eventually forced a Tory defeat.

And strident public campaigns against hospital cuts have notched up important victories in Bristol, in Surrey and most recently in London, where a tapestry over the closure of the casualty unit at Central Middlesex Hospital. Now a new government policy docu-

ment on the workings of the NHS 'inter-

nal market' has been drafted to include 'get-out' clauses allowing ministers to over-ride market criteria and block clos-

ures of 'popular' hospitals.

The welfare state is a crucial battle ground; and welfare rights offer winnable issues to rally mass opposition to the Tories.

Rather than wait for the Tories to col-

lapse of their own accord, campaigns must be built which exploit the obvious divisions and unpopularity of the ruling party, and which mobilise and organise the working class.

That offers a useful new year's resolu-

tion for every socialist.
Build demo to defend welfare state

Put some concrete in the rhetoric!

STEVE FRENCH reports on the December 3 conference of the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State (CDWS)

The CDWS Conference lacked any campaigning edge, though it showed it ability to attract important forces from the labour movement. Over 200 attended, and platform speakers gave a thorough statistical analysis of the Tory offensive, but unfortunately no debate was allowed in the plenary sessions, and no speakers were called from the floor.

GMF union leader John Edmonds welcomed Labour's re-discovered call for full employment, and argued that 'concrete needs to be mixed in with the rhetoric.'

He advocated a major programme of public works, though neither he nor other platform speakers explained how this could take place without thwarting the Blair leadership's attempt to dump Clause Four, and the Gordon Brown's firm rejection of any commitment to increased public spending.

Morning Star editor Tony Chater called for 'action' to defend the welfare state, but was not specific. Former CP General Secretary Gordon MacLennan went further, and called for strike action to defend the welfare state.

Of course this raises wider issues. A week earlier the 'Right to Strike' conference, Fire Brigades Union leader Ken 'Cammanon had talked of the 'need to strike to defend essential public services'.

Campaigning

Strikes are needed: but they can best be prepared as the product of a big, active campaign in the labour movement.

Socialist Outlook supporters won support in one of the work shops for calling a national demonstration this spring in defence of the welfare state.

Closing the conference, Ken Livingstone said that this proposal would be discussed by the officers and taken up with trade union leaders.

No new officers were elected, and this was less than a full-blooded campaign commitment. However it does offer an opportunity to press the CDWS to campaign actively rather than a tacking shop.

Informally, conference organisers accepted the need to move the CDWS up a few gears. We must try to ensure this happens.

Activists should propose their organisations affiliate to CDWS, and demand support for a national demonstration. Such initiatives can run alongside building the conferences and campaign work of the activist-based Welfare State Network, whose highly successful lobby of Parliament is to be followed by a programme of activities in 1995.

Leaders like Edmonds must be pressed to put some concrete into their own rhetoric. We need to see them at the rostrum of this year's Labour Conference moving resolutions to commit a Labour government to a major increase in public spending and common ownership.

New Left launched in UNISON

Fred Leplat
UNISON, Islington A branch

UNISON has a new left. Launched on December 3 in Leeds the first conference of the Campaign for Fighting and Democratic Union (CFDU) was attended by 100 delegates and 30 observers from 60 branches. Five NEC members were also present.

Its friendly and cooperative spirit indicates that there is a large degree of agreement on the threats ahead and upon the response necessary.

The union is still only merged at national and regional level. Very few branches have merged. Members do not understand why.

Division

The continued division is allowing employers to push ahead with their attacks. The CFDU will argue for joint campaigns of branches and joint work in disputes in order to hasten the merger.

Behind the back of the NEC and Regional Committees "Senior Management Teams" are making all the decisions to reduce the deficit. A third of UNISON's staff are losing their jobs. Most of those who are leaving are administrative staff - those who directly support the work of ex-NALGO branches.

Combined with the attack on facility time by employers and the centralisation of the control of resources of UNISON, the union bureaucracy is tightening its grip on branches and eroding union democracy by every means.

Nevertheless the left is in a good position to make a challenge and get a wide audience for its ideas. The elections to the National Local Government Service Group Executive showed that where the left stood it could be successful.

Now the CFDU has united everyone to the left of the Morning Star. The exception is the SWP, who do not support the CFDU and continue to organise in the union through "Fightback", a front which it controls. The Tories are deeply unpopular.

This gives us an excellent basis on which to rebuild the confidence of our members to take action against these attacks. The CFDU must argue for UNISON to organise a fightback now.
Organise to save Clause Four

By David Thomas

APRIL 29 1995. That is the day Labour movement activists must focus on after they wake up bleary eyed after their New Year's Eve parties.

Last month's Labour Party NEC decided by 20 votes to 3 to organise a special conference on that date, to overturn 1989 conference policy and steer the MP's back to the leadership's proposals for a rewrite of Clause IV through the movement.

A rigged questionnaire will be circulated to party members in January with questions framed in such a way to make it difficult for people to indicate their support for common ownership. At the NEC Dennis Skinner proposed that members be allowed to indicate whether or not they wanted to retain the Clause. This was defeated.

The April conference is clearly designed to exclude democratic discussion as most trade unions have their conferences in the summer. The reason is clear. Blair is worried that any such discussion would lead to a victory for those of us who want to retain Clause IV.

All the evidence points to a groundswell of support for the Defend Clause IV Campaign. A sample survey of CLP's shows that 59 out of the 61 surveyed have already voted to defend Clause IV.

The views of the NEC's East and Blackburn CLP's are among those who are in favour of retention of the considerable embarrassment of their MPs - Harriet Harman, Gordon Brown and Jack Straw.

Support

The majority of Labour MPs have also come out in support of the Clause. ASLEF, NUM, BECTU, GPMU, FBU, EPIU have also committed themselves to the current constitutional position.

The RMT seem likely to support and NCU President Bill Fry has spoken publicly in favour of defending Clause IV.

Significantly the Tribune editorial of 16 December argues "Certainly, the best advice available to the Labour leader is for him to quietly drop opposition to Clause Four, while persuading the party of the merits of an added aim and values document."

Key to winning the fight will be the Regional Labour Party conferences set for the first three months of 1995 and the National Labour Women's conference in April.

At every regional conference the left must ensure that delegations are mandated to support resolutions which support Clause IV and common ownership. Fringe meetings need to be organised now. The centre-left unions MSF, TGWU and UNISON are vital and must be persuaded to support Clause IV.

Unhappy

London Region MSF have already voted in favour of the campaign and the T&G's eyes on the Labour Party NEC, Dan Duffy and Diane Holland are known to be unhappy with Bill Morris' compromise with Blair.

In Scotland there are more than twenty resolutions defending Clause IV for Scottish Labour Conference this March. The Scottish committee of FBU, UCATT and MSF are set against any change in Labour's constitution.

UNISON will be a tough nut to crack. As the majority of the organised left are ex-NALGO and consequently will not have a vote on the question.

The next two or three months will be crucial. If we organise we can win, and ensure that Labour enters the pre-election period with its commitment to common ownership intact.

It's the way he tells them...

Tony Blair Breakfast

Frost: "If there was in fact a sort of campaign or move to get rid of Clause Four would you actively oppose that?"

Blair: "I think the most important thing is for the Labour Party to state what its economic priorities are, and there has been discussion about Clause 4 over the past couple of years, and I understand why that is, but I think the most important thing at the present time, and I think where everybody in the party wants to see the Labour Party go, is to construct its policies for the next general election and make those clear before the British people."

Frost: "Do you have your own clause 4, I mean would you oppose its being dropped?"

Blair: "Well, I don't think anyone actually wants that to be the priority of the Labour Party at the moment. I mean, I understand why people have raised this, and there are people who have raised it across a whole spectrum of the political party."

Frost: "Jack Straw, Neil Kinnock..."

Blair: "Absolutely right. But I don't think that anyone is saying now, looking ahead to the next two years in the run-up to an election, that this is what we should focus on. And I think for the vast majority of British People, I don't think they sit out there and debate the intricacies of the Labour Party Constitution."
Transport House for sale?
Morris backs sacked bus workers

By Roger Welch

TGWU leader Bill Morris has told a rally in Chelmsford that he would sell the union’s Transport House headquarters if it were necessary to help the bus workers win.

His speech is part of a developing campaign seeking the reinstatement of the 105 sacked by Eastern National for taking lawful strike action to resist unsafe working hours.

It has been gathering momentum in recent weeks as a number of sacked Eastern workers have gone into workplaces to explain the dispute and ask for support. The boycott of Eastern National has also been supplemented by a free minibus to local bus users who need transport but want to avoid sạch buses.

Support group

The support group established by the Trades Council has received broad backing from local endes unionists and the Freedom Network, supporters of Socialist Outlook and members of the SWP in Essex.

There have been two marches through Chelmsford in December. The first was a street rally organised by the Essex Freedom Network in defiance of the Criminal Justice Act. It tried to stop outside of the bus stations to read out the names and service records of the sacked workers – which is over 2,000 years.

Although this would have only lasted a few minutes the police totally overreacted and attacked the demonstration – which the police later admitted had been totally peaceful. They made three arrests.

This was not an entirely negative outcome however as the police panic led them to seal off the bus station for more than half an hour!

The second march was organised nationally by the TGWU and attracted the support of almost 1000 trade unionists and activists from Essex and London. Although the turnout was reasonable and has certainly increased the morale of sacked workers, it could have been much larger.

The march was followed by a rally addressed by Bill Morris. He referred to a letter from Badgerline threatening to sue the TGWU for claiming that it, rather than Eastern National, was involved in the dispute.

Their denial is obviously false – the buses have the Badgerline logo sprayed all over them.

Nevertheless Morris promised to sell Transport House if it was necessary to defeat litigation and win the dispute. He knows that Badgerline has to date no basis for mounting legal action.

Just the same, sacked workers and rank and file members of the TGWU should demand that the union acts to rescind the threat and bring in proper discipline over pay and working hours.

Then they would have the promise become more than rhetoric.

The TGWU is intending to organise another march early in the new year. It is important that the left-wing union activists mobilise to make it as large as possible.

Now it’s SIR Sellout!

GAUV Laird, the Tors’ favourite union leader has picked up a knighthood as the latest mark of appreciation from the capitalist class. After a lifetime on his knees, the ceremony will be a doodie.

With Laird as General Secretary, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers has connived at all the Tory anti-union laws, merged with the strikebreaking Electricians and Plumbers (EEPTU) signed single-union deals with multinational firms, let the Timex workers to isolation and defeat, and helped successive Labour leaders attack the left.

Laird has been lavishly rewarded for his efforts. In addition to his generous union salary, he has picked up directorships from grateful bosses, sitting on the boards of Scottish Television, GEC Scotland and Britannia Line. In December he was appointed to the Board of the Edinburgh Investment Trust, picking up a cool £7,500 a year.

Tories Gavin was even nominated by Margaret Thatcher for a term on the Board of the Bank of England!

New union unites communication workers

By a BT worker

A NEW union has been formed uniting members of the National Communications Union and the Union of Communication Workers. If it will organise 300,000 members, mainly in BT and the Post Office.

The UCW has had a unity policy for 70 years. The left has fought for it since the battle against the separation of the post office from British Tele.

However, as with most recent union mergers, the main force behind unity has been the fall in membership of both unions – especially the UCW. UCW decline is now beginning to accelerate due to competition to the Post Office, commercialisation and electronic mail. Falling membership inevitably causes great financial problems – for the bureaucrats in particular.

The situation in both unions is balm. The UCW has one of the most militant memberships of any unions in western Europe, as measured by strike days lost.

Right wing

But its leadership under Alan Johnson is not only highly bureaucratic and right wing, but riding high after the Tory climbdown over privatisation. The leadership are solidarity problems and anti-clause IV. The left is weak and disorganised. The NUJ on the other hand has little record of industrial militancy outside the 1983-7 privatisation period. Local action is rare.

It is internally unstable and polarised owing to the existence of an electrically powerful Broad Left which has been in office three times since 1983.

Its Broad Left is at a low ebb at the moment because a minority recently teamed up with the right wing and pushed through an agreement with BT for extended working hours.

The NUJ’s Labour Party and TUC delegations however are around the most left wing in the labour movement, voting to retain Clause IV at the Labour Party conference.

All the signs are that the combined leadership will now use the merger to undermine the relatively democratic regime in the NUJ and to attack the Broad Left.

Already the right of candidates for national office is campaigning for support is under threat.

The NUJ left voted at its AGM to link up with the UCW left. The scene is set for a bruising battle.

NUJ march for union rights

It will be ten years this year since the Murdoch launched his onslaught on media workers.

The long bitter dispute set the tone of a decade of Tory attacks on the trade union. Now the millions from the union’s today in November for organising for workers’ rights.

The union wants to rebuild organisation throughout the media and every industry that has suffered similar attacks. It is encouraging support for the demonstration from all trade unionists.

March for Union Rights

Saturday 21 January

Assembly 9.45 Tower Hall

March to News International, Bring Bonnies
US aid budget faces axe
By Harry Sloan

THE POOREST countries in Africa could be among the losers from last autumn's Republican gains in US Congressional elections. Huge cuts in aid to Africa as well as cuts to the dockets on Yeltsin's Russian economy are among the key proposals from the new chair of the Senate's subcommittee on foreign operations.

Americans like Colin McConnell, who takes over this month, has called for a 20% across the board cut in spending abroad, with aid payments restricted to countries with assiduous economic interests.

Tide turning against Indonesian junta
By Paul Walker

1995 is going to be a difficult year for the Suharto regime in Indonesia. The previous twelve months have witnessed a fundamental change in the political situation in regard to occupation of East Timor and the developing democracy movement in Indonesia itself.

As reported in the last issue of Socialist Outlook the events of November 12th saw the emergence of both a more organised and deeper rooted resistance movement in East Timor, the first signs of support for that resistance in Indonesia, and the development of an international solidarity movement with the East Timorese struggle.

The panic measures adopted by Suharto to deal with the events in East Timor show a regime maneuvering in an ever closing political space. The referendum at gunpoint and the forced demonstration and rally organised by the military in the capital, Dili (during which the assembled crowd was harangued by the military officials about the benefits of integration into Indonesia), have only resulted in a hardening of the civil resistance to Jakarta's rule.

Significantly overwhelming bulk of the demonstrators in Dili on 12th November 1994 had not started school when the Indonesians invaded in 1975.

New generation
The generation educated in special schools where the regime banned their own languages and implemented a rigorous program of indoctrination have given their verdict on this process.

The youngest of the 125 detained following the uprising are two 13 year olds, Albaso de Jesus and Antonio Goncalves. Most of the demonstrators are workers, peasants and students.

International opinion is also beginning to shift. East Timor is no longer just a small country, far away, about which people know nothing.

February will see the publication of the report of the 51st session of the UN Special Human Rights Commission by the UN special rapporteur on East Timor, Bache Wylie. The report will refer to the Sake Cruz killings on November 12th 1991 as a massacre. This will effectively undermine the continued Indonesian description of it as an "incident".

The Amnesty International report on the events of November 12th 1994 points to the excessive force and ill treatment used by the security forces in Dili. It also notes that, whilst under the gaze of the world's media, no one was actually killed, some demonstrators were beaten until their faces were "unrecognisable".

Additionally the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions has passed a resolution condemning the Indonesian occupation and widespread human rights abuses.

True, these reports only add to the paper mountain reporting the long standing atrocities of the Indonesian regime; but they do add significant pressure to all those international leaders who are sitting on the fence.

Mandela
One of these is Nelson Mandela, who only a few months after being released from prison visited Suharto and accepted a cheque for $10 million to pay off ANC debts. The international solidarity movement has exerted enormous pressure on Mandela to speak out for the people of East Timor and to end his cosy relationship with Suharto.

Inside the ANC there has been a growing debate about the issue. During his opening address to the ANC Conference in mid December 1994 Mandela called explicitly for support for the people of East Timor.

"We cannot be found wanting in expressing our solidarity with friends in need in other parts of the world including the people of Cuba, East Timor, Palestine and elsewhere."

Diplomatic words? Only time will tell.

Meanwhile the campaign to stop the delivery of Hawk ground attack aircraft to Indonesia and for a military embargo has gathered pace in Britain. The coalition "Stop The Hawks - No Arms to Indonesia" is organising a year of action in 1995.

Events will include a mass protest at the British Aerospace AGM in late April, pressups, a mass day of action on November 12th and a mass lobby or Parliament on December 7th 1995 which is the twentieth anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor.

1995 is, therefore, a critical year for solidarity work with East Timor and the democratic movement in Indonesia.

One easy task is to get Labour Party and trade union branches to sponsor the campaign - this is free but donations are welcome. An action pack is available that outlines all the campaigning possibilities for the year ahead.

Write to Stop the Hawks, c/o P.O. Box 2249, London E1 3HX with a cheque for £1.20.

Hawk protestors go beyond Jakarta's imagination
By Aidan Salter

IT WAS NOT quite business as usual for Manchester bosses invited by the governor of Jakarta to the "beyond the imagination" evening of food and entertainment at the plush, privately held Peacock Suite.

Demonstrators from Stop the Hawk Deal (part of the national Stop The Hawks - No Arms To Indonesia Coalition) made sure that the event, designed as a sweeter to lure local investors to Jakarta left a sour taste in their mouths.

No doubt the guests were sold an exotic picture of Indonesia as the land of opportunity with abundant natural resources, a rapidly expanding market in one of the fastest growing economies in South East Asia. All lubricated by fine fare of course.

Business appetites may also have been whetted by the less savoury image of a cheap, industrious, docile, obliging, largely female workforce, kept in line by the government controlled S.P.S.I. union - slaving at the mouth they must have been.

Leaflets handed out by demonstrators spell out the other side of the Indonesian experience - the harsh human rights violations under the Suharto dictatorship, genocide in the course of the 19th year occupation of East Timor, and a growing mass opposition forcing increasing state repression.

The guests were forewarned that political instability and social unrest would jeopardise investiment. But they weren't forewarned about what was to accompany the Hong d'ouvre.

A surprise awaited the diners inside the Peacock Suite. In a welcoming speech a protestor, who had somehow received an invitation, spoke out for several minutes to a stunned audience about the reality of Indonesia.

Only after delivering a blistering expose was he escorted away by hotel security at the request of the Indonesian officials.

Another protestor was also ejected after talking about East Timor.

Stop The Hawk Deal, in tandem with the Penon Coalition For East Timor, will be stepping up action in the coming months, so overpaid overinvested investors beware!

Contact: STHD c/o One World Centre, 6 Mount St, Manchester M2 5NE or PECO c/o Global Education Centre, St Peters Square Preston PR1 7XW. 

PUBLIC MEETING
Feb 1st 7.00
Friends Meeting House
(oposite Euston Station)
Free East Timor!
Spokes speakers include JOSE RAMOS HORTA,
External Representative of the National Council
Of Maubere Resistance.

Demonstration outside Indonesian Embassy in London
4,000 jobs at risk as services axe cuts

Teachers fight racist Section 11 cuts

By Ann Baye

THE END of 1994 saw a surge of action among teachers, especially in London, opposing the government’s intended cuts in Section 11 funding. Section 11 refers to special payments from the Home Office to local authorities committed to providing extra support for children from ethnic minority backgrounds “whose languages or customs differ from those of the community.”

Section 11 teachers work in mainstream schools to support such children, many of whom are just beginning to learn English. The London boroughs of Waltham Forest alone has over 2,000 children needing Section 11 support. These children are expected to follow the National Curriculum and participate in lessons in the ordinary classroom. Such integration is important socially and culturally as well as academically.

Interacting with children whose first language is English allows many of them to become fluent speakers of English quite quickly, although learning to read and write, especially for some refugee children who have learned literacy in different alphabets and particularly for those who have had no previous formal schooling, usually takes longer.

Many of those who need and have benefited from Section 11 support are not recent immigrants but members of communities speaking languages which have traditionally been worked as “dead” English. Teachers of such languages are in some cases teaching students who have never had the chance to learn English, and many schools are only beginning to give students some form of support for their home-language.

The threatened cuts to Section 11 are racist, and further undermine the presence of equal opportunities. They are part of a pattern of the government’s drive towards a tiered education system, which aims to produce a well-schooled (rather than educated) elite, flexible, skilled workforce alongside an educationally-deprived mass—the future reserve army of exploitation.

The cuts will undermine all learning in multicultural schools, and will worsen teachers’ conditions of service. The levels of need of students are rising in many areas, and demands on individual class teachers will inevitably increase, so that even with a normal teaching time and reduced class sizes, teachers cannot cope. The number of teachers leaving due to redundancy notices as a direct result of Section 11 cuts. Some estimates put the number of jobs threatened nationally as high as 4,000.

Compulsory redundancy is being used in some areas, but the cuts are being administered unequally. While Tower Hamlets is likely to suffer heavy losses under Section 11, Tony Westminster is able to make up the funding shortfall so as to avoid redundancies.

In the fact of the NUT leadership’s inaction, a group of twelve London NUT groups, with the Socialist Teachers Alliance taking a central role, organised a Day of Action on December 7.

Lobbying

This included an afternoon lobby of the Department for Education by some 300 teachers, putting their views to Education Secretary Gillian Shephard, followed by a lobby of the Home Office and in the evening with NUT General Secretary Doug McManus.

The lobby and march involved open defiance of the new Criminal Justice Act. An evening rally featured speakers from the Anti racist Alliance and the NUT’s Race Advisory Committee, while speakers from the floor warned that some Section 11 teachers could face deportation.

Speeches linked the fight on Section 11 with the need for a wider campaign to defend state education. The TUC has set the total standard spending assessment for local authorities this year at a level even lower than last year’s meagre target, and councils are predicting that this will mean further job losses in education and higher pupil/teacher ratios.

Securitisation

Like other public sector workers, teachers face worsening conditions of service, greater job insecurity (linked to increased use of fixed-term contracts) and the imposition of performance-related pay.

Of course securing adequate funding is not the only important ingredient of a recipe to save Britain’s crisis-ridden education system. Only a break from the divisive, market-oriented policies typified by grant maintained status for schools (the opting-out now patronised by Tony Blair), the League Tables, the infamous Tony- imposed SATS tests and the existing National Curriculum can begin to undo the damage done to the future of Britain’s youth.

NUT members are increasingly vocal in their criticism of the Labour leadership for not taking up the issue. Socialists should be supporting the efforts to win public support for alternative policies designed to allow equal access for all to a truly comprehensive, liberating education.
DEFEND
CLAUSE 4

“TO secure for the workers
by hand or by brain the full fruits
of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof
that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership
of the means of production, distribution, and exchange,
and the best obtainable system of popular control of
each industry or service.”

On April 29 a special Labour Party conference may scrap Clause 4 of the party’s constitution. Clause 4 commits Labour to social ownership. We want to keep Clause 4 and ensure a future Labour government renationalises industry, creates jobs and improves public services. A national ‘Campaign to Defend Clause 4’ has been established by a range of important labour movement figures and organisations - like Jim Mortimer (former
FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Local details:

Write to Campaign to Defend Clause 4, C/o The NUM, 2 Huddersfield Rd, Barnsley, S70 2LS.

Telephone: 0171 - 582 2955.
Black victims of blue murder

300 people demonstrated outside the notorious Stoke Newington police station on 23 December to protest about the death of yet another black person in custody. Ellen Moore investigates a growing scandal of racist violence.

Mr Lapite was arrested on the night of Saturday 18 December by two police officers who are now suspended. He was dead within twenty minutes. His family say his face is unrecognisable and his body covered in bruises. They are calling for an independent inquiry.

This brutal murder of another black man in custody brings the focus back onto the notorious Stoke Newington police force who have already been the cause of record damages being paid to people in compensation for wrongful arrests and brutal treatment.

But the not just in Stoke Newington that black people die when in contact with the purveyors of ‘justice’. The violence of the state within the criminal justice system is brutal and arbitrary but particularly targeted at black people.

Over the last ten years 84 black people have died in police custody, in prison or during police ‘stop and search’ or immigration officials visits to their homes.

All deaths in custody highlight the brutality of the criminal justice system, but deaths amongst black prisoners and detainees emphasize the institutionalised racism endemic within the system.

Black youth are harassed and stopped in the street and the fear on the basis of nothing more than their blackness (an event even more likely to occur with increasing frequency with the virtual re-introduction of the ‘sus’ laws in the new ‘Criminal Justice Act’), black people are subject to violent arrest because of the racist assumption of the police that black people are ‘violent’ and aggressive, and must be dealt with in kind. The deaths this year of Mark Harris and Olusegun Lapite highlight this brutality.

Contempt for black people on the streets is carried into contempt for black people in their homes. The deaths of Cynthia Jarrett, Joy Gardner and more recently of Kwame Sizuka and Joseph Nsiale bear witness to this process.

Black people are over-represented as prisoners and patients in special hospitals.

Again recent campaigns such as that about the death of Ovella Blackburn lead to state violence meted out to black people within the mental health system. The ‘unlawful killing’ of Ovambo Lumumba at Pentonville prison in 1993 illustrates the racist violence of the prison system.

How does this consistent murderous racism go on year after year? How is racist violence institutionalised into policy?

The police, prison service and special hospitals each in different ways manage to remain completely unaccountable to any public forum. The extent to which they are unaccountable, inaccessible and specialised serves to increase and make their power more absolute.

The level of secrecy surrounding these institutions increases their employees ability to get away with abuse and even murder: Where there is no adequate forum for calling an institution to account in the public domain, abusive practices run rampant and racist police and prison officers literally get away with murder.

Sacked by unaccountable, secret institutions individuals within the police, prison service and special hospitals assume a stance of invincibility and a sense of being unchallengeable whatever they do.

Floating

A recent inquest into the death of a psychiatric patient in police custody revealed a catalogue of failures on the part of the medical and police services, and deliberate floating of the police instruction manual by one officer which led to the detainee’s death.

When asked if those present in the court could assume that he would not flout those rules again the officer answered ‘no, they could not make that assumption’.

That police officer had heard that morning the Crown Prosecution Service had decided not to prosecute him for manslaughter. Supported by other high ranking officers, watched by members of the CIB and members of the Police Complaints Authority (PCA), he felt he could confidently assume that he could publicly declare he would ignore the rules and all he would receive would be some sort of ray on the fingers.

Structured like the military, the strict hierarchy of command which the police force and prison service fosters closes ranks when under attack. The chain of command becomes the chain of cover-up.

The so-called ‘independent’ PCA is staffed by highly vetted civil servants who are as likely to work there as the Home Office – its independence is laughable.

Prisons and special hospitals are virtually unassailable. Closed and guarded by the Home Office none may enter without their approval and information is as closely guarded as information about ‘national security’.

Deaths of black people – whether murder or suicide – are more cold statistics. Inquests afford little relief. The coroner’s court is there to establish the cause of death, not the reasons why, or who is responsible. The coroner has complete control, allowing or disallowing questioning on behalf of relatives according to his own whim.

He is aided by the police; he alone has access to the findings of any internal inquiry (not even MPs have access to such information); he decides what to divulge to the court, which witnesses to call and in which order; and he alone can sum up and direct the jury on which of very few restricted verdicts they can bring.

Even in the unlikely event that a jury returns a verdict of ‘unlawful killing’, the only verdict which allows a chance to reopen the case with a view to prosecution and/or compensation, it is unlikely to be successful.

Out of 75 cases of black deaths in custody between 1989 and 1991 only one has resulted in a prosecution of the police.

Redress through the law is an illusion. The murder of Olusegun Lapite in Stoke Newington graphically illustrates the futility of such change through the legal system.

Stoke Newington police have been at the centre of controversy for years – and recently at the centre of a series of corruption scandals and allegations of brutality.

Despite this their harassment of the local black community continues, and two police officers have been involved in the brutal death of another defenceless black man.

Contact Newham Monitoring Project for details of the Family Campaign Tel: 081-552 6284.
Countries must cut wages to stay competitive on the world market...

That's the USA cuts wages to compete with Japan, Japan does the same to compete with Korea and so on...

...with the result that workers everywhere no longer earn enough to buy what they produce!

Joining forces to fight GATT treaty

Socialist Outlook met with Sonny Melencio, a leader of Makabayan, one of the new mass socialist formations in the Philippines.

What is the political situation in the Philippines?

The government has been saying that the economic situation has improved, and that the political situation has too.

They have been claiming that there is a one per cent growth rate in the economy. But this is because the comparison is with 1986 - a period of negative growth rate.

From that starting point, anything that is not backwards is forwards! In fact other island neighbours are attracting much more investment than the Philippines. A recent study showed that the value of real wages has gone down.

As far as the concrete conditions go, there has been a deterioration - a large number of unemployed; there are many people on the streets, and prostitution.

The government has a project called 'Philippines 2000'. It says that it will make the Philippines a newly industrialising country by 2000, following the footsteps of Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

We used to be more advanced than some of these countries, but now we are way down the line. Indonesia has overtaken us and we're quite near to Bangladesh now in terms of the economy.

Philippines 2000 is posed in terms of the 'new world order' - meaning the order of the IMF and the World Bank, imperialist powers and multinationals. We see no possibility that the Philippines will become a newly industrialised country - there is simply no room left.

We do not have anything of value to export. Our main export now is human labour. This is what is keeping the Philippines alive - migrant workers. All our traditional exports have been overtaken by technological development.

The free trade zone in the Philippines is a mess. It has closed down. There is a new one being built, but it is not attracting much investment.

In this framework there is no hope. That is why we think of the future of the

All change on Philippines left

THE COLLAPSE of Stalinism internationally is continuing to generate a ferment of discussion and divisions in sections of the anti-imperialist movement.

The underground Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is one of the last ones still clinging together, and ruthlessly to the old politics, with its exiled leader Jose Sison using a document in 1994 explicitly calling for the party to the banner and name of Stalin.

Reformed in 1968, with strong Maoist influences, the CPP adopted and still adheres to the strategy of waging a 'people's war' and of 'stabbing cities from the countryside' based on the Chinese experience under Mao Zedong. It emphasised long term mass work in the countryside, and the activities of its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

Sison, who backed the Chinese Stalinists' brutal 1989 repression in Tiananmen Square, rejects any notion of a unified front not led by the CPP, and has expelled opponents who challenge this line.

However CPP activists also played a leading role in the broader National Democratic Front, which in turn played a key role in the development of the militant union federation the KMU (May 1st Movement), launched in 1989, which at its height claimed to organise over 700,000 workers. Though many of its original organisers were Communists, as a union, the KMU clearly had to reach out much wider than CPP members, and developed a degree of political independence.

KMU strength tended to be in the cities rather than the country areas, and the strategy of people's war is clearly inappropriate for long-term work in the unions.

Failure

These problems were further underlined by the failure of the CPP or KMU to capitalise on the situation following the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986. There were tactical differences between the NDF and the CPP leadership over whether or not to boycott the 1988 elections, the role of armed struggle and the unified front.

Growing splits within the KMU, the NDF and the CPP itself have begun to reject the traditional Stalinist strategy. The strongest challenge to the Sison line have come from the big cities, and in Manila the entire regional leadership of the CPP (Manila-Rizal) has split. Similar bitter splits have proliferated throughout the Philippines left and trade union movement.

The KMU's 1993 May Day rally saw a clash between supporters and opponents of Sison, each shouting slogans at the other side.

As a result, important forces adhering to neither side in the factional divide have pulled away from the KMU, and a range of new groupings has begun to take shape. There are now at least four groups on the Philippines left worthy of mention.

- SALAKAS, based predominantly in the Manila working class, to which is affiliated a trade union federation United Workers for Change (BMP), and organisations of women, the urban poor, and students. The BMP is a split from the KMU, which mirrored almost exactly the split of the Manila-Rizal regional committee of the CPP. Also affiliated to SALAKAS is the 'democratic socialist' political current Makabayan, whose politics are much closer to the Manila-Rizal committee.

- SISIYAY, based primarily upon a breakaway from the National Democratic-led Filipino Peasant Federation (KMP), it also has a newly formed far-left organisation, and is committed to a national-democratic programme.

- BAYAN/KMU - based upon the sections of the National Democratic Movement still influenced by the CPP. Its recent mobilisations have been smaller than SALAKAS, and sometimes smaller than SISIYAY and RISIYAY. It refuses to work with other organisations on the left, and has recently had to contend with threats to arrest 'the former Manila-Rizal leadership and try them in a people's court.'
Philippines is to keep on struggling against the state. In the political arena now there is a popular struggle against GATT by the unions and by the farmers' organisations and by the urban poor.

The GATT treaty is up for approval by the Senate. Our organisation is planning to hold an international gathering of south east Asian trade unions against the treaty.

A number of employers groups are also against GATT and which have also joined the bloc against it. Even some local government officials have passed a resolution against the treaty.

This is a new fight that is brewing up. The mass organisation is quite buoyed up by some recent victories. That is why the GATT campaign is attracting large support, and the urban mass movements are set to play a major role.

The guerrilla war which is still going on is being marginalised. Nothing is happening in the guerrilla areas. Many members and commanders of the New Peoples Army have come down from the mountains. Some have surrendered, and some have just simply gone back to their families. This trend has been going on for years.

The political development will be centred around the urban mass movement.

Tell us about the left in the Philippines

The formation which works closely with us is the BISIO. It is small and composed of at least three different currents. One current calls itself Marxist. There is a centrist current that is more or less left social democratic in its thinking. And then there is the other more right social democratic current.

What is exciting now in the Philippines is that some of the left groups have come together to form coalitions. One was formed as early as November last year. It was called "People's Challenge". It started off as a coalition against the Philippines 2000 programme. It is all these blocs together. There was even thinking at one time that a kind of automatic unity was needed. We had a conference to get to know each other better. Following various debates we stopped meeting. But the feeling for unity is still there. Our agenda is still to unite the left.

How do you build unity with workers who don't necessarily believe in the socialist project, but who are setting to fight against, say, GATT for example?

Our project right now in the unions is reunification of the whole trade union movement. We are pushing for it through our trade union organisation the BME.

The project is gaining ground because it was able to start off a coalition of trade unionists called "the caucus for labour unity". All the major trade unions joined except the KMU and the FFWM (both on ideological grounds - the KMU because it is under the control of the Sison wing; the FFWM because it is a Catholic Christian union.)

This is how we manage to have a broader base among the unions. This kind of formation gathers all the unions around concrete political projects, around struggle against the government. This formation - Militant Fight - is directly in opposition to government policies. This means direct opposition by demonstrations and whatever forms are appropriate.

During the Marcos period in the 1970s, when Martial Law was imposed, it was very hard for unions to struggle. Demonstrations were banned. Strikers were banned. The Communist Party did a lot of organising at the time, starting up underground unions. Most of the unions share this history.

This gives most of the unions on the left a certain radicalism based on the kind of education they had at that time: it is basically revolutionary, around the national democratic programme, but that is also revolutionary democracy.

With regards to the conception of the united front as a block of four classes: there is no organisation representing the national bourgeoisie.

There is no organisation of a revolutionary character, or even a progressive character, that represents the national bourgeoisie. There are tactical alliances with the employers group, with the capitalist group, against GATT and the tax increase, but these are tactical alliances not part of a united front strategy. The united front applies basically to the left.

It is funny - we had the idea that we would find a section of capitalists who are progressive, who would join the national democratic revolution. Then we even set up an organisation to gather these capitalists together!

All it gathered was some of the petty bourgeoisie. This is why we stopped using those terms. Because it doesn't mean anything at all to us. It just confuses us.

What are the main political debates between the left currents in the Philippines?

The main debate is basically on the question of party building. It is essential to rally round all the opposition groups who are opposed to the Sison CPP line. The question is how to unify the opposition in an alternative party.

The split in the CPP began around the character of the party - its Stalinist character. Only afterwards did it become more programme-based. Now it is entirely at the level of programme.

The Manilla-Rizal region of the Philippines Communist Party (MR) and, I think, the other territorial organs, are clear that there should still be a Marxist-Leninist party. But they are also clear that this does not mean the Marxist-Leninist that has been propounded by the Stalinists and Maoists.

It is basically the Leninism of the Bolsheviks that should be the model - one that is vibrant and alive. So this is to be party of the Bolshevik type, where you can have debates, that is very democratic. That is basically the MR view.

The other view wants to build a broader formation - more of a front. This view is advocated by comrades who are drifting towards social democracy under the ideas of developing a 'civil society' rather than building parties which are based on objectives of state power.

I understand that in Australia this sort of politics is sometimes called 'post modernism'. But in the Philippines it has no such name!

Some of its advocates identify themselves with the left of social democracy: they ask 'what is wrong with social democracy anyway - is it not the same as national democracy?'

This is true - the national democratic programme of the Sison wing of the Communist Party is basically social democracy. But this is the whole point of disagreement!

Our whole criticism is based on the belief that theirs is solely a national democratic struggle, not a struggle for socialism.

How have you approached international links?

One of our key debates was on the semi-colonial/semi-feudal theory. Manila-Rizal is now saying that the Philippines is basically capitalist. We also have a critique of the protracted peoples war - against the guerrilla war strategy, which is not suited to the conditions in the Philippines. We returned to the Leninist position of opening up all areas of struggle, including the electoral one.

The NPA units are not now the focus of our activity. Instead we emphasise the organisation of, for example, the farm workers.

When we started going through the programatics after the split we were looking first at the idea of internationalism. One of the ideas we repudiate is that socialism can be established in a single country. We see that as a Stalinist distortion.

We see socialism as a world project. This is why we have decided to be active in international gatherings; to link up with all international groupings. So that's why when we split up we were looking for an organisation that was anti-Stalinist, anti-Maoist and opposed to the national democratic conception of socialism.

I have attended the Fourth International's Amsterdam school and was invited to its IEC to observe. Many things were clarified but there are still some questions left.

What is clear to us is that we would like to have joint co-operation, especially on a country to country basis, aside from the Fourth International groups. The way the struggle is developing right now is also national in character.

What do you think of Trotskyism?

Trotskyism is still a dirty word in the Philippines. It is better to first discuss programatics and then use the word, as so to close off debate.

I can say with some confidence that the comrades of Manila-Rizal would find it very difficult to understand Trotsky at this point in time, because I myself have not yet read a single book of Trotsky's. Maybe there is some resistance!
Opposition to republicanism unites new Irish coalition

By David Coen

The description of the new Dublin Government as a "Rainbow Coalition" might leave you desperately casting your mind back to the last time you saw a rainbow.

For red, what about Prisias De Rossa, former Republican internee, former leader of the Sinn Fén admiring Workers' Party, now main man of the Democratic Left and Minister for Social Welfare in the "centre-left" Government dominated by Fine Gael.

Orange and blue are well represented by new Taoiseach John Bruton, who came back from political death after Dick Spring did the dirty on Albert Reynolds. Recent opinion polls showed Bruton ("Brutal" to his legions of enemies) to be in the John Major league of popularity - more than half his own party didn't want him as Taoiseach. Bruton got his reputation from his hardline monetarist policies in previous coalition governments. He is a unionist to his Blaithruit boots.

Yellow Spring

Kingmaker and Labour Leader Dick Spring couldn't be described as "green" in any sense - nor "red" for that matter. Yellow would be much more appropriate for such an opportunist.

The would-be hammer of Fianna Fáil was prepared to crawl back into Government with Reynolds successor Bertie Ahern when the Irish Times published an old story about Fianna Fáil duplicity. Spring promptly picked up his ball and went looking for someone else to play with.

Some paranoid people have even suggested that the scuppering of a new Fianna Fáil-Labour Coalition might have something to do with the British preference for dealing with Bruton and Spring. The appearance of British Ambassador Blatherwick at Bruton's first meeting of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation is surely a nod of approval from London.

The Brit can more easily mitigate with a new Dublin Government that is fiercely anti-Republican and which is more likely to agree on an internal settlement in the North and to changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the South's Constitution. The problem for the British is that, although Fianna Fáil would probably have asked for a bit more, the new coalition will find it harder to deliver a deal - especially if Fianna Fáil plays the republican card.

Sinn Feín's political strategy of relying on Reynolds (with Clinton's help) to pressure the British was a disaster even before Spring got Reynolds. The "Framework Document" now delayed to early in the New Year, will be seen in the terms of the Downing St. Declaration of 1993.

Bruton got his reputation from his hardline monetarist policies in previous coalition governments. He is a unionist to his Blaithruit boots.

Limited powers

British withdrawal and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole were never part of the plan. Former Fianna Fáil deputy Charles Haughey was right in his forecast of some kind of all-Ireland body with executive powers. But this will confine it to tourism, regional development and agriculture - areas in which it makes sense to co-operate anyway.

In return Dublin will agree to changes in Articles 2 & 3 of the Constitution, the effect of which will be to formally recognise for the first time British jurisdiction over part of Ireland. In the words of a disillusioned SDLP member talking about the Brook/Mayhew talks a couple of years ago: "It will be less than we were offered in 1974" (the Sunningdale Agreement brought down by the Loyalists).

There is little chance in the short term of a significant split in the Republican movement. The much reported robberies and the Enniskillen bomb find are more likely to be the acts of those within the RUC and the British Army whose role is threatened by the ceasefire, or who wish to provoke the IRA into resuming the armed struggle.

The British cannot be driven out by force of arms alone. But this impose of Republican politics is above all an opportunity. Both the London and Dublin governments are weak and unstable. Neither is in a position to make any likely settlement stick.

Majoe's reliance on the Ulster Unionists is the product of the chronic divisions in the Tory Party (and in the ruling class as a whole) on the European Union. More importantly, it mirrors the political crisis in the whole British State.

The British demand that Dublin recognises its sovereignty over the six counties appears completely odd at a time when the long retreat from empire - Hong Kong and Gibraltar being the two latest examples - seems to be stirring up secessionist feelings elsewhere in the increasingly less United Kingdom.

Tories trapped

The Tories find themselves trapped in a situation where advance or retreat risks bringing the 200-year old oldicite crash- ing down. The "Irish Question" was the occasion for some of the biggest splits in the British ruling class in the last century and it would be surprising if it doesn't figure in the break up of the British state.

Likewise in Dublin the installation of a new pre-Republican government under John Bruton and the apparent stabilisation of the economy gives the impression of stability.

But the ruling class remains deeply divided over the introduction of divorce legislation and the need to regulate the law on abortion following the Supreme Court decision a couple of years ago on the "X" Case. Winning changes to the constitution will not be easy with Fianna Fáil in opposition and the government led by someone as unpopular as Bruton. It is on these questions that Sinn Fein will pay a heavy price for its reluctant support for women's rights and for its identification with the reactionary and clericalist Fianna Fáil.

But there is no other way to independence and self-determination for the Irish people than the linking of forces who fight for national independence with struggles for women's rights.

Our task in Britain is to build the withdrawal movement and to support the right of the Irish People to self-determination.
Berlusconi: from nowhere to oblivion

By Aidan Day

"The most reactionary government in Europe" was a title held by the British Conservatives for the whole of the 1980s.

Not until last year did they have a real challenger: inventing a party from nothing, building a governmental alliance from incompatibles, and taking political office in one of the continent’s most unstable countries, Silvio Berlusconi.メディア moguls turn politician. The man from nowhere.

And it is beginning to look like that is where he is to return.

After 226 days in office Italy’s 52nd post-war government has perished. Faced by a stack of no confidence motions – including most importantly one from the Lega Nord allies – Berlusconi has resigned, his political career strangled in its infancy.

On the face of it, this latest casualty looks like just another mortality in the ritual slaughter which is Italy’s political system — the country’s governments have traditionally had a shelf life not much longer than Gorgonzola in the Summer time.

But behind all the blood and guts there is something more profound — that the Italian ruling classes are in a deep crisis. This is primarily a crisis of restructuring. It takes the weight of forms. It is both economic and political.

Europe

Berlusconi was given a clear mandate — modernise Italy’s political and economic structures in the context of the post-1989 European situation. He has been a dismal failure.

His first test was to put right Italy’s massive budget deficit in accordance with European Union strictures. He floundered straight away. His bungling gave birth to a massive opposition movement.

Not only did he manage to unite the various wings of the trade union movement against him and draw them into explicitly political activity, but he also brought mass protest back onto the agenda. Over a million people demonstrated on November 12 against the proposed cuts in pensions and health benefits.

Victim

If the Berlusconi experiment was born as an attempt by the Italian bourgeoisie to begin post-Cold War modernisation so too has it become a victim of this process.

This is most apparent in the corruption charges now being assembled against him. One of the most striking things about the Italian political situation is the division that has opened up between the judiciary and the executive wing of government.

The government cannot be said to be Italian. After 1991 the systems of political administration were becoming redundant — there was no longer a need to structure the whole of Italian political life around keeping out the Communist Party (PCI).

The blocks began to crumble. Big business wanted reform. It was no longer necessary to pay the high price of PCI exclusion — a deeply corrupt Christian Democratic party in permanent office, fuelled by the mafia, all under the benign approval of the church.

Perpetual corruption was becoming too burdensome. In a modern industrial western economy the need for constant pay offs and bribery slows down the turn-over of capital and gets in the way of profit. Business became less mercenary. The empowerment of the judiciary to clean up the country was deemed un-avoidable.

Disease

Someone was also needed for the second key strategic task: establishing a new centre right political formation. Because such a complete break with the past was called for the leading figure of the new government could not come from the discredited political classes. In stepped Signor Berlusconi.

With his band of middle management wannabees in a few months he conjured up out of nothing a fresh political party — Forza Italia. It was a remarkable phenomenon. A whole layer of the business classes became politicians overnight.

Now the party’s over. The experiment has got out of hand.

The judges are the beyond the control of the executive. After all, why should the prime minister be the only one in the country not to pay the price of business corruption?

Once it was announced that he was to be investigated his time was up as a political leader.

It has been precisely the fact of Berlusconi’s newfoundness to the scene that has been his undoing. He has not been able to shrug off his connections to his Fininvest business empire. Similarly, the freshness of Forza Italia means he has no inertia.

It was a TV invention. Its fragility was demonstrated back in July when the popular Milan prosecutor Antonio di Pietro was able to face down the government’s proposal to limit the power of the magistrates.

Television

It is instructive that television has become a key issue in the protests. The November demonstration included tens of thousands of media workers angry at Berlusconi’s proposals to reform the state network Rai. The plan was to distribute the seats on its governing body to the partners of the government coalition.

Political control over the means of mass communication was also the issue that brought to a head the conflict between the Lega Nord and Forza Italia. In a vote called by the Lega speaker of the chamber Irene Fivetti, Lega deputies voted against the government and opened up the fissure of the government bloc.

Future

The petit bourgeoisie regional populists of the Lega Nord remain at the centre of developments. With 117 of the 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies — more than both the National Alliance and Forza Italia — they are now in a position to determine the future direction of government.

Up to now they have been able to look for two ways — to their alliance partners who are implementing the austerity measures and to their base in the middle classes who want reform. Boschi has been a skillful enough politician to pull off the balancing act — and has along the way been denounced by Berlusconi as a "despicable traitor" for his inconstancy.

Things may become more difficult now. With Berlusconi gone Forza Italia is more or less washed up. A new alliance between the various partners are the ex-communist PDS.

The PDS is trying to establish a popular front style of "constitutional government" that includes the small forces of the ex-Christian Democrats in the People’s Party, some bits of Forza Italia (without Berlusconi), the Lega, and themselves.

Its leader Massimo D’Alema has accepted that some cuts in pensions will be necessary. In his haste to prove how "re- responsible" the new party is he has rejected all possibility of a bloc with the class struggle forces of Rifondazione Comunista.

The cross-class alliance sought by the PDS will inevitably never come off. There is too much residual fear of parties that are any liaision with the workers movement — however tenous or treacherous it may be. Already 60 Lega deputies have threatened to resign if a link is established with the PDS.

The other possibility is a government led by the far right. First the leader of the MSI is beginning to emerge as the one character not smeared by betrayal or backbiting. This is the image he seeks — the man with a cool head in a crisis, a "post-fascist" statesman to lead a strong Italy.

This is what is behind the dissolution of his party into the broader force of the National Alliance — a formation of the right that has not the same fascist heritage. If there is a move to a more presidential style of rule, as some are hinting, he would be an obvious choice.

This would be disastrous. An outright victory for the far right would be the herald of a massive onslaught on the workers movement. This is not yet posseved however — the Italian bourgeoisie is not seeking this road at the moment.

There is then a striking similarity here with the debate going on in the political classes of Britain — how best to reconstitute the centre right in order to marginalise the labour movement and workers parties?

And who is to be the Christian Demo crat to implement the austerity? If this proves insufficient is it necessary to turn to the far right forces of authoritarian populism?

The situation therefore remains very fluid. The mass movement has not given away. The deferral of the austerity measures to the Spring only postpones the necessary confrontation. When it emerges from it will shape the future not only of Italy, but the whole of Europe.
Scandal of Militant’s stance against Bosnian struggle

Recent issues of Militant have carried letters critical of that organisation’s outrageous refusal to either support Bosnia’s right to self-defence or to call for the lifting of the imperialist arms embargo on the besieged country. Militant has so far refused to publish this letter, from Socialist Outlook’s ALAN THORNETT. Thornett has travelled in the region with International Workers’ Aid and written extensively on the war.

I was appalled at the dreadful article on Bosnia in the December 9 1994 Militant by John Bulaitis. This article refuses to support the Bosnians against Nato/Serbian aggression and the Greater Serbia project; defines Bosnia as an ethnic population as “Muslim”; refuses to recognise that the struggle for national rights is a class issue; falsely regards the conflict as an ethnic civil war; refuses to call for the lifting of the arms embargo and regards talk of a multi-ethnic Bosnia as “pure fantasy”.

It also, scandalously, argues that Bosnia has never, in any case, been a “distinct nation”. Before the war Bosnia’s three main ethnic (or really confession) groups were 31.3% Serbs, 17.3% Croats and 43.7% Muslims. The divide was religious rather than ethnic, since particularly in the cities. Ethnic conflict and the rise of Serbian nationalism was delib- erately promoted by the racist Milosevic project. It was not an “inevitable” result of the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Bosnia is an historic nation which has existed for 2,000 years in various forms. Even during the Yugoslav Federation, the bulk of the population saw themselves as Bosnian first. The notion that Bosnia is not a nation because it is multi-ethnically is fundamentally flawed. Socialists should be opposed to the notion of ethnically pure states—especially now when we have Sweden and Austria as test cases. Socialists should be in favour of the right of nations to self-de- termination including their right to secede. We support opposition to their oppres- sors and this is not altered by the politics of their leaders, pro-capitalists or otherwise.

The national question and the right to self-determination is a vital working-class issue which is fundamental for the struggle for socialism in ex-Yugoslavia. Socialism cannot be meaningfully advanced on the basis of the defence of these basic demo- cratic rights.

The unity of the working class has to be built on this—our abstract phrases. The call for workers’ defence squads as a precondition for supporting the defence of Bosnia is a confused cop-out. The Bosnian working-class is defending the country at the present time. Many of them are organised by units raised by the trade unions. The miners’ brigades defending Tuzla, for example, are all composed of Muslims, Serbs and Croats—all fighting to defend Bosnia.

—For a copy of the cited article from Militant, send two first-class stamps to us at PO Box 1189, London N4 2UJ.

Socialist Outlook

Facing mass unemployment, ramp- ant employers equipped with savage anti-trade union laws, and a war on hard-won employment, 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 politi- cally united by its own crisis, its require- ment to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given deter- mined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to frag- ment 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.

The response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist poli- tics of ‘new realism’, effectively pro- claiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretense that they of- fer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply furthered and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and un-

Where We Stand

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rights. New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformism, seeking no new party of the workers — for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democ- racy — can never be achieved under capital- ism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these dem-ands ever be achieved under the bu- reaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a Marxist current, based not on the brutal totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the fame, textless ver- sion of ‘marxism’ beloved of armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradi- tion 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 ma- jority of society — to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and estab- lish 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 pension-

ers, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, 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 co-thinkers in 40 coun- tries world-wide.

Sectarianism

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 pos- turing and abstention 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 revolu- tion. The oppressed must organise them- selves and fight now against their own
feedback

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters. Letters over 400 words may be cut. Write to 'Feedback', PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UW.

Philippines, book appeal

As readers will see in this Socialist Outlook, the Filipino left is turning away from its traditional reference point with Mosiuo, Groups like BISG (members of Socialist Outlook 62) and the MultiNational Co-ordinating Body are organising new revolutionary organisations with a combined membership of over 10,000.

The Fourth International is eagerly answering requests from these organisations for English-language Marxist literature. Socialist Outlook is sending a shipment of books to Manila on January 24.

More than 30 volumes by Leon Trotsky, Ernest Mandel, James P. Cannon, Alan Thornett, Indian Fourth Internationalist Ramu Chattopadhyay and others have been donated by the Socialist Outlook staff.

If readers have books they would like to give for the shipment please contact your Socialist Outlook seller or mail them to 'Outlook International', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UW.

Strategy from Bolivia

Charles Mullett's 'Comment' article ['A Bolshevik Century?', Socialist Outlook 73-74] poses very real questions for Leninists like Socialist Outlook. We continue to defend a basic strategic line for Britain developed out of the experiences of the 1917 Russian revolutions and adapted for the west by Lenin's Communist International and those who defended its tradition.

Mullett attempts to stress the limits of what we can learn from 1917 - arguing that Bolshevism was no longer the historically specific form of the Russian revolution. Mullett concludes that a part of the Trotskyist tradition has mistakenly superimposed the Russian experience onto the modern world - a 'copy of Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution in their akcrack pockets, eager to 'spot the Kerensky' and give advice on defending the local Kornilov.'

Sadly it is Mullet who is mistaken. Of course the Leninist Trotskyist tradition must admit it has made mistakes - but not in defending the basic propositions we carry forward from the Russian revolution.

Many of these ideas - that only the workers and peasants can successfully lead the revolution, that democratic gains can only be consolidated through social revolution, that this requires the independence of the revolution - are very real questions for Leninists like Socialist Outlook.

In Brazil, fighting for independent working class politics, in South Africa, working for a break with the ruling rich, in Belgium, confronting the politics of the popular front, and worldwide - it is the living continuity of Bolshevism which the Fourth International represents and represses this period of late capitalism.


'A Bolshevik century?' The question mark says it all. How can we even talk of 'A Bolshevik Century?' [Socialist Outlook 73-74]. At best, perhaps, a Bolshevik decade - 1917-1927 and the defeat of the opposition, the victory of Stalinism and the transformation of the Communist International from organiser of the world revolution into a branch of the Stalinist foreign office.

In retrospect I would go even further back. The banning of factions at the 'Bolsheviks' 18th Congress, one of Lenin's few mistakes, was the beginning of the end. It was the foundation on which Stalin could build his bureaucratic strangulation of the revolution. How can we talk of a Bolshevik century - a century which saw the physical liquidation of the leaders of October: a century in which the political self-creation of the imperialist colonies has resulted in even greater exploitation in the form of neocolonialism; where the 'ethnic diversity' of the nations in the Czar's 'prison house of people' has been hideously transformed into xenophobic madness and the revival of anti-semitism; a century which saw the destruction of the most powerful working class movement in Germany - and ended with the geographical elimination of the USSR itself.

Bebel, at the turn of the century, described the 19th century as the century of hope and predicted that the 20th would be the century of achievement. The October revolution seemed to give flesh to that prediction. Now history will regard October as a Marxist event and the Paris Commune - an example of what can be, a blueprint for the future.

What we have left is a nuance of Bolshevism, a kernel of what we must safeguard for future generations.

Charlie van Gelderen, Cambridge.
Troops out of Chechnenia!

Battles are still raging in the Chechen capital Grozny as we go to press, as the Russian invasion runs into the predicted stiff resistance.

The full extent of the casualties cannot be assessed, but it is clear that the Chechens will not be easily intimidated. The Chechens have been prepared for a long struggle and have already shown their readiness to fight.

The Russian offensive has been met with fierce resistance from the Chechens, who have shown a remarkable level of determination and bravery.

Chechen irregulars hold up the night of Russian army attackers.

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