Labour and unions must mobilise:

There’s still time to save the NHS!

See page 5
What is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty?

By Rhodri Evans

"By [April] 2012, only 12% of the planned cuts to welfare spending and only 12% of the planned cuts to spending on pub lic services (comprising 34% of the cuts to invest ment spending and just 6% of the cuts to non-in vestment spending) are forecast to have been im plemented..." So estimates the Institute for Fiscal Studies, a right-wing thinktank whose former director Robert Chote now heads the Government’s Office for Budgetary Responsibility. The scale of the 88% to come startles even the hard-hearted authors. "Over the next few years, the UK currently faces the fifth-largest planned reduc tion in public spending as a share of national income [among relatively well-off countries]." Only Greece, Estonia and Ireland are planning larger cuts... "If the current plans are delivered, spending on public services will (in real terms) be cut for seven years in a row. The UK has never previously cut this measure of spending for more than two years in a row... Over the seven years from April 2010 to March 2017, there would be a cumul ative real-term cut of 14.1%, which is considerably greater than the previ ously largest cut (8.7%) from April 1975 in March 1982..." They can find no figures for any well-off country previously attempting such big, and prolonged cuts. "None of these countries has, for the periods for which we have data, cut this measure of public service spend ing for five consecutive years..."

In previous reports, the Blair government, free from compassion to dress things up, has shown that the Government’s "tax and benefit changes are regres sive rather than progressive across most of the income distribution". It has estimated that the median income in the UK will drop by 7% between 2009 and 2010 with child poverty on the rise. Continued cuts from 2010-2017 will result in even worse regression, which will affect workers’ salaries and bonuses con tinue to soar.

The report raises no questions about social jus tice, only about whether the cuts are workable.

The authors are far from sympathy with the anti poor cuts movement. They go out of their way to praise Ed Balls, the Labour leader’s "too far, too fast" criticism of the public services sector. "Without rapid and deep cuts, they argue, "the interest rate that for eu ries invests in the UK government for financ ing its borrowing would have risen and most likely risen so sharply that a fiscal tightening would in fact have been forced on the UK government".

Whether that is true is another question. Yet more questionable is whether governments should really be shedding their social provision for fear of each others’ "investors", or whether on the contrary the world should be uniting to tackle those "investors". Even the IFs b nasty, see ing a case now for "a short-term fiscal stimulus package to boost the economy"...[i.e. more public spending], albeit public spending which would more freely into directly up the buying power of the working classes - "A cut to the main rate of VAT, a reduction in em ployer National Insurance contributions and a boost to investment spending plans all seem sensible choices".

London Metropolitan Uni- 

versity has historically had one of the most diverse student popula- 

tions in the UK, in terms of class and ethnic back- 

ground. It has also been a target for some of the most savage cuts in 

higher education, despite a management re-shuffle in 2009/2010, the cuts are 

continuing.

Clare Locke, president of London Met Students 

Union, spoke to Solidarity.

"We’ve had 226 redundan- 
dcies announced, mainly of academic workers. That’s particularly 

shocking given that the university has over-recruited this term and most services are 

over-subscribed, so it’s im- 

possible for management to financially justify these cuts.

"Foundation year stu- 
dents promised direct entry to courses beginning in February are now de- 

nied access.

"The university also wants to outsource a lot of services to a separate company through something called the Shared Services Initiative. This would be 

owned by London Met but not struc- 
turally part of the university, which means that other companies could buy in.

"They’re looking for a 50% reduction in staffing costs of five years for the delivery of existing services which would be out- 
sourced. That has terrible 

implications; staff would be sacked, or transferred to inferior contracts once TUPE protection expired. These changes have also been abolished, and re-

placed with few waivers.

The Students Union is op- 

posed to this change, as it only benefits students pay- 

ing their fees upfront. And, as it’s means-tested to only apply to the very poorest (and therefore the people least likely to be able to pay their fees upfront anyway), the number of students it actually helps is very small.

"Campus trade unions are in consultation about the cut, and the SU wants to be involved in that con- 

sultation too. There are a whole variety of concerns, including various potential conflicts of interest of members of university management within the outsourcing proposals. We feel like we’re being at-

tacked on all fronts.

"A January meeting of Union members at Lon- 

don Met who have been pro- 

testing the changes says that dishar- 

d-Blairites are working in 

cobwebs with Ed Balls and Yvette Cooper.

• first, to undercut Ed Miliband by pushing him into a demo for Blairite standing. Only cuts will appeal to the IFS, see- 

ing Ed Miliband as a "follower", rather than a "true Labour leader".

• second, to replace Ed Miliband by Yvette Cooper as leader.

• third, after the next general election, which the diehard-Blairites assume Labour will lose, to replace 

David Miliband with Cooper.

What is the new executive, the new University, which uni- 

versity student popula- 

tion, and the national charity, the Foundation year stu-

dents, looking for jobs.

"The Telegraph’s summary catches the glo-

omiser’s eye: "As far as we can tell the UK government has only about a 1% chance of avoiding recession. The IFS has been quite clear in its projections, and it seems to have done a pretty good job..."

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Eyewitness in Cairo

By Daniel Finn

Wednesday 30 November 2011

Egyptian Protesters

The atmosphere in Tahrir Square has been more peaceful than at any other time since the protests began in January. There is a feeling that the people are united and that they will win or die. The military has been present, but it is not an Islamist revolt and they aren’t Muslims; but there are some Islamic slogans visible. One or two were disp- pointed that they were being ignored by the inter- national media. All they care about is Syria now, one guy said, and it is understandable. I was a little surprised at the lack of solidarity with Syria of the demonstrators. Quite a lot of equations are being drawn between Egypt’s military regime and Israel, however. They believe the violent teargas that is being used against them is the same as that used by Israel on Palestinian- ans. I fear both the lack of solidarity with Syria and the exclusive equation of oppressive forces in Israel are results of yet unchallenged Arab na- tionism.

• Egyptian activists have called for civil disobedience to take place on 11 February. This marks the one-year an- niversary of when President Hosni Mubarak stepped down as president. The military has not yet quit, and Egyptians have returned to the streets to ousted them from power. A strike has also been called for the same day.

• At least seven people have been killed in Cairo and Suez in street battles after the killing of 73 people at a foot- ball match in Port Said.

A Long Way to Go on Gay Rights

By Dan Katz

According to the Interna- tional Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) seven major- ity Muslim countries still maintain the death penalty for homo- sexual activity. They are Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Yemen.

Mohammad Jarahi, have been rearrested and probably unemployed, and are very brave young men, women. There seemed to be more women

In northern Nigeria, Sharia law, homosexuality is also punishable by death. In Iran gay men are nor- mally arrested under other trumped up charges. But in September 2011 three men were executed for homo- sexual activity.

And when execution is not used other brutality can

petition the council for a demonstra- tion in Glasgow city centre on 25 February. UAF has put in its application for a demonstration the same day, commencing an hour earlier from a different venue in the city cen- tre.

Beyond doubt, the SDL’s application will be refused by Glasgow City Council. The SDL — which claims that the “sneaky, evil, fake- ly” babybreak from the EFL, will be turning up to support it and organ- ize a static protest (for which a council permit is required). At last Saturday’s protest rally, UAF speakers pre- sented that they would be mobilising to stop the SDL. But in most regards these performances, they cannot

SDL threat for 25 February

Around 80 people turned up to a city-centre protest staged by Unite Against Fascist Ideology (UAF) in Glasgow on 4 February. The protest was in re- sponse to an incident the previous week when fascists surrounded the Com- munist Party of Britain’s city-centre stall, spoilt on it, and gave Nazi salutes. One of the fascists also filmed the event.

This incident followed an attack on the Glasgow Pakistan Solidarity Campaign city-centre stall, when a group of 30 or so masked thugs from the Scottish De- fence League attacked it and tipp- ed it over.

SDL has now lodged an application with the city council for a demonstra- tion in Glasgow city centre on 25 February. UAF has put in its own application for a demonstration the same day, commencing an hour earlier from a different venue in the city cen- tre.

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Trade-unionsists arrested in Iran

From the International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran

Two well-known labour activists in Tabriz, Shahrokh Zamani and Mohammad Jariahi, have been rearrested and transferred to Tabriz prison.

Shahrokh Zamani is fac- ing 10 year imprisonment and Mohammad Jariahi is facing five years.

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Working 70 hours, paid 45

My life at work
By Kieran West

I work for a private company that provides care in the home for the elderly. The organisation is one of many in my town which provides the care that once would have been privatised there is now a highly diminished council care structure. There is a stark difference between conditions for council workers and those of private contractors. We work longer hours and are treated worse. We are not paid enough to enjoy a balanced lifestyle outside of work. We are often not given breaks and are underpaid. The lack of trade union organisation has allowed Whenthey werechallenged on this they demurred, but we can only assume it was a threat to turn up at our home to the them. But the lack of trade union organisation has allowed them to get away with it. As a result I have been agitating for colleagues to join a union. Several have, however, the staffing turnover was so high that many have left. It is incredibly hard organising in the private care sector, I rarely see other carers and our work is atomised.

We need to be organised in these workplaces but we also need to have a wider campaign to bring care back into the public sector so that it can be better organised.

No quislings on the left

The editorial in Solidarity 231 seems to say:
1) We are against independence for Scotland because we are against independence for England.
2) However we are also in favour of breaking up the existing larger unit of the UK into three separate units (Scotland, Wales and England: a “democratic federal republic”).
3) Having broken the larger unit of the UK into the smaller units of Scotland, England and Wales, we then move the latter units back to a closer unity as fast as is compatible with the wishes of the populations.

But the general principle enunciated in (1) is inconsistent with what is advocated in (2). And what is the point of (2) if the end goal is (3)? Leaving aside the issue of the monarchy, (basically) already exists.

Please clarify.

Chris Stanley, Glasgow

Scotland: please explain!

No instant uniformity

We want a unified, stateless, socialist world, with social rights and conditions levelled up globally (as far as possible: as Freddie Engels once wrote, people who live in the mountains will always have different conditions from plains-dwellers).

But socialists do not advocate the immediate amalgamation of all nations into a single, uniform political unit. In current conditions, and probably for a large period even after victory of workers’ government, national autonomy that amalgamation would mean the domination of the better-equipped, larger nations over others. For now and for some time to come, we support independence for oppression nations or nations at risk of oppression.

On the same principle, even when the disparity of resources and wealth between nations was small enough that we can back merger into a single state as an immediate move, we should proceed regionally as a first step. We advocate regional autonomy for different regions of the UK: Scotland, Wales and England. The old system where Scotland had separate rules, but then merged into a single UK, would be blown national oppression, we favour a federal union of those nations, not their immediate full amalgamation (“united states of Europe”).

The same applies for England and Scotland. For centuries Scotland has had a distinct legal system from England: it would not be sensible to attempt to impose an immediate demand for uniformity between Scotland and England would be quixotic. Now, and in the near future, because England is so much more populous than Scotland, it would mean putting Scotland under English rules, and doing that would be quixotic to try to abolish by im- mediate decree.

The old system where Scotland had separate rules, but then merged into a single UK, would be blown national oppression, we favour a federal union of those nations, not their immediate full amalgamation (“united states of Europe”).

We want to explore the differentiations and barriers between Scotland and England. But we do want a rational, democratic way of dealing with the differentiations which exist, and which it would be quixotic to try to abolish by immediate decree.

Within a democratic federal republic, we advocate “levelling-up.” We want fuller amalgamation as soon as possible: as Freddie Engels once wrote, people who live in the mountains will always have different conditions from plains-dwellers.

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There's still time to save NHS

On 1 February, the first National Health Service hospital to be handed to private management, Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire, went over to its new bosses.

The Government’s Health and Social Care Bill will push the NHS into radically more privatisation and marketisation. Health minister Lord Howe told a conference of private healthcare operators in London, in September 2011, that they would have “huge opportunities” once the Bill was through.

The next several weeks are crucial. The Government has taken the Bill to its last stages in the House of Lords, after which it will have to return to the House of Commons to harmonise amendments. But as the Bill reaches those last parliamentary stages, opposition is rising.

The Government hastily drafted 137 amendments at the start of February to try to stave off the opposition. But the next day Royal College of General Practitioners joined the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nurses, the Royal College of Midwives, and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, in calling for the Bill to be withdrawn.

The British Medical Journal, Nursing Times, and the Health Service Journal have published a joint editorial denouncing the Bill as an “unholy mess”.

On 5 February Labour Party leader Ed Miliband called for a campaign against the Bill, saying that we have “three months to stop the NHS”. The TUC has called a rally to oppose the Bill at Central Hall, Westminster, for 7 March. We should organise to demand that Labour and the unions mobilise a full-scale storm of protest.

ATTACK

The NHS has been under constant attack since the end of the 1970s, with the rise of neo-liberalism and its re-assertion of those “supply and demand” laws which form the political economy of the middle class. Multi-national private profiteers have grabbed at “the health-care market”.

Grievous blows have been struck. Also at the start of February, even this government felt obliged to put together a £1.5 billion “emergency fund” to bail out seven NHS trusts which would otherwise go bust because of extortionate payments to private contractors who financed rebuilding under the New Labour government’s “Private Finance Initiative” (PFI) scheme.

But the NHS is still there, damaged but still a public service. Maybe some activists have been stunned by the years into thinking that attacks on the NHS always go through, and yet, somehow, whatever happens, the NHS will always be there.

Both resignation and complacency are out of place. The Government can be forced into abandoning the Bill. But if it isn’t, then we must lurch a vast distance towards the future sketched by Government adviser Mark Britnell: “In the future, the NHS will be a state insurance provider, not a state deliverer... The NHS will be shown no mercy and the best time to take advantage of this will be in the next couple of years.”

The labour movement should mobilise. As well as withdrawal of the Bill, we should demand:

• Reversing the partial privatisation already carried out in the NHS, and its reintegration into a single comprehensive public service.

SOLIDARITY 5

Help the AWL to raise £20,000

The AWL is growing. We now publish Solidarity weekly, setting up new branches and expanding all areas of our activity. If we are going to continue this, we also need to expand our sources of funds. That’s why we’ve launched an appeal to raise £20,000 by the end of August. A donation from you, or a regular standing order, will help.

We need money to:

1. Continue publishing Solidarity as a weekly;
2. Establish a fund for publishing high quality books and pamphlets;
3. Improve our website;
4. Organise events such as our New Unionism day school and our Ideas for Freedom summer school;
5. Organise study courses;
6. Build on our work as one of the main forces fighting for rank-and-file democracy and control in the labour movement;
7. Build on our work in developing a broad, democratic student movement against fees and cuts;
8. Pay the rent on and finance the staffing of our office to make all of the above and more possible.

We have no big money backers. We rely on contributions from workers and students like you! So please consider:

• Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to “AWL”) or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.
• Organising a fundraising event.
• Making copies of Solidarity to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.
• Getting in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

For more information on any of the above, contact us: tel: 07796 691874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, SE1 3DG.

Total raised so far: £7,336.

We raised £221 this week from a booksale by Sheffield AWL and two new standing orders (thanks to Sarah, Laura and E Powell). We are on track to make our total but only if we make sustained effort to ask for donations and put into action other fundraising plans.

Standing order authority

To: ..................................................... (your bank)

Account name: ..................................................... (your name)

Account no. ........................................................

Sort code: .....................................................

Please make payments to the debit of my account:

Payee: Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ ........ to be paid on the ........ day of ........ (month) 20 ........ (year) and thereafter-monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

UKClinc demonstration against the Health Bill
Greek ultra-cuts spark new class-struggle trade unionism

By Cathy Nugent

In 1888 a great upsurge of unskilled workers in Britain began when workers at Bryant and May match factory in Bow went on strike after one of them—a known “troublemaker”—was sacked by the sweatshop bosses.

Like the thousands of workers who participated in the strikes and union organising which followed the Bryant and May “sparking”, the largely female matchworkers wanted to end all the injustices they, their mothers, fathers and all the people of their community had suffered at work.

What does New Unionism tell us about being a “troublemaker” at work today? The basic lessons are superficially at least quite simple — ignore the “reasoning” and “compromising” of the trade union establishment; fight the class struggle.

As Union leader Dave Prentis today preaches “prudence”, “respectability” and steady growth, so too did the main leaders of the “craft unions” of the nineteenth century. The new unionists fought those leaders and sought to impose a class struggle policy. Campaigns like that for the eight-hour day was a way to unite and mobilise across broad layers and something to win against the “compromisers.”

The new unionists saw unions as organisations which could “lift up” the worker, expand horizons beyond the grind of daily life. They believed, as the saying goes, that all workers should “rise as one”. They would have been appalled by the separate negotiations and settlements made by the unions in the current public sector pension dispute.

Simple enough principles but are they relevant today? That will be a key subject of a discussion at the AWL’s dayschool on New Unionism on Saturday 18 February. AWL and guest speakers will address both historical and contemporary issues of class struggle trade unionism.

But it is not our idea that all working-class experiences in history can be replicated. Rather that the lessons can enrich our understanding of the tasks we face today:

The period of “new unionism” — which arguably lasted right through to a resurgence in 1919 — is full of many “nutty gritty” relevant “lessons”:

• The value of “industrial unionism”;
• How to build solidarity and defeat strikebreaking;
• How trade unions can be centres for educating workers in class struggle;
• How trade unions should connect with communities facing hardship;
• Building a defence against aggressive tactics by the bosses — casual work, petty rules, bullying, cuts in pay;
• International solidarity;
• Why workers need a political voice;
• Recruiting to the union by making forceful and political arguments;
• Aiming for 100% membership;
• Responding aggressively to capitalist reorganisation;
• Transforming existing unions, making them fight!

This is a school that no really serious socialist or militant trade unionist can afford to miss!
We need a united workers’ front in both the private and public sector alongside the unemployed, the refugees, and the civil disobedience neighbourhood movements.

We should put forward the demand for another society, which has as its needs as its priority, a socialist, radically-democratic society. The content and the form of struggles should match the level and aggressiveness of their attacks. Despite its revolutionary lingvo and the militancy of its members, KKE cannot be trusted to lead the struggle. Its “the party knows it all” attitude can only lead the most militant of workers to disappointment and defeat.

Its refusal to back the rank and file left wing media workers’ proposal for an indefinite strike action led to the defeat of the ballot for strike action by media workers. In general if KKE does not control a strike or occupation, then this does not support it or even openly acts as a strike breaker.

KKE characterised last summer’s movement of “the indignant” in the city squares as a movement of the ruling class. During the September occupations in universities, KKE voted in general meetings against the continuation of the struggle. In the transport union, KKE voted against the escalation of the struggle and against indefinite strike action, characterising them as ultra-left.

On the other hand in Greek Steel, where PAME dominates, KKE supports the indefinite strike action and demands the rest of the working class solidarise with the Greek Steel workers. Meanwhile KKE’s printing company, “Tipo Ekdoktiki”, has declared itself bankrupt, which will lead to redundancies, and has used legal loopholes to avoid its legal obligations to their employees as regards payment of their wages etc. So KKE’s empty revolutionary lingvo leads to the ownership of a capitalist company that places profit at its first priority!

A general strike called and organised from below cannot rely on the union bureaucracy, which tries to paralyse the trade union struggles and lead the workers to defeat through the negotiating table. Only a couple of weeks ago GSEE was participating in “talks” with the employers’ federation, discussing union struggles and leading the workers to defeat through the negotiating table.

The have agreed to cut the private sector minimum wage by 20%, from €790 to €640 per month. After taxation, the net monthly minimum wage will be reduced to €490. Younger workers, under 25, who receive 80% of the minimum wage, will have their monthly wage will be reduced to €480, or below €400 net. All private sector workers who have their wages are determined by national collective bargaining agreements will have their wages reduced by 20%.

They have also agreed to abolish the legal enforceability of the collective bargaining agreements which cover 85% of the private sector workers. The Troika will take from Greek workers almost half their annual wages.

The leaders of the three parties in the coalition (Pasok, Laos, and New Democracy), have all been making a show of fighting against the demands of the “big foreign powers” of the Troika, and especially ND leader Antonis Samaras, who hopes to become the new prime minister after elections.

When Samaras was given the chance to overthrow the PASOK government last October and call for elections, he decided instead to join the Papademos government in order to “rescue” the country. Even when starting his opposition to the abolition of the 13th and 14th months’ wages, Samaras emphasised that he would support their abolition above a certain income threshold. Similarly, Samaras supported a cap of €300 on auxiliary pensions and a cap of €1200 on pensions.

Samaras’ proposal to hire one public sector worker for every 19 that get dismissed or pushed into retirement, and to reduce the hiring of temporary public sector workers by 20%, will destroy the public sector.

EU leaders blackmail Greece

By Theodora Polenta

The push for new cuts in Greece is backed up by ever-increasing demands from the leadership of a disorderly Greek bankruptcy as early as March and the expulsion of Greece from the eurozone.

Merkel and Sarkozy are exercising severe pressure on the government to reduce Greek labour costs further towards the levels of Portugal and Bulgaria.

The Greek media were jubilant that Papademos has forced the Troika to withdraw its demand for the abolition of the 13th and 14th months’ wages traditionally paid to Greek workers. But what Papademos has agreed with the Troika will take from Greek workers almost half their annual wages.

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If this is what the tough talk of ND amounts to when it is in opposition, one can only imagine the anti-working-class politics that ND would implement if Samaras became the prime minister. In Portugal and Spain, the conservative parties, equivalents of ND, waited for the social democratic parties to be voted down, and when in government they escalated their attacks against the working class.

The IMF-imposed policies and trying to direct the Hungarian working class’s anger against the Roma and other minorities.

Although one more meeting of Papademos and the leaders of the three parties is planned for Tuesday 7th, they have already agreed to the main measures. All the party leaders have also agreed to recapitalise Greece’s banks, making a state contribution of €40 billion without changing the banks’ decision making processes (the shares owed by the state will have limited voting rights).

In other words, all the party leaders have agreed for the state to hand over €40 billion to the bankers.
Left-of-Labour party leads Netherlands polls

By Colin Foster

January polls in the Netherlands show a left-of-Labour party, the Socialist Party, ahead of all other parties. If an election were to be held now, the SP would be the biggest party in the 150-seat proportional-representation parliament, with 32 seats, way ahead of Labour with 17. Among the 150-seat parliamentary system the SP got 32% of preferences in a poll taken on 22 January, ahead of Labour with 14%.

The governing right-wing parties, VVD and CDA, and the PVV which supports their coalition, would still have 62 seats, down from their current 82, and the remaining seats would be shared.

Peter Drucker, a US socialist long active in the Netherlands, told Solidarity: “I would caution against reading too much into the SP’s very high standing in the polls right now. It could win a great electoral success if elections came at a lucky moment, but electorates have been extremely volatile across Europe for years now.”

For all that, the SP’s result is a startling contrast with the results of left-of-Labour parties in Europe for many years now. A look at the SP’s history makes it even more startling. It is not a splinter from Labour or from a big old official “Communist Party”, like Die Linke in Germany or Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, but a linear descendant of a Maoist group of the 1970s which has evolved slowly into a relatively large left-socialdemocratic party (50,000 members, equivalent of about 180,000 in Britain). It formally declared itself no longer “Maoist-Leninist” in 1991.

CORE

Peter Drucker told Solidarity: “The SP has a solid core electorate of about 8% due to its years of party-building in working-class neighbourhoods. This is the key thing left from its Maoist past, which is not reflected in its politics today or even in all of its core leadership group.”

The record, therefore, is a warning against the illusion common on the British left, that appearing at each election with a newly cooked-up “coalition” or “front”, and a new permutation of populist or leftist slogans, is a way to win mass support which bypasses the need for solid “party-building” activity.

Drucker continues: “The lower scores of genuine anti-capitalist parties (not just the Scottish Socialist Party and Neu...”

First hundred days in Denmark

In January 2012 Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the Socialist- Democrat leader of the leftish coalition government which took office in Denmark after the general election of 15 September 2011, reported on her first 100 days in office and Denmark took the presidency of the European Union.

The Danish government is unusual in Europe because it took office with promises to increase (some) social spending, to ease off immigration restrictions, and to reduce deportations. On that basis, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, a coalition including most of Denmark’s revolutionary left groups, declared “unconditional support to the new government” (Det vore [This is]()). The government depends for its majority on RGA votes in Parliament. The RGA has managed to change some government policies. Unemployed people whose benefits were due to run out after a time limit have received a temporary re-prieve and a new requirement for local authorities to pri- vate a minimum proportion of their services has been suspended.

But overall, Thorning-Schmidt said in her summary of her first 100 days: “Many will be asked to pull extra load. And we will experience job cuts and sackings. Denmark’s public sector lost 30,000 jobs between autumn 2009 and the start of 2012 — equivalent to 360,000 job cuts in Britain — and the Capenhagen Fred- erikssund region alone lost 5,100. The loss will rise by another 4,000 (equivalent of 40,000) over 2012.”

Meanwhile, the government continues to spend money to keep Danish troops in Afghanistan.

Dutch party political posters. The SP slogan, more nationalist than socialist: “Netherlands wants less Brussels”

veau Anti-captalistes [en France] but the Portuguese Left Bloc and Danish Red-Greens) reflect, I think, objective difficulties in this period for full-fledged anti-capitalist par- ties, which the SP is not.

“Of course the SP’s base is a very different kind of launchpad (from the one which, for example, Die Linke has from its base in the old ruling party in East Germany and a large splinter from the Social-Democratic party in West Ger- many), but it is a serious launchpad. The SP has for years had tens of thousands of members (mostly inactive, but at least a few thousand active). Although it subordinates extra-parliamentary activism to its parliamentary strategy and tactics, it has consistently taken extra-parliamentary work seriously.

Another factor is the exceptionally class collaborationist course of the Dutch trade unions since the Wassenaar agree- ment for wage restraint in 1982, the Labour Party’s coalition government with the VVD (the most right-wing of the major bourgeois parties) from 1994 to 2002 (which made Labour a pioneer of neo-liberal government policy in the Netherlands. Labour had also been in coalition government with a more moderate bourgeois party in 1989-94), and the virtually total absence of a class-struggle opposition inside the unions until only a couple of years ago (or a significant Labour Party left wing in recent decades).

Despite the SP’s failure to do serious trade-union work, this situation made it the reference point for a substantial and growing layer of union activists fed up with social democracy.

One more important factor is the rapid secularisation of the Catholic southern Netherlands, which was a virtual one- party state until the 1960s, the well-known affluence of Catholics with lapsed Catholicism (SP leader Jan Marijnissen had a Jesuit education) positioned the SP for its initial breakthrough in southern cities like Oss and Nijmegen.

Finally the role of the electoral system should not be un- derestimated; a party needs only two-thirds of one percent of the national vote to get into parliament here, so that the SP could get into parliament with two seats in 1998 with a vote that would have shut it out in virtually every other Eu- ropean country (except Denmark).

The Dutch Labour Party, with the complexity of the main trade-union leaders, seems to have backed away at its tradi- tional connection to a working-class base almost to the point of cutting it completely, radically more so even than other labour parties which have pioneered neo-liberal policies in government in their countries (New Zealand, Australia). The SP’s rise has been gradual, but not inexorable. In the 2006 elections it won 25 seats in parliament, almost as many as it could win now, but in 2010 it lost heavily, going down to 15 seats.

It cannot be assumed that the SP has found a magic recipe which could ensure victory for left-wing politics in other countries too. The perverse of the SP’s electoral rise has been political accommodation, and it may be that with further electoral successes will come an evolution like that of the German Greens, once dominated by “Third-Worldist” rad- icals, now a fairly leftist party of government.

Back in 2007, SP left-winger Leo de Kleijn argued: “The problem is that in the SP the weight of the parliamentary group and the groups in city councils have become much greater in comparison with the weight of militants outside of such institutions.”

RHEINELAND

SP left-wingers are worried about “a more moderate view on the monarchy, on NATO and on socio-economic questions... supposed to create an image of a ‘reason- able party’...”

These are “explained by arguing that ‘we should only make demands that we can make happen in four years, in other words until the next elections’, and by the leader- ship’s declaration “that the SP has to prepare for govern- ment responsibility.”

SP left-wingers blamed the 2010 setback on a softening of the SP’s social message. The SP had responded to the global crisis by advocating nationalisation of banks that were in danger of going bankrupt, a parliamentary inquiry into the causes of the crisis, and more supervision over the financial sector. “The manifesto ended with a plea for a return to the so-called ‘Rhineland model’ [of social-market capitalism], without asking if such a return was even possible”.

The SP has expelled some Trotskyist groupings which have tried to organise inside it, but other Trotskyists re- main active within it.

• For views by SP left-wingers see bit.ly/spneth1 and bit.ly/spneth2.

“The Treason of the Intellectuals, and other political verse” by Sean MacGann

A collection including items previously published in Solidarity and forerunner publications over the last 25 years.

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Part two of an article by the Bolshevik revolutionary Karl Radek about the 1921 Kronstadt sailors' uprising. First published in Bulletin Communiste, 1 April 1921. Translated by Ed Malin.

Once the Russian counter-revolutionaries received news of the uprising, they forgot about the [political] abyss separating them from Kronstadt.

Savinov, aide to Kerensky, who had had 10,000 peasants shot on the Galician front when they refused to take part in the murderous famine offensive of 1917, Savinov, who, in his Warsaw newspaper Szwecie, printed on Polish government money, boasts (24 February) "I fight against the Bolsheviks, I fight alongside those who have already struggled with Kolchak, Denikin, Wrangel and even Pefioura, strange as that may seem", Savinov, friend of Balakhovitch, the hero of the anti-Jewish pogroms of White Russia, wrote in his paper that the sailors of Kronstadt had absolved their sins through the blood of the peasants.

"When the cruiser Aurora firing on Petrograd [an imaginary event, as the Admiralty of Kronstadt committed on 25 October 1917 with the bombardment of the Winter Palace, the seat of Kerensky's ministry].

The organ of the right wing of the Cadet Party, wrote: "The uprising of Kronstadt is sacred, because it is an uprising against the idea of the November revolution."

"The industrial aristocracy and Financiers of Paris, when they heard the news from Kronstadt, decided not to worry about the extremist demands or the primitive cause of the mutiny ["les revendications exiguës...cause primitive de la mutinerie"] because its essential point was that "the sailors were for the overthrow of the Communist government" [Dernières Nouvelles de Paris, 8 March].

The Russian banks, with the former Tsarist minister of finance, Kokovetz at their head, began to collect munitions for Kronstadt. Goutchkov, the head of the Russian imperialist party, got in contact with the English and American governments to obtain food supplies.

PROVISION

The American and French governments immediately asked their agents in Helsingfors and Estonia to do all they could to provision the rioters of Kronstadt.

The counter-revolutionaries understood with extraordinary clarity and breadth of mind the deeper significance of the events of Kronstadt.

Milyukov's paper Dernières Nouvelles as well as Bourget's Cause Commune did not stop at offering immediate and categorical support for the sailors at Kronstadt, they also elaborated a tactical plan regarding the adoption of the demands of Kronstadt.

This tactic was based on the recognition that every counter-revolutionary attack was doomed to failure as soon as it began to operate openly with the forces of the Entente and the old regime and had representatives of large landowners and capitalism at its head.

The popular masses would not believe in the pure and disinterested intentions of the allies; they know very well that when these allies march against Soviet Russia it is with the intention of making her into a colony.

The reason for the defeat of Denikin, Kolchak, etc., consisted, according to Milyukov, above all in that as representatives of the nobility they disgusted the peasants. The first conclusion that Milyukov draws from this fact is that the counter-revolutionary movement in Russia would only be able to win if it came from within and if it was purged (in appearance at least) of any feudal tendency.

But, based on the events at Kronstadt, Milyukov has made a second theoretical step: he recognises that for neither the peasants, nor the workers, nor the soldiers of the Red Army, is the demand for a Constituent Assembly attractive. The sailors had risen up in the name of real Soviet power, but at the same time they cried: Down with the Communists! This "Down with the Communists!" was the reason Milyukov accepted "real Soviet power".

When the Communist government falls, so will the only force which supports Soviet Russia in the fight against global capitalism, the only force capable, at present above all because it has won peace, of reconstructing normal life, the only force capable, as the most mature party of the revolutions of peasants and workers, of steering a course between all the rocks and guaranteeing the achievements of the revolution.

Soviets without Communists would represent nothing more than masses of hesitating workers, tired and dispersed; and they would be obliged to allow freedom of operations to all those bourgeois forces and organisations which were severely controlled under the government of Communist Soviets.

The counter-revolutionary diaspora would begin to flow back into Russia, it would flood the organisations of the party, Soviets with its own people, and would effectively take power. And so the moment would have arrived when real power was handed over to the juridical forms of the counter-revolution, when it judged that this was necessary.

Milyukov's organ is even engaged in polemic with a doctrinaire SR, defending the Soviets not merely as administrative organs, but as governmental power. "The Soviets are not just consultative or legislative organs, they are the organs of state power in its entirety. And if it is not the case that they could replace the Bolshevik state and form the base of a more normal organisation of provinces without breaking with the population. It goes without saying that they will be unable to fulfill this role reliably until after their re-election" (8 March 1921).

Milyukov, founder and ideological leader of the liberal Cadet Party, who appeared to be a blind and doctrinaire supporter of European parliamentarism, has understood that the destruction of the Communist Party would have been the destruction of the only force which allows Russia to persist as a major world-revolutionary force. Soviet Russia without the dictatorship of the Communists would be prey to the counter-revolution. He thus shows the annihilation of the Communist Party to be a decisive goal of the counter-revolution, while saying "Do not repel the masses of peasants and workers by raising demands for a return to bourgeois state forms. The form doesn't matter — only the content does."

In peasant Russia, after the annihilation of the Communist Party, the workers in the countryside would consolidate their power under the Soviet form as a conservative and bourgeois force, and the rest would follow on its own.

The tactic of the Russian counter-revolution which aims to break the power of Soviet Russia and overthrow the Communist Party, which seeks to lead the petty-bourgeois, semi-proletarian and peasant masses into struggle against the Communist Party, this plan of the Russian counter-revolution which is rushing to triumph in the name of a truly Soviet government and a "third revolution" will not succeed. The Communist Party is sufficiently supple and prudent, it is sufficiently in contact with the masses that it can thwart this tactic. In profiting from respite from war, to diminish the size of the Red Army and reduce the demands upon the peasant, in contenting him at the same time with the produce of industry and foreign trade, the Party will re-forge links with the peasant.

It will excite the initiative of the proletarian masses, to improve their material situation and to bring up to the front, into the Party, the most backward layers.

From the present moment, several weeks after the Congress of the Communist Party, all the consequences of its new policy can be seen, we can already feel a new wind blowing which is animating the popular masses, we can really feel that the Soviet government has ruined the counter-revolutionary plan to return on the back of the petty-bourgeoisie.

USE THE DEMAND

But the fact that the Russian counter-revolution, in its struggle for power, has managed to use the demand for soviets, Soviets under which it was earlier crushed, against the Communist Party, that is a fact of universal historic significance.

It is an expression of the revolutionary instinct of the western proletariat that, in solidarity with Soviet Russia, which is seen to be the centre of the world revolution, it cried, "My country, right or wrong!", without allowing itself to be influenced by any idle gossip about the Communist Party’s "terrorism", or its "opportunism".

It has understood that the question was not to what degree communism could be realised in Russia — because communism cannot be established either promptly or in isolation in an agrarian country — but that the only important thing is that Russia was taken out of the hands of the counter-revolution, and that 100 million peasants and the economic forces of the largest country in Europe can no longer be used to economically or militarily support capitalism as it fights for its life. On the contrary, they are being put to use in supporting the world proletariat fighting for a new social order.

The global proletariat has thus understood that insofar as this is the case, the Communist Party will always be in the right so long as it retains power.

All of its acts must be judged from this point of view, including when, in order to win out against the counter-revolution’s military assaults, the Party implacably rallies all of the resources of the country, including making certain

Continued on page 10
The USSR’s bans on Jews

Mark Olsen reviews Perfect Rigour, by Masha Gessen. (2-99)

In November 2002 the Russian mathematician Grigori Perelman posted his proof of the Poincaré conjecture on the internet. The conjecture had been formulated in 1904 by the French mathematician Henri Poincaré and is no abstract, dusty problem, but deals with the possible shape of our universe.

By the time Perelman’s solution had become widely accepted, he was awarded the Fields Medal (the maths version of the Nobel Prize), had jobs offered from leading universities, and was awarded $1 million (the Clay Institute prize for solving one of the seven “Millennium” maths problems). Perelman refused the Fields Medal and the million dollars, declined the university positions, and retreated into the working class.

He faced a staggering series of anti-Semitic obstacles. Students with maths degrees for solving one of these seven “Millennium” maths problems).

1970 she faced a staggering series of anti-Semitic obstacles. Students with maths degrees were not even disguised with anti-Zionism. Nevertheless it seems that Perelman was oblivious to all this. The boy who never went to school, the working class boy, the students with maths degrees were not even disguised with anti-Zionism. Nevertheless it seems that Perelman was oblivious to all this. The boy who never went to school, the working class boy, the working class are much greater in Russia than in Europe. In the west, the struggle will be more difficult because the bourgeoisie is more organised in Russia than in England or Germany, and consequently their influence on the working class is much greater. For this reason, the petty-bourgeois oscillations of the working class are much greater in Russia than in Europe.

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ROLE OF THE PARTY

That which is specifically Russian in these events is that, firstly, the proletarian layer is much thinner in Russia than in the west; secondly, the petty-bourgeois layers are much more powerful in Russia than in England or Germany, and consequently their influence on the working class is much greater. For this reason, the petty-bourgeois oscillations of the working class are much greater in Russia than in Europe.

For, as with the declaration of the centrists that they are indifferent attitude. And the mass, which will celebrate on May 1, 1917, is not the mass which has not only been active in the revolution, but is the working class, the proletariat which the Communist Party is upholding, then it will be incapable of retaining its position.

"For as long as an improvement in the situation can be hoped for, the Party will be in a stronger position. But, in its struggle for liberation, there can arise situations where the revolutionary minority of the working class must shoulder the full weight of the struggle and where the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be maintained, provisionally at least, as the dictatorship of the Communist Party. And this dictatorship must serve as an example to Communists in all other countries.

We are convinced that in the light of the events at Kronstadt, the Communist Party has arisen more than ever as the vanguard of the working class. It must be understood that the role of the Party during the revolution, will at last learn the true value of these explanations, as well as the role of the Party in the organisation of the proletarian dictatorship, as it is the Central Committee of the Communist Party which has the final authority in this matter.

We are convinced that in the light of the events at Kronstadt, and that the Party has arisen more than ever as the vanguard of the working class. It must be understood that the role of the Party during the revolution, will at last learn the true value of these explanations, as well as the role of the Party in the organisation of the proletarian dictatorship, as it is the Central Committee of the Communist Party which has the final authority in this matter.

The working class can only be won by the workers themselves, by the fighting majority of the working class; but, in its struggle for liberation, there can arise situations where the revolutionary minority of the working class must shoulder the full weight of the struggle and where the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be maintained, provisionally at least, as the dictatorship of the Communist Party. And this dictatorship must serve as an example to Communists in all other countries.

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10 SOLIDARITY

Because the working class is the real soul of the revolution and the keystone of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The struggle which the Communist Party of Russia is currently fighting to strengthen is the struggle of the working masses who are not yet communists, for the awakening of these masses in these masses, it is the task of the Communist Party to conclude a decision to retain power by all possible means. And this decision must serve as an example to Communists in all other countries.

That is the greatest lesson of the Kronstadt events, the international lesson.
PCS: another pension strike in late March?

By a civil servant

It looks as if the civil service union PCS may move for a further strike on public-sector pensions around 28 March. Senior PCS workers have only big union to reject the Government’s December “final offer” on pensions clearly and immediately, and a continuing campaign for public-sector pensioners hangs heavily on PCS initiative. The lecturers’ union UCU set a strike for 1 March, but PCS has not come in on that date. The UCU Executive on 10 February is likely to debate whether UCU goes for a later date which PCS might back, or UCU general secretary Sally Hunt succeeds in her efforts to reverse the strike decision altogether. To their members in general PCs leaders have not gone beyond quiet hints about further action on pensions being possible, but PCS insiders suggest that the PCS leaders in fact have a plan for a further strike in late March.

The scenario, so the insiders say, is this. The government will produce “finalised” proposals around mid-February. (One estimate is 13 February; another is 20 February; the schedule may of course slip further). To their members in general PCs leaders have not gone beyond quiet hints about further action on pensions being possible, but PCS insiders suggest that the PCS leaders in fact have a plan for a further strike in late March.

Tanking drivers extend strike

Fuel tanker drivers employed by logistics company Wincanton supplying jet petrol stations and airports across the UK will extend their strike action to Thursday 16 February. Depot at Immingham (near Hull), Kingborough (in Staffordshire) and Stockton-on-Tees will be picketed by workers on the ground who, along with BBES, plan to take the action into a third week.

Gas and Telstrata oil terminal, Stockton-on-Tees, Ovington Oil terminal, North East Lincolnshire DN40 and Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS16 9TE.

By a civil servant

The conference on 31 January of representatives of University and College Union (UCU) branches at the University of Manchester ("redbrick") institutions voted 66 to 41 in favour of suspending industrial action over the Universities Superannuation Scheme. UCU is the pensions scheme for academic workers in the higher education sector. MacNeil Gordon — the National Head of Higher Education — gave a lengthy background to the dispute, slanted towards the negotiators’ recommendations.

He told the conference that it would be difficult to escalate action because the employers are ready to make the small concessions from pay in response to any strong action. MacNeil concluded that his support from branches is that members are not willing to settle but equally not willing to escalate.

He favoured taking what is on offer with the ability to step up action if there is no progress, although he thought escalation looks “unlikely” from low attendance at branch meetings and a “dangerous” withdrawal of proposals to deal with the threat of 100% deductions from pay.

Upon discovering that there might have to be a ballot before the resumption of industrial action, delegates became infuriated. One delegate from an institution from North London called the proposals a scandal, causing the 15 or so UCU employees present to leave until he apologised and withdrew the comment.

The conference voted on temporary suspension for talks with the employers. All other proposals fell. Amendment were then voted on. These included noting the “very limited progress made in negotiations”, preparing for early escalation if the employers are evasive or offer few concessions; urging negotiators not to accept an acrual rate for UUS below that of TPS; and mandating negotiators not to compromise on the rejection of an inflation cap to revaluation.

Essex journalists gear up for action

By an NUJ member

Journalists in Essex are gearing up for strike action for the first time in years. National Union of Journalists (NUJ) members at Newsquest Essexos are in dispute with management over pay.

The NUJ chapel in the south of the country is currently doing work to rule and holding mandatory union meetings, and will strike from Monday to Thursday next week (13-16 February) over pay. The North Essex chapel will hold a one day strike on 15 February. Management want to freeze pay until June with no guarantee of a rise then. This follows a below-inflation rise of 2% last year and a pay freeze for two years before this.

Workers’ pay review date is being moved until June following national NUJ NUJ conciliar. North Essex workers are currently awarded a new second of the half of the year they have to wait until June 2009—around 12 months for a rise under management plans.

More action at Balfour Beatty

By Daron Bedford

Unite members working for Balfour Beatty Engineering Services have voted by a 66% majority to take strike action to stop their bosses unilateraly imposing a new agreement for electrical and mechanical construction workers' terms and conditions. They also voted by a 70% majority to take action short of a strike if Balfour Beatty workers last voted to strike in December but were forced to take action unoffically after Unite caved in the face of BBE’s legal threats.

BBE bosses will again challenge the ballot result and will seek a High Court injunction on Tuesday 7 February.

The union says that it will begin ballot procedures at Spie Matthews and NG Baileyos, two of the group of seven contractors who, along with BBE, plans to take the action into a third week.

The extension of the strike to 16 February will take the action into a third week. Unite officer Matt Draper said: “Wincanton’s failure to offer these highly skilled drivers security over their futures and their pay and conditions means that the supply of fuel to jet forecourts is once again under threat. 24-hour, 7-day-a-week pickehts will be mounted for the duration of the strike at the following locations: • AIP Immingham • Denholme Ingoldmell, Ovington Oil terminal, North East Lincolnshire DN40 • Stainforth oil terminal, Warbreck Wharf, Immingham, Kingborough, Tamworth, Stafford and BBES B729E • Stockton-on-Tees in the north east: Boeing Way, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS16 9TE.

The conference voted on temporary suspension for talks with the employers. All other proposals fell. Amendment were then voted on. These included noting the “very limited progress made in negotiations”, preparing for early escalation if the employers are evasive or offer few concessions; urging negotiators not to accept an acrual rate for UUS below that of TPS; and mandating negotiators not to compromise on the rejection of an inflation cap to revaluation.

On a late-March strike

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Socialists are not parti s for any particular union, and where union mergers make industrial sense (i.e. reducing the number of “competing” unions in a given work place, sector or industry) we favour them. But Unite is driven by business logic and outsourced work place, and changing the way the union is organ ised, the bureaucracy wants a “rescuer” that will allow it to maintain FTO salaries and perks.

PCS and UCU have signed a concordat at general secretary level, and mous also abound that Unite leader Len Mc Cluskey (marginally more leftish than, for example, Unon’s Dave Prentis or the GMB’s Paul Kenny) wants the PCS’s Mark Serwotka (who also has a background in the socialist left) to succeed him as the leader of the most powerful bloc in the British labour movement.

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By Patricia Murphy (National Union of Teachers executive member, in personal capacity)

On 2 February over 100 National Union of Teachers branch secretaries met for a national briefing at the union’s HQ in London to discuss the next steps in the pension campaign and to consider resistance to new performance management and capability arrangements which are likely to increase workload and monitoring.

The main business was pensions. The meeting was as positive and determined as could be expected given the ongoing surrender by many unions on public-sector pensions, and the lack of action since 30 November by others.

Most agreed that the current ‘offer’ is absolutely unacceptable and that the NUT is right to refuse to sign up to it. On the next steps in the campaign, there was no hiding from the challenges and no suggestion from anyone that we should shy away from the need for further action.

Deputy General Secretary Kevin Courtney indicated that a specific date for action — in which the NUT would be proposed to the National Executive’s special meeting on 9 February. A survey of union members has confirmed what most people know, which is that they are far more likely to feel confident about action when other unions are also involved. However, most people at the briefing felt that we have no choice but to provide a lead while still encouraging others to work with us.

The most encouraging signal from the union leadership was a statement by Kevin Courtney that a further national strike must not be a one-off isolated protest, but instead part of a planned and escalating programme of action to force the government to reopen negotiations.

It is vital that the NUT develop and publicise such a programme soon, as a signal to teachers and the government that this campaign is very much alive. Rather than very occasional national strike days with no action in between, it should be possible to build a more sustained campaign which reminds the government regularly and frequently that the pension dispute is far from settled.

We need rolling, selective action alongside national strikes, with strike funds and a levy on members. Specifically a programme for the first half of the summer term could include the following:

• Strike action by members in secondary schools on a regional basis on a fortnightly rota starting in the week beginning 16 April
• Strike action co-ordinated with PCS and LCU in divisions with large higher and further education colleges with members in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme and/or large civil service departments on a fortnightly rota. This action to be sustained via the sustentation fund and to alter with the regional secondary action.
• A strike levy of members in non-secondary settings to support the sustentation of action by secondary members.
• Urgent consideration of an appropriate level of sustentation for secondary members involved in regional rolling action with a preference for 50% sustentation.
• Further national strike action in April and May co-ordinated with as many other unions as are prepared to participate.
• PCS may move to strike in late March, see page 11.

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Barak threatens to bomb Iran

By Martin Thomas

On Thursday 2 February, Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak threatened an Israeli missile attack on Iran soon.

He said he believed that Iran’s nuclear programme would soon be so far shifted to heavily-shielded underground centres that bombing could not hinder it.

Washington Post journalist David Ignatius followed up by reporting that US defence secretary Leon Panetta believed there was a “strong likelihood” that Israel would attack, Iran’s nuclear program within the next six months — as early as April.

Panetta responded: “Israel indicated they’re considering this [a strike], we’ve indicated our concerns.”

According to Ignatius, Panetta and president Obama have told Israelis that “the United States opposes an attack.” As the Washington Post further reports: “US officials fear that an attack by Israel could trigger Iranian retaliation not only against the Jewish state but also against American interests around the world.”

Panetta said that in the event of an attack, the US’s prime concern would be to protect its own facilities and citizens.

There is serious cause to fear an Iranian nuclear bomb. Iranian government claimsthat their nuclear programme is only for peaceful purposes are not to be trusted. And Iran would not be just another nuclear-armed state. It has a clerical-fascist regime vocally committed to making “the Zionist entity” (Israel) “disappear” and “go to hell.”

The Iranian regime is bullish about the Israeli threats. “We have our own threats to impose at the right time”, said Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iran, he said, would respond by aiding groups like Hamas and Hezbollah to attack Israel. In the event of war, “the west’s hegemony and threats will be discounted.” The hegemony of Iran will be promoted. In fact, this will be in our service.

Many working people in Iran will display how they will fear war, and attacks which will probably not be as “surgical” as claimed.

And many Israelis are scared about their leaders’ plans.

“One is to believe the threats that are ramping up at warp speed, Israel will strike Iranian nuclear facilities before spring. If the assessments are accurate, hundreds or even thousands of Israelis will die in the retaliatory missile attacks that are sure to come.” (Gideon Levy, Haaretz, 3 February)

To bomb Iran

By Dan Katz

The state killed nearly 200 people on Friday 3 February as tank shells destroyed private homes. The bombardment of Homs continued over the weekend, killing many more.

Friday’s killings took place after Syrians came onto the streets to mark the anniversary of a terrible massacre carried out under the direction of Bashar Assad’s father, Hafez. At the beginning of February 1982 perhaps 20,000 people were slaughtered as the regime ended a rising of the Muslim Brothers in Hama. Bashar Assad’s one party state’s aim is to terrorise the local Sunni Muslim population and defeat the more lightly armed opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Locally the population appears to have retreated into ethnic-religious groupings, each based in their own areas of town and frightened to leave their own neighbour-hoods.

Homs, already a divided city, has been hit especially hard by the regime’s bombardment of the city since January. The city’s medical facilities are being destroyed and the bodies of those killed taken away.

There is now a fear that the pro-government uprising will descend into sectarian civil war.

Human Rights Watch has reported a rapid increase in killings in recent months as oppositionists become better armed and the state responds with increasing brutality.

• Disregard on China and Russia veto of UN resolution on Syria, see page 3.

Syria moves closer to civil war

By Dan Katz

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