Socialist Outlook
A monthly marxist review * No 1 * January 1997 * 50p

With Europe’s workers -- against Euro-bosses!

Make 1997 a year of international solidarity

INSIDE this 20-page issue: 4-page pull-out on Euro-March campaign
Abortion rights under fresh attack

Marian Brain

THE NEW Pro-Life Alliance has stated its intention to send 50 candidates at the forthcoming general election. With the financial backing of Mohammed Al-Fayed, they announced in early January that they had 20 candidates already in place.

If they are able to achieve the target of 50, this would enable them to a party political broadcast. They are likely to use this to screen a film of a late abortion, a new version of the infamous ‘Silent Screams’.

This campaign is being assisted by the increasing intervention into political life by the Catholic Church, which for 200 years has stood in the way of women’s equality.

Over recent weeks, Cardinal Basil Hume used a television appearance to call abortion ‘a great evil’ and ‘unworthy of a civilized society’.

His Scottish counterpart, Cardinal Winning, who had attacked Blair’s supposed hypocrisy on abortion last autumn, was given a platform by Radio 4’s Today programme to continue to attack. Winning claimed that Labour was forcing these MPs who were opposed to abortion to keep their views quiet.

Each reactionary broadsheets have been given a good deal of follow-up coverage in the press, ensuring they reach a wider audience.

In Tory Party, 12 MPs have written to the bandwagon. Robert Spink MP, a junior government minister, said last summer that voters not to cast their votes for pro-choice candidates. Conservative Central Office has highlighted the fact that ‘Emily’s List’ which exists to pro- move women MPs only sponsors those with a pro-choice position.

Loser

Clare Short, talking to The Guardian, Maureen Freedy on January 2, argues that the greatest loser in this game is the Catholic Church itself which has alienated an entire generation of catholic women with its antiquated views on sex and women’s rights. Short, who was brought up a Catholic, has however been the only Labour politician to put her head above all following this controversy.

She further argues that there was no pressure on Labour MPs to move against ‘their councils’ and that she defended this policy which pro-choice activists have long fought against. Her past defence of women’s rights began to erode since the Blair clique who have attempted to damp down the whole row.

This is scarcely surprising when Blair has moved increasingly to claim religious, moral justifications as the basis to differentiate him from the Tories. When their economic and social policies have moved so close together, this has been a useful, and safe basis to emphasise a supposed difference.

Pro-choice activists need to gear up for the months to come. In October 1996 a Mori poll for the National Abortion Campaign found that 81 per cent of people in this country supported a woman’s right to choose.

That situation has been achieved through long years of battling by the pro-choice movement and does not give us the basis for complacency in the face of this new threat.

Newham anti-racists under attack

Simon Deville

Over recent weeks, there has been a concerted local campaign against Newham Monitoring Project, calling on the local council to withdraw funding. For the 16 years of NMP’s existence it has was awarded its 24-hour emergency service, case- work and its campaigning in the community against police harassment, racist attacks, and fascism.

Some of those involved in the campaign pose no surprises – the Tory council is in a recent by-election, and the local paper the Newham Recorder. The Recorder has always claimed that NMP was “stir- ring up racial tension and took part in particular race at any campaigns against police racism. The local To- ries have previously stood as ‘Con- servatives Against Labour’s Unfair

Ethnic Policies

What gives this campaign new impetus is the involvement of a small but vocal right wing split from NMP itself. Half a dozen people led by Unmesh Desai, one of NMP’s founding members, declared the launch of 2 new organisations: the NMP Re- form Group, and the Katherine Flood Trust. These organisations are an evolution of a number organisations that have fought to prevent local authorities from funding NMP. These organisations now form a third group called itself, ironically, Newham Unity.

This group is now organising to campaign against the new NMP, which they clearly believe is very different from NMP – far less involved in campaigning. They criticised NMP’s involvement in a protest in a packet of Firegate police after the death of Ibrahimahma Suy in custody.

Leaders of Suceven, Sussanad, charged with the NMP, in the early 1980s, they were guilty of being against ‘acta’ race relations industry’.

At the Annual General Meeting of NMP, the right proposed two councils of race officers for the management committee. NMP had previously been seen as a centre of conference professionals for the council and involvement with NMP. NMP had failed to gain any support for this move, Un- mesh and his group then left NMP.

The Traders and Residents Association is an independent group of the council’s race officers, Sultan Mohammed and some of his business partners. The Traders and Residents Association is a pressure group of local property-letting agents. NMP has always opposed the association in a series of racist attacks by private-rented accommodation, which amounts to professionalisation of the case. The association has been unsuccessful pushed for the council to oppose NMP’s position.

Since the split from NMP, however, a series of racist attacks has al- leged that Mohammed while acting as a council officer, privately offered to rehouse them in a property with his company, Share Properties. Moh-ammed is currently under investiga- tion by the council.

Despite the corruption allega- tions surrounding the ‘Newham New Labour’ itself, there is the fact that there are no specific charges made against NMP, the council has ordered an investigation into the New- wham Monitoring Project.

This is clearly a move to find a justification for withdrawing support or trying to impose tighter strings.

The Shadwell/North Woolwich Police Association has already written to the police commissioner urging him to take action in vari- arnesting exposures of police racism that NHP has so consistently pro- posed.

NMP has launched a campaign to obtain publicity for the council and to resist any further funding cuts.

To contact the Defence Cam- paign: phone 0181-555-8151.

Unworthy of a civilised society: Cardinal Hume

Newham anti-racists under attack

Socialist Outlook

Release Roisin McAliskey!

ROISIN McAliskey, daughter of Bernadette McAliskey has been held in custody since November 20 1996 on suspi- cion of involvement in the Osnabruck bombings. On January 3,1997 she was again remanded in cust- ody.

Roisin is five months pregnant and is suffering from a chronic an- ticonceptive condition as well as serious complications of a digestive and muscular system caused by the preg- nancy. Her health has deteriorated rapidly while in detention due to the treatment of her British authorities. Both police and prison doctors have confirmed that Roisin’s pregnancy is at risk.

During Roisin’s imprisonment she has been treated in ways that would create hardship to any one (woman) in her eighth pregnancy.

Roisin was transferred without warning to Belmarsh prison – an all male prison with no facilities for women prisoners. She remained in solitary confinement in a filthy cell with no heat. Her family and solicitor were not informed of the transfer for two days.

On December 2 she was again seen by a prison doctor after she was seri- ously concerned by her condition. He stated that she had no nutri- tional reserves to sustain the preg- nancy. She required full medical supervision.

The following day, Ms McAliskey was violently ill while being taken to a court in prison van. Despite an application for bail on medical and humanitarian grounds, the request was refused and she was returned to Bel- marsh.

She had been given nothing to eat all day and had no food or drink until 3.30am the following morning. During the early hours of the morning she had severe stomach- ache and was in a semi-conscious condition in her cell with which met with no response from anyone.

On December 5 Samon O’Cuiv, member of the Irish parliament, was refused access to the prison for a pre-arrest visit. Her mother and partner were also denied access. Later that day she was taken to a hospital where her pregnancy was confirmed and that Roisin had to be transferred back to Holloway. Officials were not expecting to receive any poss- ible conclusions while still at Belmarsh.

Doctor

A family visit was eventually per- mitted on December 6 and an inde- pendent doctor examined her and recommended a proper hospital exa- mination. Despite this, she re- mained at Holloway where she is subject to regular strip searches. She was again released bail on December 13, despite a doctor’s re- port submitted to the court saying she was in an advanced state of starvation and perilous to 120000. At court on Monday 20 and January 3 she was again re- mained in custody. She has been in custody for more than six days after her ar- rrest. Loud protests are needed.

Contact: The Defence Campaign, Justice Group, Conway Mill, 57-59 Conway Street, London E1, BT1 3DE Tel/Fax 01222 238542
A new year of struggle

1997 looks set to be a crucial year in politics - here in Britain, across Europe and on a world-wide scale.

The world economy goes into the new year in a fragile state despite the many measures by governments and bosses to drive down living standards and increase productivity across the globe. A new recession in the United States - which is not beyond the bounds of possibility - would send the whole situation into a tail spin.

1997 will see the continuation of the crisis in the Russia which at the close of the previous year has led to the miners taking strike action and to an unstable political situation despite the fact that Yeltsin remains formally in power. Last year's dissimal from power certainly doesn't seem to have done him any harm and he is clearly gearing up for the succession battle.

The disconcerting situation in the Central African region of Africa continues to demonstrate the barbarous legacy of imperialism and the failure of the neo-colonialists to bring peace or dignity to the peoples of the area.

The so called 'peace process' in the Middle East will continue to fail the Palestinian people with Netanjahu pledging to increase Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and the PLO doing little to oppose this. This situation of a Blair government is unlikely to make much difference to the situation in Ireland as New Labour will continue its continuationist approach and accommodate to the unionists. The struggle for self-determination for the Irish people has not been aided by the approach of the Sinn Fein leadership, fighting for a seat at talks which will enshrine partition.

Dramatic struggles will break out across the globe like the huge strikes against the regime in South Korea or the combative protests against budget cuts in Australia. The task will be to build lasting organisation from these flash points that it able to carry on the battle against international capital more consensually.

Socialist Outlook will be covering these and other processes that are of interest to our readers, bringing you information about the ruling class offensive and the resistances to it, ideas on how the struggle can be developed and lessons from other activities.

The European March for Jobs can begin to link together militant across Europe in the run up to the Inter-governmental Conference to agree the Maastricht Treaty in June 1997.

The recent victory of the French lorry drivers and the blockade of Greek farmers demonstrates yet again that the governments of Europe are not having an easy time in imposing the massive cuts they need to meet the convergence criteria.

Europe-wide

The campaign will also give opportunity to cement continental-wide links between other groups such as unemployed organisations, who have been inspired by the recent French events or those fighting racist laws.

Socialist Outlook through its involvement with the Fourth International can bring detailed news and analysis of the resistance across the continent and bring the lessons from those campaigns to our readers here.

In Britain the General Election will most likely see the election of a Labour government after the long winter of Tory rule. But Blair's New Labour is not promising an end to the unrelenting attacks the working class and working class allies have suffered under the Tories.

Far from it: Attacks on the Welfare State, already cut to the bone, will continue. Anti-trade union laws will remain in place to shackle our ability to fight back against the bosses.

And not content with his victories over Clause 4 and the manifest Blair will set out to destroy the historic link between the party and the unions, giving himself a freer rein for more reactionary attacks.

Despite the fact that Blair will continue these and other attacks on working people, Socialist Outlook will campaign for a vote for Labour.

We believe that the election of a labour government is in the interests of workers not because of what Blair will or will not do but because it will raise people's expectations and begin to rebuild a confidence which has been lacking since the defeat of the miners strike. We will seek to organise wherever ever we can to place demands on Labour both in the run up to the election and after Blair is in government.

We are committed to preparing the best possible conditions for the fight back. The Broad Left conference in early February can be an important step in better equipping the left in the unions to work together.

The campaign to build the European March for jobs in Britain can bring together young unemployed activists fighting the vicious JSA with those fighting to defend the welfare state and those fighting for rights at work.

While we will continue to work in the Socialist Campaign Group Network of the KES Link campaign to strengthen the left in the Labour Party, we are pledged to work with activists working in the anti-racist movement, in defence of women's rights, the environmental movement and in other campaigns committed to forging a better society.

We think that we will be able to meet all these goals more effectively by changing our schedule of publications.

Through producing a monthly paper and a once a month, we can be able to reduce a whole number of overheads and so increase our coverage by over 25%. This we believe will allow us to produce a paper which is more useful to our readers.

A monthly gives us the flexibility we believe we need at this crucial time to deal with complex issues in more depth than has been possible in recent months.

We hope you agree and will continue to give us your support in the battles for socialism and internationalism.

One wheel on his wagon...

JOHN MAJOR'S rickety government is suffering blows by the minute and may not stay the course through until May.

No sooner had the world begun to get over Christmas break than the News of the World was making allegations that Jerry Hayes, MP for Harlow has been involved in an illegal gay relationship.

Though Conservative Central Office refused to support Mr Hayes, his 'conference' relationship with the then 18 year-old was anything other than platonic, this will be the source of innuendo other than nightmares for the Tory leadership.

Hayes has been open about his support for gay rights - voting for the gay male age of consent to be reduced to 16 and acting as the chair of the cross party group on AIDS.

A rather more serious headache has been triggered by sender of a letter to Tory MP Hugh Bayley's announcement that he is to join Labour and Liberal Democrat talks on constitutional reform, at the time when the Prime Minister was denouncing them as 'profoundly dangerous'.

Major, launching what looks set to be another expensive, gruesome and ineffective poster campaign has really been upstaged by his rivals.

The package of constitutional reform package being trailed in the press is much more newsworthy than another tired out PR campaign from the past sell-by date Prime Minister.

More importantly the proposals could allow Blair a radical face while carrying through reactionary policies in the economic sphere.

Scrap Lords

Of course, abolition of voting for hereditary peers is completely inadequate - the whole rotten second chamber should be scrapped at once. But this, together with a Freedom of Information Act, and the introduction of a Bill of Rights are important moves.

The decision to hold two referendums in Scotland is a complete outrage - but there can be little doubt that during the first term of a Labour government a Scottish Assembly with tax raising powers will be in place.

A huge majority of the Scottish population are already in favour and this percentage is likely to grow rather than fall under Labour. This alone would be the most significant change to the British constitution for a century - it's a step we have wholeheartedly support.

Socialist Outlook agrees with Labour's call for an immediate election - it is clear that the Tories have no legitimate mandate.

We doubt that when Blair's office say they will do everything in their power to get an election called they had anything more daring in mind than breaking with the ludicrous practice of never

Certainly we have heard no calls for anyone outside Parliament to do anything - other than stop Major winning the Personality of the Year poll! No demonstrations, no lobbying, certainly no strike.

Our readers and supporters will be greeting the New Year and trying to force and election in different style - involved in promoting struggle where ever we can. 1997 will certainly be a year of change - it's a year with extra effort to make sure that as much as possible is in our favour.
How not to fight the Job Seekers Allowance or Three Strikes that shouldn't be supported

By Keith Sinclair

THE INTRODUCTION of the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) has led to a number of campaigns being set up to oppose the JSA and the work placement Project Work. Groups have been set up in a number of areas. All these groups share a common opposition to both the JSA and to Project Work. However there has been an important debate amongst members of the various anti-JSA groups.

The debate centres around the idea of “Three Strikes and You’re Out”, which has been advocated by some unemployed activists. The policy has tended to be associated with the organisation ‘Groundswell’, although it is no longer the national policy of that group.

What does “Three Strikes” involve?

A leader from Counter-Informations explains that Job Centre Staff found guilty of harassing claimants or cutting their benefits will receive a warning letter - as does their manager — that is STRIKE 1.

A repeat offence brings final written warnings — STRIKE 2.

A third anti-claimant crime by the same individual means photos of them and their manager will be fly-posted. And a claimant’s demo will confront the culprits in their offices — this is STRIKE 3.

The policy is posed in slightly different ways by different groups, but the common thread is clear: Job Centre workers are seen as part of the problem rather than potential allies in the fight against the JSA.

For example, a leaflet from the Tameside Unemployed Group refers to “dole officials”, never once calling job centre employees workers, for less mentioning that the vast majority of job centre workers oppose the JSA.

The main union involved, the CPSA, has a policy of opposition to the imposition of the JSA.

What sort of campaign is needed?

Anti-JSA campaigns need to involve the employed and the unemployed. As part of this, there is a need to involve job centre workers in publicly opposing the JSA. An example of the sort of unity that can be built is shown by the Hull Trades Council campaign against Project Work.

The campaign was initiated by the Trades Council following a motion being in the CPSA Employment Service branch.

There has been no question of setting CPSA members as being “the problem”: rather the aim has been to build a united front which demonstrates the sort of alliance we want to build.

The “Three Strikes” policy cuts across attempts to win over job centre workers to actively oppose the JSA. Left activists in the CPSA are put on the defensive, as management and right-wing union officials combine to suggest that all anti-JSA activities are targeted at CPSA members.

Three strikes’ makes it more difficult to win over job centre workers and, is, in reality, a gift to management and the right-wing leadership of the CPSA. Management have been keen to attempt to link CPSA left action with “Three Strikes”, as they know the policy makes it more difficult to win Employment Service workers to active opposition to JSA.

Job centre workers and the unemployed have the same fundamental interests. Therefore, an alliance needs to be built. This will not be easy. The good formal anti-JSA policy doesn’t mean that all job centre workers (or all CPSA leaders) fully support that policy.

The activity of unemployed groups needs to be built up.

There is a need for sustained work around the job centres, aimed at building active opposition to the JSA by claimants. This should involve leafleting, petitioning, occupations etc., which are co-ordinated with the job centre unions. The tactic of peaceful occupation is useful, as it enables both claimants and job centre workers to argue the case.

Support for ‘Three Strikes’ is often linked with a refusal to fight pressure on the Labour Party and union leaderships to fight the JSA and Project Work.

Tories fiddle jobless figures

THE TORIES were jubilantly claiming just before Christmas that the unemployment figures were now below 2 million for the first time in six years. Indeed the November drop of 95,000 is the biggest single fall in the monthly official figures for more than 25 years.

There has been no-celebrating amongst the unemployed as it is clear that the new figures do not represent an increase in people with jobs. There are in fact 800,000 fewer people at work than in 1980.

The Tories fiddling of the figures well known with more than 30 changes to the way ‘unemployment’ is calculated since Thatcher took office in 1979. Labour’s deputy leader John Prescott, responding to the Government’s announcements, pointed out that: “Much of the drop in figures can only be explained by people being driven off the benefit register and off the records altogether.”

This is indeed the case with more and more people being denied any means of support at all. Incapacity Benefits, the Asylum Bill, Project Work and the Job Seekers Allowance are combining to create a layer of non-people with no official existence — and no money!

The situation will get worse as the JSA in particular proceeds and more fail foul at new stages. It is a crime that Prescott and the Labour Front bench are happy to denounce the Tories but will not commit themselves to scrap this vicious legislation.

Clamants and civil service workers demand “Jobs Not JSA”

Tories fiddle jobless figures
Union Broad Lefts seek new ways to work together

Fred Leplast, Campaign for a Fighting and Democratic UNION
AN UNPRECEDENTED COORDINATION between 12 trade union federations and service unions has been established. These union left caucuses come from a variety of the union's sectors and serve as well as different political traditions. A conference to strengthen this coordination will take place on 21 January. This initiative should be supported by every socialist who wants to see our unions become campaigning organisations. At the moment, too many decisions of our national leaderships are the subject of scrutiny by lawyers and campaigning too often acceded to promoting Union credit cards.

For far too often each union left has been through necessity concerned with the affairs of their own respective union. The new 'realist' leaders have realised that acrobats across the union. The lack of co-ordinated responses by the left in the union has allowed the 'realist' leadership of the TUC to drag the whole movement to the right. Over the last 17 years, unemployment, privatisation, cuts in services and the anti-union laws have battered the unions.

The key to the success of these policies is the close cooperation between the leaders of the unions and the anti-union laws. The new situation provides us with an opportunity to bring the unions into line with the trade union movement.

The most immediate aspirations of union members, as embodied by their conference policies, can only be met by a majority Labour government and elected if such a government is then forced to carry out these policies.

New realists lose their grip?

Neil Murray
OVER THE LAST few years the level of strikes has been the lowest for a century. While the figures picked up slightly in 1986, the strike level has been at its lowest level since the 1970s.

Unlike bourgeois and socialist democratic commentators who see a high level of strikes as a sign of the past, Marxists recognise that the contradiction inherent to capital between the interests of the employers and their state and the working class means that class struggle is inevitable.
The question is not if, but when, around what issues and in what form this will take place. While Marxists do not claim to be able to predict the exact development of events, they can point to general tendencies.

The problems for the downturn are not hard to discover. The defeat inflicted on key sectors of the class by the Tories with the complicity of the bureaucracy allowed them to make changes which consolidated these gains.

The anti-union laws have made it harder to take action, while job losses and the use of short-time and temporary contracts have led to an insecurity which undermines the confidence to fight.

The trade union leaderships refused to challenge any of this, their shift to the right and their stressing of the need for restraint to ensure the election of a Labour government has been a major contribution.

Those struggles which have broken out in recent years, tenacious and insubordinate as they have often been, have highlighted the problems that exist.

While the anti-union laws have made it difficult to take legal, official strike action, they have also served as a screen for union bureaucrats.

Thus, while the Liverpool dock workers fought heroically for over a year against their sacking and the casualisation of port labour, and have received enormous levels of support internationally, they have been isolated by the fact that every other port in Britain has already been caused.

The TGWU has hidden behind the anti-union laws in its refusal to make the dispute official but has also refused to even do what it could to organise the battle. It has presciently the dockers into accepting sell-out deals. Similarly, UNISON has done little to support the Hillingdon hospital workers, also out for over a year.

Postal and rail workers accounted for a high proportion of the strike figures over recent years, especially official and unofficial. Rail workers had a series of successful disputes in 1996, but the break up of the rail network into separate companies means they now have to fight company by company for separate agreements, with the anti-union laws restricting who can give support.

Frustration
Postal workers frustrated at continued management attacks have led to repeated local walk-outs, leading up to the national strikes over plans to introduce team working.

They had to contend with a union leadership hell-bent on fostering a 'good relationship' with management. Unofficial strikes have been repeatedly denounced, only to protect the unions funds, and joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson did his utmost first to prevent the national strike happening at all, and then to end it.

While Johnson was not completely successful, facing the occasional revolt from the CWU members, he ultimately managed to sell a deal which at best postpones the dispute until such time as the union-management/working party on team working reports, leaving branches to fight victimisation on their own.

The recent further education strike was an important development, bringing together all the unions involved in a one-day strike.

Years of defeat and retreat cannot be allowed to continue, as they have brought about changes which are not just superficial. The level of unionisation fallen considerably and organisation within unionised workplaces has also suffered. The number of shop stewards has fallen drastically, workplace organisation is weak and many union branches have difficulty functioning.

So what is set to change? The general election will probably see a Labour government come to power, but Blair will not only keep the union-busting laws intact, he may add new ones.

There will be no loosening of pay restrictions, no assault on unemployment and the continuation of the welfare state. If a minimum wage ever emerges from joint commissions with the bosses, it will be set at a level more to do with inter-capitalist rivalry than providing a living wage.

Nevertheless, there are factors which could make the election interesting. Blair will try to make the opposite case, the working class will expect some reversal of the damage done by the Tories over 18 years. Frustration could explode in a variety of ways.

Despite all - and, in part, because of - their subservience to Blair's moves closer to Tory leaders, the Trade Union leaders expect some payback. They need something to show the members who they told the election of a Labour government is their only hope.

While Blair will not be willing to lead a fight against a Labour government, but if Blair fails to deliver, the working class will find it difficult to hold back their members.

Blair will undoubtedly enjoy a 'honeymoon' period, during which he will attempt to undermine the party-union link. How long this honeymoon will be is a matter of conjecture.

If pay restrictions remain, the low pay commission drags out, welfare provisions continue to deteriorate, or a major section comes into conflict with the anti-union laws, this situation could rapidly change.

Conflict
Given Blair's programme, the areas of potential conflict are clear - not least to Blair himself who has been busy making plans to attempt to ensure he can carry out his programme unhindered. Blair's priority is the same as the Tories, even if it differs in some of the details, improving the profitability and therefore competitiveness of British capitalism.

To do so he has to continue his attacks. Socialists do not, however, sit back and wait for the good times to come or simply assume that an upsurge will automatically lead to a long-term growth in the strength of the Left. There are too many examples in history which show otherwise.

But it does create the conditions in which this is possible, given the correct intervention by socialists.

Socialists have to lend material and political support to those disputes which do break out, arguing how to take them forward and what the lessons of them are for workers in general. While calling for a Labour vote, we need to explain what its programme will mean and build support for key demands, such as repeal of the anti-union laws.

We have to rebuild the structures of the unions and argue for policies which can provide a real lead in a fightback.
Harry Sloan
HEALTH Secretary Stephen Dorrell is on the edge of a historic decision. He is weighing up whether to scrap the NHS 'sacred cow' policy which appears to pump additional cash into health services while in reality pushing health authorities and Trusts towards new cutbacks.

Dorrell has cynically turned the tables on Labour, challenging Smith to promise more money for the NHS, safe in the knowledge that no such pledge will be forthcoming from a party terrified of appearing to endorse any policy of increased public spending.

In fact £1 billion of the £1.6 billion "extra" money for the NHS un-received last November will be gobbled up at once by rising prices - especially when it comes to the "new money" - and this falls far short of the deficits already already built up in the NHS this year.

Uneven
To make matters worse, the money is being distributed unevenly across the country, according to a fiddled formula which somehow gives the biggest percentage allocation to the health authorities covering Tories' darlings of Westminster, while leaving more deprived districts in London and across the country starved of cash.

Dorrell has even produced an extra £100m to delay high-profile hospital cuts and closures in Meriton Sutton and Wandsworth, where Tory marginal seats are at stake. Elsewhere, health authorities are being urged behind the scenes to borrow money against next year's allocations to defer high-profile cuts until after the general election.

But as more Trusts resort to banning non-emergency admissions and search for other cost reductions to balance their books, and yet another winter cold snap and flu epidemic expose the grinding inadequacy of hospital bed provision and staffing levels, there are harder times ahead.

Unless Labour wins the election and pumps in more money, NHS spending is set to fall in real terms in 1999/0 and stand still the year after.

Chris Smith's eloquent silence on these vital issues has been coupled with his ideological capitulation to the Tory market reforms.

After collapsing on earlier proposals to sweep away the internal market, abandoning suggestions of scrapping Trust boards, and embracing the disastrous Tory Private Finance Initiative as a means to build new (privately-owned) NHS hospitals, Labour has now come full circle and embraced the basic principle of GP fundholding, although this would be carried out through "commissioning groups" of GPs rather than individual practices.

The half-baked Labour proposals represent the worst of all options. They will contravene the most self-interested and determined advocates of GP Fundholding - the GPs who revel in the inequalities of the two-tier system - while ignoring professional and other support staff working in primary care, and press-ganging other unwillling GPs into commissioning groups.

And by accepting the framework of the market system with its "pur- chaser-provider split", Labour would create an additional network of purchasing bodies, and increase the administrative costs and bu- reaucracy of the front-line Trusts. This is an even greater nonsense when we remember that Labour's sole pledge of extra cash for NHS services hinged on winding bureauc- racy.

"I reject utterly Stephen Dorrell's attempts to pretend there are no fundamental disagreements between us and the Tories on health policy, and that in some mysterious way he can gain credibility by claiming to be like Labour". (Labour's Chris Smith, December 1996)

"Labour's capitulation to the notion of the market comes as its con- tradictions and inequalities are increasingly discredited. The last few months have seen health authorities grappling with the fact that £1bn of cuts have been fragmented between competing cash-strapped Trusts, and increasing pressure to merge Trusts into larger units."

In South West London, South Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, health unions have expressly called for the merger of Trusts to cut bu- reaucracy and avert cut in patient care: in Oxfordshire, health bosses facing a £7m shortfall have taken the initiative and proposed a sweeping package of mergers to salvage the number of Trusts.

With rare exceptions, therefore, despite Smith's spluttering, inco- herent attempts to deny it, Labour policy has become a pale echo of existing Tory government policy. Unless a further rapid U-turn is executed, we seem set for an even more embarrassing repetition of the 1992 'Jennifer's Ear' fiasco, leading to a second successive election in which the NHS is ignored as an electoral asset by a clueless Labour leadership.
Labour spurns offer of Social Contract II

Terry Conway
JOHN EDMUNDS, leader of the trades unions, has been slapped down by the Labour leadership. He has been told that a new wage restraint initiative is the wrong approach. The unions have rejected the proposal and have vowed to continue their fight for better terms and conditions.

The Labour leadership is more interested in discussing constitutional change with the Liberal Democrats than in finding a way forward for working people and the TUC.

The TUC's employer spokespeople, including Stephen 'Fish shop' Byers,厚厚的side Edmunds' proposals, saying that the time for a new Social Chapter---saying it would mean 'turning the clock back'.

The Labour leadership has been criticized for its failure to act on the issues raised by the Trades Union Congress. There has been a failure to address the concerns of working people and the unions.

Despite Labour's best efforts, trade unions still hope that things will be different with a new government.

Open door
McCarthy made it clear that there would be no movement at the level of pay, but it seems unlikely that the door will be open for the type of proposals made by Edmunds.

These pressures have been reflected in the TUC's recent speeches, where the need for a new wage restraint initiative was emphasized.

The public sector pay review bodies are due to report in February, but settlements are due in April. But the whole process is routinely delayed: many NHS Trusts still have not settled last year's pay review. The issue will be up and running as a fresh round of pay talks after the election.

Despite Labour's best efforts, trade unions still hope that things will be different with a new government.

Still 'modernising' away: Blair

The situation is likely to exacerbate the problem, as Blair is keen to keep unions attached to the party, even if it means taking a pay vote on the floor of the House of Commons, and then re-electing the government.

An alternative line of attack has developed, said new to have the support of Blair and his close allies. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee has often been described as the 'in-house' of Blair's strategy. The committee's proposals have been met with opposition, particularly from the TUC.

The TUC, however, is expected to continue to fight for better pay and conditions for its members.

As Blair seeks to sever Labour's union roots

Pete Firman

Blair has made it clear for some time that the trade unions can expect 'no favours' from a Labour government. The Labour Party has been accused of being too close to the ideologically motivated union leaders, and its approach to union relations has been criticized.

The extension of 'One Member One Vote' ballots to policy issues like the draft manifestoes is seen as a move by the party to distance itself from the ideologically motivated union leaders, who are seen as being too close to the Labour Party.

Regional and women's conferences have already moved towards the idea of a more democratic union movement. The TUC has been accused of being too ideologically motivated.

Simple

A straightforward proposal to scrap the 'union link' was presented to the conference, and the idea of a more democratic union movement was met with opposition.

The idea was revived by the TUC, which has been accused of being too close to the Labour Party. The TUC has been accused of being too ideological.

Shadow cabinet

The NEC's role would be a purely organisational one. No one else than the leadership would have any input in policy making. The NEC for instance —but there would be a formal policy for them to affect. Affiliation to local parties would be meaningless and conference sidelined.

'Modernising'

These proposals will be sold as modernising the Party, giving the membership greater rights against the trade union 'barons' and avoiding confrontation at conference in front of the media.

They need to be recognized for what they are—a destruction of democracy in any meaningful sense and in particular of any union input. Far from increasing anyone's participation in policy making role, they will make parties more in keeping with the content and democracy.

Does it matter? Blair's Blair removed any semblance of socialist policy and replaced party democracy with a sham anyway? These proposals are qualitatively different.

While the current structures exist it would be possible to reverse some of the changes which have been made in place over party functioning. These proposals would destroy that ability.

They would mark an important change in the nature of the Labour Party. The Party has never been a socialist party since its formation. But it is a much more democratic one.

Voice

The particular nature of its structures however has allowed the work in the name of democracy— and sometimes even heard.

Such new structures would turn the Labour Party into something like the European continental model of a social democratic party, where its members are linked to the party, there is no mechanism for them to influence party policy.

They are primarily treated as a transmission belt for the Party's policy into the working class, while the link is used as an excuse by union bureaucrats to demand the loyalty of their members to 'their' party.

Blair will probably attempt to introduce these proposals—or a variant of them—later this year while still lapsing in the glory of an election victory and before any serious conflict develops with the unions.

That is why socialists are organizing to meet these plans. While most union leaders have declared that they are opposed to a dilution of the union-link and will fight any proposals to scrap it, they cannot be relied on.

As the battle lines are drawn, the TUC's role is crucial. The TUC has been accused of being too close to the Labour Party. The TUC has been accused of being too ideological.

The 'Keep The Link' campaign has been collecting signatures in defence of the link and trying to get the issue on the agenda of every affiliated union Conference. Local campaigns have been set up in some areas and a broadband is being produced demolishing the LGC's proposals.

This is a vital issue for all trades unions as well as Labour Party members. Resolutions should be put wherever possible opposing these plans and winning affiliation on the campaign. Delegates to conferences must be mandated to support retention of the link in current form.

The 'Keep The Link' campaign can be contacted at 138 Crampton St London SE17 3AE for copies of the broadsheet and affiliation. The next open meeting of the campaign is on Sunday, 2nd February 11.a.m.-1.p.m. at the Lucas Arms, 18-22 Inn Rd (Near Kings Cross).

A Socialist Outlook pamphlet

Trade Unions in the 1990s: A strategy for socialists

A comprehensive review of the impact of the Tory years on the trade union movement and a perspective for the left in the 1990s.

68 pages. £1.50

from PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU

A Socialist Outlook pamphlet
Jitters as capitalism walks the tightrope

ANDY KILMISTER looks at the prospects for the world economy in 1997, and the economic situation in Britain.

THE LEADERS of the main capitalist economies are in agreement in predicting steady growth and low inflation over the next year. The rich nations' club, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), backed up this view in its latest report in December. But there are increasing signs of a more turbulent prospect ahead than such forecasts admit.

On December 6 world stock markets suffered what the Financial Times referred to as a 'tragic Friday'. Remarks by US central banker Alan Greenspan were taken to imply possible interest rate rises.

Markets

There were dramatic falls in European stock markets and on the Tokyo and Hong Kong exchanges. Three weeks later Japanese markets fell sharply again in response to a tough government budget. These developments are not accidental. They are a reflection of the fact that the coming year will see some difficult economic choices for the ruling classes in the industrialized countries. The relative economic stability of the last few years will become harder and harder to maintain.

There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, in the USA and Japan the immediate past has been dominated by the impact of the recession of the early 1990s. This recession was seen as necessary by the governments in these countries because of the unstable growth, fuelled by debt, in the preceding decade. Continuing speculative investment and borrowing was likely to threaten the stability of the financial system. The impact of the slump was to squeeze much of the debt out of the economy and to leave many productive resources standing idle.

This spare capacity has allowed the US to lower interest rates substantially and Japan to raise government spending and cut taxes, without causing a rise in inflation. The nervous feelings in the markets result from the fact that this phase is now coming to an end. The expectation is that to carry on expanding the economy will start to push up inflation and debt levels. So the US central bank (the Federal Reserve) is set to raise interest rates and the Japanese government plans to cut spending and raise taxes.

Dilemma

But they also face the dilemma that, despite the policies of the last few years, the "recovery" in both countries is still weak and patchy. Any attempt to slow down this weak growth risks provoking another slump.

The second major development this year concerns Europe. European governments have pinned their economic hopes on the Maastricht Treaty and the single currency. Up until now this has provided a rationale for attacking public spending and wage demands. But this year also involves deciding on the implementation of the project. This is certain to be immensely difficult.

The key economic problem is that no country is likely to meet all the criteria laid down in the treaty for joining the single currency. Given this, the criteria are likely to be relaxed to allow the project to proceed at all. But this has already sparked off a fierce debate about what the new rules of the game should be, and who should be allowed to join. In particular, the Bundesbank is pressurized at the prospect of giving up the German mark for a common currency which includes countries like Italy and Spain.

The first impact of these developments was the row at the Dublin Summit of the European Union. This put considerable strain on the alliance between Germany and France which has up until now been the basis of the Maastricht process. Germany appears largely to have won the argument, and to have imposed automatic penalities on "excessive" government budget deficits after monetary union. But this is only the first stage of an argument which will get much more intense over the coming year.

EMU crisis

An indication of the kinds of divisions within the capitalist class over these issues is the leading article in The Economist of December 14 1996. This argues strongly against the German position at Dublin, and predicts that if implemented in full it could provoke a political crisis over EMU in which "the entire structure could fold".

The British government cannot avoid either of these two issues. As in Japan and the USA, such growth as John Major and Kenneth Clarke have been able to claim credit for is essentially as result of conditions after the recession which Major also helped to create. But as in the larger economies, this economic phase is now ending and interest rates are set to rise in Britain as well.

Major and Clarke cannot avoid being involved in the debates over monetary union either. When this project looked likely to involve only a minority of EU members they could afford to stand aside. But now that it seems possible that Italy, Spain and maybe even Portugal might meet revised criteria for joining up it is much more difficult for Britain to stand outside. The result of all this is a very difficult set of economic choices for the Tories. The Bank of England and the markets expect higher interest rates, so much so that the pound has already risen in value considerably due to speculation. Even revised Maastricht criteria will mean cuts in government spending or higher taxes. But an election is less than six months away.

Clarke's response to this in his November budget was a blatant fudge. Central government taxes were cut slightly, but local council taxes are set to rise even more.

There was a very small amount of extra money for public spending this year, but projected cuts in the following two years are savage. The figures presented are based on very optimistic assumptions about both growth and inflation.

With investment still very weak and export demand insufficient to maintain growth Clarke has clearly decided to risk a mini consumer boom in the run up to the election, in the hope that no-one will notice what is in store for them afterwards.

Labour weakness

It does not seem likely that this will convince many people, however, no distinctive economic policy is on offer from Labour, and this remains the Tories' biggest advantage.

Whatever the outcome of the election though, the economic problems of British capitalism remain acute. In addition the world economy is heading for increased uncertainty in the next few years. What has been portrayed by the OECD and their fellow-thinkers as steady growth has always been much more erratic. It is more like a tightrope walk, with the constant danger of another contraction on one side, or speculation and instability on the other.

However, the prospects now are for even more frequent shifts in policy in response to one or other of these dangers, and for narrower opinions and sharper conflicts in the coming years than we have seen since the early 1990s.
1996 saw the biggest wave of struggles across Europe for more than 20 years. Strikes, demonstrations and occupations took place against the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty and the cuts and austerity programmes they have generated.

It is far from the first time that the convergence criteria have been challenged in this way. There were strikes and demonstrations against cuts in welfare and government austerity measures in Italy and Greece soon after the Treaty was signed. In the Autumn of 1994 there were mass strikes in Italy followed by demonstrations in France against cuts in education.

December 1995 saw the huge confrontation in France which shook the Government to its foundations. Million of workers struck and millions demonstrated across the country against the Juppé plan and in defence of the welfare state. It was by far biggest challenge mounted by the French working class in since 1968.

The political climate in which it took place was of course very different and the movement of the 90's lacked the vision of 1968, some of the mobilisations were even bigger.

1996 saw major strikes in a number of European countries as the governments continued their negotiations and monetary union crept closer.

Mass strikes

There were mass strikes in Italy, Portugal, Belgium, Greece and Spain while France maintained the highest level of class struggle in Europe. In Germany the biggest workers' demonstration since the second world war forced the Kohl government to withdraw its proposed cuts in welfare.

Recent months have seen the biggest European-wide waves of struggles for decades.

In October, 150,000 metal workers participated in strikes in Germany. At the end of November 3 million Greek workers took part in a one day general strike involving both public and private sector workers.

80,000 French lorry drivers paralysed France with road blocks demanding more pay, early retirement and tax concessions. It was the most powerful strike action by an individual section of workers in France for years, and at the heart of the private sector. It showed, if any further illustration was needed, the massive potential of the working class in Europe.

Fearing a more generalised social explosion, the French ruling class had to concede the drivers main demands. They won a massive victory.

Their struggle inspired truck drivers in Finland to mount blockades on the border with Russia and blockades were set up by Danish and Portuguese bus workers.

On December 11, two million workers struck in Spain against austerity programmes. There were demonstrations of 210,000 in Madrid and 100,000 in Catalonia.

Inspired by the tactics of the French lorry drivers, 80,000 Greek small farmers declared "boly war" against Prime Minister, Costas Smitis and his PASOK government's austerity policy.

They cut Greece in half by blocking the roads with their tractors, demanding increased subsidies and tax concessions. The government replied saying that there would have to be further cuts in government spending if Greece was to have any chance of meeting the Maastricht convergence criteria, and that this was their priority.

Not since austerity measures were first introduced in the mid-1980's has the government of the EU's poorest member faced such opposition. The revolt of the farmers was all the more painful in that it came from a sector that has traditionally supported PASOK.

On Wednesday December 17 most of Italy came to a halt when 1996 was a year of struggle across Europe. Let's make 1997 a year of International Solidarity

millions struck in support of engineering workers demanding higher wages. At the same time there were more strikes in France involving transport workers, communication workers, energy supply and theatre workers. There were further strikes and demonstrations in Spain against cuts in public spending.

On December 18 Greek seafarers began a two day strike and tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through Athens as part of a public sector strike involving teachers, local government workers, and health workers.

It was the second mass strike within weeks, and with much of the country still paralysed by the farmers' blockades, plunged Greece into further crisis.

Unemployed

The following day, December 19, a campaign by unemployed workers in France demanding increased unemployment benefits led by the two main unemployed organisations and major sponsors of the Euro marches - Agir Ensemble. Concorde Chomage (AC) and the Association de Defense et d'Entraide des Chomeurs (AD EC) - won an 11% increase in unemployment benefits from the government.

This came after a month of direct action by unemployed workers. They had occupied unemployment benefit offices and offices of employers' organisations, and fought repeated battles with the police who tried to evict them.

These struggles have not yet been replicated in Britain. The working class and the trade unions here have suffered more defeats over the last 17 years than anywhere else in Europe. During the French strikes at the end of 1985 the British media pointed out that such action would be impossible in Britain because of the anti-unions laws.

Isolation

This is of course a simplification as action can be taken outside the law - but there is no doubt that the law together with the "New realist" policies of the trade union leaders have worked together in isolating Britain from this European-wide tide of struggle.

If the pace of struggle continues to develop as it has done in recent months across the continent, it would well derail attempts to secure European monetary union.

Maximising the likely success and impact of these campaigns raises the need for more co-ordination and united action by the workers' movement European wide. Most struggles will take place on a national level and put forward demands aimed at national government.

The attacks against the working class however are being organised at a European level and a Europe-wide response is needed.

The only initiative concretely addressing this need at the present time is the European march for jobs. It is this which makes the European General Election and the important message they project, so completely appropriate the present political situation.

Support the European March for Jobs, converging on Amsterdam June 1997
IT IS AS CERTAIN as anything can be that we will have a Labour government by May. The new government will quickly be forced to confront the issue Blair has ducked in advance of the election - whether to sign up for the single European currency, for European Monetary Union (EMU). The consequences of this decision are likely to shape the first period of Labour in office. There is little doubt that Blair will opt for EMU and take Britain in either the first or second stages - if stages are created.

The new government will need to make more and deeper cuts in the already battered Welfare State as they seek to reduce government borrowing to 3% of GDP in line with the convergence criteria of the Maastricht Treaty. There is no middle way. A Labour government must either attack the welfare state or reject Maastricht and undermine Britain's position inside the EU. ALAN THORNETT looks at the big issues that will confront the Labour movement.

EUROPE is not the only reason for an assault on welfare. The economic and fiscal policies with which Blair is going into the Election are in essence a collapse into Tory economic policy: but they also imply further reduction in public spending. These two factors create a double-barrelled attack on welfare to be carried out by Labour.

Despite the struggles going on across Europe against the implications of the convergence criteria, the debate in the workers' movement lags behind the material process taking place.

This is particularly the case in Britain. Here the anti-Maastricht debate is dominated by the Tory right, with Labour and TUC leaderships lined up behind European integration. The left, despite important efforts by sections of it to address the issue, remains marginalised.

There are apparently as many as 50 opponents of Maastricht in the Parliamentary Labour Party, mostly, but not all, on the left. It is positive that some on the left are lending support to the project of the Euromarches, particularly Alan Simpson of the People's Europe campaign.

However none of these MPs seem likely to be willing to challenge Blair in a clear way on this issue in the immediate post-election period. Yet European integration is directed primarily against the working class, with the aim of more effectively exploiting its labour power and maximising profit.

The left in Britain has a responsibility to challenge this logic. Develop the working class dimension of the debate, and start to turn the tide. Persuading left MPs or senior trade unionists to speak out clearly could be crucial in gaining a wider audience for these ideas.

The TUC and the Social Chapter

The 'New Realist' politics of the 1980s brought with it a sea-change in the TUC. On the question of European integration, 10 years previously they had opposed the EEC. Today the overwhelming majority of union leaders support the EU.

While they are not prepared to do anything themselves to challenge the Tory government, the bosses or the market system, they argue that the EC will extend workers' democratic and social rights. They look towards a 'social Europe' and the Social Chapter. They hanker after the institutionalisation of the unions in Europe which has been exalted in Britain under Thatcherism, and is not about to be embraced by Blair.

Politically they have pinned their hopes on the illusion that the new bosses' Europe can be reformed.

This year's TUC conference strengthened the stance still further, voting for more integration and specifically for EMU. In this they are more radical, at least in their public stance, than the Labour leadership.

Only a minority of unions have even discussed this issue, and although UNISON's conference has adopted a policy of opposition to Maastricht, no union has been prepared to stand out against the TUC line.

But the so-called Social Europe is not about the generosity of Europe's bosses. It is designed as a palliative to persuade the working class and the labour bureaucracy to accept European integration.

The Social Chapter is in any case a classic example of a paper tiger. It includes the right to strike, but this is subject to 'national obligations' and in Britain is over-ruled by the Tory anti-union laws. Its provisions, even if implemented, are marginal to the problems facing the working class.

In any case the so-called 'social Europe' also includes the notorious 1985 Schengen agreement. Whilst there have rights to move, their place of residence within the Community, the Schengen deal erects a wall against immigrants and asylum seekers from outside. Anyone barred from one EU country is barred from them all. In Britain this racist structure has been complemented by the Immigration and Asylum Act and similarly draconian legislation has been implemented in most other EU countries.

The Dublin Summit

The Maastricht Treaty provided for a full constitutional review of its workings which is now taking place. This process should be concluded at the Amsterdam Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) in June this year. The recent Dublin summit of EU heads of government was a part of this.

The Dublin meeting discussed a new draft treaty - 'Maastricht 2' - which will become the Treaty of Amsterdam if agreed in June. This will set the scene for a whole new stage of European political integration.

Not all the objectives of Dublin were achieved. John Major and the British Tories vigorously opposed proposals to drop passport controls and move to a common immigration policy. These issues were laid to one side but will come up again in Amsterdam.

The crucial step which was taken by the Dublin summit was the agreement on the so-called 'Growth and Stability Pact'. This is a legal framework for the Euro and establishes the rules by which the new currency will function. The Stability Pact is highly significant and will hand over tax-raising powers to the Council of Ministers to determine the fate of countries who take part in the single currency.

Effectively, under the Pact, the convergence criteria will continue in force after the introduction of the single currency in January 1999, in the form of 'stability criteria'. Government spending will remain fixed at a maximum 3% of GDP - and a breach of the criteria will result in a huge fines being levied on the countries involved, forcing them to cut spending to get back into line. These fines can amount to many billions of pounds - up to 0.5% of GDP.

From the point of view of the European project, the Stability Criteria are crucial. The single currency is as precarious as previous attempts to regulate the currencies of the EU. The European Exchange Rate Mechanism went into crisis under the impact of recession and the pound was spelt out of it on Black Wednesday, after the Bank of England had spent £18 billion trying to maintain its value.

EMU will not just regulate exchange rates, but lock these permanently together. After that, if the Euro is to remain stable against the dollar and the yen, economic fluctuations between the different member states must be reflected directly in rising unemployment and cuts in government spending rather than in changes in the relative values of currencies.

This is why there has to be a genuine economic convergence if there is to be a chance of stability. There can be fudging at the mar-
gins, but serious fudging would threaten the whole set-up. A new development in the world political situation, such as a recession in the USA, could threaten the whole structure.

British Capital and EMU

Both the Tory and Labour Parties are looking for ways to gain support from the electorate, with the specter of a new European Union looming in the background. The Tories argue that the new currency will benefit business and improve the economy, while the Labour Party says it will lead to higher taxes and more regulation. The reality is that the currency will have a significant impact on the economy, and it will be up to each country to decide how it will be managed.

What Kind of Super State?

The European Union is fundamentally an attempt by the most powerful states in Europe to create a superstate that can balance the power of its members and match the superpowers of the world. The EU has been in existence for a long time, and it is already a significant player on the world stage.

The Emergence of the Euro as a Global Superpower

The strategic aim of a reorganised European capitalism is more adequately to meet the economic challenges of the power blocks of Japan and the 'Tiger' economies of the Pacific rim, and the North American bloc around the United States. This strategic aim has evolved outside the post-war European project. The post-war settlement was forced upon the USA in a manner which reinforced the main victor of the second world war and the overwhelmingly dominant capitalist power. The original project of the Iron and Steel Communities then the Common Market was a creation of the Cold War and NATO.

Historically British capitalism has been the most globalised. A high proportion of its assets lay outside Britain, hence the special role of the City of London as a centre of international finance. With the decline of the British Empire, however, British capital made a compromise and became second string to the USA under the 'special relationship'. British overseas banks, assets and financial operations, became more and more dependent on US economic and military power.

France reacted against US dominance in Europe, and refused to become a full member of NATO. This, along with the emergence of Germany as the most powerful capitalist state in Europe began to erode US influence, and shape a more independent European project.

The relative economic decline of the USA during the 1970s and the shaping up of new power blocks stimulated a new drive towards European integration during the 1980s. These developments created an increasing contradiction for the British ruling class between its membership of the EC and its special relationship with the USA. The special relationship had remained the main pillar of British strategy under successive governments until the post-war boom ran out of steam.

France had opposed Britain's late application to the EEC for that reason. Britain did not join the EEC until the EEC created profound contradictions between the British market for goods, and its international financial operations, which during the 1980s brought a massive outbreak of capital, primarily to the USA.

Europe versus American and Japanese power blocks is now the cleavage of the European Union. In this global struggle, the relatively small European imperialist states require bigger and more secure markets and a greater freedom for the internationalisation and rationalisation of capital on a European basis if they are to compete.

Europe's big companies need mergers and rationalisation it they are to compete with the generally larger American and Japanese giants. This is why the EU-based multinational nationals are overwhelmingly in favour of the EU and further integration.

Europe's big companies need mergers and rationalisation if they are to compete with the generally larger American and Japanese giants. This is why the EU-based multinational nationals are overwhelmingly in favour of the EU and further integration.

Those who take action against the effects of Maastricht will come to realise that the whole project of European integration needs to be challenged.

Assessment that such a step, because it is against the interests of national stagnation, looks up to the class struggle here in Britain. At the same time this might well create a crisis within the working class itself which would positively affect the relationship of forces in other countries.

Our aim of course is not capitalist Britain outside of the European Community. We are for a socialist Britain in a socialist Europe. At every stage, socialists have put forward a Europe-wide alternative to the bosses project.

We do not defend the national state. We stand for a United Socialist States of Europe, east and west. We do not defend the national state. We stand for a United Socialist States of Europe, east and west. In England they are killing children in Germany they are killing the welfare state

This issue has created the beginnings of civil war in the Tory party which may well destroy it in its present form.

Germany, France and others are prepared for a two-tier Europe if some other countries are unable or unwilling to join by the target date of January 1999.

Prime Minister Blair will not be happy if he is unable to join the first wave. Waiting for stage 2 is not an easy option. There could be a lot to lose for British capitalism if it is forced to remain outside the currency for a few more years and things shape up without them. This can happen both in terms of the financial institutions and the rationalisation of capital. However, it is not clear that it will be possible for Labour to move quickly enough to avoid this.

Ultimately integration will be on the terms of the most powerful state in the EU - Germany. Britain is developing into a low-pay, under-skilled economy, over reliant on financial services in the City of London. EMU will accelerate this trend, and exact a heavy price from the working class. Banks will have a free hand to impose monetarist, deflationary, economic restructuring, to force through massive public spending cuts, creating a more mobile, cheaper labour force, through
Come to Brussels! ON FEBRUARY 22-23 in Brussels there will be a major conference designed to launch the Euro-Marches on a continental level.

Delegations will be present from all the countries participating France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Spain, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria and Britain.

The conference begins at 12 noon on Saturday and will conclude at 3pm on the Sunday, with a social on the Saturday night. Accommodation and food provided.

A weekend delegation will be going from Britain, including a coach from the north of England.

For details and tickets contact (North) Glen Vorn's 0171-447-5589 or (South) Pete Cooper 0171-738-3362.

EURO SPECIAL

Liverpool dockers pledge support to Euro-march

The Liverpool Port Shop Stewards Committee — as solid as ever and now after 16 months in dispute against wholesale sackings — fully support the strike by British dockers against unemployment, job insecurity and social exclusion.

These Euro-wide marches signal the beginning of a concerted and massive fightback by workers against the concerted assault of bosses on workers jobs and the welfare state.

If the proposed single currency comes into operation the livelihood of a further 10 million workers will be thrown onto the already twenty-million strong scrapheap of Euro-unemployment.

No less across-the-board poverty, homelessness and social marginalisation will hit levels not witnessed since the 1930s.

The impending social cost — including human despair and degradation — is utterly unacceptable, which if not successfully resisted will give a free hand to the bosses and their governments to drive home further reactionary policies and to pour petrol on their racist flames.

The Liverpool dockers recognise the three-leg British component of the Euro-march as a powerful means of galvanising and empowering the strong but disparate opposition within the working class against the bosses many-pronged assault.

In solidarity with this strike, and in support, we will be further boosting this urgently needed campaign by sending several of our members to join the march, treasuring the whole distance to Amsterdam, shoulder to shoulder with other unemployed brothers and sisters.

Alongside, we urge and send out a call to the entire labour movement — not least to its leadership — to unite behind the marchers and to fight the government and the barbarism of unemployment and anti-working class xenophobia of the European Commission and European bosses.

NO to national austerity attitudes!

NO to their international orthodoxy!

NO! NO! AND NO AGAIN!

SIDE BY SIDE, STRIDE, MARCH AND UNITE!

BUILD INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY!

Jimmy Davies
Liverpool Port Stewards Committee.

French jobless fight for increased benefits

Robert Cremieux

THE MONTH from November 19 to December 19 saw a first in France: the organisations of the unemployed demonstrated, petitioned, and occupied public buildings.

The autonomous movement of the unemployed has only actually existed for a few years. The trade union federations have failed, or have been bought off, to organise the unemployed in a country where the official rate of unemployment is 12.7%.

This mobilisation of the jobless had been galvanised by a huge scandal. In 1996 the unemployment benefits system, UNEDIC, reported a surplus of 13 billion francs (€1.7bn). This massive fund is the result of the use of selective criteria which deny any benefit to more than half of all unemployed people.

The official figures omit all those who no longer claim, or who, for whatever reason, do not depend on help from charitable or other institutions, and who are not counted as seeking work.

UNEDIC without the unemployed

From November 19 to December 19, the policy-making Council of UNEDIC, the organisation which runs the unemployment insurance system, met to decide on what to do with the 13 billion franc surplus of employees' and employers' contributions over the total benefits paid out.

The unemployed, under-represented, called for an increase in benefit rates, the payment of allowances to all the unemployed, and an end to the system of periodic benefit reductions.

This measure is particularly cynical, since the benefit has been cut by 17% while rates of long term unemployment are increasing.

The proposal is that the unemployed are not represented on the Council. UNEDIC which decides on their fate is a organisation jointly managed by the employers' organisations and the various unemployment federations (CGT (Pro Communist Party), CFDT (Pro Socialist Party), CFTC (Christian), PO (non-affiliated), and CGC (managerial)).

The unemployed movement has demanded, with varying emphasis according to the organisation, to participate in the decision-making process of UNEDIC as well as in the management of ANPE (the national employment agency), the public organisation which manages the job centres.

The emergence of an unemployment movement

Organisations of the unemployed independent of the unions are no longer a novelty. The oldest has existed for ten years. But they had a low profile in society. At the end of 1996, UNEDIC itself revealed its extent under headline "UNEDIC negotiations under pressure from the unemployed."

The three main organisations of the unemployed in France have unified activity for the whole of France.

'Agir ensemble contre le chomage' (AEC) (Act together against unemployment) organises wage earners belonging to various trade unions and the unemployed, whether members or not of organised organisations. AEC defined itself as a crossroads of struggles against unemployment, and plays a significant unifying role.

APEIS (Association pour l'Emploi, l'Information, et la Solidarite, Association for Self Help, Information and Solidarity) is an organisation of the unemployed close to the Communist Party. APEIS is mainly active in Communist-controlled municipalities, and in the Paris region.

Le Mouvement National des Chomeurs et Precaires (MNCP) (National Movement of the Unemployed and Insecurely employed) is the federation of unemployment centres. The MNCP is engaged in both militant activity and everyday advice for the unemployed.

To this picture should be added the link up made in 1996 with movements against social exclusion. Various organisations such as Droits au Logement (DAL) (Right to Housing), Comite Des Sans Loges (CSL) (Committees of the Homeless), or Droits devant! (Rights to the future), participated in the mobilisation, feeling themselves rightly concerned with the struggle of the unemployed.

Unions, outside the main trade union federations, have only shamed the organisations into demonstrating their presence at their side, including the FSU (teachers), SUD (Post and Telecommunications), the group of 10 (autonomous sector unions), and some CFDT sectors.

One more effort

The results of the UNEDIC negotiations indicate a new relationship of forces. It is not enough for the essential demands of the unemployed just to be taken into account. But dozens of UNEDIC offices were occupied, and many occupations cleared out by the police.

A local office of the CNPF (the main bosses' organisation), was also occupied in Paris by a hundred unemployed people, on the initiative of AEC and MNCP.

All these actions had a certain resonance.

For the first time for several years, the UNEDIC negotiations did not conclude by worsening of the position of the unemployed. Some small steps forward were even registered. Some hundreds of additional francs from the 13 billion kitty were granted to the unemployed. Benefits reductions for the long term unemployed were eased (they now only face cuts every six months instead of four).

However, the essential demands remain: the right to work or a decent income for all, and the reorganisation of the organisations of the unemployed in the bodies where policies affect them.

These objectives will be central to the concerns of the joint committee which are being set up to participate in next year's Euro-marches against unemployment, job insecurity, and social exclusion.

This will be a crucial year for the development of the struggles of the unemployed in France.
Will it be a happy New Year in Serbia?

1997 may well see the fall of the Milosevic regime in Serbia. Every tactic has tried to fail but the development opposition movement, Milosevic is reaping the reward for the Western powers previously kept him in power. Demonstrations have taken place every day, mainly in Belgrade but also in several other places, since Milosevic overturned the results of local elections held on November 17. Geoff Ryan reports.

The Opposition Jazdno (Together) coalition won majorities in 11 out of 18 of Serbia's largest cities including Belgrade. An investigation by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, headed by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, upheld the opposition's claims.

The regime has now, belatedly, been forced to accept some of the allegations of fraud. Milosevic's attempts to push the blame onto officials of his ruling Serbian Socialist Party (SFP) have failed no-one.

The scale of the protests has been enormous, with over two hundred and fifty thousand taking part in the largest demonstration. An attempted counter-demonstration by Milosevic supporters could muster only thirty thousand. Milosevic has called in riot police to break up or prevent marches, further repression or appalling weather has been able to stop the protests.

Television-controlled media have largely ignored the protests, though on occasions Jazdno leaders have been allowed to speak. It has been impossible, however, to prevent news of demonstrations becoming known. In recent days, Milosevic has been forced to allow the independent radio station B92 back on the air after a clumsy attempt at silencing it. The regime is incapable of controlling access to the Internet, which has been widely used by Jazdno supporters.

Spits in support

The process has also led to the splits among some of his former supporters. The army is reported to be divided, unwilling to intervene to save the regime. Discontent over pay (or its absence in rife. There is considerable resentment among soldiers at the privileged position of the Security Police. Sections of the officer corps still harbour grudges against Milosevic for his failure to support military intervention in Kosovo.

Spits are appearing within the SPS itself. Jazdno's first success was the dominant role of the United Yugoslav Left (JYL) former Milosevic officials, Vojislav Kostunica, Zoran Jovic and Mihailo Markovic have the opposition.

Behind the protests lies Milosevic's wars against Croatia and Bosnia, but the demonstrations are not primarily anti-war. Some leaders of Jazdno are even more virulent Serb nationalists than Milosevic.

Opposition to Milosevic has been fuelled by his willingness to abandon the Bosnian Serb leadership and even to denounce Radovan Karadzic as a war criminal. This turn was not simply a public gesture designed to gain continued covert support. It was undoubtedly real. Milosevic, after all, is not a convinced nationalist. He is a Stalinist bureaucrat. Like all Stalinists he will use nationalism when it suits him and abandon it when it doesn't. Dismantling Karadzic and Miladinovic was a small price to pay for getting sanctions lifted. The Dayton 'peace' accord gave Milosevic an important role in assuring 'stability' in the region. He had previously been prepared to welcome leaders of the Serbian political parties in Croatia, who he had helped to power, when they became too independent. They were left to defend themselves against the Croatian army. A deal with Croatian president Tudjman became more important.

Milosevic has previously relied on and whipped up nationalism in his fight during the 1980s for the leadership of Serbian Stalinism and in his wars in Bosnia and Croatia. His denunciations of the Bosnian Serb leadership may have pleased the west - but they were bound to anger many in Serbia who had suffered economic hardship and the death of loved ones as a result of Milosevic's wars.

Milosevic's return to vaguely Marxist rhetoric has made it easier to portray him as the last remaining 'Communist' leader in Eastern Europe. Can those carrying placards in English proclaiming 'Better Dead than Red' explain donations totalling nearly $100,000 to the British Conservative party from the 'communist' Serbian regime? Can they explain why it has been mainly Tory MPs who have defended Milosevic? Foremost among the apologists for the regime has been Harald Ellerse, MP for Blackpool, who is also an agent for Ml.

Jazdno is united solely on the basis of opposition to Milosevic. It mobilises on the twin bases of Serb nationalism and anti-communism. If Milosevic were to fall it would rapidly split apart. It is a movement based primarily on intellectuals and the petit bourgeoisie. Despite appeals for strikes, they have so far failed to mobilise the working-class. The independent union Nesvremnost remains very weak and politically extremely heterogeneous, ranging from monarchism to very weak) revolutionary Marxism.

Most workers are alienated from the regime, not least because they are paid so irregularly. However they have little confidence in the Jazdno - though they voted for it in large numbers. To conclude that socialists should defend Milosevic would be totally wrong. Milosevic remains in power today through police repression and severe fraud. The democratic demands of the opposition movement should be supported. The overthrow of Milosevic would open up the possibility of developing an alternative to the Serbian nationalist that has been at the centre of the break up of Yugoslavia. A serious alternative to the nationalist led regimes that are in power would be more likely to develop in these circumstances.

Supporting the legitimate complaints of Jazdno is not the same as supporting its policies as its leaders. Socialists in Serbia need their own voice and their own candidates in elections against both Jazdno and Milosevic.

Neither the pro-capitalist policies of Milosevic nor Jazdno can solve the problems of workers in Serbia. Serbian nationalism must be challenged, arguing for the need to link up with workers throughout the former Yugoslavia.

A refusal to give any political support to Jazdno does not, however, mean that socialists should be part of common actions against Milosevic's fraud and repression. Despite the serious wrong political ideas of Jazdno, the overthrow of Milosevic will have important repercussions. On December 13 tens of thousands of protesters in Belgrade held a minute's silence for an Albanian teacher killed in Kosovo by the police. Such an event would have been impossible when Milosevic ruled unchallenged.

Distance

There are already signs in Montenegro that the normally servile party leadership is taking its distance from Milosevic. With Milosevic it is difficult to see how Tudjman can survive in Croatia. Despite the pro-capitalist policies of protesters in Belgrade and Zagreb neither Washington nor London would look kindly on the removal of those they believe can best guarantee stability in the Balkans.
Indonesian Show Trials: Act now

B. Skanthakumar

INDONESIAN political activists and worker leaders detained over the last four months have been on trial since December 12 1996 in Jakarta and Surabaya.

The charges they face range from creating public disorder to sowing subversion. The maximum sentence for the latter is death.

The verdict will be delivered within the next few months and probably before General Elections scheduled for May 1997 - so as not to upset that chore.

In any event, such a judgment is not in doubt. The defendants will be found guilty and sentenced to the severe penalties - without any lesser circumstances intervene.

The list includes members of the opposition Partai Demokrasi Indonesia or Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI). However the main targets are leaders of the left-wing Partai Rakyat Demokrat or Peoples Democratic Party (PRD) including its chairman Budiman Sudjatmiko, 26, trade unionist Dita Indah Sari, 21, an activist from the Workers Union (SPSI) and student activist M. Sholeh.

The other principal accused is the independent trade union leader Muchdi Putra, 43, who had already spent a year in jail for his organizing efforts.

Riots

They were arrested following the anti-government riots that swept Jakarta after the Government ordered the storming of the PDI headquarters on July 27th. To prevent it being used as a base of operations for democracy activists and as a forum for opposition government speeches and rallies.

The 'New Order' regime of President Suharto has persistently used its authoritarian grip over the country, advertising Indonesia as an investment safe and profitable site for foreign transnationals.

These companies choose Indonesia because of its allegedly low wages and (until recently) docket working class.

The labour force has been managed until a few years ago by a combination of strikes and conscription into state-run companies dominated by the state-run Unions - the All Indonesian Workers Union (SPSI) and the direct intervention of the military in industrial relations.

However in the last few years independent and opposition figures have emerged and become implanted in the new industrial working class. As a result of the formation of new trade unions and a new industry formation in which companies compete on the basis of costs and popular sectors.

In the 1980s Indonesia a new non-governmental organization emerged, the Indonesian Environment Association and the Sumatra, an organization of workers and popular associations.

The Thai government has been elected to the Parliament, popularly perceived as the social candidate for the opposition. The most popular of the opposition candidates, the rights, Mario Vargas Llosa.

IFM medicare

However Fujimori embraced his rival's economic programme of liberation and privatization, and made Peruvians swallow the bitter medicine of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Nor has it just been to the Peruvian people, who has been expropriated, but to the Peruvian people, who has been expropriated, but to the Peruvian people, who has been expropriated, but to the Peruvian people, who has been expropriated.

Fujimori has traded on his Japa- nese immigrant roots using it within Peru to portray himself as an outsider in Peru and to sanction foreign investment in that country.

In 1992, in a one-man coup, he dissolved Congress, dismissed the judiciary, and appropriated greater powers for the President. So much for the once elegant claim that free elections would be held in accordance with Peruvian and Peruvian and Peruvian and Peruvian and Peruvian.

The government removed basic labour standards, and introduced large scale redundancies by halving the public sector pay bill. It has privatized most of the state owned assets and reduced tariffs for imports and approved foreign exchange restrictions.

Foreign debt

The proportion of annual income spent on servicing foreign debt has been increasing, without any overall decrease in the size of the foreign debt. The resources from this strain come from reduced health and education budgets as the poor are forced to pay user fees to have access to these services and as private insurance, loans and self-help schemes are increasingly encouraged to provide for own funding.

Consequently over 14 million Peruvians live below the poverty line, a factor singled out by Nobel Peace Laureate in 1980, John Paul II, who criticized this country's political life to fight a system that deprives the majority of the population.
to free the detainees!

triction of the Indonesian Commu-

nism. Of all these acts were perpet-
tuated by the present ruling clique of

Communism in south-east Asia.

The torture, imprisonment and

killings which followed, the battery

of repressive laws; the growth of

the military apparatus and its reach

into everyday life; the policing of

dissent and the revising of the histori-

cal past; the egos and fortunes of

the Soeharto clan, the cronies capitalists

and their army buddies are by prod-

ucts of this period.

Ironically the regime was initially

preoccupied by the rise in public

support for the state created Partai

Demokrasi Indonesia led by

Megawati Sukarnoputri. She is a
dughter of the nationalist leader

Sukarno and was tipped to do the

unthinkable, challenge Suharto in

Presidential elections and possibly

win.

Suharto's original plan was to pre-

vent her from challenging him and
to weaken her support base in her

country and in the country. That ac-

counted for the hard-handed assault

on the PDI office where her sup-

porters were abducted.

Congress

It also explains the swift conven-

ing of a PDI congress by the military,

which Megawati and her supporters

were barred from attending, and

which replaced her with a Suharto

stooge who will play his scripted

part in Indonesia's 'Guided Democ-

rac}'.

In other words the PDI was re-

stored as a 'kept' opposition party,
giving the political system the facade

of multi-partyism but which never-

seriously challenges the ruling Gol-

ker party or the social and economic

system.

Megawati herself will be handled

with caution by the Government.

Her profile and the prestige of her

father give her some protection in

that regard.

Meanwhile she has become iden-

tified as the public face of the year-

ning for an end to the Suharto

proconsulate and for greater openness

and accountability from the state.

It is tempting and instructive not

only to draw the obvious parallel be-

tween Megawati and Burname oppo-

sitionist Aung San Suu Kyi but per-

haps from further afield Benazir

Bhattu, the former Pakistani Prime

Minister.

Bhutto drew on the popular leg-

acy of her father and his party. She

symbolised the struggle against dic-

tatorship. But her record in office and

attitude towards former allies under-

scores the inherent limitations of

these charismatic individuals and

their ideology.

The pro-democracy movement has
to unite its forces in the struggle

against the dictatorship and to rec-

ognise that the PDI of Megawati will

for the foreseeable future be its lar-

gest component. This will define the

movement's strategies and its de-

mands.

Megawati's immediate priority

has been to assert her own politi-

cal future by re-organising her sup-

porters and by creating a new legal

legitimacy for her party.

Optimism

A spokesperson for the PRD in-

terviewed by Tempo Weekly was

optimistic about the future. He ob-

served that his party (courtesy of

the regime it owes to overthrow)

has been catapulted from obscurity

into national prominence. It is gain-

ing a new audience for its ideas.

"Some pro-democracy groups

between the two lines have emerged,

but we feel the opposite. The op-

portunities... are far greater today.

So our perspective is to raise the

level of struggle and give it a politi-

cal face of its own."

In Australia members of the Mar-

time Union have been mounting
go-slow on cargo bound for

Indonesia, and in one case are refus-

ing to do a ship's work. This is a

word there must be similar

protests targeting Indonesian busi-

nesses, banks and the govern-

ment by pickets, lobbies and the

like, campaigning for free trade,

the revocation of repressive laws

and end arms sales.

Suharto has left no doubt that

he will not hesitate to take the

lives of political prisoners if he

must lie in doubt that there is

nothing that we won't do to

save their lives.
Central Africa in new turmoil

By a special correspondent

THE THREAT of foreign mili-
tary intervention in Zaïre (Congos-Kinshasa) con-
ceded. The dismantling of the refugee camps and the light of their occupants has removed the stated goal of this "humanitarian-
ism" operation.

The western powers were more concerned over the success of anti-
Mobutu forces and the stability of their client regime in Zaïre than the lives of the refugees. The aid orga-
nizations were amongst the most vocal advocates for a military operation.

The NGOs are indeed Africa's new missionaries. The old mission-
aries brought religion and de-
named colonial government to
"civilize the natives". The new mis-
nionaries bring in food parcels and de-
mand "humanitarian intervention".

They want to ensure permanent dependency on them and the legit-
misation of their work in the grand project to reconolise Sub-Saharan Africa. With a few honourable ex-
ceptions such as Oxfam they in-
vented the "fact" that one million people would die in the absence of western troops in the region secure-
ning the distribution of food and medical supplies.

Rebellion

The goal of western military in-
volvement would have been to de-
feat the rebellion against the Zaïrois dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Instead of disarming the militias which had run the refugee camps, would have supported them in the consolidation of a Hutu supermak-
sionist regime in central Zaïre.

The camps near the Zaïrois town of Goma and Bukavu are now e-
homes for the leaders of the Interahamwe Hutu militia – the in-
stigators of the 1994 genocide of the Batutsi minority in Rwanda.

Some of the civilians in these camps participated in that genocide and de-
and returning to Rwanda be-
cause they will be identified by their former neighbours. They were stock-piling arms and ammunition purchased from the west including at least one British company.

Preparations have been un-
footed ever since the flight from Rwanda for a military campaign against the new government there.

This would have been a progression into years of low intensity war.

Many refugees however have re-
nained in those camps over the last two years against their will. They were used as human shields to pro-
tect the real scoundrels and to jus-
tify the existence of these camps as a Hutu homeland in exile.

Even at the height of the fighting around the camps people were forc-
ibly prevented from returning to Rwanda by militia leaders. The Rwandan government had been try-
ning for months to reach agreement with the Zaïrois central govern-
ment on the repatriation of the refugees.

They wanted to prevent the camps being used as a base against them and to prove that their govern-
ment would not victimise Batutsi as the previous Hutu government victimised the Banyamulenge. In August, Zaïre Prime Minister and Presi-
dential aspirant, Leon Kenza Wa Dondo moved the Congolese capital, Kisangani to initial an agreement on this.

He has different interests in this issue. It was rumoured that in the 1997 Presidential elections in Zaïre, Mobutu's party would give the Ba-
nyamulenge voting rights converting them into voting fodder for their party.

This Kenza Wa Dondo wanted them out as soon as possible.

II

The Hutu militiam in collabora-
tion with the Zaïrois army had been engaged in attacks during 1996 on the Banyamulenge community in eastern Zaïre. This people have many connections with the present Rwandan government and some had been involved in the resistance war against the Hutu supremacist government of Juvenal Habyari-
mana in Rwanda before 1994.

Many have lived in Uganda where Yoweri Museveni's government has been sympathetic. So it was unsurprising that the Rwandan and Ugandan governments gave them material support in their cam-
paign against the Zaïrois army and in Hutu allies.

The immediate trigger to the fighting from October was an order of expulsion on the Banyamulenge people in eastern Zaïre by regional
department governor, Lwazi Ndagwa Lugbawas, who gave them a week to leave.

He threatened those who tried to remain saying that, "they will be treated as rebels and like rebels ... will be exterminated and expelled".

With their guns and rifles at stake, the Banyamulenge took a stand and fought back.

They had little choice. One of the rebels insisted, "the government tried to trick our land and they had us go to leave the country and go back to Rwanda. Better we don't come from Rwanda and they cannot force us to go, because we know how to fight and the army does not." The Banya-
mulenge people are often referred to as "Tutsi" by commentators who in-
sist on viewing African politics through a "tribal" prism.

However we have argued pre-
viously in Socialist Outlook, these ethnic identities are constructs of the 20th century and while useful to understand some of the political dy-
namics in central Africa, do not explain the complexity of the situation.

The Banyamulenge community curre-
cently numbers around 400,000 peo-
ple who have been settled in east-
ern Zaïre for at least two centu-
ries. They originally settled near the Rutshuru hills from which they took their name.

This community had been swelled and differentiated in this century by different migrations from Rwanda and by a specialisa-
tion in their occupations. Thus they were often pastoralists in Masisi and cultivators in Rundundu.

Many came to Zaïre or the Bel-
gian Congo as it then was to escape German and Belgian colonial oppres-
sion in Rwanda-Burundi. Zaïre is such a vast country that they knew they could live relatively free of the colonial administration in Leopoldville (present day Kin-
shasha).

Tensions

However there have always been tensions between the Bany-
amulenge and other communities in the region.

As the Banyamulenge became wealthier using their trading con-
nections in Rwanda resettlement grew. The Mobutu regime has sur-
vided for the last thirty years by fostering and using ethnic tensions across the country.

In 1981 it stripped the Banya-
mulenge of Zaïrois citizenship and one of the main demands of the cur-
rent rebellion is for the restoration of that right and an end to discrimi-
nation against them.

III

The Banyamulenge had been al-
lies of Mobutu in the early days. They participated in the crushing of the radical nationalist movement led by Pierre Mulele between 1964 and 1988. This movement for the Second Independence of Kinshasa was a continuation of the struggle against western imperial-
ism's foodstaples. It was destroyed with the direct involvement of western troops. Now the Banyamulenge have united in a broad coalition against Mobutu with Muiese's comrades notably Laurent Kabila.

Kabila is political co-ordinator of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (AFDL), an alliance of four dispa-
rate parties, which he said was formed with the intention to, "over-
throw the irresponsible clique of people in power and to put in place a transitional government which would eventually organise demo-
cratic elections".

Kabila is leader of the Peoples Revolutionary Party which has a Marxist-Nationalist past and has been active since the military de-
feats of the late 1960s in propaganda work and consolidation of its influence in liberated zones it controls.

Minerals

The strategy of the Alliance appears to be to gain control over the mineral rich provinces where the can rely on the disaffection of the local communities against any attempt to control the wealth and its distribution.

The forces have for some time abandoned Somikiza gold concession in southern Kinshasa and was making propaganda towards the gold mines in upper Zaïre. Mobutu's personal gold min-
ging concession area has recently fallen to the new government.

The western companies which exploit these mines have withdrawn

and Zaïrean troops in retreat have lost and destroyed much of the valuable wealth and would court the companies to return and threaten to revoke their licenses and sell or give them to their competitors if they don't.

IV

On the whole western businesses are fairly sanguine about the recent developments. They have got used to the weak control the central govern-
ment has over the provinces and are accustomed to bribing the re-
gional government and paying the army to keep business policies in return for protection. A further fragmenta-
tion of Zaïre and even instability in the central government won't affect their profits.

Fortunes to be made

They are far too important to all sides for that. There is no threat of nationalisation and there are still huge fortunes to be made from gold, diamonds, copper and cadmium deposits. In return for their generous contributions to the military budget and the personal bank accounts of the elite, these companies are given the foot in the door to make even more money from the privatisation of state firms in the near future.

Mobutu's political response fol-
lowing his return in December from convalesence in the French Riviera following a prostate cancer operation in Switzerland was to continue his austerity measures and close ranks around the government.

The parliamentary opposition is divided, the most serious problem con-
cerns its leaders is to ensure repre-
sentation in a new post Mobutu Zaïre. The outcome of the turmoil in the region is unclear.

The Congolese military is divided within the military. Soldiers are irregularly paid and their ill discipline is notorious. They survive by extorting the rich and poor alike and pillage and rape at will. Mobutu himself only relies on the absolute loyalty of his Presidential Guard.

There is always the possibility of a coup and politicians in Kinshasa are ingratifying themselves with military figures in preparation for such an outcome. The military de-
feats in the east could backfire on Mobutu as demands for a stronger, healthier leader become more pronounced.

The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) cannot with its small forces and narrow base expect at present to be more than one factor in this equation. What may make the difference is urban protest, which could become towards the central government.

Protests and strikes by workers, public sector employees, the urban poor and all sectors of the general government and could make a dif-
fERENCE. In and of itself it still would change the nature of the Zaïre state but it would be a begin-
ning.
Keep the censor out of my bed!

IN NOVEMBER 1996 Westminster Council banned David Cronenberg's film 'Crash', apparently because it deals with the eroticism of car crashes as well as the awkward idea that disability itself might be sexy.

While the rest of Europe can watch 'Crash' uncut, it looks as if the more susceptible British will have to be protected from such undesirable notions.

While important in itself, this event is just a symptom of a wider and more dangerous attack on our right to see and read what we like. In the name of protecting the young, violence and sex on TV and video, word and image on the Internet are under sustained surveillance.

The call to protect children is of course a clever way of approaching the question. No-one likes our apparently increasingly violent society, everyone wants to protect the young and vulnerable from attack, sexual or otherwise, so stop images of violence on TV and video and CD, ban sexual images from the Internet, and all will be well.

In today's Britain, with widespread poverty, increasing if unacknowledged unemployment, a series of issues, environmental as well as economic, the question of censorship is again firmly on the agenda. Through the last 17 years the state has been eroding democratic and social rights.

A series of anti-trade union laws have reversed long-held workers' rights against employers, whilst the Criminal Justice Act criminalised a whole range of legitimate activities, as well as attacking the right to silence. At the same time it is also preparing to control what we read and see. But this cannot be carried out directly: popular issues are utilised as a smoke-screen, issues such as sex and violence on TV and child pornography on the Internet which give censorship a legitimacy.

It is especially what we look at that is under attack. In the 1950s, and from the standpoint of a liberalisation of sexual and moral issues, it was mainly the written word which came under the scrutiny of the censors - Lady Chatterley's Lover and Last Exit to Brooklyn for example. Today the image is a much more potent form of communication, and it is film, TV and the Internet which now face the censor's eagle eye.

Even if it were true that there is more violence today, which is a debatable point, there is no serious evidence that images or words are the cause.

Rather, increasingly violent film, TV and computer imagery is a symptom of the social and moral decay of late capitalist society, the effects of poverty, cuts in welfare, so-called 'community care' for the mentally ill, and the atomisation of society resulting from seventeen years of Tory rule.

Barbarism

Images are not to blame and banning them will increase rather than undermine violence. In previous centuries violent and barbaric attacks were carried out without the aid of such images; today in some semi-developed countries where pornography and erotic images are banned for religious reasons, rape and sexual abuse and murder still exist.

Like rape in marriage and child abuse here ten years ago, they go unrecognised. But in countries with less harsh censorship laws there tends to be less sexual and violent crime.

In the face of increasing authoritarianism socialists should oppose censorship. The cutting of violence from films or of erotic images from the Internet will have no impact on real violence and real sexual attack, nor will it solve the social problems suffered by many today.

Quite the reverse, it will be used to further undermine our rights and liberties.

Once accepted, censorship will be used to increasingly curtail the rights of the oppressed - women, lesbians and gay men, black people, the disabled - and against the left and anyone who wants to change the status quo. Real violence and sexual abuse against women and children will be again swept under the carpet of moral hypocrisy.

In the United States the reversal of affirmative action for blacks and women as well as attacks on a woman's right to choose have gone alongside increasing censorship of the arts - museums have been threatened with withdrawal of federal funding for showing exhibitions of the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe or critical works on the history of native americans.

Abortion

These events have their echoes here: the Labour Party leadership is just holding the line against demands from the Catholic Church to change policy on abortion rights, but with Blair moving right on more or less every policy area, there is no guarantee that this demand will not be successful. And sections of the Catholic church are calling for a ban of some pop records on the grounds of satanism.

Once accepted, censorship will spread from sexual and/or violent images to political expression. Already TV films or documentary programmes on Ireland are subject to extra scrutiny. Jordan's film 'Michael Collins' was attacked for being "pro-IRA", just as Oliver Stone's work 'Born on the Fourth of July', 'JFK' has been slated for its exposure of American injustice.

Real violence and sexual abuse against women and children will be again swept under the carpet of moral hypocrisy.

This Christmas Channel 4 was under pressure to pull R andy Bremen's satire on the Queen's Xmas broadcast - 'Prince Charles in a Parallel One'.

Opposing censorship does not mean passivity in the face of sexism, racism or homophobic images or texts, nor that we in any way defend them. As socialists and feminists we have a good deal to say about the way women, black people, lesbians and gay men, disabled people are represented on our TV and in film, in magazine adverts and on boardings.

Everyday images

In many ways the images of advertising and mainstream TV programmes are much more pernicious, because more everyday, than pornography. But they remain all of them 'representations'.

They may reflect reality and reproduce ideology but they are not real. Nor is there any serious evidence that it is such images that produce or even encourage violent and sexual attack.

Even sexual images of children, on the Internet or elsewhere, perhaps the most difficult area, while subject to political critique and exposure, should not be subject to censorship. First of all there are other laws which can be used to prosecute people actually abusing children, but more importantly, accepting some elements of censorship opens the door to the censorship of images which we do want to be available - lesbian and gay images, sex manuals for teenagers, films about eroticism and sexual desire, which explore the links between sexuality and violence - it will be these things which suffer the censor's knife, not the gruesome violence of the films of the likes of Sylvester Stallone.

To call for censorship is to hand over power to people who have no interest in the rights and liberties of ordinary people. Just as we do not call on the state to police fascist and proto-fascist political groups and demonstrations, but try and organise labour movement responses, so in the face of reactionary cultural imagery, we should organise educational conferences, hand out leaflets and demand discussion - not a ban.

A new moral plague behind these calls for censorship are anti-libertarian movements, once more trying to use censorship as a form of ideological control. From Hitler's Germany to today's anti-pornography groups and what it is said or seen is read has always been a question to be decided by the authorities.

Hitler

Hitler put on a special exhibition of modern art, 'Degenerate Art' in 1937, so that there could be no confusion about what was 'good' and what was 'bad' art. The fact that Goebbels collected the latter was not seen as a problem, after all he wasn't confused about the function of Nazism.

Today we could use the analogy with what happened in Nazi Germany: first they banned pornographic images of children and I did not object, for I did not use them; next they banned pictures of lesbian sex and I did not object, for I was not a lesbian; then they banned sadomasochistic sex and I did not object, I did not engage in such activity; later they banned teenage sex manuals and I did not object, for I was not a teenager; then they banned representations of heterosexual couples and I did not object, for I did not like nudity; in the end they banned sex outside of marriage and I wanted to object - but there was no-one left to support me.

Calling for censorship of words or images is a dangerous and slippery slope: we should not take even the first step.
Charting the history of South African radicalism

South Africa’s Radical Tradition - a documentary history

Volume One 1907 - 1950

This book, the result of years of diligent research by Alison Drew, will serve as a text book for all students of the development of South Africa from a racist colony to the democratic republic, inaugurated by the election of a black-dominated government by universal suffrage.

The victory of the ANC under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, is the culmination of years of struggle by socialists and nationalists. These documents present a factual record of that struggle.

A documentary history has the one advantage over narrative history, in that it is free from the bias of the author. It is the nearest we can get to an objective view of the events recorded.

While the events recorded, often violent, from the onset of colonial conquests, are these not the subject of this book. Its theme is the birth and growth of the socialist and labour movement, and the struggle for national liberation.

Socialist and trade unionism were brought to South Africa by the skilled workers from Britain who came to work in the diamond and gold mines in the 19th century, and the immigrant grants fleeing from Czarist oppression in Russia and Europe. They brought with them the ingrained traditions of their countries of origin.

Drew’s selection of documents faithfully chronicles these early years of British workers, while often militant in their demands and their employers, never looked upon the non-white sector of the working class as allies in the struggle, but rather as a threat to their own privileged standards of living.

Macdonald

Thus we have a letter from the Cape Labour Party to Ramsey Macdonald (August 12 1908), then secretary of the British Labour Party, complaining that..."the interests of the savage Zulu, the comfort of the Chinese criminals in the compounds & the convenience of inferior races", seem to be nearer the heart of the English (sic) Labour Party than the continued oppression of the white brethren of the same flesh and blood...

(Echoes of Ian Smith and the white Rhodesians’ appeal to their ‘White Voice’)

This division along racial lines was to run as a red thread throughout the history of the Labour and Socialist movement in South Africa right up to the end of apartheid.

Even the Communists and Trotskyists had difficulties in this regard. Although free of the racism and xenophobia of the South African Labour Party, which they subjected to intensive criticism, they accepted the orthodox Marxists view that the struggle for socialism would be spearheaded by the organised industrial workers — and these were, for the most part, white, and male.

They tried to overcome this by all sorts of euphemisms, like Black and Unemployed Union, or W.H. Andrews — a founding member of the Communist Party - “equal pay for equal work”.

Although the Communists made serious efforts to work in the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), and strongly opposed all racist legislation, it was not until Stalin’s Comintern foisted the “Native Republic” thesis on the SAP that they began any in-depth study of the issues involved.

Then under the majority of communists and socialists saw the movement for national liberation and democratic rights as foundations underneath the struggle to subdue to the working class struggle.

This thesis was strongly opposed by P.S. Bunting and Edie Roux at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, reflecting the views of the majority of South African communists at that time.

Mandela: Jailed in 1964: President in 1997

The documents take us up to the outbreak of war, and its consequences as it affected the radical movement in South Africa.

changed line

The SAP gave their full support to the war, until the defeat of the Fascists drove them into opposition, only to change position again after the Soviet Union was invaded in June 1941.

The Workers Party, anticipating a repressive legislation, voluntarily dissolved itself. On the Left, only the same remaining Trotskyist groups (inconveniently) opposed the imperialist war. The Fourth International, Club Cape Town and the Socialist Workers’ League, Johannesburg, issued this Joint Manifesto:

Workers Of South Africa

Unit against the imperialist peoples against the tyranny of Imperialist rule.

Unity is the only just war - the war against the oppressors, the expropriators, the imperialist agents in the working class.

Fight against capitalist rule, for the liberation of the oppressed peoples from the burdens of race, colour or creed.

Build the Fourth International.

These documents represent the nervous system, the veins and arteries, the muscles and skeleton of South Africa’s radical movement. We look forward eagerly to Volume Two.
No more Bloody Sundays!

David Coen
ON JANUARY 30 1972, British paratroops shot dead 13 unarmed civilians in Derry: one person died later from his wounds.

The Civil Rights Movement which over the previous 4 years had mobilised thousands against discriminating in jobs and housing, and which had been inspired by the mass protests against racist discrimination in the United States, was literally shot off the streets. Bloody Sunday showed the determination of the British ruling class to defend the Orange State literally to the death.

Already under growing pressure for internment of hundreds of nationalists without trial the previous August, the British were forced to abolish the hated Unionist Government and at Stormont in March 1972 and begin direct rule from Westminster.

Three lessons
The mainly nationalist and Catholic protesters drew three main conclusions from Bloody Sunday massacre: First, the Six County State could not be reformed and therefore had to be destroyed. Second, because the British stood behind the unionists, the real struggle was to drive the British out of Ireland. Thirdly, a large section of nationalists, particularly the youth, joined the IRA believing that only military force could force British withdrawal.

In 1972 nationalists and socialists in Ireland are still faced by the same stark choice as in Derry 25 years ago. The unionists made it clear at Drumcree and the Lower Ormonde Road in the summer of 96 that they will not concede an inch - there will be no reforms of the Orange State.

The British ruling class led by John Major stands four square behind them, demanding a surrender by the IRA surrender and threatening to unleash a sectarian bloodbath spearheaded by the loyalist death squads.

Those on the left in Britain, including Militant Labour and the Alliance for Workers Liberty who, as recently as last summer, were engaging the Progressive Unionist Party in fraternal debates, should consider, even if it is painful to contemplate, that the reactionary alliance which demands IRA surrender extends from the loyalists, through the Unionist parties to the British state itself.

Civil war
In the civil war in Ireland which ML and AWL, claim to foresee, the loyalists will form the shock troops of British efforts to smash republicanism and socialism in Ireland. And why not? The British have armed and trained them in the RUC and the RIR and have used them in the secret war to kill Republicans from General Frank Kitson's Low Intensity Operations in the mid-1970s to well-attended recent cases. Militant Labour and the Alliance for Workers Liberty in practice accept the British propaganda line on Ireland: essentially seeing the British as a benign force keeping two warring factions apart.

The ending of the IRA cease-fire was to them a provocation and IRA actions over the past twenty five years are seen as being mainly responsible for sectarianism. They completely leave out the diligent efforts of the British over the past century and more to whip up sectarianism and the structure of the Orange State itself which was built on sectarianism.

Mistake
No doubt they also believe Bloody Sunday to have been a tragic mistake which simply stirred up nationalists and unionists.

 Bloody Sunday was not a mistake: it was a clear warning to nationalists that behind the bogons of the Unionist Party and the Orange Order stood the might of the British State.

The British are not neutral peacekeepers without selfish strategic or economic interests in Ireland. Anyone who believes that the British spend £3 billion a year to keep the peace in Ireland or to uphold the rights of protestors in the Six North Eastern Counties betrays a naïve and trusting nature not suited to a serious revolution.

While we in Socialist Outlook side with the oppressed against the oppressor in every case and do not put an equals sign between IRA violence and that of the British or its agents in Ireland, we do not believe that armed struggle will force the British out of Ireland.

The talks, even supposing the Government were allowed in, will not lead to British withdrawal and self determination; in fact, as Militant Labour have themselves pointed out, what is on offer at those talks is a deal which makes fewer concessions to the nationalists than the Sunningdale Agreement of 1974. In other words, it is a worse deal than was on offer more than 20 years ago.

Desperation
The British position since the IRA cease-fire of August 1994 comes not from strength, however, but from desperation. Major has been pulled and pushed by the conflicting forces inside the Tory Party and the ruling class as a whole. There is no doubt that at several points the British could have had a very favourable deal with the pro-nationalist alliance of Dublin, the SDLP and Sinn Fein but at crucial moments these were lost because of the tensions which even the minor concessions necessary caused within the Tory Party.

Tensions
These tensions have usually been about policy on the EU rather that Ireland, but they had the effect of preventing any initiative which might have led to a deal.

Blair and Mowlam's "me too" means that the second team has no alternative to the Tories. In Government their placidness will sound good only until the next marching season.

With the Tories in opposition free to give vent to their ancient imperial and racial hatreds, Labour can be expected appease them and their Unionist brethren by repressing the nationalists - all in the name of opposing sectarianism. Of course.

In previous crises of de-colonisation the British ruling class were able to impose a solution, even if that meant sacrificing the interest of an important section of their own class in the interests of the class as a whole.

Major is incapable of doing that in Ireland without dividing the Tory Party from top to bottom. He also has the problem of being a minority government heavily dependent on Unionist votes at Westminster.

Opportunities
As the political crisis of the British State deepens it will present opportunities for socialists to divide and isolate its components, central to which is the Conservative and Unionist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Socialists in Britain have a duty to counteract the activities of their own state in Ireland if only because as Marx said: a nation which oppresses another can never itself be free. We must protest against the appalling treatment of Republican prisoners in English jails, the most recent example being that of Roisin McAliskey who in March was effectively British political hostages.

The message is clear: peace in Ireland and socialism in Britain can only come about through British withdrawal.

On the 25th anniversary of Bloody Sunday we must re-dedicate ourselves to that objective.

---

SUBSCRIBE to Socialist OUTLOOK

Special Offer: THIS MONTH ONLY!

INTRODUCTORY subscription to our expanded monthly paper
- 12 issues for just £7.50 (Britain and Europe) (normal price £10)
- Rest of the World: Introductory offer £15.00 (normal price £20)

Please send me 12 issues of SOCIALIST OUTLOOK. I enclose a cheque/order for ... plus a donation of ... Name ......................................................

Address .........................................................................................

Post code ................................................................. Age ....

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

This is a very small way for you to help us to continue to produce this magazine. We hope you agree.

---

A regular subscription would naturally be preferable.
Sinister forces combine to carve up Palestine

The Palestinian bantustan would have its capital in the village of Abu Dis.

(PLUS: Proposing a new capital in England.)

A national unity government in Israel would need to be established.

In March 1977, workers of Europe with make 1977 a year of international solidarity!