

TGWU ● Economy ● WTO ● Sabena ● Turkey

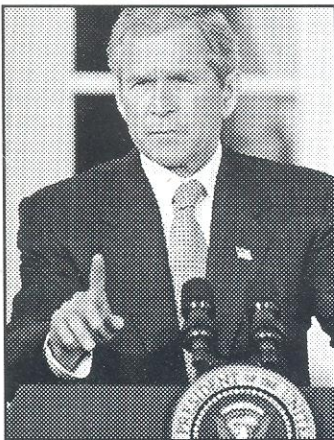
Socialist Appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

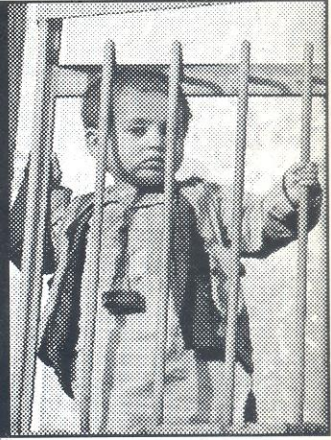
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Capitalism means a future of

WAR and CRISIS



**"It's not over.
Afghanistan is just
the beginning"**
George W. Bush



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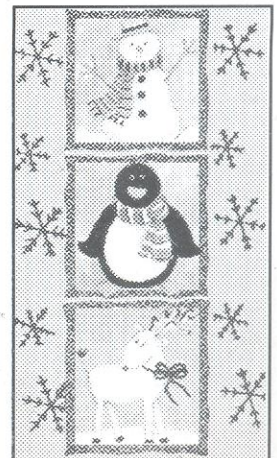
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Marxist Xmas!

Socialist Appeal wishes all our readers a Very Merry Xmas. See you in 2002!



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Bosses hollow patriotism exposed

As the world teeters on the brink of the worst recession since the second world war, bosses are gearing up for a renewed onslaught on working people.

Airlines and other companies have used the attacks on New York and Washington as the green light to sack thousands of workers. "I have seen since September 11 excuse after excuse for bosses to make workers redundant", says Mick Rix, general secretary of the train drivers' union ASLEF. "You cannot ask workers to go to war and stab them in the back at the same time."

Amid much jingoistic drum-beating, there is much talk in upper class circles of 'patriotism' in this time of international crisis. However, such 'patriotism' is only skin deep and only extends to their wallet. The great 'patriot' Blair stands idly by while 'patriotic' British Airways axes over 7,000 jobs, while British Midland and Virgin throw thousands on to the dole.

The Post Office, Consignia, also intends to slash some 20,000 workers to 'reduce costs.' After tens of thousands of redundancies declared by 'patriotic' bosses, unemployment is once again on the rise in Britain. In the three months from July some 53,000 women fell out of employment, and do not show up in the figures.

Employers were braced "for a cold economic winter", warned Digby Jones, director general of the CBI. "To shore up profitability", states the Financial Times ominously, "companies have also cut overtime and temporary work."

This is nothing but a declaration of war on working people and their families, as jobs and conditions are eliminated in the drive to maintain profits. At the same time the breath-taking squeeze is continuing in the public sector. The government is hell bent on pursuing its pri-



Branson weeping crocodile tears for his sacked workers

vatation of public services, while handing out mega-profits to the private speculators.

While PPP is being pushed on the London Underground, Alan Milburn is rushing through privatisation of key sections of the health service.

After years of under-investment and privatisation under the Tories, services in Britain have been completely ground down. The announcement that Britain has the worst public transport in Europe will come as no surprise. The railways, especially since their break-up through privatisation, are a disaster. The roads are grid-locked, and the over-crowded Underground is in a state of collapse. But this is not the only area in which British capitalism has failed.

Increasingly, after decades of cuts in public services, Britain is fast approaching 'third world' levels.

In relation to health care, the government spends little more than a third per person of the amount paid out in the USA and just over half the sum spent in France. One World Health Foundation study found that up to 25,000 Britons who die of cancer each year would survive if British care were up to the best standards in the European Union. On the other hand, as much as £45 million has been spent on lawyers and advisers in the 15 PFI hospital trusts. Of the 24 dirtiest hospitals under the starring system, 70 per cent had their cleaning services contracted out.

In regard to education, if we

were to construct a league table of EU countries ranked according to how many over-16s are still in school, Britain would come bottom. Germany and France would be 20 percentage points ahead of us. A 1999 survey found that one in five British adults couldn't add up the change in their pocket.

British bosses are only interested in short-term gain and quick profits. They have relied for decades upon cheap labour, and failed to reinvest the surplus extracted from the labour of the working class. In the 1990s, German workers enjoyed 70 per cent more investment than Britain, produced 29 per cent more and worked 175 hours less in a year. They also enjoyed a better living standard and a much higher social wage.

While cash is easily found to fight an imperialist war in Afghanistan, very little comes to fight the war against poverty and failing services. The increases announced by Brown for the NHS come after two years of less spending on the NHS than under the Tories.

This New Labour government - which as been in for nearly five years - has largely continued where the Tories left off. It is carrying through discredited Tory privatisation and Tory PPP at every opportunity.

"Where the private sector can help lever in vital capital investment, where it helps raise standards, where it improves the public services as a public service, then to set up some dogmatic barrier to using it, is

to let down the very people who most need our public services to improve", stated Blair defiantly to the Labour Party conference.

Unfortunately, the trade union leaders have blown hot and cold in defence of public sector workers. In face of the anti-terrorism rhetoric and for 'patriotic' reasons, they have run for cover. Both UNISON and the GMB have largely brushed their campaign against privatisation under the carpet. It is time words were translated into deeds.

As workers face a difficult period ahead, it is vital that the unions are forced to take up the struggle to defend their members. That requires a fighting programme that refuses to put the burden of the crisis on the backs of working people. That in turn means challenging the basis of capitalism and the market economy.

The defence of jobs and services must go hand in hand with a determined struggle to rid the Labour Party of Blairism. This means a struggle for socialist policies as the only way forward for working people. The market has meant untold misery for millions of workers in the private and public sector alike. Only by taking over the commanding heights of the economy, the 150 major monopolies, banks and insurance companies, can the economy be run in the interests of the majority and not the greed of the few. A socialist plan of production can end unemployment and dramatically raise living standards by using the full resources of society for our needs, eliminating the colossal waste of capitalism. A socialist Britain would provide an example to workers everywhere, laying the basis for a socialist Europe and a socialist world. This would at last relegate the horrors of war, famine and poverty to the dustbin of history. ●

New hospital could cost an arm and a leg!

The £135m scheme for a new single-site hospital in Peterborough, approved by Health Secretary Alan Milburn in February of this year, is due to be finalised in May 2003 and operational by 2006.

by a UNISON member

But because the hospital is to be funded by private companies as part of the so-called 'Private Finance Initiative' (PFI), it is certain to cost the local NHS far more than £135m, and is likely to trigger a fresh escalation in the pressure on front-line hospital services in the city.

Unison is convinced that the scheme will set back rather than improve health services for patients. The assumptions made by local planners leave large potential gaps in care, especially for elderly and frail patients and all those whose care would be switched from existing hospital services to vaguely defined new services - to be delivered by already over-worked GPs and primary care staff.

Switching acute services from Peterborough District Hospital to the less accessible Edith Cavell Hospital site will also cause problems of access



for those least able to drive or afford private transport.

Unison is also concerned at the chronic lack of sufficient social service provision to support ever larger numbers of frail elderly patients in their own homes or in nursing and residential care, without which the new hospital will struggle to achieve its highly ambitious targets.

This is far from the first time that the health needs of older people in Peterborough and the local area have been pushed to one side by NHS chiefs eager to save money or put their hands on private capital.

But Unison, in common with other trade unions and organisations in the city, is convinced that this PFI plan is the most serious problem so far: in our view it is a formula for failure.

Its costs, which would hang like an albatross around the neck of local health care for at least 25 years, would squeeze other important areas of health care - mental health, community services, primary care - and worsen the problems of morale

that have already affected the recruitment and retention of professional and medical staff.

We want to see new hospitals and proper investment in Peterborough's NHS: but we don't want services distorted by the costs of a scheme which siphons cash from front-line care.

If ministers are serious in wanting to see services develop, and meeting rising public expectations, they must inject public funds, not open up the NHS to the predatory forces of private profiteers.

A few new hospitals funded by NHS capital are being built in various parts of the country. Unison wants to see this type of investment in Peterborough.

Once an affordable source of capital has been identified we would be happy to discuss the best model for the development of 21st century health services for the benefit of patients, health workers and the wider public. ●

Brown's Magic Economics

It appears Gordon Brown has become a New Labour Harry Potter. Waving his magic wand he has transformed the British economy!

"In the past", says Brown, "in every major global slowdown since 1945, Britain has entered weaker, suffered longer, experienced higher inflation and endured higher unemployment." But not anymore!

According to Brown, Britain will outstrip the USA and Europe with growth between 2 and 2.5% next year. And for 2003, he predicts an acceleration to 2.75 and 3.25%, based on a recovery. He obviously believes in the tooth-fairy as well.

The world economy is facing its greatest crisis since the 1930s, and the weak British economy will be hit very hard. The British economy is utterly dependent on the world economy, despite the illusions of our new Harry Potter.

"Even with a mild recession in America", states the Economist (20th October), "then, this could still turn out to be the most severe world recession since the 1930s."

"Another reason for thinking that America's recession may turn out deeper than expected is that the world economy is in an unusually synchronised downturn."

John Thornhill in the Financial Times (15/10/01) warned that the economic shocks across Asia are greater this time than they were in 1997. "The danger is that the economic downturn will become increasingly synchronised between the US, Japan and Europe."

Once the American economy takes a dive, and it is already technically in recession, the rest of the world, including Britain, will be dragged down with it. Brown's expectations will be shown up for what they are - simply wishful thinking. Poor Harry. ●

TGWU General Executive Council Elections

Public Services Trade Group

SUPPORT DAWN STUART

The following is a statement by the left candidate Dawn Stuart, who is fighting for trade union democracy:

My name is Dawn Stuart I am an activist working for the Belfast City Council. I have been active in the union for many years and am proud of the role our union has played in our society that is up until recently. Four months ago the General Secretary attacked the very fabric of the union by removing our Regional Secretary and our Regional Organiser, without reason or explanation humiliated our Region.

Both these Officers have good track records in the union to treat them this way is a disgrace - to do it in the members name is unforgivable. Since their suspension our union has suffered - we are the laughing stock of the movement. My employer taunts all our activists about the abuse of the procedures and asks can they have the same.

I am being encouraged to run in this election to highlight how undemocratic our union has become. How demoralised our active members are at the behaviour of the leadership. If like me, and those members, ordinary everyday people who depend on the union to stand up for them, you believe that we should be better than the worst behaved employer, then I know you will want to support my candidature.

I am asking that you bring this letter to the attention of your branch for their consideration and that you will support me.

Since the Regional Organiser has been suspended minority groups in our Region have lost their voice. No one has shown any interest in these groups. No one is prepared to demonstrate that the TGWU is interested in real social issues. Instead all we are offered are platitudes. The facility of a telephone help line in the Regional Office that the Regional Organiser pioneered has been closed down.

It is no surprise that ordinary members have picketed our offices in the Region. We have also picketed the last GEC meeting to highlight these issues. By and large our picket was well received but they're still some members of the GEC who fail to see the need to protect the lay-democracy of the union.

These are the same GEC members who actively worked against the courageous delegates from this Region who fought at the BDC to have the matter discussed at what is supposed to be our conference. You will also know that not only did these people intimidate our delegates to follow the lead from the platform, they stooped low enough to have some Regional

Secretaries vote in a crucial vote!

Our members in this Region will not succumb to threats or intimidation. We will not stand idly by and allow the destruction of the union in Ireland by the so-called leadership supported only by a small band of career TRADE UNION officials. We will fight to maintain this union and its integrity from attacks no matter how they are disguised.

This is not just a problem for Region. We are all in this together. The fight is on for the very survival of our union as a major social force in society, whether it is in Belfast or Bradford. Neither I nor the people who support me want to see a shrinking T&G - we want the union visible. We do not want empty offices, redundant officers and staff. We want our union to grow.

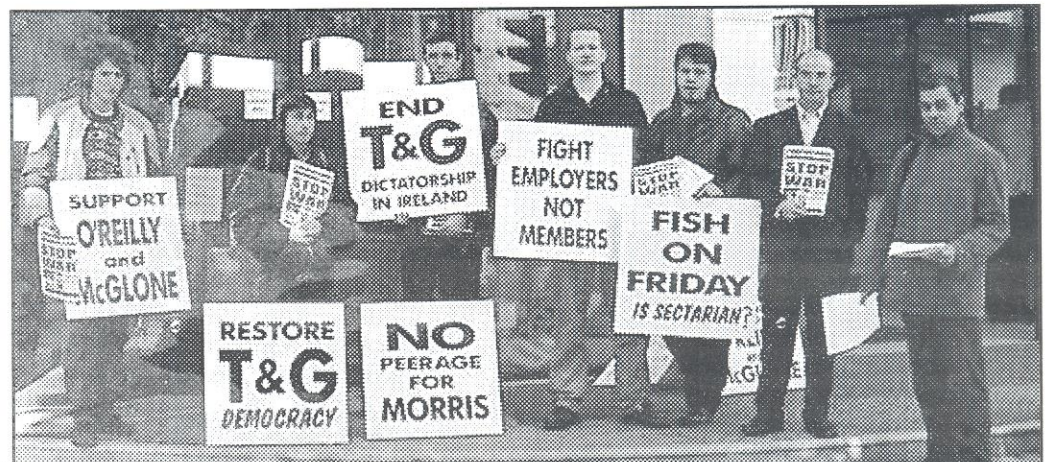
Again I urge you to support me by helping to put me - a young woman - onto the GEC to represent our Trade Group.

Thanking you in anticipation
Yours Sincerely

Dawn Stuart

REGION 3
BRANCH 3/121

A recent picket outside the headquarters of the TGWU in support of union democracy



New law attacks civil rights

One by-product of the so-called Great War Against Terrorism has been the mad rush by governments around the world to introduce all manner of assorted new 'anti-terrorism' laws.

by Steve Jones

As usual Britain has again led the way, bringing forward the most reactionary set of measures against civil liberties since the height of the Second World War. Under a new law it will be possible for the state to arrest people and hold them without trial indefinitely in cases where they cannot be deported. Such legislation undermines the right to trial which has been enshrined in English law for centuries. Speeded through parliament in a matter of days with sadly minimal opposition, there are still many questions unanswered as to what is going on - and why.

Over the years successive governments - both Conservative and Labour - have looked for the means to restrict our civil liberties in various obvious and not so obvious ways. This may seem strange when you consider that they are forever going on about democracy and freedom. But the truth of the matter is that they are only interested in their democracy and their freedom - the right to exploit and act in the interest of big business. Parliamentary democracy is supposed to be the means by which we decide on issues, freely and without restraint. Yet it is largely an illusion, designed to implicate us in the continued rule of capital over our lives. So long as it doesn't threaten their privileges and their system they are quite happy. Naturally they are quite prepared to pontificate at will. They produce worthy sounding long resolutions on the Rights Of Man and complain

about those regimes who do not go along with it.

Yet where 'our' economic interests are then found to be in conflict with such protests then the protests are quietly dropped. So whereas we have recently seen pages and pages written about the repressive acts of the Taliban, we see nothing about other regimes such as Saudi-Arabia, Kuwait and - of course - Israel. They are 'our friends' and cannot be criticised, it would evidently be unpatriotic. Activists around the world have become used to the two-faced approach of such august bodies as the British foreign office. Torture, false imprisonment and rigged elections are all very nasty but for our great democracies trade deals take priority.

These people understand that it is necessary to have as much real control as they can get away with, if only as insurance for the future. The state, as Marxism has long sought to explain, is at its heart, armed bodies of men. That is to say the coercive element by which, implicitly or otherwise, the state machine exerts its authority over society. Normally, by convincing us that we are in fact running things ourselves by virtue of the odd election here and there this power remains masked. But at times of crisis things change. For example during the miners strike of 1984-5 the state openly displayed its power, turning whole mining areas into virtual police states where civil liberties became just a long forgotten dream. Usually at times such as this the representatives of the police etc. are quick to complain about how their hands are being "tied" by the inconvenience of various civil rights. The trouble is that having introduced various pieces of legislation to show us that we do live in a liberal, fair-minded democracy where equality under the law exists, these laws cannot then be pushed aside without a reason.

In recent years terrorism, with its inevitable whipping up of reaction within society, has been the best excuse to hand to push through repressive laws. In the seventies, we saw the Prevention of Terrorism Act rushed through in

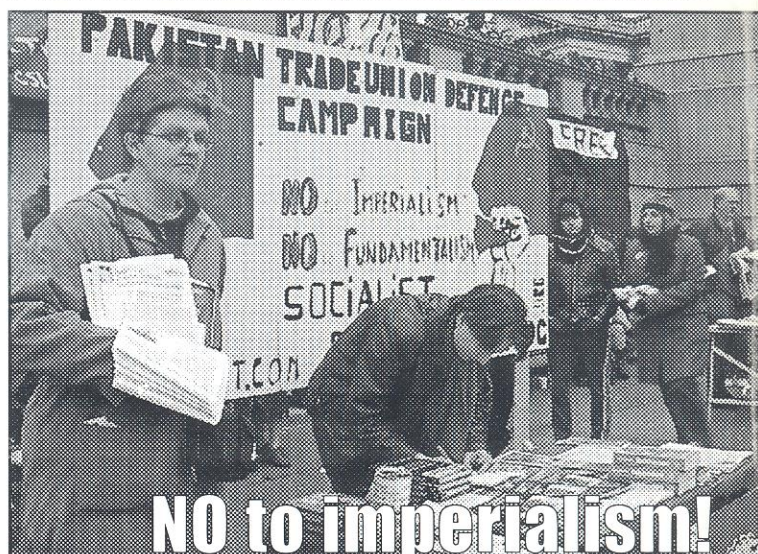
response to the IRA bombing campaign. This act was rather misnamed since it had no preventative effect on terrorism whatsoever but instead gave the state all manner of draconian powers to arrest and hold people without charge, starting first of all with as it happened a trade unionist. In the eighties, Thatcher tried to use the reaction to the Heysel disaster, where many football fans were killed at a European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus, to push through legislation to force all football supporters in the UK to carry ID cards if they wished to attend games. The unstated intention was that this would have acted as the thin edge of a wedge by which the principle of ID cards would have been established in British society, no doubt to be widened out to the rest of the population at a later stage under one pretext or another. However the official report into the later Hillsborough disaster clearly stated that ID cards would not only not prevent trouble but could actually endanger life, forcing an already under pressure Tory government to drop the whole idea. Dropped but not forgotten?

Within hours of the events of September 11th, assorted experts and spin doctors were again raising the idea of national ID cards. When it became clear that no one could actually explain how having an ID card would stop a bomber from carrying out his work the idea was pushed to the back... for now that is. In the mean time our caring home secretary has suddenly decided that we urgently need new and yet more restrictive anti-terrorist measures to protect our sacred way of life. Hence the grandly named Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill now being rushed through the houses of parliament. They will be able to arrest people, hold them in internment camps and not have to worry about having to actually prove anything or even justify their actions. We are told that this will, in some magical way, protect us from terrorism but the reality is that it will give the state incredible powers over us. This is unacceptable and the fact that it is a Labour government pushing this through makes it doubly so. The whole labour and trade union movement should rise up to campaign against this attack on our rights, for there will come a time when it will be used against the organised labour movement. ●



Anti-war demo

One step forward, two steps back



NO to fundamentalism!

On Sunday, November 18, the second big national demonstration against the war held in London. By 12 o'clock, a steady stream of demonstrators were pouring into Hyde Park, determined to express their opposition to the war and the blatant pro-imperialist policies of Tony Blair.

With over 50,000, the participation of a large number of youth was very encouraging. The mood was militant and enthusiastic - a decisive answer to those cynics who say that young people are not interested in politics.

There were serious weaknesses, however, mostly of a political character. The demonstration was organised by a "coalition" of anti-war groups, ranging from pacifists to Islamic fundamentalists. During the rally held in Trafalgar Square at the end of the march, demonstrators listened to the speeches, but unfortunately they would have learned very little.

Tony Benn, as usual, delivered an emotional but coherent speech, denouncing the attacks on civil liberties and the "cringing cabinet" which has accepted without exception all the impositions of Tony Blair. John Pilger spoke as well denouncing the crimes of US imperialism. ("If they wanted to declare war on terrorism, they ought to have begun by bombing Florida.")

In general, the chief weakness of the demonstration was its class content. There was a certain participation from unions, which was very positive. However, from the speakers on the rostrum, there was not an atom of class content. The majority confined themselves to endless denunciations of "this bloody war" and so on. As this was self-evident, the above-mentioned speeches were about as much use to them as an auto-graphed photo of Tony Blair.

So far, so bad, but there was far, far worse to come. About halfway through the

proceedings, the speeches suddenly stopped, and a gentleman with every appearance of being a mullah approached the microphone and proceeded to deliver a hearty rendering of the Islamic call to prayer. The crowd listened in silence - not quite knowing how to react. The other speakers on the platform stood to attention, trying to look pious. When the performance was over, there was polite applause (which from a Muslim point of view was probably blasphemous). And then the show continued as if nothing had happened.

It is not clear how many of those present were embarrassed or indignant at this. Anyway, nobody protested as if it was quite natural to introduce an element of religious fundamentalism into what was supposed to be an anti-imperialist demonstration. And this aberration, it seems is quite acceptable to organisations that have the gall to call themselves Marxists, like the SWP, which apparently is now in favour of "defending Islam".

Well, one might have expected this kind of thing from the SWP, whose organic opportunism is such that it would probably agree to the Pope celebrating mass in Trafalgar Square, if only it would guarantee a big turnout. And the same goes for all the other pseudo-Marxist sects who spend their lives fussing and fiddling on the fringes of the labour movement.

In the present conflict, there is no doubt about the imperialist character of the war. We are unconditionally opposed to the imperialist aggression in Afghanistan. Our position cannot be determined by the crimes of the Taliban - that is quite clear. But that does not mean that we abandon our criticism of the Taliban and Islamic fundamentalism, both of which remain completely reactionary.

To use the pretext of the war to blur the differences between socialists and the labour movement and fundamentalist reac-

tion is nothing more than a betrayal. It would have the most negative consequences for the workers' movement - especially in Pakistan. The Pakistani workers - who have had to fight fundamentalist reaction for decades - have quite rightly come out against the imperialist war against the Afghan people. But they have done so under their own banners and slogans, advocating a revolutionary class policy. They have not mixed up the red banner of the working class with the black flag of fundamentalist reaction. The poster of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (see www.ptudc.org), which has been posted all over Pakistan, contains the slogans: AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST WAR! AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISM! NO WAR BUT THE CLASS WAR!

The struggle against war and imperialism cannot be served by mixing up the banner of the working class and socialism with religious obscurantism and fundamentalism. Of course, we are in favour of the active participation of all sections of the working class - including Muslims. We must fight against racism and attacks against Muslims. But this does not mean that we must allow our platforms to be used for the propagation of Islam - or any other religion.

The great majority of Muslims do not demand the right to impose their religion on other people. They only wish to have the right to observe their religious beliefs in peace, without harassment. This right we will fight to defend. Marxists will be the most active fighters against the imperialist war in Afghanistan. But we must also fight to raise the consciousness of the working class. Our task is to win them to the ideas of scientific socialism. By their actions, the organisers of the November 18 rally are educating the working class and the youth of Britain backwards. ●

Support Pakistani workers

Trade unionists in Pakistan are working in difficult conditions. The military dictatorship took power two years ago, which has continued the IMF and World Bank imposed cuts in state spending, reducing trade tariffs, etc. this has led to unemployment, wage cuts, mass poverty, and increased prices of fuels, and other utilities. The war and the resultant uncertainty has been used to

was established by leading members of the Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP) and supporters of the "struggle" in response to the state repression against trade unionists. The meeting was well attended by people of different backgrounds, and led to a good discussion.

The first speaker Naeem Khan is the organiser of the PTUDC in Britain. He described the deteriorating situation of

increase of support for fundamentalism - still a relatively weak force in Pakistan - but now falsely perceived as an opposition to imperialism. As the movement widens will begin to pose social questions and can draw class conclusions.

The PTUDC is opposed to fundamentalism and imperialism, both of which are reactionary forces. We stand for the unity of the working class across all artificial divides, and for workers to take power into their hands to solve the problems of society.

An appeal was made by the second speaker Alan Woods in support of 100 trade unionists arrested and facing torture in a civil servants strike in Baluchistan, among them a PTUDC leader Hameed Khan.

After the main speakers there followed a good discussion which touched upon the history and present role of fundamentalism, the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, America's economic interests in the region, and world relations between

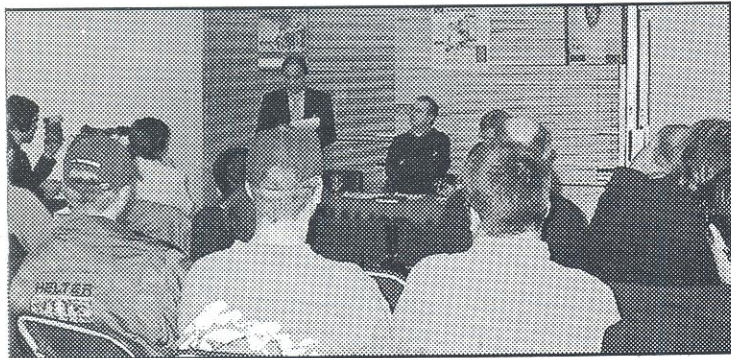
Russia and America.

The working class of Pakistan are struggling under difficult conditions, and it is our duty to help them financially, and by raising awareness in Britain. More importantly, this activity must complement the main task of fighting for socialism in our own country since the struggle of the working class is international and socialist revolution must embrace every country of the world.

People attending the meeting were asked to take material, and raise the campaign in their trade union, Labour Party branch, or student union.

We organised a picket of the Pakistan embassy the following day in support of the arrested comrades, and we are pleased to announce that due to the pressure of our campaign in Britain and Europe the trade unionists were released.

The priority now is to build support and attendance for the next meeting of the PTUDC on Wednesday the 5th December. ●



intensify attacks on the working class.

The Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign (PTUDC)

ordinary people in Pakistan and how this has been expressed politically. The impact of the war has resulted in a short term

Victory of Quetta workers!

- Workers' demands accepted by government.
- All prisoners released, and none victimised.
- Union leaders salute PTUDC international campaign.

We have just received the following report from Quetta, Baluchistan. It shows that the strikers of the public sector CSEA union, after a hard strike in which over 100 workers were arrested, have won an outstanding victory.

The strike of the CSEA workers ended today with total success. On Tuesday, November 27, the strike was called off by the union, after the provincial finance minister, Naeem Ahmad, announced the package in the general council of the CSEA. More than 1,000 workers attended the council meeting to witness the government's climb-down.

The demands which were accepted in the meeting were as follows:

1. 600 Rupees increase in utility allowance, plus 1,000 rupees increase for those workers employed after 1994 (these workers were not getting the earlier allowance)
2. Transport facilities for more workers. The Government will purchase two more buses for the workers (which will cost more than 1 million rupees).
3. BHU (special funds for workers) increased from 45,000 to 250,000 rupees.
4. Sports funds increased from 25,000 to 300,000.
5. The authorities have also accepted some demands regarding better working conditions and minor issues faced by the workers.

The only demands that was not accepted was a demand for a 40% special allowance for Quetta workers.

Because the authorities said that this allowance was not only for CSEA workers but for all workers employed by the Government in Quetta.

This also needed the participation of others unions which were not involved in this strike. Now the Government is saying that until all the unions participate, they will not accept this demand.

The CSEA also passed a resolution of gratitude to the international campaign and all those who sent solidarity messages and supported their cause and demands.

So this strike ended with complete victory. Nazar Baluch, Secretary General, CSEA Abdul Khaliq Kakar, President, CSEA Hameed Khan, Press Secretary, CSEA They also specially thanked the international campaign organised by the PTUDC and comrades who organized the picket in front of the Pakistan High Commission in London.

Historic victory for Pakistan workers: Hameed Khan and 100 workers released!

Complete victory for the International Campaign

The authorities in Baluchistan have released the arrested leaders and workers today. But the strike is still continuing. The decision on the future of the strike will be made tomorrow, when it is expected that the finance minister of Baluchistan will announce a package which spells acceptance of the workers' demands.

The breakthrough in the negotiations between CSEA (Civil Secretariat Employees' Association) and the government of Baluchistan, came on Saturday, November 24, when an agreement was reached which would represent a total victory for the strikers. According to this agreement the arrested workers were to have been released on Saturday, November 24. The Governor of Baluchistan issued the orders for the release of 100 arrested union leaders and workers. But the Chief Secretary of Baluchistan refused to accept the agreement.

Because of this contradiction within the ranks of the bureaucracy and the government, there was a delay in the release of the arrested leaders. And now the workers are saying that until the Finance Minister himself announces the agreement in the General Council of the union, they will not call off the strike.

The General Council will be held tomorrow, when the minister is due to announce

the package. According to the agreement reached last Saturday, the wages of the workers are to be increased by 600 rupees (10 US dollars) per month (a rise of about 20 percent) and the government also agreed to implement the other demands, in accordance with the July agreement. We will send you the other details of this agreement tomorrow after the General Council meeting.

This victory is very important for of two reasons:

1. This strike is the first successful strike against the present military regime. Despite using the full power of the state against the workers, the military regime failed to break and defeat the strike. This will give enormous courage and inspiration to the whole trade union movement and working class.

2. This victory will help to build the forces of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign on a national basis, and especially in Baluchistan, because the PTUDC is rapidly emerging as the only fighting force in Pakistan. This campaign has also proved again that international solidarity is the key and a most important factor in the trade union movement. Now ordinary workers are convinced that without international help and solidarity no struggle can be won.

In short, this victory is a great step forward for PTUDC and for the whole Pakistan Labour Movement. After his release comrade Hameed Khan said:

"We are confident that victory is ours because we are not alone in this fight. Our brothers and sisters in the international workers' movement are with us. The international solidarity campaign boosted our morale and give us the courage and inspiration to continue the strike when in police custody. During this strike we practically understood the meaning of the slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" An injury to one, is an injury to all. This victory is not the victory of CSEA but a victory of the whole international movement. We will use this inspiration to step up our struggle against this rotten capitalist system and for the socialist transformation of society."

Fraternally,
Khalid Bhatti,
National Organiser, PTUDC
Lahore, Pakistan
November 26, 2001



Outside consulate, Friday November 23

"This picket certainly it had an effect," stated Lal Khan. "It shows what international pressure can do."

PTUDC

London Public Meeting

Lal Khan

author of "Partition can it be undone?" and PTUDC organiser in Pakistan

Nigel Pearce

Chair of Yorkshire region
NUM

Phil Waker

NEC of the CWU, personal capacity

The Afghan war and the crisis in Pakistan

Wednesday, 5th
December

7.30 pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq,
Holborn London WC1
(Nearest Tube: Holborn)

Spanish Students' Union calls day of action: 2.5 million on strike

On Wednesday, November 28, the Marxist-led Spanish Students' Union (SE) called a general strike to protest against the reactionary education law of the right-wing Aznar government.

by Miriam Municio, General Secretary of the Students' Union (SE)

More than two and a half million students in the schools and universities answered the strike call all over Spain and 200,000 poured onto the streets of Spain to support the demonstrations organised by the SE: 50,000 marched in Santiago de Compostela, including students from all over Galicia. This response was particularly satisfying because the right winger Manuel Fraga had recently won the regional elections in Galicia.

The strike and demonstrations received very extensive coverage on television and the radio and in all the national newspapers. There were 30,000 on the Madrid demonstration, 10,000 in Barcelona, 15,000 in Valencia, 12,000 in Seville, 3,000 in Bilbao, and many others. This is an excellent result in view of the fact that the Students' Union was obliged to call the strike alone.

This was the fourth strike and day of struggle since the Student's Union first called for action on October 25. In the first

day of struggle, 100,000 students - mainly from the schools - participated. This compelled the trade unions and the other student organisations to join in the fight.

This is the most important student mobilisation since the big movement of 1986-7, when the Students' Union led a massive movement of three million students which lasted more than four months and ended in an historic victory.

According to the opinion polls, 80 per cent of the population support the students' demands and reject the privatisation policies of the PP government. The attitude of the workers was shown by the SE's collection in the shipyards and the big CASA company in Seville, where we raised 120,000 pesetas.

On November 7, the CCOO and UGT unions also called a strike of teachers and university employees. The SE also called a strike for that day. But the other student organisations boycotted the workers' struggle or stayed on the side-lines.

There was a massive response in Madrid, where around 50,000 - mostly from the university - marched. In all Spain the total number of demonstrators was almost 300,000.

On November 14, the numbers participating clearly increased, as did the extension of the struggle: there were almost half a million demonstrators - all students. On that occasion there were 100,000 in Barcelona, 80,000 in Madrid, 40,000 in Seville, 25,000 in Valencia and 20,000 in Santiago de Compostela.

Following this, the Students' Union proposed a day of struggle for November 28 - which was rejected by all the other organisations. However, the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the United Left called for a march on Madrid on December 1. We considered that this proposal did not contradict our plans for the 28th, but complimented them. So we maintained our strike call. Now we have been proved right.

Despite all the attempts of the other groups to prevent it, the mobilisation of November 28 has been a fantastic success. The strike has been widely followed and the demonstrations have been successful everywhere.

Sadly, the preparations by the PSOE and IU for the march on Madrid have been poor. But the success of our strike has given the necessary impetus to the movement, and it now seems likely that the December 1 march will be massive.

The Students' Union has always maintained a firm policy of unity in action of students and workers. On Saturday we will be marching at the head of the demonstration, together with the leaders of the main unions: Fidalgo (CCOO) and Candido Mendez (UGT).

We will be putting forward the demand for a general strike before Christmas to bring the whole educational system in Spain to a stop in support of our just demands.

We have every confidence in the success of our movement.



Graduating....to the dole queue

Until one year ago or even later, the economists, central banks, and finance ministries were telling us that the economy would grow and grow, Britain's boom and bust 'business cycle' had ended, Gordon Brown

had discovered the secret levers for controlling the economy. There would be full employment.

by Kris Lawrie

Social services, and especially 'education, education, education' was developing at a fast rate. Schools and universities were benefiting from budget cuts, and partnership with profit making companies.

It has become apparent what 'reforms' of the public sector mean, privatisation by the back door, and services suffering in the interests of profit. What is now also dawning on many people is the false promises made about the economy and full employment.

While there are still quite a large number of unskilled, low wage jobs, jobs for graduates are evaporating. The boom has played an enormous role in shaping the attitude of graduating students to work. Through the 1990s, certain areas experienced quite acute shortages of skilled workers, especially in the new economy. The wages of these workers increased against others in more 'traditional occupations'.

In February 2000, The Guardian reported optimism among university students about finding a job when they finished, the report also noted however - perhaps strangely at the height of a boom - that many of them expected low pay, or even voluntary work experience, at least for a while.

The truth is that throughout the boom most endured low wages and long hours in the belief that they were building their career.

Even when the economy was growing there were not enough graduate jobs to go round, up to 1/3 of graduates accepted jobs which did not formally require university qualifications, these were the same old jobs but with the word graduate tacked onto the title. Many Philosophy students ended up in Macdonalds trainee manager programmes etc.

Now even this situation is beginning to deteriorate, the Financial Times (26/11/01) this month reported on the state of graduate recruitment; universities, especially in financial services and science are trying to bring students expectations down to earth. Many are leaving with inflated ideas about salaries and benefits packages based on what they have seen in the past few years. A number of big graduate employers are not recruiting this year, some are waiting till spring to see if the economy picks up. Companies who are recruiting are doing so in smaller numbers, because they need fewer staff, and those in work are reluctant to leave employment.

One of the main reasons that more young people have been going to university in the last period is that they want something better than the terrible conditions of today's workplaces; low wages, long hours, and bad conditions, in takeaways and call centres. As the economic slump widens companies will have to shed more jobs.

As unemployment creeps up those graduating will graduate straight to the dole queue, and many in work at the moment will join them there. The lucky ones will get a job at the 'low end' of the job market, the sort that university was supposed to raise us above; the others will end up on New Deal working fulltime for £40 a week.

Capitalism always moves through booms and slumps and we have moved past the end of a very long boom, and are teetering between growth and deep recession. Even during the last few years the system has been unable to guarantee full employment, this situation is set to get much worse. And yet huge revenues are still generated by the multinationals, the rich are still rich, and many working people are about to get a lot poorer. There are an unlimited number of tasks to be done to improve the lives of humanity, unfortunately the people who have the wealth do not want to invest it for our common benefit. In such a situation the working class must organise in order to take control of the wealth of society and use it for the benefit of society.

- For full employment
- For democratic workers control of the means of production
- The full resources of society must be used to benefit the whole of humanity.

Sales Rise - Increase your order now!

The international situation is moving very rapidly in comparison to even six months ago when things appeared relatively stable. We have had quite a shake with the double whammy of disaster and uncertainty on the economic front on the one hand, and a war which threatens to spiral out of control on the other. The objective conditions have changed and people have had a glimpse of their true situation, which has opened formerly conservative people up to the ideas of Socialist Appeal.

This has translated into much higher sales of the journal in many areas. In North London alone this month's sales have reached over 100 journals, while at the anti war demo in London we sold over 80 journals and 70 Asian Marxist Reviews. Demos in other parts of the country have given us excellent sales results too; comrades from Scotland sold more than £50 of material at a demonstration in Glasgow.

The mood is there; in Brighton two comrades sold 11 journals to the public in a spare 20 minutes before a meeting; 17 in one hour

on a separate public sale, and they have increased their journal order for next month. People are being surprised by the number they can sell. A public sale in Chester sold 14 copies in a few hours!

The journal has had increased appeal among activists: 7 journals were sold on the PCS picketline in Southend, and 8 at an AEEU broad left meeting.

It is time now to push up the sales of the journal, and increase its circulation in the universities, the labour movement, and on the streets. Not just to increase our revenue, although this is important, but most importantly to take the ideas of socialism forward. April 2002 will mark not only the 100th issue, but also the 10th anniversary of *Socialist Appeal*. Events have opened up a new layer of people to our ideas, so the most appropriate way to mark our anniversary is by making a big push to increase the distribution of our ideas, building new points of support, and winning new sellers. ●

OTUARF

On 14th November the TUC backed coalition against racism had its launch meeting in Oldham Civic Centre. 16 speakers were on the platform from various organisations and ethnic groups. The main speaker from the TUC was John Monks who made some good points about the conditions of unemployment creating the conditions for the growth of racism. Many speakers recognised the serious threat from the BNP and NF and a delegation from OTUARF (Oldham Trade Unions Against racism and fascism) met Alan Manning the NW TUC secretary on Thursday morning to discuss support for the ongoing campaigns that are necessary by the Trade Unions.

The rally on Wednesday night was attended by around 300 people with a good cross representation of all ethnic groups. As everyone recognised it is going to be a tough job to defeat the BNP at next years local elections, but it is a job we will carry out.

What was missing on Wednesday was solutions to the conditions of social deprivation that are the breeding grounds for the BNP support. The problems that are being added too by a Liberal democratic council that is privatising madly and carrying out job cuts, in order to keep council tax down.

From this rally the antiracist work will continue and be strengthened and we will ensure that locally any sectarian approach will not be tolerated in building a genuine united campaign. ●

by Lynn Beckingham,
Oldham

Oldham: The fight against racism continues

On October 20th we had planned events to celebrate the many cultures of Oldham. This was the first chance to regain confidence in local people's desire for unity against racism.

**Bryan Beckingham Secretary Oldham NUT
(personal capacity)**

We arrived, after months of struggling to overcome many obstacles, to find that the police and council had called off the event on the grounds of a risk to health and safety. Four days before the event we were presented with issues of car parking, toilet facilities, public order (the police even saying we were asked to pay for the policing of the event!) etc. Oldham United Against Racism (OUAR) is a voluntary group supported by antiracists in Oldham. Oldham Trade Unions Against Racism and Fascism (OTUARF) has been set up for 3 months primarily to fight the ideas of racism and fascism in the workplaces by the unions that affiliate. We have certainly faced bureaucratic obstacles and non-cooperation from the Council. This Council, that on paper opposes racism, is in reality afraid of its own shadow! We have also faced attempted sabotage by the actions of some sectarians on the left of the movement. However we are confident that our approach of a united campaign is the correct one. We are pleased that the ANL is part of this campaign. Most importantly we have gained the affiliation of a growing number of local trade unions. Apart from the NUT, we have UNISON local government, Unison Health, Oldham TUC, Tameside, MSF several local branches, GMU and AEEU. It is without doubt locally one of the best responses from the trade unions I have seen since I have been in Oldham. However it is essential that the

trade union leadership do support the movement against racism and fascism but not to impose censorship on locally built groups. OUAR and OTUARF are building on the ground and must be supported not suppressed.

The Council (at present under Liberal control) should have been fully supporting our events instead of putting obstacles in the way. Many of the problems in Oldham stem from actions of the last 20 years of Oldham Council. The police are apparently all sweetness but in reality seem to put forward obstacle after obstacle to the antiracist campaign. The putting off of our event on October 20th was a serious blow, from which only the BNP, the NF and racists have gained. We have a long-term campaign to wage and the NUT will continue to play a leading role in this.

The poverty and social deprivation in Oldham, the feeding grounds for racial prejudices, have to be tackled. It will take concerted public sector action to tackle the underlying issues.

The issue of the segregation in schools must also be tackled. Whilst New Labour supports in its White Paper more "faith" schools, we face the reality of white/Asian segregation. We need more so-called "faith" schools like a hole in the head. What we really need is a commitment to comprehensive quality education. No more selection or specialist schools but the full resources for expansion of all comprehensives in the area.

Locally in Oldham the Council has embarked on a sui-

cide mission. They propose a PFI for all the secondary school buildings, and also a PPP for the remainder of the services. It seems that the Liberal administration will do all in its power to gain seats by keeping council tax down and selling off services, despite their national policies of opposition to these policies. The New Labour Government's slavish following of PFI and PPP (privatisation by other names) is used locally by the Liberals to justify wholesale redundancy threats and cuts as they go for these options. The public sector in Oldham employs large numbers of dedicated workers whose jobs are threatened at the alter of PFI and PPP. Fulltime council officials, who may perhaps be headhunted by the PFI companies are busy preparing bids.

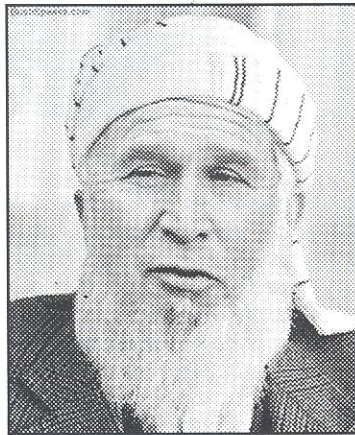
Oldham faces many problems of racism and division, which have been developing for many years. But many people in the area totally oppose racism. It is through the trade unions above all, that we can wage a long-term campaign to defeat the fascists of the BNP and NF. This is why I continue to appeal for support for our campaigns to send the BNP and NF packing from Oldham. Don't let them gain any foothold in elected positions!

In December the Independent Inquiry is due to report. However when giving evidence to the enquiry, both in written form and verbal, it was unclear whether the report would be made public. The Council and police have much to hide and it is to these bodies that the report is made. We must demand that all findings are made public and acted upon. If the Council and police want to regain the confidence of all communities in Oldham they must openly and publicly accept the report and their responsibility to take action. ●

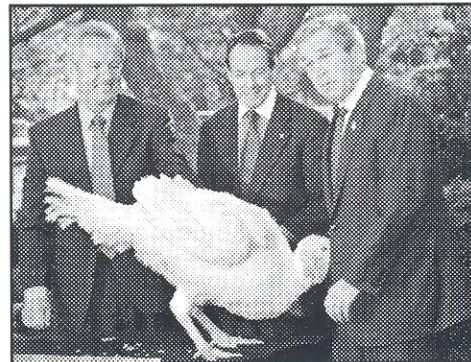
Seasonal QUIZ

Who said what?

- 1) "You cannot ask workers to go to war and stab them in the back at the same time."
- 2) "You teach a child to read, and he or her will be able to pass a literacy test."
- 3) "Airy-fairy civil liberties."
- 4) Classroom assistants are "pig-ignorant peasants."
- 5) "The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."
- 6) "Education, education, education."
- 7) "When the leaders speak of peace, the common people know that war is coming."
- 8) "The crisis of mankind can be reduced to a crisis of leadership."
- 9) "More and more of our imports come from overseas."
- 10) "This quarrel will drink blood another day."
- 11) "I set up my first camp in Pakistan where these volunteers were trained by Pakistan and American officers. The weapons were supplied by the Americans, the money by the Saudis."
- 12) "A week is a long time in politics."
- 13) "We have the lowest rate in history of British corporation tax."
- 14) "A dictatorship would be a heck of a lot easier,



who is wanted "dead or alive"?



"And that's why yesterday the Secretary of Treasury and I both said that we need to have more stimulus available."
GW Bush

there's no question about it."

15) "If they are breaking the law, the protesters should be arrested."

16) "You will not, and should not, shift this government - any government - with bully boy blockades and civil disruption."

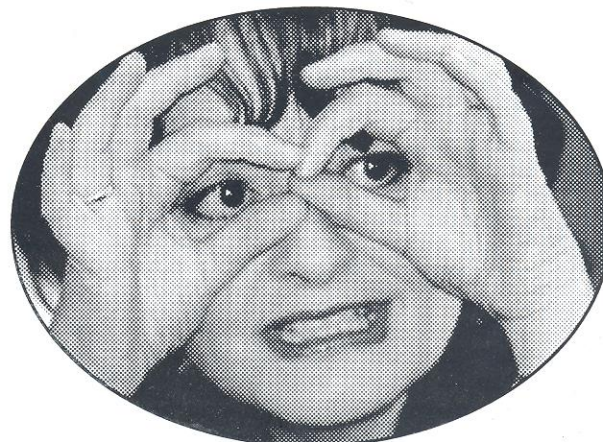
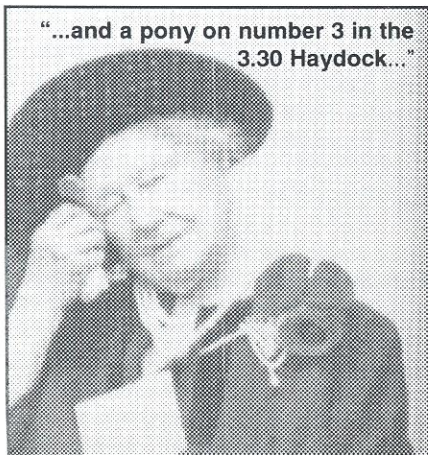
17) "The gréat ònly appear gréat as we are on our knees. Let us arise!"

18) "I know what I believe. I will continue to articulate what I believe and I believe - I believe what I believe is right."

19) "It's exciting to have a real crisis on your hands, when you have spent half of your political life dealing with humdrum issues like the environment."

20) "All property is theft."

- 1) Mick Rix, general secretary of ASLEF
- 2) George W. Bush
- 3) David Bunket, Home Secretary
- 4) Nigel de Guchy
- 5) Marx and Engels
- 6) Tony Blair
- 7) Berthold Brecht
- 8) Leon Trotsky
- 9) GW Bush
- 10) William Shakespeare, King Henry the Sixth, Part One.
- 11) Bin Laden
- 12) Harold Wilson
- 13) Gordon Brown
- 14) GW. Bush
- 15) Bill Morris about the oil blockade.
- 16) John Monks
- 17) James Larkin
- 18) GW Bush
- 19) Margaret Thatcher on the Falklands War.
- 20) Proudon



- What is Cherie up to?
- a) demonstrating to Tony the use of the burka
 - b) testing for NHS glasses
 - c) Watching the Teletubbies

Gordon's pipe dream

By the time you read this, Chancellor Gordon Brown will have presented his annual 'pre-budget' statement to parliament. Every year, the Chancellor gives an overview of how the British economy is doing and announces what the government plans to do with taxation and its spending for the next three years or so.

**by Michael Roberts,
our economics correspondent**

The world's most 'prudent' finance minister has juggled the figures to explain how the government is going to fund a substantial increase in spending on health, education and transport, while not raising taxation for the average working household and while cutting taxation (yet again) for big business and the City of London.

Gordon's figures are dependent on two assumptions, both of which will prove to be false. The first is that, thanks to his 'prudent' policies on taxation and spending, British capitalism no longer has booms and slumps. So, while the US, Europe and Japan may slide into economic recession, the UK will avoid it. The second is that, even if the rest of the world is contracting in its output and living standards, Britain can go on growing at 2% a year, so unemployment will hardly rise and pay packets will stay thick and prices low.

Gordon's argument about booms and slumps is based on his claim that he no longer allows the government to spend more than it can earn in taxation, unless it is for investment. This 'golden rule' ensures that inflation (caused by government borrowing apparently) does not return.

But the 'golden rule' has been kept to only because the UK has managed grow at a relatively fast rate (by British standards) of about 2.5% each year in the global boom period of 1997-2000. As a result, the government sucked in huge amounts of tax revenues and paid out much less in social security and unemployment benefits. And, as we have commented in this column before, Gordon Brown and New Labour kept religiously to the previous Tory government's public spending freeze on public services. The health service and schools got much worse as a result. And, by

not reversing the rape of the railways through privatization, transport ground to halt. So public services rotted during an economic boom!

It has now been revealed, in a new analysis of the first four years of the New Labour government that investment in the public sector fell to its lowest level as a proportion of national income since the second world war! The Institute of Fiscal Studies found that public investment was just 1.7% of GDP in 2000, down from 8.9% in 1975. There is the proof of what any parent or teacher at a school could tell you, what any patient in a hospital knows, and what any commuter to work by train or tube experiences every day.

But that's not the worst of it. Take investment in the health service. Total investment on new hospitals and equipment (so excluding spending on the wages of staff) was just 0.4% of Britain's national income in 1992. Under New Labour, it fell to even more, to just 0.2% in 2000.

'Education, education, education' is Tony Blair's election promise mantra. In the 1970s, investment spending on school buildings and equipment was just 0.7% of annual GDP. The Tories and Labour managed to drive that down to 0.2% by 1982. Now it is still just 0.3% of GDP.

Of course, Gordon is pledged to raising public investment in transport, health and education by considerable amounts. But here is the really startling fact that the Institute of Fiscal Studies has found. Even after the doubling of investment in public services up to 2004 as promised by Gordon in last year's pre-budget statement, and even after taking into account all the money that is supposed to come from big business for investment in public services through the ghastly 'private finance initiative', public investment as a share of national income will still be lower than in 1992! As the IFS commented: "it is easy to promise to increase public investment sharply without going to very high level, if you are doing it from a very low base."

In practice, what all this means is that, by 2004 even if everything goes well and New Labour sticks to its promises, improvements in public services will be hardly visible to most of us.

At least it won't be any worse, you might grudgingly admit. Well, even that is in doubt. Gordon bases all his forecasts for government spending on the British economy continuing to grow at about 2.25% a year over the rest of this parliament. That's optimistic to say the least. In the 1970s and 1980s, Britain grew at about a 2% rate, well down from the growth rate of the



1960s, of about 3.3% a year. In the 1990s, the UK managed 2.2% a year and managed to reduce and stabilize unemployment as result.

But the prospects for the next few years don't look so good. The bad news is coming. British capitalism is ill equipped to escape the huge downturn in world capitalist economic activity. The squeeze on profits for UK big business is already under way. As companies reduce investment and employment as a result, unemployment will rise by at least 300,000 over the next year. Officially, the unemployment is just one million, or 3.5%. But that's a fake. The real picture on any accepted international measure is at least 1.5m or 5.4%. Even so, this is low historically. But by the end of next year it's going to be over 6% and rising.

That means less tax revenue for the government and more social security spending. The budget surpluses that prudent Gordon has been achieving over the last few years are going to turn into deficit. Then the crunch comes. How can increased spending be achieved without raising taxes or increasing government borrowing and debt?

No doubt, Gordon will have told parliament that he can square the circle. But nobody really believes him.

The Tories, as represented by that revolting weasel, Michael Howard, a man 'with a touch of the darkness about him', will go on about the rising tax 'burden' that New Labour will create for big business. Ironically, New Labour has steadily reduced that burden, as Tony Blair and Gordon Brown continually boast to the CBI and reactionary extremist organisations like the Institute of Directors. Indeed, Gordon Brown will have announced further cuts in capital gains taxes for the rich in this pre-budget statement.

As this column has shown before, corporate taxation revenues have fallen under New Labour, while national insurance contributions and taxes (VAT, fuel tax etc) for the average working family have risen. So, to meet his targets for spending, taxes for you and me will have to rise. And yet services will hardly improve!

And then everything depends on global capitalism staying healthy. Will the US economy will jump quickly out of its economic recession (officially declared as such by the august National Bureau of Economic Research only last month) and allow the US cavalry to save the rest of the world.



In the last few weeks, stock markets around the world have recovered sharply. Optimism prevails. The "War against Terrorism" seems to be going well in Afghanistan. And the US economy, key to world capitalism, seems to be making a small turn for the better. Or so US government leaders and Wall Street financial experts are arguing. But there is nothing to justify this optimism.

How can anyone take the experts seriously? Read the first sentence in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Economic Outlook, published less than a year ago in December

In the course of this year the US economy has developed far worse than had generally been expected, and ten interest-rate cuts by the Fed have completely failed to show any desired effect. Yet the faith that the 'almighty' Mr Greenspan and the Federal Reserve can and will successfully reignite economic growth is unshaken.

In September, America's industrial production experienced its 12th month of decline, the longest unbroken fall since 1945. Yet the consensus continues to reckon that America's recession will be brief and mild. Underlying these forecasts is a deeply embedded conviction that the US

In the course of this year the US economy has developed far worse than had generally been expected, and ten interest-rate cuts by the Fed have completely failed to show any desired effect.

2000: "Global economic growth appears to have peaked during the first half of 2000, but world economic prospects remain relatively bright...". Attached to this rosy assessment was an equally rosy forecast for US economic growth of 3.5% in 2001 and 3.3% in 2002.

Then read what this same top economic organization in the world wrote in its June 2001 Economic Outlook, barely four to five months ago: "Economic growth in the OECD area has been weakening since autumn of 2000, but the forces damping growth are projected to dissipate during the current half-year." US real GDP growth was projected to accelerate from 1.2% in the first half of 2001 to 1.9% in the second half and further to 3.1% in 2002 and 3.5% in 2003.

The very latest estimate, drawn up at a recent committee meeting of OECD staff economists and government officials and to be published in December, is for 1.1% in 2001 and 1.3% in 2002. Although sharply down, it is already a joke before it is published, because to realize a growth rate of over 1% this year would require the economy to have already been accelerating. Just the opposite is true.

economy is still bursting with underlying economic strength and dynamism. The idea that America might follow Japan into a prolonged period of economic stagnation is emphatically discarded.

All this optimism ignores the crucial importance of profits in the capitalist economy. The US is in the worst profit crisis since the 1930s. According to Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, the reported profits of companies in the S&P 500 index fell by 60% in the year to the second quarter. It's already the biggest decline since the Depression. As a result, profits in the non-financial corporate sector fell to 8.1% of GDP in the second quarter of this year, down from 12.5% in 1997. Profits have slumped further since then, as the third quarter figures (out by the time you read this) will show.

The world is not going to recover quickly from the economic recession of 2001. And as the capitalism grinds further down into depression, all the prudent calculations of Gordon Brown and the belief of New Labour in globalisation and the end of boom and busts in the New Economy will be exposed as sham. ●



The war in Afghanistan:

Swamps and alligators

In the few days that have passed since this article was written, the basic analysis has been completely confirmed by events. Kunduz has fallen, and in all probability Kandahar will not be far behind. However, the Taliban resistance in these and other areas shows that they are still capable of inflicting serious damage. The Northern Alliance was only able to achieve its rapid advance in the north because the Taliban put up no resistance. But in the Pushtoon south things will be very different.

The fact that America is at last putting in troops on the ground is an indication that the war is by no means over. The presence of US troops indicates that they cannot trust the Northern Alliance to do the work in hand. Meanwhile, Britain has been effectively sidelined and humiliated. So much for the "special relationship"! Bush wanted his marines to get the front page treatment. But he will not be so content when the same front pages are publishing details of American casualties.

by Alan Woods

The situation in Afghanistan after the dramatic fall of Kabul continues to give the British and Americans a headache. Washington is still trying to improvise a coherent strategy, making up its policy as it goes along.

Writing from Washington in the Pakistan English language daily *The News* (November 17), Nusrat Javeed comments: "Though extremely pleased with the stunning rout of the Taliban, policy planners in the USA are utterly confused where to go next. 'Policy papers written in the morning are obsolete' by the afternoon," admitted a State Department official working on South Asian affairs."

The confusion is so profound that Washington is still not certain whether the Taliban are running for their lives like "headless chickens" or abandoning the cities according to a pre-arranged plan, to prepare a guerrilla war.

The vacillations in Washington are the product of a growing perception that the war in Afghanistan is not over, and that America's problems are only just beginning. On the subject of the Taliban's losses, there are many estimates. But the subject of losses among American and British special forces who have been fighting alongside the Northern Alliance is strictly taboo. Washington is maintaining a complete news blackout on this question. Likewise, Moscow will say nothing about the persistent rumours of Russian spetsnaz troops and Uzbek divisions fighting in Afghanistan. There are unofficial reports of such troops fighting in the battle for Mazar-e-Sharif and taking heavy casualties. But nobody will confirm this.

The basic problem is that, despite recent reverses,

the Taliban has not been destroyed. The majority of the Taliban's 60,000 fighters are believed to have escaped from the bombing with low casualties, and have saved most of their weapons. Most analysts in Washington believe that not more than 900 Taliban fighters have been killed, and that their basic arsenal of between 250 and 300 Scud missiles are still intact. These can be used with deadly effect against the cities controlled by the Northern Alliance. Most of the casualties during the Northern Alliance's advance have been members of bin Laden's al-Qaida organisation - Pakistanis, Arabs and Chechens, whom Mullah Omar very considerably ordered to stand and die, in order to protect his retreating forces. Despite these heavy losses, it is believed that bin Laden's primary fighting force ("Brigade 55") is still in existence, having retreated with their leader to safer territory.

The northern city of Kunduz continues to put up resistance, although it cannot hold out for long. And the Americans are continuing to subject Kandahar to heavy pounding. After the recent setbacks, the Taliban will require some time to regroup. Although they have not suffered heavy losses, two months of constant bombing will have had a psychological effect, the extent of which is hard to calculate. However, the abandonment of the cities by no means signifies a total collapse of the Taliban's military potential. As *The Economist* (November 17) points out: "They [the Taliban] had never much liked cities, but knew all about hit-and-run warfare from the hills."

According to a report in *Afghan Islamic Press*, Mullah Omar has ordered the Taliban militia to withdraw from Kandahar, and had reached an agreement to hand

the city over to the control of two former mujahedeen commanders. According to AIP, the decision was taken to avoid more civilian casualties from daily US bombing. The violence of this bombing is such that the Pakistani authorities were obliged to deny rumours that some American bombs had fallen inside Pakistan (Kandahar is not far from the Pakistani frontier), although they admitted that "these bombs fell very near Pakistan's territory".

Bush decides to act

The tendency to substitute improvisation for a coherent policy has apparently led to some strange developments, including a tendency on the part of the president to make use of his powers to overrule his policy makers.

There are reports, originating from the WorldNet daily, alleging that Bush, while publicly opposing the entry of Northern Alliance forces into Kabul, had in fact arrived at a secret deal with Putin to allow this to happen. Quoting "intelligence sources", it says that moments before Bush was leaving to address the UN general assembly on November 7, Putin talked to him on the phone. The Russian leader allegedly urged Bush to "let the Northern Alliance off the leash and signal the attack on the key northern city of Afghanistan, Mazar-e-Sharif."

According to WND, Putin was confident that the Northern Alliance could take the town "within hours of the USA giving the green light", and Kabul would only be a few days away. Such a proposal was completely contrary to the gradualist approach adopted by US military strategists, who envisaged that the bombing campaign would continue until April 2002. WND claims that Bush "responded with an on-the-spot decision to go with the Russian plan" without consulting his aides.

"Had he done so," says WND, "Rumsfeld would have warned him the new proposal would place at risk all the military preparations, deals and understandings the United States had put together over the past weeks. Powell would have warned him that letting the Northern Alliance go would amount to ditching Washington's chief war ally, Pakistan...and damaging the special relations with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who was then in the USA."

There is no way of verifying the content of this report. But it seems to have the ring of truth about it. Bush's conduct since September 11 suggests that he has allowed the extravagant praise of the media to go to his head. He seems actually to believe all that stuff about being a great war leader. Maybe he has been talking too much with Tony Blair lately. Whatever the reason, this is a dangerous mental illness which bodes ill for the conduct of America's war in Afghanistan. If George W. Bush concludes

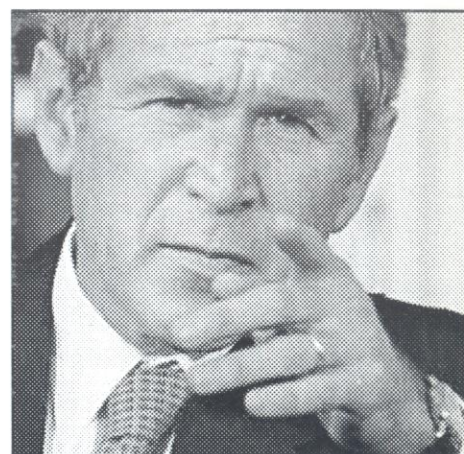


that he can dispense with the services of his advisers (limited as they are), heaven help America!

The first effect of the entry of the Northern Alliance into Kabul was to offend President Musharraf. Evidently, Bush was convinced he could deal with that, ride out the storm and go forward to victory. Musharraf must learn to know his place. As for the Northern Alliance, they could be dealt with later.

Blair's blunder

Unfortunately for Bush, Tony Blair has complicated things by attempting to secure a leading role for Britain. For some time now, Blair has been itching to get British troops involved in Afghanistan. He is greedy for prestige and also for lucrative contracts in the region when the war is over. The French want to get their troops in soon for identical reasons. But Blair's hasty attempt to send 6,000 British soldiers to Afghanistan immediately hit problems. As a first instalment, he dispatched a force of 400 men to occupy the airfield at Bagram, which the Northern Alliance had recently recaptured from the Taliban. By what right the British government sends its army to a sovereign state to seize an airfield is not entirely clear. London claims (naturally) that it is for "humanitarian" purposes, and to make the airport "safe" - without specifying, safe for whom, and against whom. None of the aid agencies have ever requested troops from Britain or any other country, because they know quite well that the sight



of foreign soldiers, especially from the West, does not go down well with the Afghans.

The Northern Alliance (also naturally) have demanded that Britain withdraw its troops forthwith. They know quite well that the purpose of the British troops is not humanitarianism, but to make the airfield and Kabul "safe" - for Britain and against the Northern Alliance. The British press makes no secret of the fact that Britain is opposed to letting the Northern Alliance take power in Kabul, and is - together with the USA - demanding a "broad-based government". (See SA issue 96). This transparent manoeuvre has infuriated the Northern Alliance, which has stepped in to block them. The British troops remain camped in tents on the outskirts of Bagram airfield, while thousands of others are still in Britain - "all dressed up, with nowhere to go".

The resident of Number 10 Downing street seriously imagined that Britain could behave as it did in the good old days of the Empire and gunboat diplomacy. But the imperialists cannot behave as they did in the past - or rather they can do so only up to a certain point and they will pay a heavy price for it. Blair has tried to act like the American imperialists, but lacks the necessary clout to do so. He is utterly crude, and, to make matters worse, has no sense of proportion. The present leader of the Labour Party lacks even the understanding of right-wing Labour leaders like Wilson or Callaghan in the past. How could Britain even consider intervening in a place like Afghanistan where it has no support

It is now clear to all the world that British imperialism has been boxing above its weight. They thought they would get the backing of the Americans, but things did not turn out like that. Cracks are clearly beginning to open up between Washington and London.

amongst the population? They must have known that not just the Northern Alliance, but the Afghan population as a whole, looks on foreigners with suspicion, yet they persisted in barging in where they were not wanted.

The British prime minister has even succeeded in antagonising the Americans. This is quite an achievement! Blair must have had the idea that he was doing Bush a favour by immediately intervening with British troops to keep the Northern Alliance under control and thus to create a position more favourable to America - and Britain. But the manoeuvre blew up in his face. Now the British are left out in the cold, while the Americans keep a discrete silence. The "special relationship" was not supposed to be like this! The problem is, of course, that this relationship was really no more special than the relationship between the Big Boss and his obedient lackey. Now as everyone knows, a lackey is not supposed to think for himself, and, though he may sometimes anticipate the Master's wishes, he can get into serious trouble if he gets the wrong message, as Blair has done on this occasion.

It is now clear to all the world that British imperialism has been boxing above its weight. They thought they would get the backing of the Americans, but things did not turn out like that. Cracks are clearly beginning to open up between Washington and London. In order to make the sending of British troops to Afghanistan palatable to the British people and Labour movement, the Labour leadership has had to stress the argument about "humanitarian" aid. On the other hand, Washington says next to nothing on this subject. Republican spokesmen have stated, with brutal clarity, that the Afghan people must look after themselves. The job of the USA is to crush the Taliban. So the USA cannot afford to offend the Northern Alliance just now.

In any case, the whole plan was stupid in the extreme. 400 troops are not nearly enough to make a difference, and they cannot send in the remaining 6,000 in the teeth of Afghan opposition. If Mr Blair is foolish enough to defy the Northern Alliance and send more troops in, they will have to fight

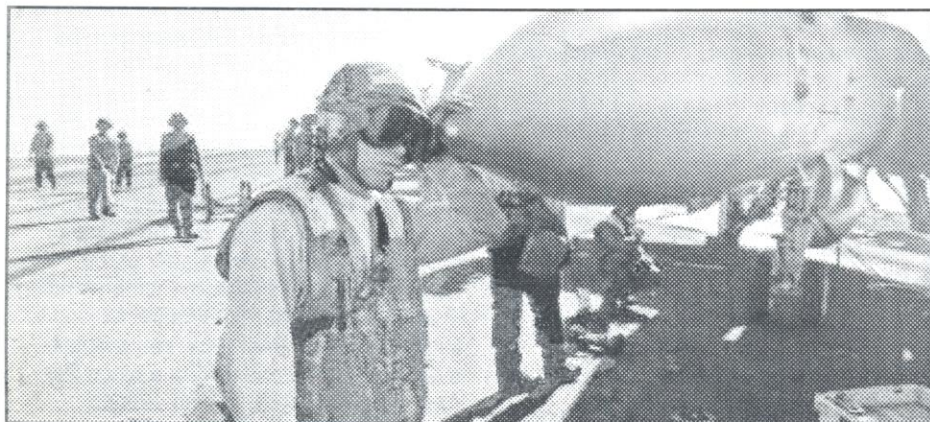
their way in. This is a most uninviting prospect! In the end, instead of sending thousands of British troops to Kabul, it is quite likely that they will have to withdraw even the small number of troops they have sent. So in the end, Mr Blair will be left looking very foolish. This, unfortunately, is always the most likely outcome for a man who believes he can walk on water.

Bad nerves in Islamabad

As time goes on, the government of Pakistan is getting increasingly nervous. Last Friday Islamabad announced that it was putting troops on the borders with Afghanistan to prevent the retreating Taliban fighters from entering Pakistan. However, in practice, this will be impossible. The government in Islamabad has good reason to be nervous. Having stabbed Pakistan in the back over the Northern Alliance's entry into Kabul, Washington is now in the process of turning Pakistan into one big US military base (for "humanitarian" purposes, you understand). A few weeks ago, it was beginning to have doubts about Pakistan's viability as an ally, and it was cultivating relations with Uzbekistan as an alternative base. But the sudden fall of Kabul has changed the situation. The Americans see Pakistan as the most convenient base for their operations against the Taliban in the south of Afghanistan. But this opens up the unpleasant prospect of the war spilling over into Pakistan.

At a meeting of Musharraf with his joint chiefs of staff, the situation in Afghanistan was discussed, along with internal security. "Steps taken include putting assets on the borders", reported The News. A Pakistani general explained that by "assets" he meant heavy weapons. This underlines the fragility of the situation inside Pakistan and the anxiety of the regime, which is cracking down viciously on the workers' movement (see today's report from Quetta). The new fear is that elements from the Taliban and al-Qaida will link up with the extreme fundamentalists in Pakistan to spread chaos there: "There is increased border security, the reason being we do not want anyone to come without documents...No refugee will be allowed into Pakistan except for humanitarian reasons. Others will be proceeded against by law," a spokesperson said.

There are signs that, after treading on Pakistan's toes, Washington is anxious to smooth ruffled feathers in Islamabad. On returning from his fruitless visit to America, Musharraf told the press that "Pakistan was becoming the real opinion builder regarding Afghanistan." This implies that, having handed Kabul over to the Northern Alliance, Bush is offering the Pakistanis the possibility to reassert their influence in Afghanistan through the agency of a "broad government". By manoeuvring between allies with conflict-



ing interests, Washington betrays first one, then the other, and is thus stoking the fires of future conflicts. But for the present, Pakistan will have to wait.

Right now the Americans are preoccupied with winning a quick victory over the Taliban, for which they require the services of the Northern Alliance. But the whole situation is fraught with difficulties and dangers. The Northern Alliance are not reliable allies. They are far more likely to follow the Russians, Iranians or even Indians than the Americans. But the Americans are acting on the well-known principle: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." Therefore, riding roughshod over Pakistan's objections, Washington will continue to back the Northern Alliance - for the time being.

Tomorrow the Americans will switch horses. In order to reduce the influence of the Northern Alliance, they will try to impose a government of their liking (a "broad" one, to use the current jargon) in Kabul. That will give Pakistan a chance to interfere once more in the internal affairs of Afghanistan - a prospect that can be dangled before Musharraf to keep him happy, since the USA also needs Pakistan. The Pentagon is considering the establishment of a separate military command in Pakistan. According to US officials, this would include military officials from a coalition of US allies. It would have in its hands a large quantity of money to rebuild roads (useful for food transportation and also for the movement of troops and tanks - therefore, not just humanitarian, but eminently practical too). Its other aims include the establishment of an Afghan national bank (so that the US will control not only the movement of food, but also of money) and a judicial system (i.e. the state). But before this can be done, it is first necessary to defeat the enemy on the field of battle.

Swamps and alligators

The priority of America is to capture or kill bin Laden and to crush al-Qaida and the Taliban. But all these objectives are as far away as ever. The Taliban and al-Qaida have melted away into the villages and mountains of the Pushtoon areas, from where they will prepare a series of counter-strokes when they are ready. It will not be easy even to find bin Laden, let alone capture him. The Americans have offered a huge reward, but so far there have been

no takers. This is hardly surprising - in order to enjoy the reward, the first prerequisite is to stay in one piece. Traitors do not tend to live long in Afghanistan. This is a serious disincentive to anyone thinking of claiming the reward.

Despite this, it is an old Afghan tradition that people can change sides and convictions, depending on which side looks like winning. It is possible that the overwhelming military superiority of America may convince some former "fundamentalists" to exchange their beliefs for US dollars, despite the risks entailed. The author of a very good book on the Taliban, Ahmed Rashid, sees a "very high" chance of bin Laden eventually being betrayed by some of his former allies in southern Afghanistan. Some of the defectors from the Taliban army may have information about his whereabouts which may be for sale if the price is right. But even if George W. Bush succeeds in getting his enemy delivered "dead or alive", this will not end the war. New conflicts are arising all the time.

The Americans and British have learned nothing from history. The British failed three times to conquer Afghanistan in the nineteenth century. Winston Churchill famously described the Afghans thus: "Valley against valley, and all against the foreigner." With all the might of its armed forces, the Soviet Union failed to force the Afghans to submit in a bloody war of attrition that lasted ten years. Yet it took the Russians just one week to overrun Afghanistan. Their initial advance was just as rapid as the one we see now. The problems began later.

The difference now is that Kabul has been taken not by foreigners but by Afghans. But here the problem for America begins. It will not be easy for them to bend the Northern Alliance to their will. Moreover, it is not clear that the Northern Alliance will want to continue their advance into the Pushtoon lands, where they will meet stiff resistance. From now on, the Americans will have to do some - perhaps the majority - of the fighting themselves. So the bombing campaign grinds on and on. The trouble is that soon they will run out of targets. "The bombing will become more and more focused," claims army General Tommy Franks.



Focused on what? On Afghan mountain villages? But that is a sure recipe for more civilian victims ("collateral damage" in the official, cynical jargon). This will cause a surge of bitterness against the Americans which will make it much harder for them to wage war on the ground when the time comes. And the time is fast arriving.

The latest statements from US military chiefs indicate that they are now preparing to dispatch ground troops to fight alongside the Alliance and special forces. They evidently believe that the enemy is on the run and that one last push will suffice to finish the job. But that is a delusion. To send ground troops into the Pushtoon areas is a very dangerous task. That is why Washington still needs the services of the Northern Alliance. But the Alliance itself is composed of Tajiks and Uzbeks and therefore will also be seen by the Pushtoons as foreign invaders. In the words of *The Economist*: "The energy with which Afghan forces fight with another is nothing with the fury with which they will turn on anyone from outside who is perceived as an occupier or invader."

President Bush, with his imitable gift for striking phrases, has referred to the anti-terrorist campaign as "draining the swamp". Pursuing the analogy with military gusto, General Franks added that, now "we simply have more capacity to focus on the alligators." Yes, gentlemen. But do not forget that before you succeed in draining a swamp, it is always possible that you will sink in it - and also that alligators tend to bite. ●



The collapse of Belgian airline underlines bankruptcy of privatisation policy and the union strategy

Airline crashes - 12,000 sacked

Only superlatives and historical comparisons can help us to understand the scope of the sudden collapse of the Sabena airline and the new commotion it has provoked in Belgium:

by Erik Demeester

As one trade union leader put it: "Our society is going from one shock to the other." In just one day 12,000 workers have lost their jobs and 36,000 jobs in service-providing companies are now in jeopardy. This amounts to the biggest single bankruptcy since the second world war. To this must be added the atmosphere of financial scandal and fraud surrounding the outgoing management.

Sabena workers were not informed by the management about their sudden fate but by the media. Many of them, ignorant of the situation, arrived at their workplace only to find closed doors and their magnetic access badges deactivated. The management and other leading staff had deserted their offices. None of them have been available since. Instead a strong police force tried to keep the shell-shocked workers calm. As one airhostess told me: "They don't even send us psychologists to help us cope with this disaster but only policemen." That morning, November 6, the main entry hall to the departure areas witnessed a spontaneous gathering of thousands of airline workers in a state of anger, sadness, confusion and unbearable tension. For the first time in many years all the professional grades who had been kept artificially separate

from each other seemed to unite. Pilots were speaking with the ground workers, airhostesses entered into agitated conversations with cleaning staff, younger workers from the more depressed regions of the Borinage took their weeping older workmates in their arms as they realised this was the last job they would ever have in their lives. The most radical groups wanting immediate action were clustering around young workers with the least trade union traditions and paradoxically the better paid pilots, who were outraged at the way they had been treated by the management. If capitalism starts to upset even this category of workers then something very important must be happening in the workers' consciousness! Natural empathy and solidarity was the general reaction amongst ordinary workers in the country.

Downturn

Rapidly many people understood that this bankruptcy was not caused by a natural disaster like a bad storm or an earthquake hitting the airline. It was neither God's Will nor Destiny. This social tsunami was man made. Strictly speaking the Belgian airline was not even one of the numerous victims of the downturn affecting the industry after the September 11 attacks in New York. Neither was it a casualty of the world recession. The world recession and September 11 only served to exacerbate the process already taking place in the company. This process is called privatisation or more precisely piratisation and outright plunder. No surprise then that posters produced by Sabena workers denounced what they called "social and economic terrorism".

Sabena, until 1995 a public company in the airline industry, was forced to open its capital to private shareholders. This privatisation imposed on the company by the European Union was to become the death knell of Sabena. After a wedding with the

French company Air France that ended rapidly, Swissair proposed to become its partner. The Belgian state maintained formally a majority share of a little more than 50% but had to offer a dowry. In reality the new private shareholder was running Sabena with the government turning a blind eye to their practices. The entry of Swissair is comparable to opening the door of your house to an unscrupulous thief. Swissair made a lot of promises of investment but ran away with the money. Successive transport ministers are at least passive accomplices of this plundering. The pilots' association had warned and given detailed proof to the government and the workers' unions of the modus operandi of this plundering. None of them wanted to listen. Swissair has siphoned billions of Belgian francs out of the catering and ground-handling departments.

Some flight destinations of Sabena have been suppressed to the advantage of Swissair flights. Great suspicions exist about some expensive contracts with the Airbus manufacturers. Sabena workers will give you tens if not hundreds of examples of how the Swissair shareholders have succeeded in enriching themselves at the expense of Sabena and public money. Consequently a group of workers and some shop stewards are taking the company to court. The government has even announced a parliamentary inquiry in an effort to stave off criticism. The scandal is even bigger if you consider that for more than 10 years Sabena workers have been pressurised into accepting wage cuts (up to 17%), increases in productivity through the intensification of work (up to 200%) and of course, sackings. Sabena workers have a tradition of struggle against those "sacrifice packages". But their unions have always been on the defensive and have often justified the sacrifices in return for "social plans" to help sweeten their human cost. This is again the case now with the bankruptcy of

Sabena. This time it is even worse because the deal with the government does not even meet the legal requirements which apply to workers who have been sacked "normally" by a still existing company.

The union leadership, behind the backs of the workers, without the slightest consultation, has signed this deal. The workers were not even informed by the unions of the deal. Again they had to hear it from the media. Contrary to previous struggles, no assemblies were organised in the workplace.

Courageous rank and file shop stewards took the initiative of organising action and challenging the attitude of the union leaders. In the days following the bankruptcy no union leader was present at the airport. When interviewed by a national television journalist about the division amongst the Sabena workers, a shop steward answered that the only division that existed in the airport was between the workers on the one hand and their union leaders and the government on the other. He is completely right.

This was not just a "problem of communication" as some national union leaders claimed. This gulf separating the floor from the tops can only be explained by the capitulation of the union leaders and some shop stewards to the logic of privatisation and their fatalistic acceptance of sackings and closures as the normal form of regulation of the economy.

This attitude sets those leaders on a collision course with the workers concerned and their families who cannot accept such "logic". Many activists understand that Sabena also represents the bankruptcy of the policy of privatisation by the government and also the bankruptcy of the official union strategy.

The demo organised at very short notice by the national union leaders reflected the rising tide of discontent with this strategy. The way the demo developed also indicates that the union leaders desperately want to continue to be just the caretakers of the social calamities caused by capitalism. More than 10,000 workers from all public services and from many factories participated. Many had made their own placards demanding "jobs not social plans". The union leaders present were "strongly recommended" by the Sabena workers

**"Sabena,
terrorism,
12,000
injured"**

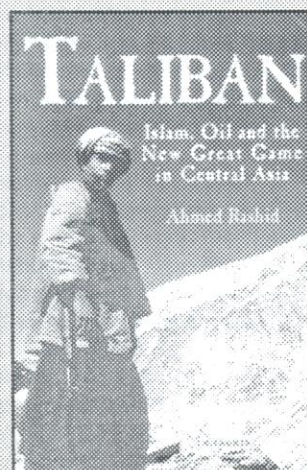


not to march in front but to disperse in the demo. No speeches were given at the end. A massive gathering of workers nevertheless continued to discuss for more than an hour after the demo. Many refused to leave the place as they tried to challenge the image of a funereal atmosphere injected into the demo by the media, the government and the union leaders. This led to small skirmishes with the police. Rank and file leaders who had emerged from the earlier days of struggle are trying to give a perspective by calling for a massive turnout at the big demonstration of the European unions on December 13 against the European summit.

Marxists around Vonk-Unité intervened in the actions of the Sabena workers. They demand the renationalisation of Sabena under democratic workers' control. This demand challenges the European Union too, since they reject public monopolies and state handouts to industries. The workers and their democratically elected representatives should get access to the accounts and check what happened with the money squeezed from their sacrifice.

The capital for the new company should come from the banks and the financial institutions. Nationalisation of those companies is the only guarantee to achieve this.

A European struggle has to be waged against the privatisation policy. The struggle to defend public services has to be given a new impetus with the demonstrations of December 13. In Belgium different public service trade unions have already announced that they would organise a 24-hour strike that day. ●



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What GATS is and why we need to fight it

The anti-globalisation movement sprang to the world's attention two years ago with the huge demonstrations in Seattle against the last summit meeting of the World Trade Organisation. The anti-capitalist protestors correctly identified the WTO as a bully boy for big business. Two years later the World Trade Organisation has just held its next summit. *Mick Brooks* examines the issues.



The aim of the WTO bosses was to skulk in Qatar in the Gulf of Arabia, as far as they could get from the 'teamsters to turtles' coalition against all that is wrong about capitalism. The summit decided to launch a new round of trade talks. The World Development Movement has denounced the likely move to further trade 'liberalisation' as a "disaster for the world's poor". An important part of the WTO agenda has been the onward rush of the General Agreement on Trade in Services - GATS - due to come into force very soon.

The WTO is the body charged with regulating world trade. Its supporters, such as Clare Short, claim it is a 'rules-based organisation'. Otherwise, they say, we would have the domination of strong nations over the weak. Actually the WTO is the forum in which the strong nations exercise their domination over the weak.

Economist Bergston confided to the receptive ears of the US Senate, "we can now use the full weight of international machinery to go after those trade barriers, reduce them, get them eliminated." As for being rules-based, genuine representatives of the wretched of the earth would probably react like Gandhi when he was asked what he thought about British civilisation. He said he thought it would be a good idea.

The WTO's brief is said to be the promotion of free trade. It has done nothing to open up the European Union's protectionist Common Agricultural Policy or strike down

America's export subsidies on farm products, both of which discriminate against third world farming. GATS is supposed to be about free trade in services. Well, they want to liberalise the supply of financial services - banking, insurance and such like. As the maverick economist Joseph Stiglitz (late of the World Bank) has pointed out, "Which country is the major exporter of financial services? The US. What services were not opened up?"

Vote per country

Construction services, maritime services, services of unskilled labour that are of concern to the developing world. Those remain closed."

Clearly if its nation members were given one vote per country, or voted according to their population, the organisation could potentially be dominated by poor countries. That would never do! The WTO and its predecessor GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) have not taken a vote since 1959!

Bergston explains, the WTO "does not work by voting. It works by consensus arrangement which, to tell the truth, is managed by four - the Quads. The US, Japan, the European Union and Canada. Those countries have to agree if any major steps are going to be made, that is true. But no votes."

'Our' representative is a career civil servant who is not accountable even to the Prime Minister. How he votes is a closely guarded secret. And yet the WTO has enormous power over our lives, as we shall see.

The WTO is a profoundly undemocratic organisation. Most of the deals are cut in the 'Green Room', from which poor countries are excluded. Pascal Lamy, Trade Commissioner for the EU, in a moment of exasperation, described this procedure as 'medieval'. Michael Moore, the head of the WTO, cheerfully agreed, "Lamy's partly right." Readers will already be guessing that, with a structure like this, the organisation is up to no good.

Parliament has never voted for membership of the WTO or debated its rules. So 'we' were not consulted. But somebody was consulted. Before going into negotiations about the ongoing GATS 'liberalisation', Charlene Barshevsky (head of the US delegation) asked the Coalition of Service Industries, a big business forum, what they wanted. They gave her a shopping list - health care, hospital care, home care, dental care, child care, elder care; education - primary, secondary and post-secondary, museums, libraries, law social assistance, architecture, energy, water services, environmental protection, real estate, insurance, tourism, postal services, transport, publishing, broadcasting....have

I left anything out? The European Commission consulted the European Services Forum, a (guess what?) big business lobbying group and got much the same advice.

They're putting all our public services up for auction in juicy chunks to the profiteers. World-wide there is reckoned to be a market of \$1 trillion in water, \$2 trillion in education and

\$3.5 trillion in health care. This is mouth-watering for the multinationals. GATS is a way of big business getting in there. In using GATS as a crowbar, the WTO tramples on democracy. Behind-the-scenes discussions are going on to 'strengthen' and implement the existing GATS provisions - in other words to tighten the garrotte on our public services.

The WTO sees itself as a court. If so, it is an unusual court. It debates in private. Since its reasons are not given they cannot be challenged or subjected to public debate. But they always come down on the side of big business. And its decisions have life or death consequences for billions of people on the globe.

Let's check out Article VI.4 of GATS. It says that governments have a duty to hold "a balance between two potentially conflicting priorities: promoting trade expansion versus protecting the regulatory rights of governments." They have to balance the interests of democracy and the attempts of capitalism to undermine democracy. This is like demanding a balance between the interests of the tiger and the lamb. Who decides the balance? Not the government - the one that you had a chance to vote for or not vote for, last June. You are too stupid to know where the balance should be drawn, or rather you might draw it differently from big business. The GATS Disputes Panel will decide where the balance is drawn - in the interests of big business.

The Disputes Panel uses something called the 'necessity test', also derived from Article VI.4. If we have to regulate, it should not be more burdensome than necessary. Who decides? - the GATS Disputes Panel - in the interests of big business.

They already have all this in the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). How has this been applied? The state of California banned a toxic chemical additive MBTE because it was leaching into their water supply. A Canadian chemical company that makes MBTE sued the State of California because it was 'burdening' free

trade with the ridiculous idea that people who voted for them shouldn't be poisoned just because some Canadian company wanted to save money. What the state of California should do, apparently, is spend hundreds of millions in digging up and resealing storage tanks, to help the Canadian cheap-skates out. There's capitalist efficiency for you! The USA may have to pay £635 million in penalties to the Canadian poisoners after this ruling. That's another thing. WTO rulings on penalties can only be overridden if everybody, including the complaining country, waives the fines.

'Horizontal' treatment

Another legal provision in GATS is what is called 'horizontal' treatment. This means that the principles of 'trade-friendly' (business-friendly) liberalisation operate across the board. There are no exemptions. 'Horizontal' treatment means they can walk all over us.

The government tells us we are getting it all wrong. Completely free services that have never been provided by profit-making companies, and so cannot be opened up to competition, are not at risk. So the health service and education are safe with them. But the health service and education are no longer uncommercialised. Large sectors have already been contracted out, hived off to big business or opened up to competitive ten-

der with the private sector. In the UK almost half of all government spending actually goes on purchases from the private sector. It was only a quarter in the 1970s - there was much more direct state provision back then. And of course the Private Finance Initiative will open vast areas of our public services to the money-grubbers. That's another reason to oppose PFI.

Can we opt out? 'Horizontal treatment' means everything will be up for grabs. It

also means that any firm, foreign or local, can complain about 'burdensome' rules imposed by irritating elected governments, and have them struck down. GATS is not really about trade at all. It's about overruling the state whenever it responds to its citizens' protests about looting and pillage by big capital.

Is there any defence? Can a yank service corporation just parachute in like something out of 'Band of brothers' and start stealing everything from the welfare state that's not nailed down? Pretty much. Preliminary negotiations have established that a government defence of safeguarding the public interest was rejected. Think about it. The government is not allowed to take measures which are in the public interest. It is not a defence before the GATS tribunal. And a Labour minister has participated in this and agreed to it all in the backroom negotiations.

The Trade Minister before the election was Richard Caborn, a deservedly obscure

figure. If the government is not ashamed of what it is doing to co-operate with the strengthening of GATS, why don't they come clean and tell us what they are up to? When it was put to Caborn that he had effectively prepared for the dismantling of the welfare state with his secret behind the scenes manoeuvring negotiations, his reply was that "this has not been tested in WTO jurisprudence". 'Search me, gov' would have been a more honest answer. As ever, New Labour ministers are selling out shamelessly to the multinationals.

The GATS Secretariat proposes that "it may well be politically more acceptable for countries to accept international obligations which give primacy to economic efficiency." And you'll be in trouble with them if you don't. So it's a race to the bottom. GATS is about opening up services to international competition. That means getting rid of environmental protection, worker protection and quality control in services. Rules such as restrictions on the traffic in toxic waste will be outlawed. These are really just trade barriers, you see. So at least services should get really cheap - right? That's not the story we're hearing so far.

Water. This journal has already reported on riots in Cochabamba in Bolivia, which were fired upon by police, leaving six dead. The riots were against the privatisation of the water supply (on the demand of the World Bank) to a British-owned company & - IWL. The result of the sale was a huge increase in the price of life's prime necessity. Some of the poor were paying up to a fifth of their household income for water. So far from saving people money, the profit-makers were paying six times as much as they needed to for water. Of course they were buying it from themselves! The Bolivian government was forced to take water back off IWL. Would they be allowed to renationalise under the GATS cosh?

Health. Even the British Medical Association is sounding the alarm about the likely effect of GATS. The 'Lancet' published an article in December 2000

Mike Moore, director-general of the World Trade Organization



entitled 'How the WTO could accelerate privatisation in health-care systems'. It points out, "the legal tests under consideration would outlaw the use of non-market mechanisms such as cross-subsidisation, universal risk pooling, solidarity and public accountability in the design, funding and delivery of public services as being anti-competitive and restrictive to trade". Even a conservative group such as doctors understands that the national health service was built on opposite principles to those of capitalism. The healthy pay for the care of the sick, in case we get sick one day. In fact the principle is of purest communism - 'to each according to their need.'

Prisons. Private prisons have become an ugly fact in Britain and the USA. How do firms make a profit and still tender at a lower price? They cut costs. That sounds fair enough in a textbook. But it doesn't always work like that. In economics textbooks an economic good or bad thing that happens off the balance sheet is called an

externality. For instance if a factory produces smoke, the owners don't have to pay for it - but we have to pay to get it cleared up. The owners (shareholders) don't care about that. They're just maximising shareholder value.

The story of Wackenhut in New Mexico shows that private provision can really be very expensive. In the first year the company took over two prisons there were riots, nine stabbings and five murders. This has all happened because they save money by not using enough guards. Because Wackenhut prisons are short-staffed, the state of New Mexico has to bump up its supply of police to deal with the riots. This costs money - it is an externality. So the state doesn't actually save any money on the Wackenhut deal. In 1999 a warden, Bob Garcia was left alone in a cell block with 60 prisoners. He died in a pool of his own blood. That was an externality for the company, but not for his wife and kids. There are a lot of riots because the facilities are dire. New Mexico gives the firm

cash for education, skills training and computers. Wackenhut just trousers the money in order to maximise shareholder value. It is cheaper to keep the prisoners locked up all day. But one day these prisoners, brutalised and institutionalised by the Wackenhut regime, will be released. This is likely to be the biggest externality of all for the citizens of New Mexico. Still, it couldn't happen here, could it? Actually Wackenhut is part of the Premier consortium bidding to run prisons in Britain.

The commercialisation and privatisation of our public services is a relentless drive by international big business. Don't let anyone fool you it's about efficiency. A recent study by Allyson Pollock of University College London painstakingly proved what we have argued here - privatised public services cost more and deliver less. The privateers walk off with public assets and lumber us with public debt. It's all about profit. ●

The 'work-to-rule' taxperson Cometh at 10 - Goeth at 4.

Workers in the Inland Revenue (IR) are fed up, completely fed up. After years of poor pay rises, erosion of conditions, constant change - much of it ill thought out, ill prepared and even more appallingly delivered, extra work taken on with little thought of our capacity to do it, we have had enough.

Unlike the camel our back has not broken - but our patience certainly has. The mood to fight back has gradually grown. After years of attacks by the Tories on the Civil Service the election of "Comrade" Blair should have marked a change in our fortunes. Union leaders in the Public & Commercial Services (PCS) union had for years refused to fight the Tories and instead promised the election of a Labour government would save us.

The initial relief at being rescued gave way to frustration, then acceptance followed by stoic determination. Starting in a quiet way, we saw the election of Mark Serwotka, the independent socialist candidate, as general Secretary Elect earlier in the year. This result shocked not only the incumbent union bureaucrats but also the Labour government nationally.

Labour's re-election in June was greeted with a mute acceptance and the knowledge that nothing would change and the attacks on us would continue. The anger has finally come to a head with this year's pay offer. The deal is supposed to be done by August 1 each year - but no offer was made until early September. The overall increase on the pay bill was 4.3%. Out of this, part of last year's settlement had to be found leaving the majority of members a 2% - 2.5% rise. The majority of IR staff

earn £9,599 to £15,500 maximum.

Unsurprisingly the offer was rejected 7-1, but no improved offer was received. Members were then balloted on action short of a strike and actual strike action (duration unspecified). The results were 6-1 and 2-1 in favour respectively. These results are amazing in a traditionally moderate union especially in light of the pressure put on members by the IR over the Middle East issue.

The first protests occurred on November 2 and 7 which involved disruption to customer services by not providing cover either end of the day. They have been a success and 98% responded, reducing the senior managers to manning telephones and counters.

The next step will be decided by the GEC and members will respond in the campaign to not only win a fair pay award but also show management that we do have the muscle not only to achieve our aims but also to defend ourselves in the coming battles over new contracts, extended opening, contact centres, functionality and area management. ●

Martin Page
Branch Secretary
Leicester Revenue Network Branch
(Personal Capacity)

USA: The Storm Clouds Gather....

The US government's propagandawar against "terrorism" is also attempting to deflect attention from the dramatic economic slowdown affecting the United States and the dire consequences it is having on American workers. **Rob Sewell** takes a look at the developing situation.



According to the latest figures American industry has been in the grip of recession for longer than any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In October more workers lost their jobs (415,000) than any month since May 1980, and trade union data suggests 638,000 have gone since the attacks of 11 September. "The huge jump in this month's unemployment rate makes it clear we are at a watershed," says John Sweeney, president of the AFL/CIO.

Savings rates for families are at an historic low, and many were deep in debt well before the economic downturn. Figures reveal that the average outstanding consumer debt per worker is \$5,000. But averages tends to hide the real picture. With growing debts and job losses, more and more workers are becoming homeless due to mortgage foreclosures. In Chicago the number of homeless has increased by 30 percent, while in the suburbs it has grown by 100 percent.

Those unemployed are struggling to make ends meet as jobs dry up. The savage welfare counter-reforms introduced by Clinton in 1996 - masked by the boom - have now started to bite, with many denied adequate welfare cover or no cover at all. In the richest country on the planet, only 39 percent of America's unemployed receive any welfare benefits. This is being added to every day as the dole queues become ever longer. The callous message of government is clear: 'go find yourself a job, or go hungry.' As always, it is all those at the bottom who suffer most. At the same time, America's rich have never been richer in an uncanny resemblance to the class polarisation of the 'Roaring Twenties', and the prelude to the Great Depression.

To make matters worse, given America's federal structure of government, the level of benefit differs from one state to another. In Massachusetts, unemployment benefits were \$477 a week last year, while in the southern states of Alabama and Mississippi they were \$190.

The unemployed, faced with a dramatic cut in income on benefit, simply cannot afford to continue 'luxury' expenditure, such

as on health care payments. With little room to borrow your way out of trouble, the winter looks bleak for millions of Americans.

"It's not enough to survive," says Edgardo Viray. "I pay \$300 a month rent and \$256 a month repayments on the car. With daily expenses, it just isn't enough.

"I've got to find another job with a good salary. But it's hard, especially now, because the companies aren't taking people. I don't know what I will do."

Many of the job losses are amongst the low paid and part timers, especially in catering. "I believe we will face another round of layoffs in January. This is shaping up a lot worse than the last recession," says Henry Tamarin of the Hotel & Restaurant Union.

Hypocrisy

While the President's dear wife, dressed in the finest clothes and wearing the most expensive jewellery and perfume, appears on TV protesting about the plight of Afghan women, America's poorest women are being ground into the dirt by her husband and his rich paymasters.

Perhaps the 'First Lady' at home in the White House or on her millionaire Texan ranch is unaware that the average age of a homeless person in the USA today is nine years old because of the number of homeless single mothers. "What about the children terrorised by poverty and hunger?" asks John Donahue, director of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, a body that Mrs Bush has no doubt never heard of. These constitute the 'undeserving poor' of the Bush administration, slandered and marginalised by Republican and Democratic politician alike.

It is always the weakest that suffer the most in a slump. "One of the things that kept the economy hot was that women were forced to take low-paid jobs - minimum wages that don't pay the rent in any city in this country. And those are the first to lose their jobs. People who have jumped through the welfare-to-work hoops and are ending up in shelters", continues John Donahue.

The brutal speed of the job losses are causing resentment amongst the unions. Leslie Mayo, who represents the flight attendants at American Airlines where 1,400 have lost their jobs, says at least 1,000 had little or no severance pay. "They weren't protected and we have filled a grievance," she says.

Kurt Hanson, an official of Speea, the Seattle-based aerospace union, is asking workers to donate cash to help the 30,000 who are losing their jobs over Christmas. The majority are due to leave the week before the holidays. The union suggested job-sharing, but this was rejected by the company. "The mood is pretty angry," he says. "A lot of people think September 11 is a cover for what management would have done anyway. But they have made a lot of business decisions, which suggests they don't need an excuse.

Boeing has demonstrated it doesn't really care about people. Typically they wouldn't have laid people off in substantial numbers between Thanksgiving and Christmas which is what they are now doing."

Clearly, this is no isolated incident. The ruling class is attempting to unburden the crisis onto the shoulders of the working class. The boom has disappeared. The American bosses are preparing to put in the boot. While they are waging imperialist war abroad, they are starting to engage in class war at home. Just as they are ruthless in pursuing their interests abroad, they will attempt to crush the resistance of the workers inside the US.

The American working class will not take these attacks lying down. They have a rich militant history. It is no accident that the 'heroes' of September 11, the fighter fighters of New York, fought with riot police when they were told to scale back their operations in digging out their fellow dead. Even clutching the American flag, the American working class will show its revolutionary mettle in the storming period that is opening up in the United States. ●

Turkey: Shaken by deep crisis

Statement of the International Communists of Turkey

The present war, in which US imperialism seeks to maintain its hegemony, is further aggravating the current contradictions in Turkey as a result of its strategic situation and socio-cultural structure. Although the country is engulfed in a serious economic crisis, Turkey is setting out to undertake new missions in the region, playing the role of the "little brother" of the USA in NATO. It is trying to involve itself directly in the conduct of the war together with US, and is preparing to send troops to any hotspot.

However, to be able to take these steps in a country which is trying to get along well with the Arab states, and which has an overwhelming Muslim population, creates deep contradictions. The Turkish ruling class is determined to keep everything under its control. And this amounts to nothing but stepping up continually the severe repression which already exists.

For example, some left parties attempted to organise a big anti-war rally in Istanbul several weeks ago. But the government raised various obstacles to avert the rally. We must remember that every demonstration requires permission and if a demonstration is organised without such permission, the police has every right to attack it. And they make use of their right every time! Despite all this the rally took place, but there were thousands of policemen in the square where the rally was to be held. After the beginning of the rally they attacked the demonstrators, beat them violently with truncheons, dragged them on the ground. Many were arrested. It was quite apparent that the bourgeois government, being engaged in a war along-

side the US, was prepared to savagely attack even the smallest anti-war demo.

When student groups in the universities attempt to organise anti-war demos they are stopped at the very beginning by heavy-handed police attacks. The police are always ready because they are already present in the universities. Despite its boast to be the only so-called secular and "democratic" republic of the Middle East, Turkey never ceases to deny the most elementary democratic right of the working people to demonstrate, employing repression and violence.

On the other hand, the bourgeois government, which is severely squeezed on the economic front, makes a pretence of complying with the requests of the West in favour of so-called democratisation. In reality, they are pretending to take steps along these lines in order to get financial aid from the West. This hypocritical attitude of the government has been turned into a farce. While the parliament, amending some anti-democratic articles in the current constitution, is preparing an apparently more democratic

constitution, the government - under this new "democratic" constitution - is carrying on terror against the democratic demonstrations of the workers and the progressive youth.

Just as in the case of demonstrations on the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) - still in being - which was established in the period of military dictatorship after the September 12, 1980 military coup. This was for the purpose of abolishing the autonomy of the universities, preventing the democratic acts of the lecturers and students, and putting the universities under state strict control.

On November 6, the university students organised demonstrations all over Turkey to protest against the Higher Education Council, anti-democratic measures against the youth, increased fees, etc. The protestors were violently dispersed, beaten by truncheons, and tear-gassed at close quarters (so that even the cops who were enjoying themselves beating the students were affected), dragged on the ground; and many were arrested.

Even the liberal capitalist press reacted against this violence. For example, the title of the news in *Radikal* was "Didn't we change the constitution?" and the article went on to say: "Yesterday the police force made their first comments on the right to demonstrate and protest, which has been reinforced by the new amendments in the Constitution."

On the other hand the government's attacks on the use of any democratic right have been intensified very much in war conditions. As is well known, the hunger strikes and death fasts initiated by some political prisoners in protest against the F-type prisons were previously attacked in a bloody operation called "Back to Life". 32 people were killed in this operation, increasing the number of deaths in the death fasts to 77, and many more maimed.

A few days ago the police once more carried out a violent operation, raiding a small workers' district called Küçükarmutlu, where some people - either prisoners released on bail or relatives of the fasting prisoners - had been on a death fast. The police used tear gas, automatic firearms, armoured vehicles and bulldozers in the raid, and a house in which some people were fasting was partly demolished by bulldozers; four were killed and ten injured, two of which are in a dangerous condition. Using the argument that the strikes are harmful to Turkey's image in Europe, the government doesn't want to allow anyone on hunger strike or death fast as a political protest. By methods like these, it wishes to bring the political prisoners and their families and other relatives who support

Musharraf and Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit



them "back to life"!

In Turkey there is a complete deadlock and uncertainty in politics. This situation strengthens the role of the army which is already at the heart of the political life of the country. The interesting point is that there is an abyss between the contents of the showcase and reality. If you look at the showcase, Turkey is passing the laws which the EU requires and the process of converging with the EU is proceeding! But in reality, God knows what the future of Turkey's relations with the EU will be. The question of Cyprus is in a complete deadlock at the moment. The prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs have abandoned their moderate tone.

Depending on the political developments after September 11, the government now seems to be about to give up the aim of establishing good relations with the EU. But the matter is more complicated than one imagines. For a long time the Turkish ruling class has been split into two wings - those who want to come closer to Europe on the one side and those who want to undertake a sub-imperialist role in the region as the aide of the American cowboys on the other side.

Now the government is portraying the problem between itself and the EU as the result of the EU's intention to accept the Greek Cypriots as the representatives of the whole island. They pretend not to know that the reality of Cyprus has been regarded in this way by the EU for the last 10 years! The Turkish minister of foreign affairs, Ismail Cem, says that the Cyprus question is not going well, and it might even be necessary to venture to break with the EU. After that, prime minister Ecevit said: "If they force us to, we will annex Northern Cyprus." Against this wing, the pro-EU bourgeois circles are very angry and they want the government to be overthrown.

TUSIAD, the organisation of the big capitalists which played a role in the September 12 military regime - now plays the "democrat" and for the first time in its history declares that it would support the actions of the Labour Platform in which all the workers' unions take part. In short, as a

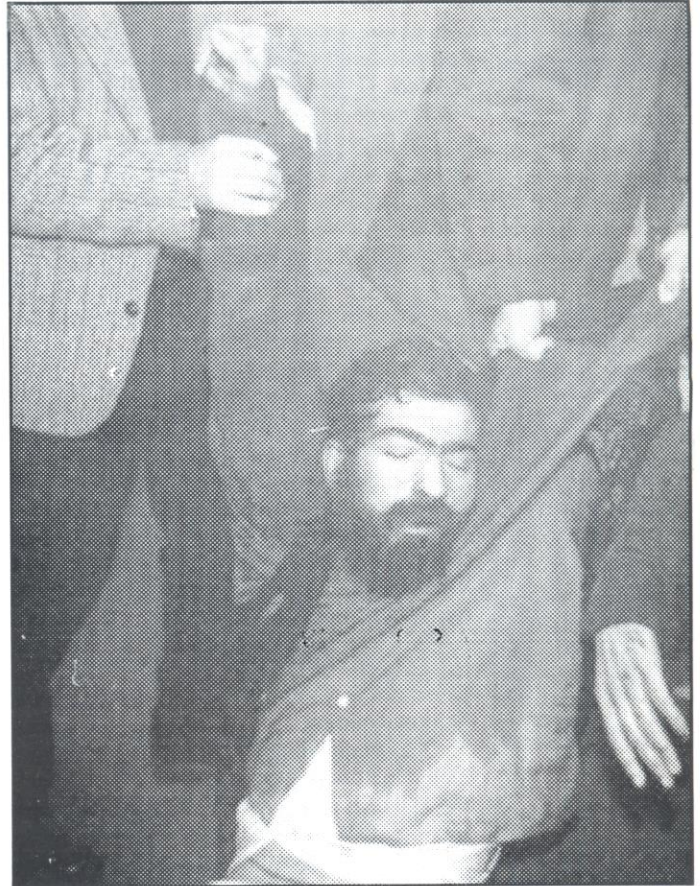
result of the new contradictions and conflicts of interest between the different capitalist countries, Turkey is now being shaken to its foundations. As the representatives of American imperialism - which is the hegemonic power of world capitalism - declared: "This war will last a long time!"

In such a period of turmoil it would be absurd to attempt to predict the future development of events. But one thing is obvious for the time being: that the bourgeois government is on the side of American imperialism. Turkey's relations with the USA and NATO are going so well that institutions like the IMF and the World Bank are promising new credits as a reward!

But in reality, as a result of the ever-deepening economic crisis, the labouring masses are suffering the hell of unemployment and poverty. As a result of the last economic crisis in Turkey, the number of workers who have been dismissed in the last year is over 1.5 million. It is now definite that the Turkish economy will shrink by 8% by the end of 2001. Although there is a stagnation in the economy, the inflation rate is 90% on a yearly basis. So the Turkish economy is experiencing a second and deeper stagflation than the first one in 1994.

Desperate bourgeois economists say: "The plight of Turkey cannot be learned from the economics text-books." They are quite right. Not only the crisis of Turkish capitalism, but also the crisis into which world capitalism has been plunged at the beginning of the 21st century can only be analysed in the light of Marxism.

About 150 years ago Marx explained the direction capitalism from an historical perspective. He also said that in this historical march it could solve its crises only at the expense of preparing new and deeper crises. The new millennium has opened with a deep economic crisis, unprecedented in the history of capitalism. This crisis is so obvious with the rising figures of unemployment, economic stagnation, incessant stock market crises, etc, all over the world - including advanced capitalist countries - that there is no need even to list the data.



A hunger strike protestor is dragged away by Turkish police

On the other hand, the economic crises which break out in the advanced capitalist centres, and have devastating results in the weaker capitalist countries like Turkey are not local or accidental. On the contrary, they are part of the crisis of the system. They have no independent character, demanding a separate study. One can only say that they are early symptoms of the general crisis of the system. The deep financial crises which caused a sudden collapse of the Turkish Lira broke out first in November 2000, and later in February 2001. After that, the Turkish industrial sector plunged into an unprecedented stagnation. The crisis of the world capitalist system has concluded the meaningless debates as to whether this crisis is partial or accidental.

The trade unions are under pressure both from the workers below and from the bourgeois state which does not want to tolerate even the smallest protests because of the explosive nature of the situation. The union bureaucracy moves only reluctantly, and when it does so, tries

The world working class is now faced with a serious economic crisis and an open war that the imperialist powers intend to spread.

to hold the workers back. DISK (The Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions), which was a big union confederation before the military coup of 1980, has now lost its power and has become a small confederation. It was closed under the military regime and its officials and thousands of members were arrested, and KESK (Confederation of Public Employees' Unions) started a long march from several cities to Ankara. The main slogan of the march was "Against unemployment, poverty, corruption and war!" They also advanced the slogan of "Global equality, justice and peace". The workers who participated on the march and other workers from the biggest union confederation TURKIS (although it did not participate in the preceding march towards Ankara) met in Ankara on November 9 and a rally was held with the involvement of about 30,000 workers.

The framework of union organisation in Turkey is so narrow that the initiative of workers is hampered at the outset by various prohibitions. For example, because of the restrictions in the union and labour laws, it is forbidden to set up workplace type unions. A union which does not recruit at least 10% of the workers

nationally in a particular industry cannot have the right to represent the workers, etc. The civil servants' unions which have hundreds of thousands of members have neither the right to strike nor the right to conduct collective bargaining.

It is necessary to break out of this narrow framework, and in order to do this it is necessary to follow an intelligent, planned and patient way of working. Otherwise there can never be a permanent success. Under such conditions, as is always the case, the petit-bourgeois style of work, involving unplanned, hasty activities aimed at getting "showy" appearances, does not get any significant results.

The world working class is now faced with a serious economic crisis and an open war that the imperialist powers intend to spread. Harsh and decisive days of struggle are knocking at the door for the working class in Pakistan, a country which is in the line of fire of the imperialist war. In such an atmosphere, the publication of the Appeal of the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign is very important and correct in its content.

From the standpoint of the historical interests of the Turkish working class, it is necessary to be able

to establish an organisation following the example of the vanguard sections of the Pakistani working class. We must make similar efforts permanent. We believe that the Appeal of the vanguard Pakistani workers will arouse feelings of class brotherhood wherever it reaches the workers in the union branches.

In the coming period it is of crucial importance that the vanguard of the working class in different countries pay greater attention to work in the unions, organising various events, seminars, etc, that will enlighten workers the imperialist war, the economic crisis of imperialism and the positions to be taken. The militant workers of Turkey wholeheartedly support the Appeal of their Pakistani brothers as a concrete indication of the fact that the working class is not alone in this world and that we workers must believe in the future. We send our warmest feelings of solidarity.

Long live the struggle of the workers of the world against world capitalist order!

Long live proletarian internationalism! ●

£4,000 Xmas Appeal - Give Generously!

As another year draws to an end, we are all confronted once again by the festive season during which big business will attempt to inflict maximum collateral damage on our cash and credit cards. They just want to maximise their profits. However it is also supposed to be the time of giving, a time when people try and show that commercialism isn't everything. So it is in that spirit that we make our Xmas fighting fund appeal for this year.

We are calling on all sellers and readers of *Socialist Appeal* to make a special donation towards our funds this Christmas. We are totally reliant on the support we get from ordinary working class people to keep going and improve and replace our resources. The journals of big business can rely on the backing of their friends in the City to keep going. They have the support of their class, we need the support of ours.

We want to raise £4000 over the Xmas period. We have already got £1264.18 as at the end of November so we have some way to go over the next two months. But we can do it if everybody chips in. Why do we need this cash?

Well we have a number of major purchases and jobs which need paying for. For example, there is important unavoidable structural and electrical work needed to be done on our premises which needs paying for. We also want to get a new and suitably

powerful computer to compliment the one we currently use for the layout of the journal. This will enable us to produce the journal far quicker and to a much better standard. So every bit helps.

Every seller and reader should consider how much they can give and send it off straight away. Supporters of *Socialist Appeal* are already organising various fund raising efforts to help raise money on top of this and meet the £4,000 target. Socials, raffles, sales of Xmas cards and so on... all helps and should be given the fullest support. Donations should be made payable to *Socialist Appeal* and sent to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ.

Special thanks to all those who have contributed so far including £20 Leicester sellers, £25 Espe, £190 Jim Brookshaw (including £50 in memory of Peter Krumbein), £108 Keith Morrell, £30 Andy Elliot, £30 Steve Brown, £50 Terry McPartlan, £50 Graham Wilson and many others. In particular, we would like to thank Ray McHale for £500. Thanks and keep it up! Lets get that £4000 and make the start of 2002 a good one.

Finally on behalf of the editorial board of *Socialist Appeal* I would like to wish all readers a Merry and Socialist Xmas and a Happy New Year.

Steve Jones

The Spanish Civil war

Dreams and Nightmares

REVIEW:
 Until April 28, Imperial
 War Museum, Lambeth
 Road,
 London SE1
 Daily 10am to 6pm
 Tube: Lambeth Road
 Free from December 1

The Spanish Civil War, which broke out in July 1936, was a struggle between the forces of revolution and counterrevolution. After the fascist victories in Italy and Germany, many saw this war as the last stand against fascism. From more than 50 countries, some 45,000 volunteers left home to fight fascism on Spanish soil. One of the most powerful images of the conflict remains Picasso's *Guernica*. Painted following the massive aerial bombardment of the Basque town by German and Italian Nationalist allies in April 1937, it is an angry memorial to the thousands of civilian war dead.

Though Picasso's masterpiece is not part of this exhibition, Picasso is one of the many artists who feature in this major survey marking the 65th anniversary of the arrival in Spain of these foreign volunteers. The exhibition contains an array of documents, letters, diary extracts, posters and photos that cover the conflict. Among them are George Orwell, Ernest Hemingway and Stephen Spender, all of whom fought against Franco.

There are all kinds of artefacts featured in the exhibition, from a coin salvaged from the battered ruins of *Guernica* to a bread ration card from the siege of *Alcazar*. They serve to bring to life the basic emotions that permeated the Civil War. The hopes, dreams, sacrifice and struggle are all captured.

The Spanish Civil War was interwoven with the Spanish socialist revolution. The upris-

ing against the fascists placed power in the hands of the working class of Catalonia. Such were the heroic actions of the workers that Trotsky was to comment that their struggle could have accomplished ten revolutions.

Unfortunately, without a revolutionary party, the Spanish revolution was ultimately betrayed by the Stalinists and the Anarchist leaders, who entered the bourgeois government of Catalonia and set about restoring the capitalist



state machine.

Stalin wanted to prove his moderate credentials to the western democracies and deliberately strangled the Spanish revolution through the CP policy of "win the war first", and then we will see about revolution. The arms they supplied were paid for with gold and were deliberately kept from the revolutionary fronts held by the POUM and Anarchists.

The art that is shown is far make for the revolution.

It expresses the enormous hope for the future and the terrible fate that faces mankind if fascist barbarism is victorious. The propaganda posters of the trade unions, the UGT and CNT, depicted strong-armed workers marching forward to defeat fascism. "More men! More arms! More ammunition!" they cry. They carry dreams of a New World free from capitalist exploitation. It is a fight they



of General Franco surrounded by a group of fascist officers. On his extreme right is a group of cassock-clad clerics, their arms held high in praise of fascism. Their actions sought to spiritually justify Franco's 'just war'. There are clear parallels with the Archbishop of Canterbury's endorsement of the bombing of Afghanistan as a 'just' war.

The victory of fascism opened up a new chapter of blood and iron and prepared the way for the second world war. Although the Allies said the war was a war against fascism, the fascist dictatorship in Spain was left intact. Only those who sought to challenge the interests of the imperialist powers of Britain and the USA were to be defeated. Franco was left in peace to continue his bloody rule for the next thirty years.

This exhibition is certainly worth seeing. If nothing more it serves to provoke an interest in these events.

Nothing could explain things more clearly than a reading of Felix Morrow's book 'Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain', as well as Trotsky's *Writings on Spain*. There are lessons to be learnt and a new generation that need to understand the heroic and tragic events of the past. ●

are prepared to die for.

The graphic images each tell a story. The black and white images have a striking visual impact. Perhaps none more so than Robert Capa's *Falling Soldier*. As the dying militiaman is releasing the grip on his rifle, life drains from his body, thrown back onto the soil of Spain. A single shot caught in an instant.

The image of a woman in blinding pain is also captured in the initial artwork that you see on entering the exhibition, *Montserrat 11*, a 12-inch tall bronze cast by Julio Gonzalez. A woman, her head wrapped in a simple headscarf, her face contorted in pain, screams in terrible agony. No noise emanates from this sculpture, yet her pain can be heard. She screams not for herself but for the thousands and millions crushed by the heel of reaction.

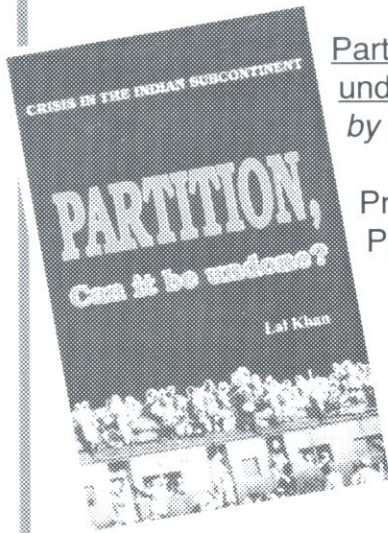
The exhibition also includes the images of the Francoists.

The most sinister picture is

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Socialist Appeal Fights for



☆ **For a Labour government with a bold socialist programme!**

Labour must break with big business and Tory economic policies. Vote Labour and fight to reclaim the party.

☆ **A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £6.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

☆ **Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

☆ **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need.

☆ **The repeal of all Tory anti-union laws.** Full employment rights for all from day one. For the right to strike, the right to union representation and collective bargaining.

Election of all trade union officials with the right of recall. No official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker.

☆ **Action to protect our environment.** Only public ownership of the land, and major industries; petro-chemical enterprises, food companies, energy and transport, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.

☆ **A fully funded and fully comprehensive education system under local democratic control.** Keep big business out of our schools and colleges. Free access for all to further and higher education. Scrap tuition fees. No to student loans. For a living grant for all over 16 in education or training.

☆ **The outlawing of all forms of discrimination.** Equal pay for equal work. Invest in quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act.

☆ **The reversal of the Tories' cuts in the health service.** Abolish private health care. For a National Health Service, free to all at the point of need, based on the nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

☆ **Reclaim the Labour Party!** Defeat Blairism! Fight for Party democracy and socialist policies. For workers' MPs on workers' wages.

☆ **The abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.** Full economic powers for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, enabling them to introduce socialist measures in the interests of working people. ☆ No to sectarianism. For a Socialist United Ireland linked by a voluntary federation to a Socialist Britain.

☆ **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives.

Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.

☆ **Socialist internationalism.** No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.

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Socialist Appeal

**Marxist
voice of the
labour movement**

Jobcentre Plus

STRIKING FOR OUR SAFETY

In the last 12 months there have been 169 physical attacks on staff in Jobcentres and Benefit Offices. In Welwyn the office was attacked by a man with a baseball bat, Staveley Jobcentre was firebombed and on the 5th November a client who had been refused a payment stabbed a security guard in an unscreened Jobcentre. Sooner or later someone will be killed. The staff in these offices work in extremely difficult and stressful conditions.

Our Management do not seem to take these and other incidents seriously and are going ahead with the implementation of Jobcentre Plus. This is the new Government Agency, which sees the merger of the Employment Service and Benefits Agency into a single organisation, offering benefits and job search advice, from predominantly unscreened offices, even though the HSE have recommended that screens should be provided. For many years the union has complained that the run down offices themselves encourage violent behaviour and would welcome a re-design. This must be done taking into account the health and safety needs of staff and be fully risk assessed. It should not be done because of a ministerial view of a new 'retail like' environment, which bears no relation to the nature of business that Jobcentre Plus will be doing.

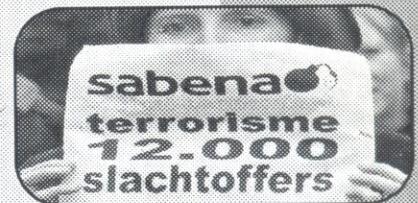
At present 80% of staff in 57 Pathfinder sites are on indefinite strike action over the issue of a safe working environment. The PCS in the Employment Service and Benefits Agency have begun to ballot members in the new Department for Work and Pensions for an initial five-day strike action over their safety at work. The right wing 'Moderate group' within the PCS have already attempted to undermine the Pathfinder ballot, narrowly losing a vote on the NEC to recommend a worthless management offer and with one of their members in the East Midlands crossing the picket line at his office and

so was forced to resign from the Employment Service Group Executive Committee. Their actions should not be allowed to undermine what will be the biggest Civil Service strike action against a Labour Government since 1979.

The five-day action must be regarded as only the first step towards further strike action. It has coincided with a vote for industrial action of other Civil Servants in the Inland Revenue and strike action in the Home Office over pay, signalling an increasing mood of militancy in the Civil Service. All PCS members in the Employment Service and Benefits Agency must support the call for action if they are to preserve health and safety in their jobs.

Rachel Heemskerck
ES Essex Branch Secretary
(Personal Capacity)

inside
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