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Inside your Xmas holiday Special issue of Socialist Outlook:

- China: a capitalist road?
- Poland: fight for abortion rights
- UCH: a victory in hospitals fight

Next issue JANUARY 13, 1993

Best New Year wishes to all our readers -
and to socialists and anti-imperialists in
struggle throughout the world

1992: a year of world crisis

1992 saw the capitalist world unable to break out of sharp economic recession, and slide towards slump. No major capitalist country has been able to break free of recession, and relaunch sustained economic growth.

The net result is that the toll of unemployment and social misery for the working class has only increased.

The present crisis is a bitter, but utterly predictable, conclusion to the Thatcher-Reagan years. The popularity of free market is at its lowest ebb for a decade.

At the same time, there is no resolution in sight for the crisis in eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union. The attempt to restore capitalism has plunged these states into economic and political turmoil, with no obvious way out. Without massive growth in the world capitalist economy, the investment to carry through privatisation in the former eastern bloc will not be forthcoming.

The attempt to restore capitalism has dislocated the state planning system, and succeeded only in catastrophically reducing production levels and creating social anarchy. There is a grave danger, as the article in this issue on Poland points out, of harshly authoritarian governments emerging as a result.

Two years after the Gulf war, Pax Americana has done nothing for the peoples of the third world. Millions continue to starve, and suffer from the effects of IMF and World Bank 'restructuring' projects as crisis and recession are exported from the advanced capitalist west. The Rio summit did nothing for the environment except demonstrate the utter cynicism of the advanced nations, especially the US,



towards dealing with the crisis which will, unless tackled, lead the planet to catastrophe.

Famine in Africa and the apparently unending war in Yugoslavia are vivid symbols of where the so-called 'new world order' have led. US intervention in Somalia, aimed primarily at combatting Islamic fundamentalism in the region rather than defending aid convoys, is indicative of the free hand which the US currently enjoys in organising military intervention worldwide.

All this can be summed up in one phrase: capitalism is leading the planet to catastrophe. The case for socialism has never been stronger; it is the only hope for humanity. But what prospects do the forces fighting for socialism now have?

Everywhere the working class is fighting

defensive battles in difficult situation. But 1992 has shown the ability of the working class to remobilise.

The year started with mass pay strikes in Germany. A general strike movement against austerity measures followed in Greece. A massive protest strike movement then developed in Italy. And finally, in the autumn, the British labour movement mobilised in huge numbers – in defence of the miners.

We can be sure that the working class will fight; but the effectiveness of that fight will depend on the ability of the working class to build a viable political perspective and a leadership committed to reorganising society on a socialist basis.

In the 1930s Trotsky said that the crisis of humanity could be reduced to the crisis of working class leadership. Ever since then that phrase has been met with derision by those in the labour movement opposed to revolutionary socialism. That derision is especially ill-placed today.

It could not be more obvious that in the emerging political conflicts in Russia, authoritarian right-wing government will be result unless a powerful left wing alternative is built. It is equally obvious that in Germany politics will veer sharply to the right, with a powerful fascist surge, unless the forces of the left can act as the backbone of resistance. The examples could be multiplied endlessly.

World capitalism is a very long way from stabilising itself and preparing the basis for another boom. Every fightback, every workers' struggle is important. But unless a movement for revolutionary social change is built out of such struggles, in Britain and internationally, barbarism awaits us.

Mad Harry has Noël of an ordeal

By Jack Dobermann

IT WAS CHRISTMAS morning. Crisp, frosty – and a little hung-over – assistant editor 'Mad' Harry Sloan was clocking on for the day shift at *Socialist Outlook*.

In the distance he heard bells and excited shrieks of discovery – as the local community upheld the Christmas tradition of nicking videos from their neighbours.

Having scouted the horizon for bailiffs, he climbed the wall to approach from the rear entrance. Sloan put his key in the lock. The door creaked open: he realised he hadn't turned the key – even the lock was knackered.

Reaching for the light switch, Sloan heard a click but saw nothing. Bulb gone again? Or no money in the meter?

He moved inside, allowing the door to close behind him. In the half-light he stumbled over a large bundle in the passageway. He heard a snore.

It was the sleeping form of Bill Peters, the tireless sales organiser, obviously too exhausted even to open the door and go home the day before. So fanatical was his devotion that he had wrapped himself in old copies of the *Financial Times* supplement rather than spoil any back issues of *Socialist Outlook*.

Sloan made his way up the narrow creaking staircase, then realised it was him that was creaking. Only 43, but working himself into an early grave, he thought, his debonair good looks raddled by endless hours painstakingly pasting up the paper.

His stooping shoulders rustled against walls lined with pinned-up invoices from a host of suppliers past and present.

One invoice – for office equipment – had become such a favourite with the staff that they had framed it two years earlier as a present for business manager Geoff 'Tomorrow' Lowe.

Unpaid but frequently admired (like me, thought Sloan) it hung in pride of place in Lowe's office on the top floor, valued for its views of the local winos lolling by a wall near

the park.

Sloan reached the first landing, now almost completely in the dark, fumbled for the correct key, and then opened the door to the *Outlook* production area. He coughed as the heavy smoke of the previous day's duty-free Gauloises consumption floated out to grab him by the throat.

He climbed over the abandoned hulk of the previous laser printer – kept 'just in case' – and unlocked the door to the layout room. His feet were already beginning to stick to the carpet: he was entering the Spraymount Zone, where unused aerosol glue had formed a permanently tacky layer underfoot.

No more Spraymount now, he thought, remembering the crisis finance meeting the day before. It had been a grim affair. More economies had to be made, Sloan had been told.

"Spraymount doesn't grow on trees, you know. The Fund-raising committee has decided we have to find a cheaper glue," 'Tomorrow' Lowe had said.

"One of our teacher comrades said her kids make some lovely pictures at school using flour and water paste – and you can get a big bag of flour for less than a quid. So here is your glue for the next three issues," Lowe had said, handing over a bag of Spillers' Homepride.

While Sloan had spluttered, lost for words, the next cutback was announced:

"We're using too many sheets of paper, Harry. From now on we want you to use both sides of the paper you put through the laser printer. Paper doesn't grow on trees, you know ..."

Sloan had turned in disbelief and gone for an early lunch: but this had been spoiled by other members of the paper staff – who hadn't

been paid since the summer – lining up pathetically at the window of the burger bar, watching him and licking their lips hungrily as he went to eat.

In the end five of them shared his burger, bendy sausage chips and beans, taking turns to sip at the cup of coffee.

It was getting ridiculous. Earlier in the week he had dropped in during the afternoon, to find editor 'Fillin' Limmo [see a column inch, and fill it] in a grumpy mood.

The man whose relentless slave-driving put the 'dead' into deadlines was watching a computer screen flicker and surge as office junior Kay Tarrance peddled erratically on a bicycle-dynamo.

"Why can't you keep a regular rhythm going? Frankly, this is useless," he rasped through a Gauloise as the red-faced Kay paused for her fourth cigarette since coffee.

"But I've been pedalling for over an hour. Surely it must be somebody else's turn soon," she winged between drags as she forced her feet round on the converted bike.

Ignoring her, Limmo had picked up the cracked bakelite phone on his desk and laboriously dialled 'Tomorrow's' office.

"Are you sure we can't afford to buy even one photograph for this bloody issue?" he asked. "Here we are producing a rail industry special and all we've got to illustrate the bloody thing is a 5-year old picture of Jimmy Knapp, a tube ticket and a creased graphic of the BR symbol."

"... No, we can't use a picture of the Tory Transport Secretary – no reader would recognise him and anyway our reference books are all from 1988, and nobody here can remember the bugger's name."

Limmo made no headway. There would be no new photos, and the embarrassing weekly

picket line of unpaid photographers would continue each week outside the *Outlook* office.

As a miserable Sloan reached for a spoon to mix up the flour and water paste, the phone rang.

"Hello comrade, season's greetings and all that jazz. Just ringing to wish you well," said a relaxed, well-fed and slightly inebriated voice. In the background Sloan could hear music, laughter, and the popping of champagne corks. He could imagine the platefuls of food and generous freshly-opened presents surrounding the mystery caller.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm the spirit of complacent readers present," said the voice. "We're all celebrating the fact that we can find extra cash for everything else at Christmas, but not a brass farthing for you daft buggers working on the paper. I thought I'd ring up and patronise you with faint praise ..."

"But it's all a mess – you're going to get that bloody picture of Jimmy Knapp on every page if you don't send us some cash," gasped Harry in frustrated anguish. "Surely a few quid wouldn't hurt you? Have a whip round. Send us some money! ..."

"Now, now, don't get hysterical. We think the paper's great, don't we? Some of us even sell a few. Oh: sorry, lunch is starting, must dash. Have fun ..."

There was a click, and the dialling tone. It was too bad to be true.

It wasn't true.

Sloan suddenly woke up; he had dozed off again, editing an article on Labour Party Socialists. He looked at his watch. December 14. How much of the dream had been real?

Only you can decide how much comes true.

If you support us, send a Christmas donation. Now. How about £20?

Give us the resources, and we'll give you a better *Socialist Outlook*.

And that's an investment for Christmases yet to come!



After TUC 'recovery day' wash-out...

Fight for a day of real action!

By Bill Sutcliffe

BE HONEST now. Did you even notice the TUC's 'national day of recovery' on December 9? Thought not.

As you will no doubt not be aware, December 9 - a date selected to tie in with the Edinburgh EC summit - was the centrepiece of the TUC's so-called Campaign for Jobs and Recovery, launched after the coal crisis broke last October.

Trade unionists were asked to meet their bosses and put the case for investment and job creation.

Few could be bothered to waste time on such a pointless

task, and most of the 100,000 leaflets giving the TUC's argument will presumably be pulped.

There was no industrial action anywhere, although there were at least rallies in Manchester, Oxford and Swansea. By contrast, a service for recovery at Southwark cathedral attracted 350.

Clash of Titans

Norman Willis met John Major. Such was the TUC general secretary's negotiating prowess that on December 10 the government announced it was scrapping state funding

for union ballots.

The absolute high-spot of December 9 was NUM leader Arthur Scargill's repetition of earlier calls for the TUC to organise a national day of action, "with millions of people out on the streets", if the Tories do not back down on pit closures.

Scargill made his demand at a conference held in the TUC's Congress House headquarters, repeating remarks made outside the TUC's special general council meeting in Doncaster last month.

Photo: Andrew Ward



This time he got implicit backing from TGWU transport workers chief Bill Morris, presumably under the influence of rank-and-file pressure, who noted the need for "far more active and wide-ranging measures than the under-

powered ones that have already been announced."

The idea of a day of action must be pushed by activists in all unions branches and trades councils, who should also argue for strike action on the day wherever possible.

'Economic' argument destroyed It's pot luck on pit closures

BRITISH Coal statistics prove at least five pits facing the Tory axe are more efficient than some of those scheduled to remain open.

This gives the ILE to Board of Trade President Michael Heseltine's case that he is acting on rational economic grounds.

The high-price subscription newsletter *UK Coal Review* has used data from British Coal's regular area review meetings to compile a table of production costs for the second quarter of 1992, the latest information on which closure decisions could have been based.

Of the 19 British collieries currently safe from

closure, only 14 of them are among the 19 most efficient pits.

Bentley, Prince of Wales, Frickley, Hatley and Bevercoles - all scheduled for shutdown - produce cheaper coal than Silverwood, Welbeck, Littleton, Daw Mill and Kellingley, which are due to stay open.

Seeing no logical basis for British Coal's shutdown shortlist, the magazine argues:

"It is impossible to play any game of certain winners and losers in the British coalfields. It is all a matter of shifting fortunes, hunches, lobbying and personal reputation... In England, the story is really one of perm any seventeen from forty six."

New threat from Smith's review Right wing aim knife at Labour's roots

By Dave Osler

THE LABOUR Party's links with the trade union movement - currently under consideration by a labour movement review group - are under attack as never before.

The only well-organised faction within its leadership is determined to terminate Labour's role as, in Lenin's phrase, "the political expression of the trade union bureaucracy" and transform it into a potential coalition partner for the Liberal Democrats.

While they face resistance from the centre and left and the majority of the trade union leadership, that such a historically unprecedented project is even being countenanced demonstrates Labour's deep ideological drift over the past decade.

Neil Kinnock relentlessly promoted "one member, one vote" (OMOV) - a euphemism for heavily diluting union influence - in the Labour Party throughout his leadership.

The idea was effectively rejected by conference in both 1984 and 1991. Significantly, it was the only major issue on which he never got his way.

Nevertheless, the idea has not disappeared. Its standard bearers include shadow home secretary Tony Blair, shadow chancellor Gordon Brown, Kinnock himself - still on the

national executive committee - and new MPs like Peter Mandelson and Tony Wright.

The rest of the party's leadership has long lost the habit of strategic thinking, giving the Kinnockites a continuing political weight in excess of their numerical strength by virtue of their unity around a common project.

Although likely to proceed with extreme caution, John Smith is obviously well-disposed to their case. The battle is unlikely to be decisively resolved until the other side of the next election.

Internal labour movement tensions can be clearly seen in the review group's deliberations. Big unions, including GMB, Rail Maritime and Transport, the National Union of Public Employees and Manufacturing Science Finance are putting forward a "no say, no pay" bottom line. They are backed by MPs Clare Short and John Prescott, who realise that unions offer Labour an irreplaceable mass base.

While Blair also sits on the group, his position is most ably voiced by the hard right superunion AEEU, represented by Nigel Harris, operating on its own agenda of institutionalised company unionism. Just as its TUC membership is negotiable, so are its links with Labour.

Recommendations include slashing the overall union conference block

vote from 90 to 70 per cent, as agreed at last year's party conference. While this should eventually reduce further to 50 per cent, there is a need to "preserve the stability of the party" (read: keep any future constituency left resurgence in control). The words are underlined in the original.

The suggestion is that MPs and MEPs, and possibly endorsed candidates and councillors, should get a 20 per cent block vote as a "third force".

The report adds: "Consideration of the balance of voting does not take place in isolation but must be made alongside an understanding of the implications of establishing the National Policy Forum."

In other words, now Labour Party conference no longer has real policy making powers, it can't hurt to make it a little bit more democratic.

Constituency and union delegates would effectively get mini-block votes proportional to the size of their local party or their union's affiliation respectively. Theoretically, this is good news for left, but the concession will now mean little.

The real controversy is over pushing OMOV to its logical conclusion, by making political-levy paying trade unionists "registered supporters".

It is proposed that candidate selec-



Photo: John Harris

tion should be based on an electoral college of members and registered supporters resident in constituency, with OMOV in each division. This system would end collective union branch input into the process and should be opposed.

The leadership and deputy leadership elections would be conducted through an electoral college of MPs, members and unionists, again with OMOV operating within each section. This would give the bourgeois media unlimited chances to push candidates of its choice to the rank and file.

The working group is to meet again at least once this month to finalise the draft. It will be considered by the January NEC and rubberstamped at 1993 conference.

But it is vital for the left to realise that this is not the end of the story.

OMOV supporters are clearly in for the long haul.

TGWU cuts lifeline

The Transport and General Workers Union is to slash projected financial support for the Labour Party by over £500,000 a year.

It will also withdraw backing from at least a dozen of its 38 sponsored MPs.

The move is a sure sign of Transport House disquiet with the party's current moves to reduce trade union influence in all areas of its work and indicates the growing gap between the two wings of the movement.

Is China going down the capitalist road?

By Paul Clarke

THREE YEARS after Tiananmen Square, China still remains an economic and political model for sections of the international Left. As opposed to the failure of perestroika in the ex-Soviet Union, economically at least 'market socialism' in China seems to be a success. For others, Deng's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' is advancing rapidly towards capitalism. What is the truth of these counter-claims?

The short answer is that while China remains a non-capitalist country, important sections of the economy have been 'marketised', and domestic and foreign capitalist penetration is growing. While every section of the ruling bureaucracy remains committed to a harsh authoritarian style of rule, important political battles over the future course of the country are taking place behind closed doors, although part of the scope of these battles was revealed at the recent 14th Communist Party congress.

But most important Deng Xiaoping himself is committed to a thorough marketisation, which taken to its logical conclusion would result in the restoration of capitalism; his view were set out at the CCP conference in the keynote speech by party secretary Jiang Zemin. And Deng is doing everything possible to ensure that the political succession is in the hands of those loyal to him.

Agriculture

In the 1980s China had the fastest growing economy of any major nation averaging 7-8 per cent growth each year, and achieving a staggering 12 per cent in 1992. This was based above all on the reform of agricultural production, part of the 'Four Modernisations' charted when Deng replaced Hua Guofeng as party chairman in 1978.

Under these reforms the huge peasant communes established by Mao Zedong in the 1950s and 1960s were abolished, and agricultural production put in the hands of individual peasant producers or small co-operatives. This did not amount to a full privatisation, since up to two thirds of production had to be sold to the state at negotiated prices.

Nonetheless peasants were allowed access for part of their product to deregulated markets in the cities. Very quickly family-based farming units were expanded, and a class of richer peasant farmers or kulaks emerged, employing agricultural labourers. With class differentiation came a big growth of income inequality, and the beginnings of the accumulation of private capital.

The abolition of the peasant communes, and the consequent explosion of agricultural production, exploded many popular myths about the popularity of the collectivisation of the



State repression prepares way for market

peasantry.

Forcible collectivisation, and the madcap schemes imposed on the communes during the late 1950s 'Great Leap Forward' was intensely unpopular; low living standards and poor social and welfare services combined to disrupt incentives to the peasants to develop production.

But the growth in agriculture did not at all solve the basic economic questions facing China. The country's rulers aimed at rapid economic growth, and a qualitative industrialisation process which would put the country on the road to becoming an advanced industrial nation.

Backwardness

What stood in the way of this aim was the backwardness of industry, and all the inefficiencies, waste and corruption associated with bureaucratic rule. In 1988 official statistics said that 30 per cent of enterprises were running at a loss.

In addition, Mao's cultural revolution dislocated economic development from roughly the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s; China lost a decade to anarchy and stagnation. Stark statistics about Chinese economic growth cover up the realities of the poor quality of production and do not translate directly into rising living standards, especially in the towns and cities.

In addition, rationalisation of production in the countryside led to a drift of 'surplus' labourers to the towns, boosting unemployment rates. And China's population growth, small in percentage compared with India, but huge in real terms, constantly uses up increased production.

The basic answer to this from the Deng camp, vigorously promoted by

Far from allowing political liberalisation to go hand-in-hand with marketisation, the party leadership is set on a resolutely authoritarian model, stiffening its system of political surveillance and repression, right down to street and community level.

the now-disgraced party secretary Zhao Ziyang, was to promote marketisation of industry. This has combined encouraging investment from foreign private capital especially in coastal 'special economic zones', a drive to 'rationalise' production at the expense of the workers, and allowing the establishment of private businesses.

The most important aspect of this is the drive to 'smash the iron rice bowl'. Since the 1949, the industrial working class (400 million people now live in big cities and towns) has won important social gains, especially in employment. Workers were used to jobs for life, and a labour regime which, while often harsh by Western standards, was at least stable. This went hand-in-hand with education and health care and other welfare services, at least for most industrial workers and their families.

Redundant

The new drive to smash up this system involves attempts to make millions of workers redundant, and allowing enterprises to go bankrupt. Spontaneous worker resistance led to a slowing of this process, but not to its reversal.

For the moment however the overwhelming majority of industrial production remains in the hands of the state. The private sector is above all in the commercial and distribution sector, with at least 40,000 private businesses, but not in basic industry. But the eventual aim seems to be to develop joint-stock companies in a gradual privatisation process. Stock markets have been established in Shanghai and Shenzhen, with about \$11 billion worth of shares bought so far.

Class differences are now emerging in the big cities as well as the countryside. Private commercial ac-

tivities have created a newly affluent layer, with increasing access to all the goodies of Western capitalist consumerism. Corruption among party officials is endemic, allowing many to become wealthy, and some enormously rich. Business millionaires are being created for the first time.

This contrasts with the growing army of unemployed, now tens of millions strong, and the pressure on living standards of many industrial workers.

The Tiananmen events in 1989 showed that the central party leadership would not tolerate any challenge to the political monopoly of the Communist Party, an organisation of 50 million people. The backbone of the bureaucracy's rule in the loyalty of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), an institution which has been consistently privileged in access to resources for ever more-modern weapons.

Deng's protege Zhao Ziyang fell in 1989, not only because the bureaucracy needed a scapegoat, but because Zhao appeared to hint publicly at concessions to the student movement, a line he almost certainly pushed in the leading echelons of the party.

But far from allowing political liberalisation to go hand-in-hand with marketisation, the party leadership is set on a resolutely authoritarian model, stiffening its system of political surveillance and repression, right down to street and community level.

Divisions

If 'authoritarian marketisation' is the unanimous course of the party leadership, there are certainly differences on where this marketisation is headed. The real lines of political divide are unknowable, because of the secrecy of the bureaucracy's internal debates.

The new drive to smash up the Iron Rice Bowl system involves attempts to make millions of workers redundant, and allowing enterprises to go bankrupt. Spontaneous worker resistance led to a slowing of this process, but not to its reversal.



Bureaucracy crushed opposition in Tienanmen Square

But a number of indications emerged at the October 14th Congress, and their background is in the Tienanmen events of 1989. Faced with the student revolt, and the wavering of the Zhao Ziyang faction, Deng was forced to appeal to veteran party 'conservatives', especially in the leadership of the PLA, to win support for the military crackdown. Indeed, for nearly two weeks in May 1989, the CCP leadership seemed paralysed in face of the student upsurge – an indication of the political struggle over whether to crush the student movement.

Aghast

These events brought especially Long March veteran Yang Shangkun, now state president, and his brother, general Yang Baibang, to the fore. Deng was also forced to enlist support from the ancient veterans of the Central Advisory Commission to his side.

Many of these members of this over-80s Stalinist club are probably aghast at the thought of drifting towards capitalism, and despite its advisory role, the Commission had been used as a platform by 87-year old Chen Yun – an advocate of central economic planning and often regarded as Deng's most powerful rival.

At the 14th Congress Deng had the Central Advisory Council abolished, leaving the party's elders politically adrift and powerless. At the same time, Yang Shangkun was forced out of the politbureau, and his younger brother lost his position of general secretary of the Central Military Council and director of the PLA. In these two moves, potential sources of conservative opposition to Deng were thwarted.

Purge

Although the PLA was rewarded by the promotion of CMC vice-chair Liu Huaqing to the politbureau, officer loyal to the Yang brothers (or suspected of such) are being demoted throughout the PLA in the biggest military purge for a decade.

However, despite the congress rhetoric being staunchly Dengist, the overall outcome of changing 50 per cent of the members of the central Committee is not so clear. Vice premier Tian Jiyun, who attacked the concept of special economic zones in a widely distributed document, retained his place on the politbureau, as did other leading 'conservatives'.

Now many of these differences within the bureaucracy could indeed be issues of tempo, and not of fundamental direction. But as in every post-capitalist state, marketisation and the drift towards capitalism poses enormous questions for the bureaucracy. While



some sections see a future for themselves and their influence and wealth within capitalism, others see it as a direct threat. As a unified caste, the bureaucracy cannot survive capitalist restoration.

The influx of foreign capital, often from expatriate Chinese, is indeed a powerful factor for capitalist restoration. In 1990 alone foreign investment was \$6 billion. The special economic zones, which in effect exchange cheap labour for foreign capital, inevitably create a layer of *comprador* elements inside and outside the bureaucracy. These people are an emerging bourgeoisie based on their links with foreign capital, and their role as middlemen, fixers, and organisers of foreign production.

This is a big factor in the growing regional conflicts inside the bureaucracy. Deng has been fighting hard, especially through his well-publicised national tour, to win the allegiance of party barons in the coastal areas where the special economic zones are located. The new politbureau includes representatives from Guangdong, Tianjin and Shanghai, reflecting the increased power of the regions.

Restoration.

These are among the factors which make Deng's political project of 'authoritarian marketisation' utopian and will certainly lead to massive political explosions in the coming years. Different sections of the bureaucracy will fight among themselves.

Deng's political project of 'authoritarian marketisation' is utopian and will certainly lead to massive political explosions in the coming years. Different sections of the bureaucracy will fight among themselves.

Workers will resist the smashing of the iron rice bowl, as class differences widen in the cities and the countryside. And sections of the new middle classes not directly linked to the bureaucracy will demand the right to influence political events through democratisation, just as they have against the succession of de facto military governments in Thailand. This is an explosive mixture.

While China will not face the emergence of the national question on the same scale as the ex-Soviet Union, continued resistance to Han Chinese national repression in Tibet and the huge province of Xinjiang (which borders

Kazakhstan) will be an additional destabilising factor.

But above all there is in China the process of formation of an indigenous bourgeoisie, whose interests of course lie in the restoration of capitalism per se, and not in the maintenance of a capitalist sector within a stasised economy.

Red flags

During the 1989 Tiananmen protests the students marched under the red flag and sang the 'Internationale'. For the most part, the statements of the students themselves rejected any attempt to link the demand for democracy to restoring capitalism.

It is hard to make judgements about the consciousness of opponents of the regime and young people today. However numerous dissidents and recent exiles, including socialists, speak of wholesale rejection of the party by the young, and near-universal cynicism about 'socialism', identified with the regime. It is not obvious that the next wave of student protestors will march under the red flag.

If these accounts of the attitude of young people are true, it is of course the direct result of the Tienanmen massacre, and the spectacle of a self-proclaimed 'Communist' party which venerates the market, is mired in corruption and represses any dissent. A democratic socialist alternative in China faces a long march before it becomes any kind of significant force.

Failures behind Indian clashes

THE OUTBREAK of communalist violence in India after the destruction of the mosque at Ayodyha cast a spotlight on the growth of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party. This extreme reactionary organisation, its building of a mass base, demonstrates the failure of two traditions – the bourgeois nationalism of the Congress Party, and that of the two mass communist parties, the CPI and the CPI(M).

Mass support for the BJP is just one aspect of communalist politics dividing the country; the other key struggle is the prolonged Sikh insurgency in the Punjab.

The social basis of communalism is the mass poverty of the country. This in turn is a reflection of the failure of the whole tradition of bourgeois nationalism, historically represented by the Congress party and the Nehru/Gandhi dynasty, to make any substantial impact on the legacy of under-development left by British imperialism.

Under successive Congress governments, for three decades attempts were made to bolster industry through a 'state capitalist' approach. A big state economic sector, combined with aid from the Soviet Union, succeeded in developing some heavy industry in the big cities, but on nothing like the scale needed to move India towards becoming an industrialised country.

The absence of successful land reform left the hundreds of thousands of Indian villages in dire poverty, worsened by the massive population growth. Without any social security structure, the pressure on peasants to have large families to provide for the future is relentless. Birth control campaigns make little impact against this economic pressure. This is compounded by the high illiteracy rates, and the subservient status of women.

In the struggle for independence the Congress Party deployed Hindu myths and symbolism. Independent Indian capitalism retained the archaic caste structure, worsening class divisions.

Against the background of terrible mass poverty, socialist aspirations have been largely in the hands of the two mass Stalinist parties, the CPI and the CPI(M). Both these parties are dyed-in-the-wool popular frontist organisations capitulating the Congress bourgeois nationalism at every turn.

Communist state governments, in Kerala and Bengal have become a fixture of the Indian political scene. Educational and welfare reforms have been implemented, including the building of agricultural co-operatives. But all this is a drop in the ocean of Indian poverty and misery.

In the world economic recession India's economy has slumped. The Soviet Union has disappeared, disrupting a key source of trade and technology, and the state economic sector is in huge deficit. Prime minister Narasimha Rao has embarked on a wide-ranging privatisation programme agreed with the IMF.

Poverty and misery, combined with the corruption and economic failure of bourgeois nationalism, has opened the door the religious fundamentalism. Without a mass revolutionary alternative which can inspire the hundreds of millions of dispossessed, nothing stands in the way of a descent into communalist reaction.

Polish left defends abortion rights

Gill McGrath reports from Bialystok

TODAY in Poland, legally there is a right to abortion, more or less on demand.

But under the present right-wing/liberal government coalition this right has been increasingly limited by cuts in the national health service as well as by the new 'Medical Code of Ethics', hastily and unconstitutionally drawn up in defiance of the law by a minority group of doctors.

The Code forbids a doctor to perform an abortion except where the woman's life is in danger. Although it has been opposed by many members of the profession, it has been used to intimidate doctors into refusing abortions.

The most powerful opposition to abortion rights however comes from the Catholic Church. Claiming that 'life' begins at conception, it calls abortion the 'sin' of murder. This is also the position of the most powerful party in the Polish parliament, the National Christian Unity/ZChN, as well as some other parties.

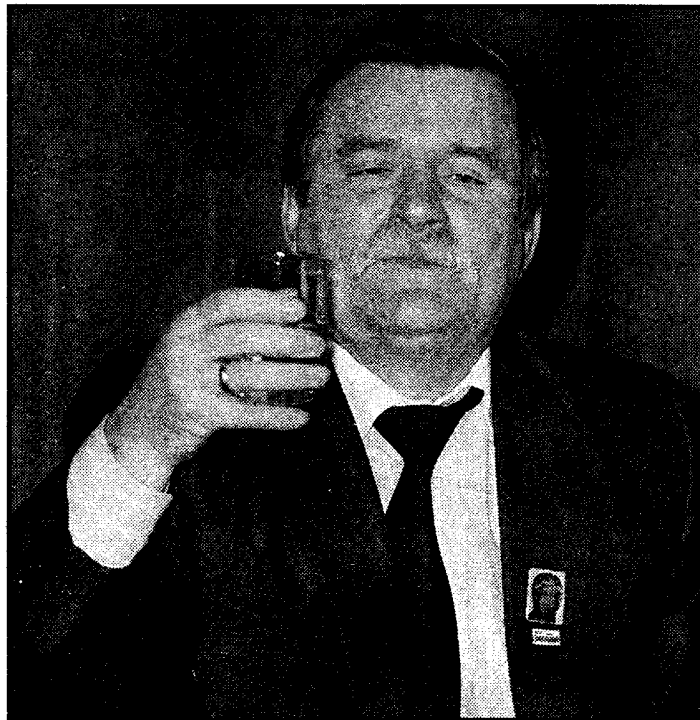
The result of the activities of the anti-abortionists has been to push through to its present voting stage a Bill which would criminalise all abortions unless the woman's life was in danger.

The penalty for performing the abortion, either by the woman herself or a doctor, would be up to two years in prison. Attempted abortions resulting in the death of the foetus and the woman herself would be punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

Ban on coil

Pre-natal tests will be banned, together with forms of contraception said to cause an 'abortion', such as the coil (IUD) and some forms of contraceptive pills. This draconian law will be voted on either at the end of this year or the beginning of 1993.

How has the situation come about. Do the majority of Polish people want abortion outlawed? Not according to all the opinion polls, the latest of which shows 70 per cent against criminalisation, twenty-nine per cent are against any form of restriction on abortion.



The fact that the Bill is opposed by the vast majority is precisely why the catholic Church and right wing are fiercely and loudly opposed to a referendum. Both prime minister Hanna Suchocka and president Lech Walesa are opposing abortion and a referendum.

One reason for their opposition to a referendum is the danger that it would split the present fragile government coalition between the Catholic fundamentalists of the National Christian Unity, and liberals within the Democratic Union (which includes many Solidarity intellectuals).

Abortion is not the only area where democracy is under threat. Economic guru Balcerowicz, architect of the privatisation and austerity drive, recently stated that authoritarian rule was the best way to impose his policies.

The right to strike is under threat. Riot police were used earlier this year to disperse farmers from the militant

peasant union Self Defence. The big wave of strikes this summer was denounced by the government as 'illegal', and calls were made for wide-reaching anti-strike laws.

Together with the campaign against abortion and other democratic rights, there is also a big campaign to demand that TV and radio respect 'Christian value and' not offend 'religious values'.

The Committee for a Referendum on Abortion rights was set up earlier this year, on the initiative of the newly formed social democratic party, the Union of Labour. The committee, which is backed by much of the left, and by a section of the liberal and peasant parties, aims to gain the half-million signatures necessary to force a referendum.

Campaign co-ordinating committees have sprung up in many regions including Wroclaw, Lodz, Gdansk, Poznan, Bialystok and elsewhere.

What future for LPS?

By Chris Brooks

THE SMALLEST yet Annual General Meeting of Labour Party Socialists met in Sheffield on 5 December.

Founded as the Labour Party wing of the Socialist Movement, LPS successfully drew together a section of the Labour left for united action around party conferences.

But the launch this summer of a Network for supporters of the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs has posed questions for the future of LPS.

Its gatherings are now mainly composed of supporters of Socialist Outlook, Labour Briefing and Socialist Organiser.

Question

The Network however drew over 500 to its founding conference, posing the question of why LPS should continue to exist.

Socialist Outlook supporters at the LPS AGM argued for the LPS to prioritise building the Network; only as its groups develop will it be possible for LPs to wither away.

The AGM also took debates on Europe and the pits crisis which were marked by the numerical majority of Socialist organiser supporters at the AGM.

A motion calling for a United Socialist Europe was defeated, and one stating that LPS is not opposed to a united capitalist Europe was passed.

A resolution calling for a one-day general strike to support the miners to prepare a general strike to kick out the Tories was also defeated.

Victory against hospital cuts Two, three, many UCHs?

By Harry Sloan

THE FIRST hospital 'work-in' of the 1990s - to save threatened beds at London's University College Hospital - has produced an important victory.

The action - given official support by both COHSE and

(eventually) NUPE - was a direct challenge to management plans to close surgical beds as part of their draconian package of spending cuts.

So damaging were the cuts that consultants and other medics joined forces with nurses, support staff, patients and relatives in a powerful alliance

against management.

Staff balloted in favour of strike action, but maintained emergency cover, and focused their efforts on keeping the threatened wards open and treating patients.

After five days, management caved in to union pressure and withdrew their closure plans.

This victory for militant action should certainly encourage hospital staff everywhere to fight back against a rising tide of cuts, closures and redundancies.

But the Socialist Workers Party is doing health workers no favours by trumpeting the UCH fight as the only way to win.

The occupation arose out of an extraordinary combination of factors - the harshness of the cuts; the division between management and key consultants; the immediacy of the closure threat; the recent militant activity of staff in UCH and the nearby Middlesex Hospital; and the official support from the main health unions (especially COHSE, which immediately made the action official and has encouraged its branches to fight for jobs and services). Unusually, even NUPE gave official backing.

However desirable occupations might be, SWP members in leading positions in other



hospitals know full well that without this kind of combination of circumstances it is unlikely that an occupation can be achieved: even strikes can be hard to get.

Health workers, like other trade unionists, can be frightened of the consequences of going on strike, especially when over 20,000 jobs are already under threat in London's hospitals.

This is why the SWP are so wrong to sneer at those who carry out broader campaign work inside and outside the hospitals, designed to raise militancy and resistance among health workers and demonstrate the huge potential support they would win if they took action.

Indeed the SWP draw precisely the wrong lessons from UCH, falsely claiming that the action was carried out against the opposition of union bureaucrats, and then insisting that *only* such action, and *only* at rank and file level, can win. This leads to them effectively proposing the ultra-left line of a general strike from below -

while SWP activists fail to use the opportunities available to raise demands for concerted action within the health unions.

Far from attempting to head off rank and file militancy, COHSE is now embarking upon a campaign to stoke up anger among health workers against the Tory 1.5 percent pay limit.

The combination of pay and cuts has been key to previous battles in the NHS, notably the 1988 strike wave.

Leaflets and stickers calling on nurses and support staff to 'bust the pay freeze' are being distributed by COHSE in L-Ondon, urging branches to submit pay claims above the limit and prepare for action.

NALGO, too, has voted to challenge the 1.5% limit in the NHS, and to ballot for action if necessary.

While the slogan of 'two, three, many UCHs' may seem over-ambitious, systematic campaign work inside and outside the hospitals and health unions could yet make it a reality.

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Right diagnosis, but the wrong treatment

The Left and Europe

By the Tribune group of Labour MPs

Reviewed by Dave Osler

The Left and Europe, a new pamphlet from the Tribune group of Labour MPs, is a serious contribution to the socialist debate on Maastricht.

It rightly comes down hard against ratification, recognising that: "The central driving force behind Maastricht is the competitive single market. Price, currency and interest rate stability predominate, together with tight restrictions on public borrowing and debt, almost regardless of the consequences for employment, growth and redistribution."

Nevertheless, it backs the treaty's overt aim of a united capitalist Europe, counselling renegotiation of the basis on which it should occur.

This position is echoed by the newspaper *Socialist Organiser*, which opposes Maastricht but argues: "We are against a united Europe being capitalist, but not against a capitalist Europe being united."

Chimera

But the concrete reality is that 'nice' European unification under capitalism, on terms socialists would not resolutely oppose, will always be a chimera. The full version of Maastricht, including the Social Chapter, represents as good a deal as the Europe's bourgeoisies will ever offer.

Left responses must start from outright opposition to the EC project and promote the need for a Europe based on full employment, equality for women, guaranteed welfare rights and combatting the ecological crisis.

This could only mean a socialist



Will Delors' dream come crashing down?

Europe. Otherwise we end up playing ball with the bosses while seeking to ameliorate the worst consequences of their plans.

The Tribune pamphlet attacks 'marginalised elements on Labour's Left' - read: Tony Benn - for supposedly lining up with the Little Englander Tory Right in opposing Maastricht on loss-of-sovereignty grounds. *Socialist Organiser* has carried similar classic demonstrations of the amalgam tactic.

Benn's argument is premised not on nationalism, but on his ideas about democracy and the way forward to an alternative Europe. They are hardly reactionary.

But as the Tribune group correctly argues, with the increasing integration of the world capitalism, economic power now operates on a transnational basis. Black Wednesday proves that British governments can no longer set exchange rates and interest rates independently of the Bundesbank.

Sweden

This would be true in or out of the ERM, and even outside the EC, as the example of Sweden, where

interest rates recently hit 24 per cent, conclusively demonstrates.

Yet it is readily apparent the authors see no alternative to following the logic of capital accumulation: "If the UK were to opt out of monetary union at a time when the other eleven members of the EC seem determined to proceed with it, this would make the UK significantly less attractive to international capital with damaging effects on our already weak economy."

Monetary union, would eliminate currency exchange costs, ex-

change rate uncertainty and currency speculation against an incoming Labour government. Nevertheless, consequent restrictions on national macroeconomic policy could see rocketing unemployment, it is warned. Where the right puts forward free markets, the left must counter with the need for social cohesion through Euro-Keynesianism, it is argued.

"If we support monetary union the inescapable logic is to argue for a much larger centralised European budget and/or other automatic redistributive mechanisms, as well as highly interventionist regional and industrial policies. Without these, monetary union could be a reactionary step."

Capping

Banning budget deficits above three per cent of gross domestic product, or total government debt above 60 per cent of GDP, would create "state-capping" by 1999. This would inevitably presage an attack of the welfare state that would dwarf anything yet seen in Britain.

Under current proposals, the future EC budget would be under 2

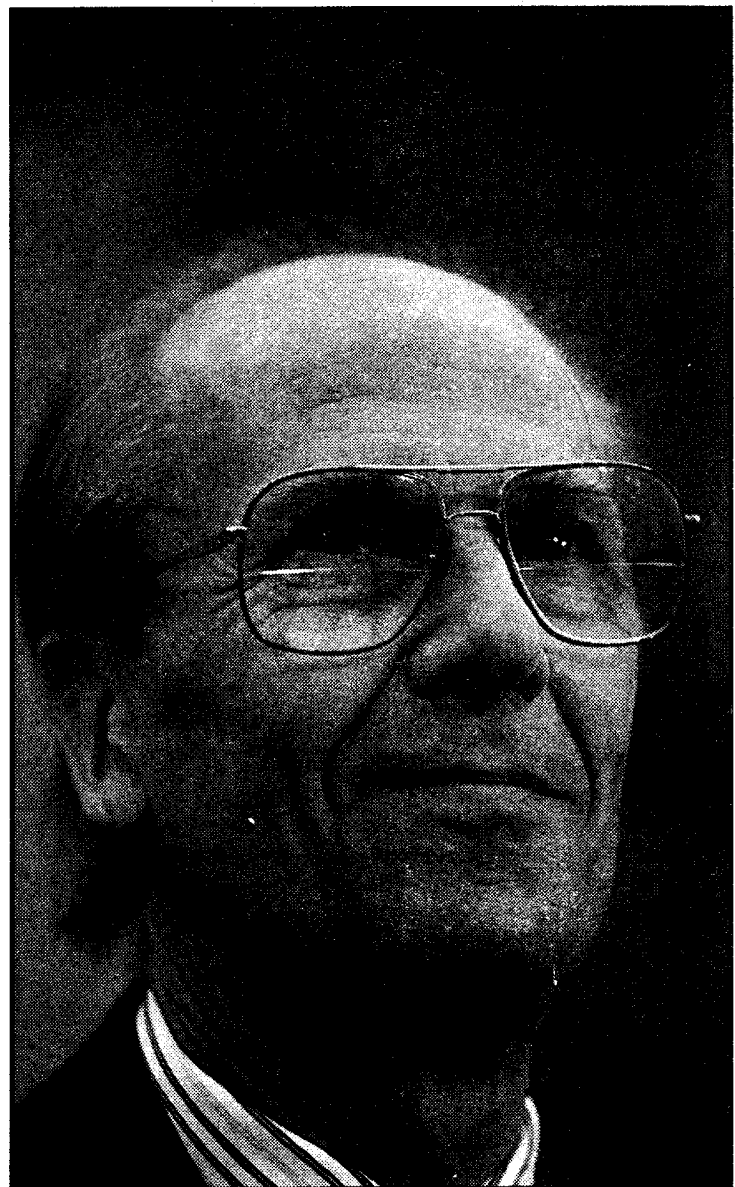


Photo: Andrew Wiltard

Face of the right's opposition to Maastricht

per cent of total community expenditure. The authors call for at least a fourfold increase.

European socialist parties, it is argued, should agree a programme which backs "Keynesian policies for reflation and incorporates specific measures to counter regional imbalances, including a larger EC budget and the redistribution of wasteful farming subsidies to industrial and infrastructure investment."

The argument grossly overestimates the radicalism of European social democracy. Labour is a long

way from such policies at home, never mind within the EC. Spain's PSOE is effectively Thatcherite, while the French socialists dare not jeopardise the agricultural vote.

Ultimately, *The Left and Europe* is a usable and readable critique of the worst points of Maastricht. But it is not enough to speak out against the symptoms; the only socialist starting point can be treating the disease itself.

● *The Left and Europe* is available from Peter Hain, House of Commons, London SW1, price £2.

Kinnock: by the right, quick march

Out of the Jaws of Victory: Inside Kinnock's Labour Party

Published by Verso
By Richard Heffernan and Mike Marqusee

Reviewed by Pete Firmin

WRITTEN by two supporters of *Labour Briefing*, this book does not hide its partisanship.

It shows how Neil Kinnock became the leadership candidate of most of the left and the more far-thinking right, and then proceeded to demolish most of the policy and democratic gains won in the years just before and after the fall of the Callaghan government.

Whether Kinnock was attacking Labour's policy on the anti-union laws or unilateralism, ensuring support for the Gulf War, curbing democracy in the party of purging it of 'undesirables', a common method emerges.

Rather than launch an immediate assault, he would bide his time, line up the votes, and fly the odd kite before moving in for the kill.

The soft left and their recurring 'realignments', their desire to cling on to front bench posts and their refusal to challenge Kinnock on policies they supposedly held dear come in for close scrutiny and condemnation.

Kinnock's use of party employees as personal staff shows how the decision-making processes on Labour's elected bodies were effectively circumvented.

The general election defeats of 1983 (leading to

Kinnock's own election as leader) 1987 and 1992 are analysed; the 1992 defeat, rather than representing the crowning glory of Kinnock's 'achievements', was the consequence of years spent ditching policies that differentiated Labour from the Tories.

Borrow or buy this book. Whether or not you were 'there' during the Kinnock years, it gives a well-researched insight into what was happening in the higher echelons of the movement.

The problem is what it doesn't say and where its emphasis lies. Because of its deliberate concentration on the Labour right rather than the Labour left, the analysis becomes somewhat one-sided.

New realism cannot be properly explained without much fuller reference to the struggles against Tory policies after 1979, why and how they were defeated, and

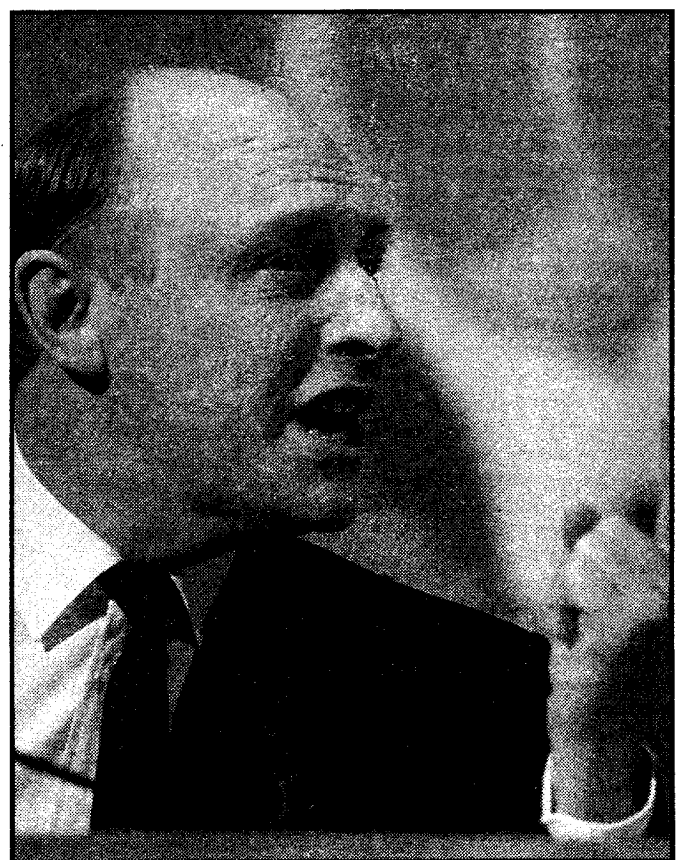


Photo: John Harris

how this strengthened the hand of both the Tories and the right of the labour movement.

Otherwise one could draw

the conclusion that if only the left were as good at manoeuvring as Kinnock, everything would have been different.

socialist OUTLOOK

US troops bring Somalia no hope of peace

'OPERATION Restore Hope' - the bitterly ironic cover name for last week's US-led multinational military takeover of famine-ravished Somalia - owes more to hardline imperialism than humanitarian intervention.

No one on the left should be fooled by US president George Bush's mocking words that the 36,000 troops set to occupy the country by Christmas are "doing God's work". The roadside summary executions of Somalis have already begun.

The official justification for the invasion is that up to 80 per cent of aid is being looted by Somali warlords and the armed forces are needed to ensure that relief gets through to the dying. But aid workers on the spot argue this is simply untrue, and that real losses, at under 10 per cent, are easily sustainable.

The United States is cynically acting to secure its military position in a country strategically located near the Gulf states, the Indian Ocean and Egypt, now on the brink of Islamic revolution.

If it does not opt for permanent occupation, its long term goal will be to re-establish the sort of

puppet government it enjoyed under the brutal regime of Siad Barre, which changed alignments from the USSR to the US almost overnight in 1977.

Overthrown in 1990, Barre still nurtures hopes of a comeback, although there are a number of other leaders who would be happy to act as US stooges.

There are no signs that the invasion has yet speeded up supplies of aid to the interior, where there are at least 300 deaths a day, and two million human beings desperately need food, medicine, seeds and tools.

Yet the shortages have not been caused by natural disasters. Somalia has escaped the worst of Africa's drought. A year ago the country grew enough food to meet everybody's needs, and even today food is being exported to Kenya and Mozambique.

Given the almost complete absence of a working class, let alone an organised labour movement, in



Somalia, the chances of successful internal opposition to the latest US moves are minimal. This situation makes the solidarity of anti-imperialists in the West even more of an elementary duty than usual.



Regal power failure

By Mick Woods

1992 was to have been the 40th anniversary of the 'Second Elizabethan age, already an epoch of peace and plenty under a popular monarchy.

Instead the institution of the monarchy itself is in the deepest crisis in living memory, as the capitalist economy they live in goes into slump.

While Mrs Windsor (nee Sara-Coburg-Gotha) is not the only person to have had an 'annus horribilis', the speed with which both press and public have turned on them could almost make you feel sorry

for them. Almost.

It is therefore surprising that so few people in the labour movement have given a lot of thought or priority to this question, and the impact it could have on the fabric of British society. It is not a marginal question.

The queen is head of state; parliament is answerable to her, not the people. The monarch has enormous power, especially in time of crisis. The use of regal power to throw out Gough Whitlam's Australian government in 1975 shows the residual strength of the monarchy.

The monarch is also

head of the established church, a revolting enough concept at the best of times, especially ironic when her daughter is forced to shoot across the border to enjoy the more liberal and humane norms the Church of Scotland extends towards divorcees. The Church of England should be disestablished and its state funding be abolished.

When I spoke to Socialist Outlook's editor about the coming constitutional crisis, he indicated that the whole issue bored the arse off him, and he failed to see its relevance. This is dangerously far

from the attitude of Lenin and Trotsky, who had the whole lot shot - and thrown down a well for good measure.

Irrespective of whether they prune the civil list, or pay their council tax, the monarchy is a reactionary feudal institution. Its survival reflects the weakness and indecision of the bourgeoisie at the time of the 1688 'revolution'.

It is clear that they have outlasted their shelf life; unlike the Tories they cannot reinvent themselves. Republican sympathy is growing - an if we do not take advantage of this there are other who will.