Stop Labour making Tory cuts!

Council cash squeeze sparks mass protests

TORY cuts imposed on council budgets have triggered an angry fightback throughout the country.

In NEWCASTLE, 6,000 council workers and 2,000 teachers staged a 24-hour strike on February 1 in protest at a £20m cuts package. 12,000 marched through the city.

Thousands have also been on the streets in demonstrations and lobbying in TAUNTON, OXFORD, BIRMINGHAM, COVENTRY and other towns and cities, as the scale of the cuts in education, social services, fire and other key council services hits home.

But what are Labour councillors doing? With a few honourable exceptions, instead of leading this popular revolt against Tory policies, many have been actually drawing up packages of cuts.

The old argument that Labour’s “caring” cuts are less painful than Tory cuts has been wheeled out again, but with less credibility than ever.

The timid councillors doing the Tories’ dirty work reflect the wretched right wing politics of Tony Blair’s front bench. Instead of leading the opposition they are leading the retreat.

It has been left to the unions to express the growing tide of anger, as they have in Newcastle. They must demand that Labour councillors vote and campaign against the cuts; that Labour councils defy Tory spending limits; and that the party leadership commit a Labour government to reverse the Tory cuts.

Unions must fight for jobs and services
Assembly unites anti-racists

By Terry Conway

A small but important step forward was taken by the anti-racist movement at the National Assembly Against Racism which took place on February 4.

Around 700 people attended the conference (which took place in plenary sessions and did not take resolutions) heard a host of speakers.

These included Labour MPs Gordon, Short, Grantham, Al-Makbul, Cohen and Livingston, MEP Pauline Green and TUC leader John Monks, who said that the TUC would shortly be calling another march against racism, this time in the North.

Of the MPs, only Livingston called for the repeal of all immigration laws and none attacked the Labour leadership's partisanship on these questions.

There were speakers from organisations such as the Asian Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Church Commission for Racial Justice.

But the reason for the day was set by the moving testimonies from those at the sharp end of racist policing; those campaigning around deaths in custody and those raising the failure of the police to pursue people involved in brutal racist attacks.

Antideportation campaigns were also given a voice, and the testimony of Ivory Coast activists and Asian doctor datasete of the Campfield immigration prison, Francis Dickson-Brissaou, who is due to arrive on February 5, was particularly poignant.

The lessons of Auschwitz were on the lips of many, and a refreshing number put forward a class analysis of the rise of racism. Dave Landau of the Jewish Socialist Group raised the sections of Cable Street, while Ken Livingstone argued that divisions on the German left aided Hitler's rise to power.

Charter

The conference saw the launch of an anti-racist charter for the new millennium, drafted by Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Committee (THARC), which will be the focus of a recall conference.

While the Assembly did not adopt or formally consider this document, it was the focus for many contributions from the platform and in the limited sessions for speakers from the floor.

The need to build unity across the different sections of the black community - African, Caribbean and Asian - and for black leadership of the movement was a key theme.

There were some attempts to draw lessons from the split in the Anti-Racist Alliance, through warning against self-proclaimed leaders, and recognising the importance of giving a voice to those like the family campaigns who are actually confronting racism in practice.

Black nationalism and separatism were fairly muted, and the need to win the labour movement to the anti-racist struggle was given prominence.

Many of those who argued for legislation outlawing racist harassment, such as Harry Corbett MP, at the same time pointed out that one could not point out that one could not rely on the law and support the right to self-defence.

Axim Hajde from NUCPS, while welcoming the concept of a charter, said that his organisation was not convinced that creating a new organisation was the way forward.

A key strand of opinion, most clearly motivated from the platform by the Newham Monitoring Group, argued that the existing charter was too detailed and what was needed was a series of more limited principles.

He cited No Platform, Self-Defence, and the necessity to confront racist ideas and mobilise in whatever context they occurred, as vital to this.

Socialist Outlook supporters were heartened by the day's proceedings. We have long argued for unity in the anti-racist/anti-fascist movement and believe this task is becoming more urgent as the racism grows in confidence.

Dangers

The present charter rests too much on reliance on the state to be an adequate vehicle for this process, but we are aware of the dangers of those on the far left who want to make agreement with every dot and comma of their ideas a precondition for action.

We will be participating in the forthcoming discussions around the charter.

While we argue for the most extensive and democratic debate, we will also be working locally and nationally to promote unity in action against the rise of racism and fascism.

2,000 people braved torrential rain in Cardiff on January 28 to demonstrate against racism in South Wales.

The march was led by the family of Mohan Singh Kular who died in December after being found in a pool of blood outside his shop in North. Three men have been charged with his murder.

The march was one of the biggest ever mobilisations against racism in Wales.

This kind of unity in action against racism is needed now more than ever. Although Mohan's death is the latest in a long series of recent deaths, it did occur in a period of increased violent attacks by racists.

The Welsh valleys now experience some of the worst housing, lowest wages and highest unemployment anywhere in Britain. This is the breeding ground for racism.

Wales ARA has monitored a dramatic rise in the number of racist attacks across South Wales. There were also signs of an increase in physical attacks and death threats made.

Campsfield on Sea?

HASLAR prison in Gosport is one of several new 'detention centres' for asylum seekers, the best known of which is at Campsfield, Oxfordshire.

It is being used to hold more than 100 migrants - mainly reghs fleeing brutal regimes.

None of these people have committed crimes, yet they are imprisoned without trial, with very little access to outside support.

Saturday 28 January saw the campaign to free the Haslar detainees hold its first public demonstration.

Portsmouth Peace Council has set up the campaign in order to fight this dhron.

Last week the Home Office obtained an exclusion order allowing the police to hold protesters onto a small piece of land.

Some distance from the gate entrance. This scene epitomises what the racist 'Fortress Europe' are all about.

More Arabs face police harassment

By Robert Race

In apparent coordination with Israeli intelligence, the British authorities have arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act several Palestinian activists who have lived for many years in London.

Although most have been released without charge, two - Nada Zekra and Jawad Bishmeh - have been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions.

The evidence presented against them is entirely circumstantial. This scene epitomises what the racist 'Fortress Europe' are all about.

Police continue to harass Palestinians living in London, many of whom have been interrogated about their politics, and about their religious views.

Police have also contacted employees seeking information about Palestinian workers. This harassment has been supported by the racist press, and through the put pressure on the British government from this regime.

In response to this harassment, a new campaign has been established. Called Action for the Rights of Arabs in Britain, it aims to oppose and publicise the criminalisation of Arabs, to support the victims of such victimisation and their families, and to ensure their freedom of speech.

It plans to issue a Rights Guide in Arabic and English, to expose the use of immigration and security laws against political refugees, and to organise a 'Hicline' of lawyers who will offer support.

Members of the campaign will picket Bow Street Magistrates Court at the next arrest for Jawad and Nada - 10:30 am, Thursday 16 February. Further information from Action for the Rights of Arabs in Britain, 25 Horsell Road, London N5.

NO PLATFORM FOR FINI!

Protest against visit to London of Italian fascist leader Gianfranco Fini

WEDS FEB 15 4:30pm

Chatham House

St James Square

London SW1
Blair’s blast from the past

THE CHAMPAGNE corks were clearly popping in the offices of the Observer and the Guardian after Tony Blair’s latest keynote speech in his campaign to scrap Clause IV of Labour’s constitution.

Under the euphoric and completely misleading headline “Blair’s attack on socialism, the Observer (January 29) welcomed him aboard as a fully committed liberal who has publicly jettisoned any pretense of socialist politics.

Surely able to contain his enthusiasm, political editor Anthea Hamilton declared: “It’s an amazing speech, an emotional and moving one.”

As ever, Blair’s en- thusiasm was dwarfed by every weasel word, declaring that “Tony Blair yesterday offered his party a crystallised version of socialist values. . .

Of course in closer examination the “personal statement of faith” which could yet form the basis for a revised Clause Four proves to be a forthright renunciation of any aspiration to remove and replace capitalism now or even in the indefinite future.

Anarchonism

Clause IV, argued Blair, means the “anarchonism of a command economy, common ownership with no boundaries.”

“Not a mixed economy of public and private sector. But common ownership of industry, retail and finance. Now that just does not make sense—either in the grounds of socialist principle or economic reality.”

So in the name of “socialist principle,” Blair insists on the need to retain not only capitalism (painfully termed the “mixed economy”) but also capitalism.

“We believe in success. We believe in enterprise. A just society cannot exist without its public servants and private entrepreneurs.”

Poor Tony cannot imagine a “just society” without its Robert Maxwell’s, its Rupert Mur- dochs, its Cadie Browns and other such pillars of “social justice.”

Of course an anachronistic society also needs exactly the same personnel: Blair gives no hint as to how the anachronistic raising excesses could be restrained. His vision is of a fantasy world in which the lion lies down with the lamb, and capitalism is somehow per-}

sued to act not for profit but in the public interest:

“We need both dynamic markets and strong public services; and both public and private sectors should be properly responsible to the public good.”

What is the public good? If it is different from healthy profits, who is to impose on Blair’s cherished entrepreneurs?

Canute-like, Blair appears to imagine he can stem the tide of capitalist profit-seeking.

Missing completely from Blair’s blinkered world view is any understanding that the ex- ploitation of labour is central to the drive for profit. His idea of reform is restricted to making capitalism more democratic.

The French revolution struck a devastating blow against clericalism and absolutism

Relying again and again on the idealistic notion of “social justice” within a capitalist society, Blair insists that it represents a “left of centre view.” “That a nation must be governed not for a small elite, but for the broad majority of people.”

But when the broad elite own the vast majority of the wealth and means of production, retail and finance, the reality is that they will continue to call the shots over the “broad majority” who are forced to work for the means of subsistence.

Property relations

The exploitation of workers under capitalism is not en- shrined in explicit laws which declare them unequal, but in the economic system, the property relations of capitalist society.

For Labour to renounce any intention to counter this root exploitation would be to deprive millions of the hope that even- tually the capitalist system would be replaced by something better.

Blair has of course cynically retained the word “socialism,” even while he strips it of any meaningful content. His aims and values are quite explicitly restricted to those of liberal (bourgeois) democracy.

His notion is that the “idealistic notion of social justice within a capitalist mixed economy” is a slogan for mass mobilisation.

“What do we want?” “A mixed economy with social justice!” “When do we want it?” “As soon as the entrepreneurs agree!”

His speech argues that socialism then.

Far from looking forward to the next century, Blair’s minimalist political aspirations are a pathetic, timid echo of the democratic demands which fo- cused the great bourgeois revol- utions—and which have led not to socialism but to capitulation states and governments.

While Blair invokes 200- year old slogans in his quest to ditch any call for nationalisation, we should recall that one of the early blows struck by the French revolution in 1789 was the nationalisation of church property.

The new, rising capitalist class which derived the principal benefits of the new regime are today the enemies of any extension of democracy. They saw the end of absolutism sim- ply as a means to strengthen their power and enrich them- selves.

We now see their system in world-wide crisis and decay. Unemployment, poverty, brutal exploitation, mass starvation, environmental destruction, ra- cism and a succession of vicious wars spell out the bankruptcy of a system which produces only for profit and in which the mar- ket is the new absolute ruler.

‘Social justice’

Tony Blair tries to persuade us that the system can be tamed, planned, and redirected to de- liver “social justice.” Socialism, he insists, is no more than “a belief about society.”

This concept of “society” is an empty abstraction, an illu- sion. We live in a class society. That’s what capitalism means.

There is no collective social expression of the needs of both classes.

The property and interests of the wealthy are protected by the state, which is a capitalist police force, its laws, its police and armed forces, its judiciary, its civil and military machinery of government.

In case Tony Blair hasn’t no- ticed, far from sharing any com- mon ‘society’, the interests of the exploited, the working class, are completely opposed to the interests of the capitalists who exploit them. They will always be counter- posed.

The trade unions and Labour Party were set up as part of the fight to challenge that exploita- tion. Clause IV, for all its limi- tations, represents the aspiration for a fundamental change of system, an aspiration to genuine socialist values. This is why Blair is so opposed to it.

Preemptive betrayal

In seeking to slam the door on this hope of something better, Tony Blair is breaking new ground in only one respect: in- stead of seeking election on radical policies and abandoning latterly, he seeks to get the betrayal over before the elec- tion, and run for office offering nothing more as a platform than the fact that he is not John Ma-

Almost 100 years ago, Rosa Luxemburg, leading revolu- tionary in the German social democratic party, fought the idea of an early Tony Blair. Her words ring terribly true today:

“The final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the social- democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class movement against this order, for the suppression of this order.”

For genuine socialists in to- day’s unions and in the Labour Party the fight for socialist poli- tics begins with the battle for de- feated Clause IV, but must lead on from that to the development of a fighting programme going well beyond the illusionary quest for ‘social justice’ under capi- talism.
Job-seekers Allowance: wage-cutter's charter

By Terry Smith

DRACONIAN new elements of the Tory Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) are emerging each week, as Peter Lilley's moves to scrap the dole grinds its way through Parliament.

Not only will tens of thousands of unemployed be immediately denied under the new scheme, but thousands more each month would be ruled ineligible under brutal new restrictions.

Claimants will be forced to enrol in a laughably-named 'Jobsearch Plan', in which they declare the lowest wage for which they would be willing to work.

This opens up a Dutch auction in which Chapeco employers looking to push down wages take their pick of the applicants with the lowest expectations.

But it also offers another pre-text on which claimants who declare more sensible aspirations could be denied benefit. Those asking for too high a wage will certainly be deemed as not genuinely seeking work.

To make matters worse, the Jobsearch Plan would also require an unemployed person to be able to work at just 24 hours notice - in a new step towards complete casualisation of labour.

Disqualified

Failure to meet this deadline - even if this is because they cannot find care for children or elderly dependants at home - would result in the claimant being disqualified from Jobseekers Allowance.

Stingent conditions will also be imposed on the number of times claimants are forced to approach local employers, scour newspaper ads and visit local Job Centres seeking work.

Benefit staff, working to tough new targets for savings to be made through detecting 'fraud', will be pressed into the most callous reading of these tight rules.

Already most claimants face a reduced rate of benefit because they are assumed to have lost their jobs through their own fault.

But the JSA will not have a reduced rate; many will lose out on benefit altogether.

Amid this carnage - and the imposition this April of the new system of Incapacity Benefits designed to strip benefits from 250,000 people with long term sickness and disability - Labour's front bench remains eloquently silent.

The unions must do more than whinge at the injustice of the JSA: they must join forces to fight the Tory offensive, de-mand a Labour government reverse these savage attacks, increase benefits and implement a minimum wage.

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NHS cuts: some victories for the good guys

By John Liston

WHILE Virginia Bottomley wrangles with a tide of statistics showing that her marketed policies are bringing changes to the NHS, some important victories are being notched up by campaigners.

The most glaring weaknesses of the market system is its failure to recruit and train sufficient doctors, nurses and medical staff to keep vital services going.

Nurse and midwife training has been drastically cut back, prompting serious staff shortages in parts of London, while early February has seen casualty units in various parts of the country forced to close due to a shortage of staff.

Now figures produced by inner London health authorities reinforce the long-standing claims by campaigners such as London Health Emergency that the closure of 1,000 acute hospital beds in the capital every year for the past decade has reduced many key hospitals to state of crisis.

A conference on February 18 at the nearest hospitals (Horneth and the Royal London) which are expected to take the strain were running with their beds consistently around or even over 100 percent full.

The new report adds weight to the growing demand for a halt to further hospital closures, which are generating a new wave of agitation across London.

A conference on February 18 on the state of London's health services sponsored by the Evening Standard has already attracted over 1,000 applicants for just 850 tickets.

Elsewhere, too, pressure is being brought to bear to block hospital closures.

After the success in defending London's Central Middlesex Hospital, a massive outcry in Hertfordshire has apparently persuaded health chiefs to refer plans to close two of the county's four A&E units.

No formal decisions are now expected until after the next election. A similar retreat by health chiefs in the North West, which has lifted the threat to 'rationalise' acute hospital services in the Merseyside area.

And protestors in Birmingham are celebrating the reprieve of services after South Birmingham health authority retreated from imposing ET 5.5c cuts on the local Community Trust.

For the first time in years, there is confidence among health campaigners that some of the cuts can be fought and defeated. But the fight must still be waged.

In London, efforts will now be focused on halting the threatened run-down of Guy's Hospital.

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New storm over education cuts

By Harry Sloan

WITH SCHOOLS facing a cut in real spending power and 120,000 extra children entering the education system, there is no sign of the 'peace in the classroom' promised by Gillian Shephard.

Thousands of teaching posts are at risk, bringing the threat of class sizes rising to all-time record levels - many will be 40 and above, making a nonsense of any talk of quality in education, and turning the national curriculum into a sham.

Though morale has been knocked back after the surrender on SATS tests, unions have begun to resist.

Ballots

In Oxford both NUT and NAS/UEW are balloting on one-day strikes acts of protest at the crucial County Council meeting on February 14.

Strong pressure for action has come from angry parents, many of whom joined the 3,000-strong march through Oxford last month, and thousands more of whom have since been attending a series of packed local meetings across the country.

At least one school's governors have adopted a deficit budget, while others have joined the call for schools to be closed to back the lobby on February 14.

NCG and NAS/UEW for one-day stoppages are also being held in Northamptonshire, Lancashire and Islington in London.

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GMB splits Newcastle fight

HE MAY be strong on matters of social justice and a founder of the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State, but where does GMB leader John Edmonds really stand on the fight for council jobs and services?

The question has added weight following the GMB's attack on local government members in Newcastle to cross UNISON picket lines on the February 4 Day of Action.

Newcastle's Labour council is threatening to axe 200 teachers, 20 social workers and six homes for the elderly.

Three day centres and 30 per cent of meals on wheels.

But instead of joining UNISON in blocking and campaigning for action, Edmonds' union did nothing. Tony Blair would be pleased.
3-way Tory squeeze on jobs

by Harry Sloan

COUNCIL services are facing the worst spending cuts for 30 years as they fall victim to a three-way squeeze from the Tory government.

- The level of central support grant to councils is being slashed by 0.4 percent in cash terms, while inflationary pressures demand an increase of up to 3 percent to stay level.
- As if that cut were not enough, most councils also face tough ‘capping’ restrictions limiting the amount they can raise from the council tax, which is rated as ruthless clampdown in London, this is having the heaviest impact in the top shrine counties, triggering anguish among protest from Tories as well as Labour and Liberal councillors.

3 pictures to the boot in, ministers have disregarded warnings from Education Secretary Gillian Shephard that as many as 10,000 teaching jobs could be axed if the teachers pay award, expected to be 2.9 percent, is not fully funded by the government.

Council cash pays for 60 percent of school budgets, most of it on pay. As Miss Shephard pointed out in a leaked letter to cabinet colleagues: ‘If teachers’ pay went up by 3 percent, schools would need to find resources equivalent to the loss of 7,000-10,000 teaching posts to fund it. This further tightening of staffing ratios in today’s class sizes would shoot up.’

Main target

Education, taking the largest share of council spending, has been the main target for cuts, triggering a growing revolt by school governors reluctant to impose redundancies, and adopting varying tactics from settling (illegal) deficit budgets to threatening mass resignations to force the blame back onto councils.

But social services — notably services for the elderly, fire services and other important support services are also facing brutal cuts.

The scale of the actual shortfall facing each council varies widely, but Oxfordshire faces a shortfall of up to £22m this year, Taunton £22m, Birmingham £41m and Newcastle £22m over three years.

But while Birmingham’s right-wing Labour council leader Theresa Smith has locked unashamedly to axing 800 jobs (hoping for voluntary redundancies), other councils have opted to defy Tory spending limits.

Shropshire’s Lib-Lab council has adopted a deficit budget — with the backing of local Tory MP John Biffen. Now what would Tony Blair have to say about that?

● IN SCOTLAND, a separate budget means threats of cuts of up to £320 million.

Birmingham’s community fights back

By Bob Whitehead

BIRMINGHAM Community Conference has taken the lead the defence of local services and jobs.

Following the Labour Group’s near acceptance of a £45 million cut in the government grant, it organised a lobby of a group meeting, with 150 people. Both events generated substantial press coverage. Both were built with posters, leaflets and street stalls.

And now March 25th has been named the day for a city centre demonstration with the theme of defending public services and jobs.

The Community Conference will seek to involve the RMT, who are campaigning against rail privatisation.

The shock of the savage cuts ordered by central government seems to have generated a new mood of resistance, at last.

There is a lot of talk of industrial action. But we cannot shake off the years of defeatism overnight.

Confidence needs to be carefully built and organised. In particular, many sectors are cautious about going into action on their own.

The role of the Community Conference is to overcome this by uniting the different areas in common activity. So far, the strategy seems to be working.

Victory for Postal worker solidarity

By a postal worker

A TWO DAY walk out by 15,000 London postal workers put the brake on management’s offensive against conditions, jobs and union organisation.

When management suspended all 150 delivery staff at North West District Office Camden on January 19 all district offices in London - bar one - struck in response. The next morning most delivery offices in London were out too.

With millions of mail items held up management quickly backed down promising to lift the suspensions and take no further disciplinary action.

The dispute stems from the introduction of the Computer-Assisted Delivery Revision System which involves a massive increase in workers’ workload.

In early January around 650 workers walked out when a union member was suspended for refusing to get into a dangerously overloaded van.

They returned to work only after intense pressure from union officials and pressures of legal action and improved health and safety.

In a single week 50 workers were suspended for alleged “slow working”. Hundreds of casuals were brought in to take over deliveries.

After a further one hour strike delivery staff were instructed to sign a declaration waiving their right to strike. Refusal was met with suspension, and then the spreading industrial action.

None of the key issues were resolved in the back to work agreement — which only went through after pressure from the national leadership on their membership.

A major opportunity for the whole workforce to go on the offensive over CAFD, job losses and new duties was rejected by a leadership more concerned about the union’s bank balance and its good relations with Royal Mail management.

For postal workers the lessons are clear — there will be more fights over jobs and conditions. General Secretary Alan Johnson and the national leadership will not lead a fight.

We have to build an alternative leadership in the union which has the respect and support of the membership.

For all workers and the labour movement as a whole, the postal workers’ action shows how solidarity can win, and that those who face widespread strikes the anti-trade union laws are not worth the paper they are written on.
Socialism key in fight against oppression

Don’t let Blair play ‘equality’ card!

By Peter Burton

THOSE WHO wish to abandon Clause IV argue that it says nothing about the kind of equality that a modern Labour Party should have at the centre of its concerns.

True enough, and it could be scarcely be argued that the Labour Party of 1938 would have considered adding the objectives of equality for women, black people, lesbians and gay men, and the disabled, had they been suggested.

But the reasoning of “modern Labour” is thoroughly fallacious. Socialists have always understood that genuine equality for those many who suffer from oppression in society can only be achieved by a fundamental change in society itself.

Liberals – even some Tories – can support such individual measures as an equal age of consent for gay men, or equal pay for women, or rights of access for the disabled, or condemning of racist violence.

Campaigning for all these is vital in itself. But while society as a whole is unequal because of the underlying economic system, it is impossible that fundamental equality can be won.

Hence the socialist commitment contained within Clause IV is not counter-poled to the fight for an equal, fair and just society. On the contrary, to achieve these goals demands a combined struggle in both spheres.

The capitalist market operates on the basis that the few profit from the labours of the many. Some exploit, and the rest of us are exploited.

Inequality is basic to capitalism, that inequality occurs in social existence too, and not by accident. For example, the inequality of women, and of lesbians and gay men, is rooted in the privileged position occupied by the patriarchal (male-dominated) family system.

Women are the home-making, child-rearing, pin-money-earning, sex-object majority. Lesbians and gays, whose acceptance as genuine equals would undermine the domination of the much-promoted (if increasingly mythical) “Polar family”, continue to be marginal, second-class citizens, at best tolerated providing we stay out of sight.

Divided

Discrimination and oppression designed to keep us in our places also serves to reproduce a divided and docile workforce, as likely to blame fellow workers, “Europe”, or those of another race for our woes as to pin the blame where it really lies.

An economic system which seeks to achieve equality, however, not like a society where these oppressions have no place.

Clause IV, certainly, does not itself address these questions. It does create a framework in which the struggle for equality for ALL sections of society has its rightful and logical place.

The modernisers will seek to tinker with the system. They will use all the fine phrases. But until and unless Labour is willing to tackle the fundamental questions of the way society operates – in 1995 just as it did in 1918 – it will only treat the symptoms and never deal with the causes of oppression.

Socialists always argue for Labour to state its support for equality, and justice, loud and clear.

It should start by promoting the wide range of equality policies it already has. It should throw its support behind the struggles against racism, against sexism, for lesbian and gay and disabled rights.

But far from representing a different approach from the vision of Clause IV, this really represents the same fundamental.

If we mean to win equality for all who are denied it in capitalist society, it can only be as part of the struggle to win “the full freedom of the industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible on the basis of common ownership” for (and by) the workers.

Add Clause IV to UNISON Rule Book!

THE CAMPAIGN for a Fighting and Democratic UNISON is urging branches to support the following Model Resolution for this year’s conference.

It would add to the union’s rule book the formula words set out in the old MUPE Rule book attached to Clause IV.

We would have been in the UNISON Rules agreed at the first conference.

“Add new point 4.6 in section B

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

Clause IV can block the road to ruin!

By Eileen Gersh

ALL OVER the country people are fighting against government road-building programmes.

All kinds of people are involved: young and old, well-off and poor. If your home is being demolished to make a road, you’re not going to take it lying down, unless you’re lying in front of a bulldozer.

The names of these battlefields – Twyford Down, Oakens Wood, Wanstead, Stanworth Woods – are becoming well known.

What has this to do with Clause IV? Well, in whose interests are these roads being built?

This is not just a perverse idea of the Tory government, that they will ease traffic problems and accommodate more cars and lorries.

Someone – not the car owners benefits from these road schemes.

The car manufacturer keep turning out cars and persuading people that driving conditions will be improved by new roads, (when in fact they will be made worse).

Is it clear that they have over-produced to them to complain that they can’t sell off their stock.

The car industry is a powerful lobby, and it is backed up by another arm of heavy industry, road construction business and quarrying companies, which hack out huge chunks of countryside for their materials.

Like the roads, these quarries destroy areas of natural beauty and scientific interest. Add to these the petroleum industry, which fuels the vehicles and road building machines.

Of course the Tory Party, the party of capitalism, listens to and serves powerful lobbyists: these are the kind of people from whom the party receives its funds.

It is much less responsive to the people who are victimised by the road building programmes – those who are left homeless without adequate compensation; whose health is ruined by asthma triggered by the toxic emissions of vehicles; those whose scientific or aesthetic pursuits are interrupted or wiped out; victims of road accidents.

What is the way to stop this depredation? To properly restrict the activities of big business would require innumerable specific, laws prohibiting various types of action on their part, laws without loopholes that they could dodge through.

There would have to be regulatory bodies to appeal to that were representative of all the people, not like some quangos, appointed by the government, and therefore sympathetic to big business.

All this is unimaginable unless there was recognition of the problem of fighting for change in a myriad of individual laws that led women and their supporters in the United States to demand an amendment to the constitution, the Equal Rights Amendment. So that’s where Clause IV comes in, as part of the Labour Party constitution. The campaigns that are involved in the road lobby should be owned and controlled by the people, with boards not appointed by the government but elected.

Then they could be held responsible and recalled if necessary. It’s obvious, anyway, that a nationalised system, like transport, must be planned on a nationwide scale, not privatised and given over to numbers of different companies, each under independent control.

A good national system of public transport, buses and trains, would greatly reduce the need for car travel and provide a cleaner, healthier environment, saving some of the beauty for the future generations.

Retention and improvement of nationalised British Rail should therefore be one of Labour’s highest priorities.

That is one of the reasons we say: No more privatisations! Retain Clause IV.
Clause IV fight finds groundswell of support

By Dave Packer

THE CAMPAIGN To Defend Clause IV has developed a spontaneous momentum amongst grass-roots activists across the Labour movement.

This was confirmed at the campaign’s national steering committee meeting held on January 15 in the contractors’ Town Hall.

Many trade unionists were amongst the 60 people present.

John Nicholson introduced the meeting with a report which showed the growing number of commitments and resolutions backing the Defend Clause IV Campaign.

Blair has been forced to ‘cancel’ the event and a new date is in the offing, a move which is self heading the bandwagon in the constituencies, while Prescott sets to work on the union bureaucrat.

Over half the Party’s MEPs, the Socialist Campaign Group of left MPs and many others from the so-called soft left, supporters of Tribune, CLPD, and the political centre have come in behind the campaign to defend the Clause.

Abusive

The growing anxiety in the Blair camp is illustrated by the abusive tone of Peter Mandelson and other right wing ideologues. Blair was forced to apologise for a press statement made by Mandelson which referred to his opponents as ‘mad as hell and infinite’.

Blair’s hopes lie in a combination of media back up, bureaucratic mis-leadership, manipulation of delegations to the Special Conference and the disbanding of the GMU (OMOV) of members.

If he succeeds in carrying the day for the right wing offensive against socialist policies and values, this is by no means a foregone conclusion, his will be a Pyrrhic victory.

The right wing will not only have angered the majority of grass roots activists in the party and the unions, it will have significantly revived and rebuilt the links amongst the left in the movement.

The revival of the left was a theme of Lord Monckton’s speech on behalf of the Campaign Group at the Steering Committee meeting.

He stressed that we have already changed the terms of the debate. It’s not about loyalty or confidence in the leader, he said, but about Labour’s principles.

A series of reports from the campaign in the trade unions was briefly introduced. Comrades were reminded of the way we won on Clause IV at the last Labour conference, and that the groundswell of support of the present campaign showed that the Party was not dead for the left.

We can expect a serious increase in constituency support at the special conference, but crucially we must hold on in the unions.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on the special conference. It was generally agreed that it was no longer possible to get this conference, deliberately timed to pre-empt most of the union conferences, called off.

Therefore, we must raise demands to make it as representative and democratic as possible.

The left are not afraid of a genuinely open and democratic debate, unlike Blair and the right wing, who plan to have only one item on the agenda – the leadership’s (still unpublished) redraft of Clause IV, and one vote, for or against the redraft!

Blair’s ‘Bambinos’ crated for slaughter

REPORTS to the Clause IV campaign steering committee showed the scope of activity in more than a dozen unions.

This week’s reports show by an accident in the white collar union MSF, a press statement put out by MSF General Secretary Roger Lyons in support of a Blair redraft of the Clause was withdrawn within 24 hours.

This humiliating public retraction was due to an explosion of protest from the membership across the country.

The rank and file ‘Left United’ is now on the offensive in MSF, and is calling for a recall conference and trying to win as many regions as possible – we have won so far, but eight are needed for a majority. In the London region there was an unini- mate vote to retain Clause IV together with a call for Lyons’ resignation.

A similar press statement by shop workers’ union USDAW was also retracted for the same reasons.

Here, as in other unions, the broad left is providing support for retention. Already there are several resolutions – some from traditional middle of the road branches – in defence of the Clause on the agenda of the US- DAW conference, one of the few union conferences which take place before the special conference, and where Blair is an invited speaker.

The rail union RMT will continue to support Clause IV, a position that has been reinforced by national political groups to prove the fact. The high profile, partly by the campaigning work of Rail Workers in Defence of Clause IV.

Despite statements by the Labour leadership, there are real dangers of a Blair culldown on Rail nationalisation.

A speaker from the RMT’s North East Regional Council gave an illuminating insight into the social composition of the Blair roadshow.

He described how his local CLP and the Trades Council had requested tickets to the Blair meeting, but were both refused on spurious grounds – apparently the CLP had not asked in advance, and the Trades Council was not recognized as an official part of the trade union movement.

In the telecoms union NCU, the broad left, which is affiliated to the campaign, feels confident that it can keep its NEC in line, but needs a big campaign at grass roots level.

The London district of the Fire Brigades Union has already affiliated to the campaign and donated £250.

In the TGWU, several regions have also come out for retention, although the Midland Region 5 will be a tougher nut to crack.

Meanwhile the leadership of the GMB have made it clear that if there is no commitment from Blair on nationalization they will vote for the retention of Clause IV.

The delegates from public sector union UNISON reported that they had a good chance of winning a majority of the Affiliated Political Fund committees.

London and the Midlands were assured, but again he stressed the need for a campaign in the rank and file.

Blair’s ‘Bambinos’ crated for slaughter

TONY Blair has given us a taste of how decisions are going to be taken in New Labour – by unelected full time officials.

The Brighton Young Labour conference was an exercise in how to prevent discussion.

Even before the weekend had got underway left delegations were being ruled out of order. The left-inclined RMT were prevented from taking part on a technicality.

Student groups – bastions of Blairism – were allowed to affiliate twice; once as Young Labour Groups, once as student groups.

This gave them twice as many delegates.

When the Clause Four vote was called, the result by show of hands was too close to call. But by the time of the card vote this had miraculously turned into a 4 to 1 majority in favour of Blair.

Diane Jeuda marched the whole USDAW delegation into her bedroom to let them know that anyone who voted for the retention of Clause Four had no future in the union.

The TGWU abstained on the vote, and many left unions were not present, including the NUM, FBU and BECTU.

Given these circumstances the Clause Four result is not so disheartening.

A truly democratic conference would have come out with a different result.

Blair Dance

We put the Clause 4 in
You take the Clause 4 out,
You stamp on all our principles
And shake the lefties out,
You smile at everybody
As you spin around the floor:
That’s what it’s all about.

OH Tony, Tony, Tony,
OH Tony, Tony, Tony,
OH Tony, Tony, Tony,
Right foot forwards,
Blair, Blair, Blair.
Chechynya and the eclipse of the Russian Liberals

By Boris Kagarlitsky

IF SOME reckless analyst had suggested a year ago that admirers of Yegor Gaidar would be joining on Pushkin Square with followers of extreme nationalist Victor Aznavor to shout "Put the Yeltsin gang on trial!", he or she would have been dismissed as delirious. But Russian life is stranger than any kind of delirium.

Beginning on December 11, columns of tanks and 45,000 troops burn on the territory of the mutinous Chechen Republic, along the way shooting up peaceful villages and killing the health minister of neighbouring Ingushetia. Aircraft and artillery dumped tonnages of bombs and shells on the Chechen capital, Grozny.

Despite a television propaganda campaign, the anti-war movement quickly began to gather strength. Nor were the government's hopes of exploiting the racist prejudices of Russians against Chechens borne out.

On the contrary, surveys showed that the attitude of Russians towards Chechens, who had become the victims of aggression, became more favourable. Press reports of the bombing and shelling, from which the Russian population of Grozny suffered as much as anyone, played a considerable role.

The weakest spot in the authorities' new scenario was the lack of combat readiness of their own army — demoralised, poorly trained and without the slightest idea of why it was supposed to fight against citizens of its own country.

The war on Chechynya was still more absurd for the reason that the Russian government had spent three years allowing the Chechen regime of General Dzokhar Dudayev to do whatever it liked. After proclaiming independence from Moscow, Dudayev had done nothing to make independence a reality.

Russian laws continued to be enforced on the territory of Chechynya and the Russian rouble remained in circulation. There were no border checks and the Chechen government did not set up its own customs system. The inhabitants of Chechynya remained Russian citizens, dealing with their problems through the structures of the Russian federation. Chechynya did not pay taxes, but other regions of Russia also refused to forward tax revenues from time to time.

The only thing that Dudayev did that was at all out of the ordinary was to set up armed formations under his personal control, just as Yeltsin and the Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov have done. In addition, he delighted pittitants by issuing a series of Chechen stamps bearing his portrait, and with a quality reminiscent of matchbox labels.

It is quite clear that Dudayev was not so much seeking independence as aiming at winning special status for Chechynya within the framework of Russia or of a future Eurasion Union, the need for which the Chechen general stressed repeatedly.

The Moscow politicians for their part watched events in Chechynya without particular alarm. The semi-independent republic was an ideal place for laundering millions stolen in the capital and for cutting deals in smuggled weapons.

However, the crisis of the Russian regime, the economic collapse and unresolved failures in all spheres of domestic and foreign policy, forced Yeltsin's associates to look for a way out. While the Yeltsin government had bungled any attempts it made at constructive activity, it had unavailing emerged victorious from political crisis.

A victorious little war seemed like an attractive way to increase the popularity of the authorities, to crush the opposition and at the same time, perhaps, to postpone the elections and get rid of the faint hearted within the governments own ranks.

As military actions began in the country for a second time in little more than a year, the nerves of many "democratic" politicians gave way. Gaidar and the majority of the Russia's Choice parliamentaty fraction began to protest. Against all their expectations, they found themselves in the same camp with the left.

The social democratic politicians generally preferred to remain silent, and did not show up at demonstrations. The leadership of Russia's largest trade union federation, the FNPR, limited itself to expressions of "concern" over the bombing of Chechynya.

It is paradoxical that this time, unlike 1993, Yeltsin has acted strictly within the framework of his constitutional powers. The leading defenders of these powers once included people like Gaidar. They, of course, imagined that these provisions would be used only against leftists. But "justice" triumphed. The time has at last arrived to recognise that to a police baton all heads are equal.

It has been striking to observe how Gaidar and other liberals from the President's circle, who themselves took part in preparing earlier provocations, have proven so helpless when the provocations have been directed against them. They have been driven swiftly and unceremoniously into the same trap in which earlier
parliamentary oppositions became enmired. The need for a constant struggle against internal and external enemies is part and parcel of authoritarianism. This is why former allies and fellow travellers of the regime have become its victims. The circle has continually contracted. First the Communists were defeated; then wavering democrats were thrown overboard; now the turn has come of the privatizing "Westeners" themselves.

The task of seizing property has been fulfilled. The ideology of liberalism, which allowed the regime to create a mass base for itself, has been totally exhausted and discredited. This has made the ideologues themselves unnecessary ballasts for the regime.

"Serious people" understand that the time for seizing property has come to an end, and that the era of consolidation has begun. It is therefore time to replace liberal slogans with conservative ones. The idea of change is being replaced with the idea of order, and human rights by a police state.

The situation is complicated, however, by the presence of democratic instincts. On the one hand, the new social order is incompatible with democracy, while on the other, open dictatorship is impossible as well. Moreover, a certain heed must be paid to the West. The organs of repression, meanwhile, are un-prepared for really broad and systematic work. They are capable only of episodic aggression - raids, assaults and blockades.

The regime has been forced constantly to create democratic structures, and then, when they have fulfilled their immediate purpose, to abolish them. If these structures were to survive and acquire strength, they would be dangerous and destructive for Russian monopolistic capitalism. The Duma is less dangerous than was old Supreme Soviet, but it has begun to take on an independent significance all the same.

Appearing now in the uncustomed role of an opposition, the right-wing liberals are repeating all the errors of Yeltsin's earlier adversaries. By contrast, the left, the Communist Party, after suffering two defeats, appear a good deal. They appreciate that you cannot frighten the authorities with hysterical declarations and with little gatherings on Pushkin Square. The crisis in Chechnya has confronted the Communists with a new political situation. They are now losing some of their allies in the "patriotic" camp. But in speaking out against the war, they are once again acquitting their own face as the leading party of the left.

**CHECHNYA: an urgent appeal**

A DEMONSTRATION outside the Russian Embassy in Brussels last week delivered the following appeal from the Belgian workers' and intellectuals' opposition against the military intervention into Chechnya.

They called the attention of the Fourth International. The translation is by Duncan Chappel.

THE WAR in Chechnya is a war against the Chechen people. The conflict is an unprovoked war by Moscow. The tragedy is that the Chechens were the victims of the war.

The war in Chechnya is a war against the Chechen people. The conflict is an unprovoked war by Moscow. The tragedy is that the Chechens were the victims of the war.

The Chechen people have been subjected to a war of aggression by the Russian government. The Chechen people have been subjected to a war of aggression by the Russian government.

In the period of the Russian Revolution, the revolutionary Soviet government of Lenin and Trotsky won over the Chechens by offering them the right of national self-determination. The Chechen people proved to be invincible allies of the beleaguered revolutionaries.

On his march towards Moscow, the counter-revolutionary General Denikin had to leave behind a third of his army to guard the area inhabited by the Chechens and the closely-related Ingush people.

The mountain people, Denikin later wrote, had created a "beheading volcano". In reprisal, the counter-revolutionaries burned down one out of every five Chechen and Ingush villages.

The Chechens were brutally repressed by Stalin. During World War II the entire population, along with the Ingush people, were forcibly expelled to Central Asia.

About a quarter of them died on the road. After the war, they managed to force the Soviet authorities to allow them to settle in their homeland. Subsequently the Chechen-Ingush autonomous republic was reconstituted.

So it is not surprising that the first battle fought by the Russian troops sent to Chechnya actually took place on the territory of the Ingush people. In 1991, however, the Chechen regime, headed by Dokhaur Daudov declared independence from Russia.

At the time, the far-less numerous Ingush were not less坚持以over such a radical step, and therefore formed an autonomous republic of their own.

The Chechens, moreover, have a stronger tradition of resistance to Russian rule than many of the peoples of the republics that have gained independence.

When Daudov proclaimed the independence of Chechnya in 1991, this was the most radical step towards self-determination taken in a number of autonomous republics.

The Russian authorities feared he was starting a snowball rolling which could lead to the break-up of the Russian Federation, just as the USSR had disintegrated.

The current Russian intervention is Yeltsin's latest attempt to restore what Lenin called "the great prison house of nations".
Clinton bails out plunging peso

By Mark Wallington

IN MEXICO City the peso tumbles. The country's ruling elite stumbles close behind in a vain bid to shore-up their ailing currency. In the besieged southern state of Chiapas, the Zapatista-led "rebel government" continues to assert its political legitimacy, an important reminder that more than a year since the Zapatistas took up arms against the Mexican state there is still a vibrant opposition beating at the heart of the country's new crisis. It is a year on since the Zapatistas' own ambiguous welcome to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), embracing the US, Canada and Mexico.

Now the mass-based Convention for National Democracy, led by the civil and human rights activist and former presidential candidate Rosario Ibarra, has launched an international appeal, calling for opposition to the violent repression with which the Mexican state replied to the demands of the people of Chiapas.

The appeal states that the "only way of avoiding war breaking out in Mexico would be to meet the economic, cultural, political and social demands expressed by [the Indian communities]."

And in Mexico City the peso continued to plummet.

Now, the "international community" believes it can breathe again — confident in the belief that a "global crisis has been averted"

Yet a week's frenzied activity from bankers and the US President could never have achieved anything other than a short-term resolution to the country's liquidity crisis.

Default

Mexico, alongside Brazil, has been heading towards "default" for the past few years. The $50 billion rescue package will be gobbled up all too quickly.

Three years ago, when the 500th anniversary of Columbus's contact with the civilization of the Spanish single market, the significance was not felt in Latin America.

It is a continent deeply marked by a conflict of historical identity: part-European, part-indigenous, part-African and wholly at the bottom of the international priorities of its European progenitors. It is a crisis of identity which is particularly marked for Mexico. Their deformed integration into NAFTA, alongside the US and Canada, is the only recent attempt of its most profitable business to resolve this conflict.

At the time there were two arguments: one was that the consolidation of the industrialised world's largest market could only mean an expansion of trade and development. The other feared the creation of "fortress Europe", entrenched behind tariff barriers to protect its weaker regions, and immersed in internal disruption.

However, both projections were underscored by the fear that, if Latin America misses its footing among the megabucks of the emerging re-organisation of the world economy, it could be heading for what some have described as a "new dark age of marginalisation".

The facts are clear. For twenty years, Latin America and the Caribbean has been the developing world's worst economic performer. In the 1980s per capita income fell back ten years.

Interest payments on its gargantuan external debt make this impoverished region a vast net capital exporter to the developed world.

Today — and Mexico is no exception, quite the contrary — exports are still largely primary products with shifting prices and low added value, and its internal economies are bogged down in underinvestment, bureaucracy and bloated fiscal deficits.

In relation to Europe, the ambiguities of the past have deepened. Political contacts grew with the flow of exiles during the period of military dictatorships, and the regional presence increased in political international institutions such as the Socialists and Christian Democrats. Economic links with Europe weakened. The region still supplies almost half Europe's agricultural imports from the Third World, but overall trade with Europe has plummeted compared with that with the US.

Common Agricultural Policy restrictions, high tariff and other barriers, and discrimination in favour of imports from other regions such as the Mediterranean and Africa, are blamed.

Resentment

The treatment of Latin America's external debt causes particular resentment. Europe accounted for a third of the $415 billion total in 1990, about as much as the US, but because of better reserve provision its banks could more readily contribute to a solution, instead they defer to their US colleagues.

As far as public debt is concerned, European governments have shown less than even the minimal willingness to help which some have extended, for example, to sub-Saharan Africa.

Nobody expected 1992 to change any of this. Extrapolations from even the most optimistic EU projections of the impact of the new market showed minimal expansion for existing imports from the region.

Opportunities

Latin America's ruling elite knew that if they were to take advantage either of European opportunities, or, closer to home, moves towards greater regional integration, they had to find ways of disciplining their unstable micro-economies.

They have to curb capital flight, stabilise their currencies, and improve the number and quality of their manufacturing goods. And they must do all of it without deepening the region's gross social injustices and tearing their own societies apart.

They feel they have a right to demand European co-operation above all over the debt — a brake on development beside which all others pale.

It was Mexico, above all, who believed it possible to break out of this economic and cultural cycle. Its bourgeoisie cherished the vain belief that an easily convertible currency was one of the most important planks of a bridge which would lead the smiling nation to join the first world.

That myth has now been smashed and without any other emotional props it will not just be the Mexicans who will be finding the medium to long-term future with a certain degree of pessimism.

Coughing together

The next time Mexico's peso catches a cold, the US and Canada will have little choice but to cough along with it. No amount of vigorous debate about alternative currency regimes will stop that.

Three options have emerged:

- A currency board, in which the central bank issues currency only when it is backed by foreign exchange reserves. Proponents claim that the advantage actually lies with the Mexican government abandoning all pretexts at conducting monetary policy.

- The central bank propose pegging the exchange rate. The question however — at what rate?

Five pesos to the dollar would be unsustainable. Six pesos to the dollar would bring the US in a range because Mexican exports would be so cheap.

- The third option — revaluation of the pound in the finance ministry — is a 'managed float' where the exchange rate would be manipulated between broad bands.

Favourite or not its drawback is substantial. Given the considerable amount of time required for the central bank to replenish its reserves (if it can), a 'managed' uncertainty will not re-appear internationally for Mexico's domestic monetary and fiscal policies.

How long before a group of merchant bankers next have to throw $50 billion at Mexico?
Bhopal: the second tragedy

Written and directed by Mark Tully

Reviewed by Bala Kumar

Ten years on from the gas leak at a Union Carbide factory in Bhopal Mark Tully revisits the scene of the world’s worst industrial disaster.

The report focuses on how the big companies have shed all responsibility toward the communities of the poor.

Union Carbide’s pay out to the victims was far less than the sum that would have been required if the US based firm had committed its crimes at home.

Corporations will be able to use this precedent to hide from every wrongdoing committed abroad.

Tully suggests that the Indian government has been complicit in moving the case to India as a result of pressure from the Reagan administration – Carbide is an important partner in the US nuclear industry.

The Indian government compounded it crimes by arriving at a settlement over the heads of the gas affected people.

The survivors have formed their own organisation, the Bhopal Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan (BGPSU), made up of women.

Only a quarter of the claims have been settled. The documentary showed how claimants are pressured by officials to accept low awards. Most can’t afford the delay. One person dies of gas-related illness every day.

In a welcome break from the fake “objectivity” of reports like this Tully makes some hard hitting comments about the leverage that large companies enjoy in their dealings with governments.

He indicates the likelihood of repeats of such disasters in Mexico – where US companies have moved their most dangerous plants. We have been warned.

After Deng’s demise.

Will China break up?

By Aidan Day

According to the CIA China has a “50-50 chance” of falling apart after the death of Deng Xiaoping. The day of reckoning cannot be far off given his daughter’s recent confession that his health worsens daily.

The succession crisis is about to erupt in only one of the changing factors in the politics of the country. The prospects of a trade war with the USA looks large. And China’s economy is beginning to show signs of overheating.

First line in line to take over is President Jiang Zemin. He was Deng’s third choice as successor – He Ziyang was dismissed for being too liberal and Zhao Ziyang was purged because of his sympathies with the Tiananmen protesters.

Jiang has his base in the army. He is chair of the military affairs commission. The People’s Daily has recently issued statements calling for the people to “rally round” his leadership. He has lately been wearing his Mao jacket in place of his business suit.

Li Peng the Prime Minister is also hoping to benefit from Deng’s demise. He is worried that a reassessment of Tiananmen may be made post-Deng – he would inevitably come out badly from this because his known enthusiasm for martial law.

The CIA’s Pentagon report says that “the political fate of China is up for grabs”.

The balance is delicate: “there is a 50-50 chance that China would disintegrate under a post-Deng diffused leadership and internal conflict.

Power in general will gravitate away from the centre.”

The waiting game is made even more tense by the trade standoff with the United States. Michael Kantor the US trade representative has threatened 100 per cent tariffs on Chinese exports worth more than $2 billion.

Although the USA has never actually acted upon its threats of trade sanctions the warnings serve as an important intervention into the political life of the country.

As well as rising inflation and a flood of immigration from the countryside to the cities the disparities of wealth and income are beginning to cause social tension.

At the September 1994 Central Committee of the CCP Li Peng launched a fight to strengthen the power of the centre against localism and centralism.

It seems that at the subsequent meeting called to discuss the economy some serious differences emerged.

The Xinhua News Agency produced only a brief report. Contrary to usual practice none of the speeches were published in full.

Three areas of difficulty were identified: “a relatively weak agricultural base, difficulty in production and management of some state enterprises, and poor social security in some regions”.

All these are related to increasing inflation.

It is clear that market stagnation is beginning to turn into serious problems. The future is indeed, up for grabs.

China prices crisis

Since May 1994 inflation has accelerated further after many years at high levels. At the end of 1993 consumption prices for all residents broke the 10 per cent danger line.

By September 1994 the retail price index rose to 24.6 per cent and the consumption price index for big and medium cities rose to 24.6 per cent – which was the highest since 1949.

Food prices were 61.6 per cent higher than the same period a year ago. In October new peaks were reached. The State Statistics Bureau announced that consumption prices for all residents rose by 27.7 per cent compared to the same period a year ago, and was 1.7 per cent during September.

Of the 30 big and medium cities, 9 saw the consumption prices index increase more than 30 per cent. Changing even witnessed 38.2 per cent. The rural scene is even worse than that in the cities.

Zhang Kai

October Review December 1994
100 years after the Dreyfus affair, DAFYDD RHYS explores marxism and the ‘Jewish Question’

From Dreyfus to Auschwitz

ONE HUNDRED years ago a large crowd gathered in Paris to witness the public humiliation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army who had been convicted of spying for the Germans. The crowd spat and shouted “kill the Jews” as Dreyfus was stripped of his insignia and his sword ritually broken. Once deported to Devil’s Island his case unleashed a violent outpouring of anti-Semitism across France.

It took 11 years for the French government to admit that he had been framed and to admit his innocence.

Fifty years after the case Dreyfus’ granddaughter died at Auschwitz. Such is the dreadful unity of these two events, which mark the beginning and mid-point of our imperialist century.

Paris demonstration following 1939 anti-semitic bombings

Leon Trotsky’s re-evaluation

The deepening wave of anti-Semitism led Trotsky to re-evaluate his views on the whole matter during the 1930s. He saw that the expected assimilation had not occurred and that the Jews had developed further the Jewish language and created a vibrant Yiddish press.

He decided that therefore the Jews could be called a nation and that they therefore had the right, if they chose to exercise it, of a homeland of their own. Nevertheless he continued to oppose both Zionism and the Bundist ideas.

He opposed colonization of Palestine because “there is no such thing on our planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another”. He argued that the only way a Jewish nation could be brought into existence on the basis of mutual understanding would be under international socialism.

To those who argued that this was utopian Trotsky replied that the immediate task was to campaign for the right of asylum for all those Jews menaced by fascism. This call was taken up by a number of socialist groups, under the slogan “open the gates”. Sufficient to say the western government chose to keep them closed.

For Trotsky the rise of anti-Semitism was a product of the crisis and decay of capitalism, further proof that it could no longer contribute to human progress — anti-Semitism is today one of the most malignant con-

vulsions of capitalism’s death agony”.

In a prophetic statement of 1939 Trotsky predicted that the next stage in its development may result in the “physical extermination of the Jews”.

These views are of particular importance because they combine a commitment to a homeland for the Jewish people with a total opposition to the Zionist colonization of Palestine.

The choice between assimilation and Zionism is shown to be false. Neither complete denial of Jewish identity nor its affirmation on a racist colonialist basis is necessary.

Zionism or assimilation?

With hindsight the Dreyfus case can be seen as an ominous foretaste of the power and ferocity of anti-Semitism in this century. Not least because it occurred not in feudal Russia - the land of the pogroms - but in modern industrial democratic France.

It led Theodor Herzl, who witnessed the affair, to write his famous book The Jewish State, which has become the founding text of modern Zionism. He concludes that it is impossible for Jews and non-Jews to live together — instead an exclusively Jewish state should be established.

The social democrats of the time rejected this. They saw it as a self-imposed isolation — a diversion from the socialist struggle. They saw anti-Semitism as a feudal product destined to die away. Under conditions of advanced capitalism the Jews would be gradually assimilated and absorbed. Eventually they would cease to be a distinct group.

Lenin

This assimilation was seen as a desirable outcome. The Jews were not considered a nation because they did not possess a common language and territory. Such an outlook was shared by socialists as diverse as Kautsky, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky.

Russian social democrats assumed that assimilation would proceed in their country in the same way as Western Europe and North America.

Opposition to this approach came mainly from the Jewish Bund. This organization developed a programme opposed to assimilation demanding recognition of the Jews as a nation.

At the 1903 congress of Russian social democrats they demanded the right to be recognised as the sole representatives of the Jewish workers within the party, proposing to turn it into a federation of national groups. This was bitterly opposed by the majority and led to a split.

Exact opposite

It seems today that the assimilationist view was wrong, the Nazi terror of the 1930s indicates the exact opposite of its premises.

The crisis of capitalism, linked to the failures of the revolutionary wave that swept through Europe in the century’s second decade, produced a new kind of anti-Semitism: a product not of feudalism but of imperialism.
New vampire movie lacks teeth, but

Cruise Carries On Biting

AIDAN DAY reviews
Neil Jordan's film
Interview with the Vampire

IT TRIED to be sombre and lugubrious, a melancholy lament of those denied the release of mortality. It ended up as Carry On Biting – but without the tongue in cheek. Instead the tongues are dripping with blood. Gory neck chews follow superficial special effects, follow dull plot lines follow take-gothic-big-budget-backdrops on which the characters issue lamentations at their imminent mortality.

Jordan's rendition of Ann Rice's almost-but-never novel has just had too much money spent on it. He would have made a far better product with fewer dollars – the attempts at tangourous frailty might have turned out less rambling, more focused. Perhaps it's just impossible to make a horror movie that isn't a horror movie. If you're going for spatter then you do it properly - leave the lyrical gloom to others. Two hours of leaden music is boring.

All attempts to raise the pace fail. Tom Cruise just does not cut it as a tragi-comic actor. Unfortunately the funniest thing about him is his blond wig. He barks his lines to Brad Pitt in an atrophied monotone reminiscent of Rick Moran in the Young Ones: "So now we're in the cemetery sleeping on graves, happy now are you?"

The first section of the film is framed around Cruise's portrayal of a lordly vampire's initiation of a younger soul mate to share his right life. Unhappily for him his new blood brother is not so keen to go out on the town gouging joggers.

The Brad Pitt character wrestles with his guilt, trying to avoid taking human life to feed his hunger. He must be the world's first veggie vampire.

Well hidden
Any hint of sexual attraction between the two is well hidden. Aside from a few lingering caresses - "oh, you are so beautiful" - this is a pretty dull encounter. If this is homo-eroticism then bring back Kenneth Williams.

The one opportunity to introduce some genuinely interesting sexual tension arises when Claudia, played by Kirsten Dunst, is "made-up" to vampire.

Betropped with a mop of gold ringlets, the precocious Dunst comes between the two male protagonists. She is the best character by far – as long as you can keep Bonnie Langford out of your mind. Like all of her breed she is conditioned to eternal life - but unlike her two bloodsucking friends she is stuck in a twelve year old's body. The realisation of eternal physical immaturity is devastating.

Her relationship with vampire number two is under-explored. It would have been massively laden with complications and ambiguities – precisely the sort of things that make for good drama. Which this isn't.

Laughable merde

Killing Zoe, Cert.18, director Roger Avary.

By Steve Smith

THE SUCCESS of Quentin Tarantino will mean the cinema-goer is going to have to put up with many a half-baked imitator. Step forward Tarantino-ery, Roger Avary, and his laughably crap French film, Killing Zoe.

Avary is a 27-year-old American best known as the co-writer of Pulp Fiction. Killing Zoe is his directorial debut. It presents the exploits of a gang of low-life Parisian bank robbers whose heist goes horribly wrong. Sounds familiar? "Reservoir Dogs" was a justified description by one French writer.

In fact the film only resembles Tarantino's work in highly superficial ways. Tarantino's films are always superbly structured, economically crafted, contain a rare literary quality stemming from the brilliance of the dialogue and reveal a dizzying universe of pop cultural styles.

Killing Zoe is a negation of all these qualities. It is akin to one of those poorly written plane hijack films, where the only 'drama' arises from the anticlimax of the hostages being shot one by one.

Avary's film is structured around an unconvincing emotional triangle between three characters, Zoe (Eric Stoltz), Eric (Jean-Hugues Anglade) and Zoe (Julie Deply). Zoe is a professional American safe-cracker summoned to Paris by her childhood friend, the French-American, Eric. Eric is every Daily Mail reader's nightmare vision of a French revolutionary. An Algerian-loving, fascist-firebombing, drug-created journalist. He leads a gang of gun-toting, left-bank hippies on a mission to rob Paris's biggest bank on Bastille Day.

A mesmeric psychopath, he develops an homo-erotic bond with the naive Zoe, duping any woman who so much as claps eyes on his American friend.

Zed bed
But Zed tumbles into bed with a classy art-loving prostitute, Zoe. A tragicomic night is ended when Eric violently bocks her out. Zoe, however, has a day job at the bank.

When the heist goes disastrously wrong, Zed is forced to choose between loyalty to his fellow gang-members or saving the life of his new lover, now one of the hostages.

Most men have the good sense to keep their adolescent wet dreams to themselves— but not Roger Avary, who inflicts them on us with remarkable candour.

It is very hard to take the film seriously from the moment when Zoe (who Avary describes as a self-portrait) gives Zoe, the tart with an art degree, her first "on-the-job" orgasm.

French cinema gave birth to the modern 'sad' movie some 20 years ago with a young Gerard Depardieu being badly in Les Voleurs, and it is easy to trace this misogynistic lineage in Avary's decision to give his boy's fantasy some self-indulgent French art-house chic.

The absurdities of Killing Zoe are too numerous to detail, but Avary does defend his film on the grounds that it reveals the living for the moment nihilism of his characters.

No, I'm afraid not. The nihilism plot is always the last refuge of the scurvy direc-
WHERE WE STAND

Feedback

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers’ letters. Send them to Feedback, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UW. Letters over 300 words may be edited.

Back Serbia or Thatcher?

I CONTINUE to find your coverage of the Bosnian crisis a source of confusion. You devote half a page of issue 75 to an attack on Millitant, yet in truth they have given a space to alternative viewpoints than Socialist Outlook.

I also find many of the formulations in your article deeply unconvincing. For example, you suggest Bosnia has existed as a ‘historic nation’ for 2000 years. This introduces the un-Marxist concept of a nation above people, since this ‘Bosnia’ pre-dates the Slav occupation of the Balkans by some 1400 years. You completely fail to place the struggle in its historic context, namely the break-up of a feudal workers state into a series of imperialist dominated, capitalist mini-states.

Thus, you fail to distinguish between the differences between the various capitalist powers that have imposed their will on the region.

Serb Chauvinism would have fought to defend the integrity of Yugoslavia. It is certainly true that the Yugoslav constitution allowed for the right to self-determination of its constituent republics, but this does not mean that Marxists advocated its break-up. Surely we stand for a truly democratic and voluntary socialist federation? It is one thing for socialists to oppose the repressive Chetnik war against the Croats and Serbs, it is quite another for socialists to advocate Bosnian or Croat independence. That logic leads you straight into the camp of Helen Kohl and Thatcher.

The logic of the Socialist Outlook position on Bosnia is that rapprochement between the working class of Yugoslavia is impossible. This is a downright reversion to bourgeois nationalism and precisely the kind of view that capitalism requires in order to maintain its world-wide. John Laurence, Harrow.

Warton 4

On Wednesday 23 February 1994 myself and others attended a British Aerospace factory at Warton, Lancashire, where Hawks are finally assembled.

We were there to protest about the latest sale of Hawks to Indoensia. However we were prevented from progressing with banners through the plant and were arrested and charged with going equipped with the intent of causing damage.

We are defending ourselves at Preston Crown Court. An aspect of our defence in this court is the question of whether we can commit one crime in order to stop a bigger crime. In our case, we believe we could stop the greater crime of the continuing genocie of the East Timorose.

For more information, please phone me on 1457871809, or Email: banem@uniserv.co.uk.

Michael Bane, Colchester.

Soft on ‘Labourism’?

WHAT a misleading article you published recently [Why Blair picked fight on Clause IV, Socialist Outlook 76].

In this article we read that the activity of Labour’s ‘traditional social democratic collectivist framework’ by a broad alliance ‘in defence of social democracy’ is a ‘major threat’ to Marxism or Liberalism as the predominant ideology amongst them ‘must be ended’.

There are three significant problems with this view.

Firstly the forces that defend Clause IV are not Marxist or objectively defending something that is Marxist. To suggest this fight to defend Clause IV only objectively defends Marxism conceals the fact that the movement to defend Clause IV is not Marxist. Isn’t Marxism for building a party which can act as the basis of a Smith chart of workers’ revolution? Do many Clause IV defenders consider themselves as Marxists?

Secondly Marxism is not the same as collectivism. Marxism is more than collectivism on the level of collective ownership. The Labour ‘traditionalists’ defend a 100 per cent class collaborationist idea of collectivism. They want the collective subordination of the workers’ movements to the will of the ruling class. They want the workers to work for the benefit of the bosses’ state.

They want to go back to having union leaders in at central levels of the state apparatus. They need the Labour party to get in.

Thirdly the view that the defence of traditional social democracy, ‘Labourism’, is simultaneously a defence of Marxism suggests that social democracy is compatible with Marxism, or at least with class struggle politics. The opposite is true. Many Marxists work in the Labour Party and defended Clause IV only in order to produce better conditions for workers resistence and to help us to win cooperation from working people away from Labourite politics.

Julian Meneer, Harlingey.
FUERBERY FEBRUARY
Fri 10 CLAUSE 4 rally with Arthur Scargill 7.30pm Union Club Pershore Road Birmingham Sat 11 HOUNSLOW anti-racist march and rally 12.45pm Thornbury Playing Fields by Islworth tube.
INTERNATIONAL Day School planned by Socialist Campaign Group Supporters’ Network. 10.30am - 5.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. Holborn tube. Registration/Crèche - £7 waged, £3 unwaged from SCGN, 1 Gatreif House, Canal
bury Road, London N7. SAVE London Chest Hospital appeal 12 noon Weavers’ Field off Bethnal Green Road for march to the hospital on Bonner Street E1.
DEFY the Criminal Justice Act - Birmingham demonstration meets 12 noon Victoria Square. DEFY the Criminal Justice Act - conference 10.30am Stratford University Students Union John Street Glasgow.
Tues 14 OXFORD anti-cuts lobby 8.15 am County Hall Oxford DEBBY firefighters support demonstration assembly
11am Selk Mill for rally 12 noon Market Place.
SEDGEFIELD Denzil Clarke 4th meeting with Arthur Scargill 7.30pm Main Street Community Centre Ferryhill ‘Station’ on the A167.
Weds 15 PROTEST at visit of Italian fascist Gianfranco Fini 4.30pm Chatham House St James Square SW1.
CLAUSE 4 meeting with Alan Simpson Hayes Heath.
Fri 17 CLAUSE 4 rally with Arthur Scargill Cardiff.
Sat 18 WELFARE State Network working conference on benefits at University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1.
Sun 19 DEFY the Criminal Justice Act - National Mass Trespass dusk 12 noon Windsor station.
Thurs 23 CLAUSE 4 meeting with Arthur Scargill Liverpool.
Fri 24 CLAUSE 4 London rally.
Sat 25 DEFY the Criminal Justice Act - anti-M77 demo 12 noon George Square Glasgow.
Sat 25/Sun 26 GREATER London Labour Party Conference.
Sun 26 CLAUSE 4 steering committee meeting.
Mon 27 SYLVIA Pye national appeal meeting with Tony Benn, Sylvia Pye and Sue Wilson 7.30pm details 0181 520 5237.
MARCH Weds 1 WEST London Defend Clause 4 rally with Tony Benn, Bob Crow (RMT), Ealing Town Hall, 7.30pm organised by Ealing Trades Council.
Fri 3 CLAUSE 4 questionnaires return deadline.
Sat 4 CLAUSE 4 debate hosted by Leeds Fabian Society.

Coming up in ‘Socialist Outlook’
The next three issues of Socialist Outlook are all scheduled to carry special supplements.
Our next issue will carry a pull-out on the fight to defend Clause 4 A, a four-page feature in issue 79, published in the week of International Women’s Day, will celebrate that important event.
Issue 80 will include the tenth issue of theory-practice, our occasional review. It will be the first issue of r+ to carry more than one major article.
This r+ will look at the re-introduction of Trotskyist ideas into the USSR and will include a report from US Fourth International member Marylin Vogt Downey of an important conference at Leon Trotsky held in Moscow.
Translated extracts will also be included of a conference pamphlet on Trotsky by Michael I. Voeikov, head of the Economic Institute of the Russia Academy of Sciences. Socialist Outlook’s Chris Ernest also attended the historic international gathering, held in November last year.

‘Militant’ pamphlet still available
Most recent orders have been from supporters of the Fourth International overseas.
While Socialist Outlook does not criticise Militant in the same way today, the pamphlet remains a useful tool in educational discussions.
Order the pamphlet today for £1.00 from Outlook International, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

‘Outlook’ plans May dayschool
Socialist Outlook will hold a London dayschool in mid-May to draw together the new readers and supporters we are gaining through our activity in the defence of Clause 4.
The school will follow a series of local Outlook forums being held by readers’ groups in many towns and cities in the period before the Labour Party special conference on 29 April.
Full details of the dayschool will be carried in the Clause 4 pull-out published with the next issue of Socialist Outlook.

The politics of Militant

Tired of reading between the lies?
Subscribe to the fortnightly that tells the truth.

The Socialist Outlook print schedule in the last issue left one issue out.
We currently plan for our next issue to be shipped out on 22 February, 8 March, 22 March, 5 April, 19 April, 16 May and fortnightly from then until our August double issue.

24 issues: Britain £31, rest of the world £22 (air mail £31, Australia, Japan, China £38.)
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Why Tories want killer Clegg free

SINCE 1970, 300 people have been killed by Crown forces in the six counties of Ireland. Only two soldiers have been found guilty of murder for those killings.

In 1990 Karen Reilly and Martin Peake were shot dead by the 3rd Parachute regiment. Private Lee Clegg was sentenced to life imprisonment. Quite right.

How did 3 Para respond? Did they apologise to the families of Karen Reilly and Martin Peake? Quite the opposite. According to John Ware, Panorama journalist:

'3 Para constructed a large mock-up of the Astra peppered with bullet holes and displayed it in the canteen. In the front was a papier mache head with red paint depicting the shot that killed Martin Peake... the caption read 'Vauxhall Astra, Build by Robots. Driven by Joyriders. Stopped by A company.'"

The Parachute Regiment's murderous record in the six counties is legendary. They were responsible for the murder of fourteen civil rights marchers on Bloody Sunday in 1972. As with Karen Reilly, many of the Bloody Sunday demonstrators were shot in the back. No-one has yet been brought to trial.

We should be clear about the issue involved: for once justice has been done. Neither the British government nor the tabloid press are able to stomach that. For them Irish lives do not count.

Oppose

The British labour movement should oppose the call for Clegg to be released.

If Labour's leadership - after years of indifference to such blatant outrages as the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four - now wants to ride another Tory bandwagon and begin challenging abuses of justice, there is no shortage of victims of British imperialist frame-ups.

Following Blair's recent TV appearance appealing for us to trust Major's plans for Ireland, and Mowlem's guest appearance for the Loyalists, this will require a major campaign throughout the party and trades unions.