

# COMPASS

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## THATCHER MARK 2 !

In COMPASS No. 81 (November 1990) we drew attention to the split within the British ruling class and to moves on the part of that section representing the interests of financial capital to dump Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister:

"When Thatcher failed -- despite nationalist demagogy -- to obtain the number of votes required under the rules for a first round win, the 'faceless men in brown suits' who run the party at present in the interests of financial capital decided that it was extremely doubtful whether Thatcher would win the second ballot in the party's leadership election and that it was therefore desirable that some other candidate should have the opportunity of standing against Michael Heseltine.

So Thatcher was made to resign the leadership and both Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Chancellor of the Exchequer John Major were free to accept nomination, in the hope of preventing a Heseltine victory and papering over the rift in the ruling class for another period" ('COMPASS', No. 81, November 1990; p. 2).

These manoeuvres were successful in bringing about the election as leader of the Conservative Party, and so as Prime Minister, of John Major. Nicknamed by the media 'Son of Thatcher', Major was the candidate closest to Thatcher and supported by her, a candidate pledged to continue Thatcherite policies on Europe and Thatcherite high interest policies. Heseltine has been given the poisoned chalice post of Secretary of State of the Environment, among whose tasks will be to try to make the poll tax acceptable to the electorate.

The financial columnists point out:

"While public attention has been diverted by the Tory leadership struggle, the state of the real economy has been worsening. Under more normal circumstances the CBI's gloomy assessment of industrial trends . . . would have been cause for national alarm. . . .

Manufacturing output was down over 2% over the last three months. . .

Last night's result will disappoint those who thought Michael Heseltine represented the best chance of a more interventionist industrial policy being adopted by a Conservative government". ('Guardian', 28 November 1990; p. 6).

The paper of 'unity' which for the moment covers the rift in the ruling class is desperately thin. It remains to be seen how long it will be before the knives which stabbed Thatcher in the back are brought out again.

Meanwhile the realignment of political forces within the ruling class continues.

On 28 November the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party endorsed explicitly for the first time the principle of a single European currency and a London-based European central bank accountable to European Community finance ministers.

The Labour Party and the Heseltine wing of the Conservative Party -- despite their exchange of insults in the House of Commons -- now represent fundamentally the same section of the ruling class: the industrial wing of monopoly capital.

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## THE GULF : THE DRIVE TO WAR

### BACK TO THE UNITED NATIONS

On 29 October (for motives described in the last edition of 'COMpass'), the Security Council of the United Nations was successfully pressed by Washington and London to adopt (by 13 votes to nil, with Cuba and Yemen abstaining) its 10th resolution on Iraq declaring Iraq liable for all financial losses incurred as a result of its invasion of Kuwait. However, as a concession to Colombia, Cuba, Malaysia and Yemen, who had pressed for negotiations, the resolution called on the Secretary-General to try to reach a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

The Anglo-American imperialists claimed that they were entitled to take military action against Iraq, without going back to the Security Council at all, under Article 51 of the Charter, which endorses

" . . . the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence".  
(UN Charter, Article 51, in: 'Yearbook of the United Nations, 1985', Volume 39; Dordrecht; 1989; p. 1,383).

and that a further resolution of the Security Council would be purely a formality.

But international lawyers maintain that Article 51 applies only to situations where extremely rapid action is necessary to deter aggression. For example, Richard Falk, Professor of International Law at Princeton University, insists that

" . . . once the question has been referred to the Security Council, then the claim that one can act immediately is not available".  
( 'Guardian', 28 November 1990; p. 14).

### THE NEW UN RESOLUTION

It was on the insistence of the more reluctant allies of the United States -- particularly China, France, Germany and the Soviet Union -- that Bush and Baker finally accepted that a further UN resolution was desirable before an attack was launched upon Iraq and embarked on several weeks of arm-twisting and bribery:

"The UN was brought around by a mixture of intensive personal diplomacy, wheedling and bullying by the US. . . .  
The combination of US diplomacy and Saudi money spoke volumes. This

week's \$1 billion Saudi credit to Moscow, and yesterday's forgiveness of \$3 billion in Egyptian debts to Saudi Arabia were the sub-text to the more overt diplomacy".  
(*'Guardian'*, 3 December 1990; p. 12).

So, the United Nations Security Council adopted on 29 November -- by 12 votes to 2 (Cuba and Yemen), with one abstention (China) -- a further resolution authorising member states (unless Iraq fully implemented, on or before 15 January 1991, the Security Council resolutions demanding an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, etc.)

" . . . to use all necessary means to uphold and implement"  
(*'Guardian'*, 30 November 1990; p. 8).

the resolutions previously adopted on Iraq.

It was noteworthy that the new resolution did not actually mention 'military force' nor specify under which article of the UN Charter the desired, but unmentioned, military force would operate.

Article 42 of the UN Charter certainly authorises the Security Council to proceed to military sanctions, but it must be read in conjunction with Article 46 which states that

" . . . plans for the application of military force shall be made by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee"  
(UN Charter, Article 46, in: op. cit.; p. 1,383)

and in conjunction with Article 47 which defines the functions of the Military Staff Committee as

" . . . to advise and assist the Security Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements. . . .

The MSC shall be responsible, under the Security Council, for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council".

(UN Charter, Article 47, in: *ibid.*; p. 1,383).

US officials admitted that the course of avoiding any mention of the UN Charter in the resolution had been adopted

" . . . to avoid invoking other sections of the Charter opening the way for UN control of the forces".

(*'Guardian'*, 28 November 1990; p. 14).

#### THE MOVEMENT FOR PEACE

Nevertheless, the Anglo-American plans for an international war against Iraq sponsored by the UN encountered a number of difficulties.

Despite Bush's assurance that

" . . . this will not be another Vietnam",  
(*'Guardian'*, 12 December 1990; p. 1).

it became ever clearer to the peoples who would be involved in the war against Iraq that it would be catastrophic.

Britain's tank commander in the Gulf, Brigadier Patrick Cordingley, took the unprecedented step of warning the British people

" . . . to be prepared for a very unpleasant war involving heavy casualties",  
( 'Guardian', 30 November 1990; p. 1).

while the media reported:

"The United States has sent 100,000 body bags to Saudi Arabia in case of massive civilian and military casualties in a Gulf war".  
( 'Observer', 2 December 1990; p. 1).

The International Red Cross warned of the devastating new weapons ready for use in a Gulf war:

"Newly developed laser weapons, including systems now deployed in the Gulf by Britain and the US, would cause permanent blindness to troops if war broke out, says a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross. . . .

The report says that . . . if new weapons that are about to come on stream were used on full power, casualties with significant visual loss might run into many hundreds of thousands'. . . .

Sources at Red Cross HQ in Geneva say that initial reactions from Western governments to a ban or restriction have been 'fairly brutal'. The US is said to have responded with particular hostility. . . .

The report says there are 'considerable advantages' for the military in using a weapon which produces only blindness"  
( 'Observer', 11 November 1990; p. 2).

These revelations led to a growing distrust of the Anglo-American war aims. The 'Guardian' asked pointedly:

"What are we getting ready to fight for? This is clearly no crusade for freedom or democracy. Our war aims include the preservation of religious bigotry and autocratic plutocracy. The only value that we seem to share in common with the princelings of Saudi Arabia is the right of the obscenely rich to get even richer and the duty of poorer men to risk their lives in their defence".  
( 'Guardian', 28 November 1990; p. 14).

This increasing distrust led to a growing movement for a solution of the Gulf crisis by a continuation of sanctions, that is, by peaceful means. This movement was reflected in wavering on the part of politicians in the anti-Iraq bloc.

The latest in a series of surveys published the 'New York Times' and CBS Television found that only 50% of Americans interviewed now approved of President Bush's handling of the Gulf crisis -- down from 75% in August.

Already by 27 October the 'Guardian' was referring to

" . . . the wavering international coalition against Saddam Hussein",  
( 'Guardian', 27 October 1990; p. 1).

and insisting that

" . . . in Paris and the Middle East there was a powerful mood for compromise. . . .

In a speech to the Spanish parliament, President Gorbachev reaffirmed his support for a political solution. . . . The French and Soviet leaders are uncomfortable with the US assertiveness and have floated diplomatic initiatives with Iraq".  
(*'Guardian'*, 27 October 1990; p. 1).

By 28 November the United Nations Association in Britain was urging that the Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar

" . . . should be encouraged to continue and, where feasible, to expand his good offices and quiet diplomacy".  
(*'Guardian'*, 28 November 1990; p. 14).

Also on 28 November German Chancellor Helmut Kohl told the newspaper *'Die Welt'* that there could be no military solution to the Gulf crisis, which should be settled by international negotiation.

On 29 October Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev declared in Paris

" . . . a military solution to the Gulf crisis is unacceptable. . . . I think the time has come to involve the Arab factor, and here there are positive moves possible. . . .

The best thing would be to have an inter-Arab meeting".  
(*'Guardian'*, 30 October 1990; p. 1).

On 30 October the *'Guardian'* was saying that

" . . . the growing isolation of the US and Britain as the two hard-liners . . . was underlined with the arrival in Paris last night of 263 French hostages".  
(*'Guardian'*, 30 October 1990; p. 1).

On 31 October former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt announced that he would visit Baghdad the following week at the invitation of the Iraqi government. On the following day the British government strongly attacked Germany for endorsing Brandt's visit to Iraq.

Nowhere did this movement for peaceful negotiation grow faster than in the United States itself. On 27 November the US Congress opened a formal congressional inquiry into the Bush administration's policy objectives in the Gulf. Former Secretary of Defence James Schlesinger told the Senate Armed Services Committee that

" . . . more time should be given for the sanctions to work, pointing out that post-war reconstruction costs would be likely to exceed anything seen so far, while a war could damage America's standing in the Arab world for a generation".  
(*'Guardian'*, 28 November 1990; p. 13).

On 30 November, the day after the 'war' resolution had been adopted by the UN Security Council, the *'Guardian'* was reporting:

"Prominent Congressmen have warned the Bush Administration that a

resolution authorising the use of force in the Gulf, similar to that voted on at the UN yesterday, would face strong opposition in Congress and could fail. . . .

The House Majority Leader, Richard Gephardt, said of the use of force: 'I'm not for that at this point. . . . Sanctions are the right policy'".  
(*'Guardian'*, 30 November 1990; p. 8).

"Some important figures, such as Senator Edward Kennedy, a member of the Armed Services Committee, say that if the President asks Congress to make a declaration of war it would emphatically refuse to do so until sanctions . . . have been given a chance to work.

In a somewhat vehement meeting with congressional leaders on Friday (30 November -- Ed.), Mr. Bush failed to win a formal collective endorsement of his strategy, let alone a 'blank cheque' to go to war after Jan. 15.

'He asked the Congress to help about seven times and he came out empty-handed', said a frustrated Senator Robert Dole, the Republican minority leader. . . .

'There is no proper basis for the use of force at this time', countered the Democratic majority leader, Senator George Mitchell. . . .

Retired Admiral William Crowe (former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff -- Ed.) . . . suggests waiting as long as 18 months to see if the embargo might work".

(*'Sunday Telegraph'*, 2 December 1990; p. 13).

#### THE AMERICAN U-TURN

It was these developments which brought about a U-turn in the policy of the US imperialists in relation to the Gulf.

On 30 November Bush proposed direct talks at Foreign Minister level with Iraq. Although the US government insisted that the talks would not be negotiations, and later withdrew the proposal on the grounds that Iraq would not agree on a date for the talks which was acceptable to the US government, the proposal was seen by the media as

" . . . a sudden reversal of policy".  
(*'Guardian'*, 1 December 1990; p. 1).

In its leading article on 2 December, the *'Sunday Telegraph'* admitted that this U-turn in Bush's policy

" . . . has been imposed upon him by the strength of the American peace movement. At the moment he has not got the consent of the American Congress or people to go to war in the Gulf".  
(*'Sunday Telegraph'*, 2 December 1990; p. 22).

The basis of the change of policy was the hope that by it the opposition to war in the Gulf could be liquidated:

"White House aides said the talks were designed to deflate opposition to military action".  
(*'Daily Mail'*, 3 Decemer 1990; p. 1).

This hope was, of course, rubbished by the ultra-right-wing, warmongering press:

"By being seen to bend over backwards to avoid war -- and sending Mr. Baker to Baghdad is bending over backwards, if not crawling. . . . This strikes us as a very optimistic assumption. The record of the last four months suggests that American opposition to war in the Gulf increases with every week of delay".  
(*'Sunday Telegraph'*, 2 December 1990; p. 22).

Consequently, the ultra-right press urged Bush to ignore public opinion and proceed to war if Iraq did not surrender to the UN ultimatum:

"There are times when it is not better to jaw jaw rather than war war. This is one of them".  
(*'Sunday Telegraph'*, 2 December 1990; p. 22).

"Fears were growing last night that President Bush could be moving towards a deal with Iraq. . . .

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said that Mr. Baker's mission filled him with 'grave foreboding'. . . .

The secret fear (of Israel -- Ed.) is of a deal on Kuwait containing an 'understanding' on a Palestine settlement at Israel's expense".  
(*'Daily Mail'*, 3 December 1990; p. 1, 2).

"Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker have . . . signalled that some form of territorial re-adjustments may emerge from later talks".  
(*'Guardian'*, 3 December 1990; p. 12).

"The Israeli daily 'Ma'araly' said in an editorial yesterday: . . .  
'What can be assumed is that there will be concessions at Kuwait's expense, and at Israel's expense with respect to the Palestinian question'".  
(*'Guardian'*, 3 December 1990; p. 12).

On 2 December, two days after the US proposal of talks, the Iraqi government commenced to release and permit to leave the country all foreign hostages who wished to leave.

On 20 December the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution criticising Israel's policy of deporting Palestinians from the Occupied Territories and offering them protection against Israeli violence. The resolution was associated with a (non-binding) statement by the President of the Security Council agreeing

" . . . that an international conference at an appropriate time . . . should facilitate efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement . . . in the Arab-Israeli conflict".  
(*'Guardian'*, 21 December 1990; p. 4).

The progressive developments outlined above do not, however, mean that the danger of war in the Gulf has been averted.

BRITAIN OCCUPIES A KEY ROLE IN THE US-DOMINATED AGGRESSIVE ANTI-IRAQ COALITION.

IT IS VITAL THAT THE MOVEMENT FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF THE CRISIS IN THE GULF SHOULD BE BUILT IN BRITAIN.

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# ALBANIA SUCCUMBS TO REVISIONISM

In 'COMpass' No. 79b of August 1990 we wrote that the published interview with Albanian writer Ismail Kadare, in which he raised the standard of liberalism, was

" . . . CLEARLY A BARELY DISGUISED CALL BY KADARE FOR COUNTER-REVOLUTION, ADDRESSED PARTICULARLY TO THE YOUTH AND THE INTELLIGENSTIA. WHAT IS OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE ABOUT IT IS THAT IT WAS PUBLISHED, NOT IN SOME UNDERGROUND DISSIDENT BULLETIN, BUT IN THE NEWSPAPER OF THE LABOUR YOUTH UNION OF ALBANIA . . .

THIS FACT DEMONSTRATES BEYOND ANY DOUBT THAT KADARE'S REVISIONIST VIEWS HAVE SUPPORT AT A HIGH LEVEL WITHIN THE PARTY OF LABOUR.

In this context, new significance attaches to recent moves in the 'West' to nominate Kadare for the Nobel Prize in literature -- an honour in which he would join other distinguished East European dissident writers like Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Jaroslav Seifert.

Clearly, THERE ARE THOSE WHO SEE ISMAIL KADARE AS ALBANIA'S VACLAV HAVEL!"

('COMpass', No. 79b, August 1990; p. 12).

On 25 October KADARE WAS GRANTED POLITICAL ASYLUM IN FRANCE.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reporting to the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania on 6 November, the revisionist First Secretary, Ramiz Alia, proposed amendments to the Constitution:

- 1) (in an unspecified manner) of the clause of the Constitution which provides for the Party being the sole leading political force of the state';
- 2) to permit foreign investment in Albania, cooperation with foreign firms, and the receipt of foreign credits;
- 3) to permit freedom of religious worship.

\* \* \* \* \*

Following demonstrations by students at the University of Tirana, the main seat of Albanian revisionism, on 11 December revisionist President Ramiz Alia successfully asked the Central Committee of the Party of Labour to approve the formation of opposition parties. Five members of the CC including Simon Stefani were removed from the Politiburo.

On 12 December the formation was announced of a 'Democratic Party' and this was followed on 26 December by the announcement of the formation of a 'Christian Democratic Party' linked with the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile, the statue of Stalin in Tirana had been removed and enterprises, streets, etc. named after Stalin had been renamed. Alia told a conference on 26 December that the Party was abandoning 'Stalinism'.

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## CRISIS IN THE SOVIET UNION

The struggle which is shaking the Soviet Union at the present time is not between Marxist-Leninists and revisionists, but between two groups of revisionists. One group -- the 'perestroika' group -- typified by Alexander Yakovlev and former Interior Minister Vadim Bakatin, stands for the speediest possible transition to a free enterprise market economy and 'parliamentary democracy'. But the steps taken in recent years along this road have permitted corrupt elements within the revisionist party to hand large parts of the distribution system over to the 'black market' operated by the Soviet 'Mafia' and have stimulated antagonism between the different nations of the Soviet Union.

This state of affairs has enabled the political opponents of 'perestroika' (who rely on their membership of the pseudo-socialist bureaucracy for their wealth and status) to form a united front with the leaders of the armed forces, who portray 'perestroika' as having caused the loss of Eastern Europe to Soviet imperialism and as leading to the break-up of the Soviet Union itself. This group stands for the establishment of a military dictatorship which will retain the false facade of a socialist economy.

In recent weeks President Mikhail Gorbachev himself has been forced to move from the camp of 'perestroika' to that of the military, and it is this situation which brought about the resignation of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on 20 December "in protest at the danger of dictatorship".

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A Soviet presidential decree of 26 October has raised the amount of foreign investment permissible in Soviet enterprises from 49% to 100%, with permission to repatriate a proportion of their profits.

\* \* \* \* \*

French President François Mitterrand, signing on 29 October in Paris a Treaty of Understanding and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, announced that French 'aid' to the Soviet Union is to be doubled to £1,000 million.

The treaty also provides that compensation will be paid to French holders of Tsarist bonds not honoured after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

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## IN EASTERN EUROPE . . .

In East Germany for the last forty-five years

" . . . there was on average one doctor for every 400 citizens, and 543 hospitals served a population of 16 million.

Overall standards of health care were good".  
(*'Guardian'*, 30 October 1990; p. 10).

On 1 January, however, the old health service will come to an end, and be replaced by one based on the payment of insurance premiums.

\* \* \* \* \*

A crime wave is sweeping Poland and the small, badly equipped police do little but keep records. The Warsaw district alone has 4,000 unfilled vacancies. Unemployment is expected to reach one million by the end of the year and unemployment benefits are well below the poverty line.

\* \* \* \* \*

In October Hungary was paralysed for three days as lorries and cars blocked roads in protest against a 63% increase in petrol prices. The government agreed to reduce the increase in return for removal of the barricades.

In an interview published in 'Nepszabadsagn' on 1 November, Gyorgy Matolscy, Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister, said that the private enterprise programme over the next six months would push inflation to over 35%, bankrupt one in three companies, and more than double unemployment to 200,000.

\* \* \* \* \*

1,000 demonstrators blocked the streets of Bucharest on 1 November in protest against the ending of price controls.

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The former East German Constitution guaranteed its 16 million citizens a roof over their heads, but this guarantee was not written into the unification treaty. A free market in housing is to be introduced on 1 January, and rents are due to rise steeply. Homelessness in Germany is forecast by the Federal Study Group for the Homeless to reach 1 million by next spring.

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## JUSTICE !

On 25 October the European Court of Human Rights found the British government to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights by failing to provide procedures whereby prisoners serving life sentences could challenge at intervals the continued lawfulness of their detention.

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MP Chris Mullin, a leading figure in the campaign to free the 'Birmingham Six', told a meeting in Westminster on 12 December that while the Home Office was anxious to bring the scandal to an end, senior Court of Appeal judges

" . . . were willing to go to any lengths to avoid admitting that they are capable of making mistakes on this scale".  
(*'Guardian'*, 13 December 1990; p. 2).

As a result, the victims of the miscarriage of justice could eventually be released by order of the Home Secretary without being declared innocent, without apology and without compensation.

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## DEATH THROES OF THE CPGB

The remnants of the revisionist 'Communist Party of Great Britain' — its membership down to 6,000 — met in Great Russell Street, London, in December. Resolutions to dissolve the party were defeated, but it was agreed to remove any reference to Marxism-Leninism from its constitution and to change the party's name. This latter move is, however, complicated by the fact that donations from many old comrades are made out to the CPGB; decision on the change of name was therefore deferred.

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## CLASS STRUGGLE

Rover, Britain's largest car firm, has agreed with union representatives to pay an 11% increase in wages from November, subject to the approval of a workforce ballot.

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On 29 November Rolls Royce withdrew its 9% pay offer for 8,000 of its staff, stating that this was made necessary by the economic situation and the impact of the Gulf crisis on its civil airline customers.

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On 13 November pay increases of 10.4% were approved for 165,000 postal workers — the highest settlement won to date in the public sector.

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A march by some 300,000 school students, parents and teachers through French cities was held on 12 November. The protest forced the government to introduce a record £24,000 million education budget — surpassing defence spending for the first time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Stephen Hunter, Chairman of the Hospital Junior Staff Committee, revealing on 23 November that 90% of house officers were regularly working more than 72 hours a week, said:

"These hours of work are damaging to the patients who use the health service. Tired doctors are bad doctors".  
(*'Guardian'*, 24 November 1990; p. 6).

96% of junior doctors who responded to a questionnaire said they would be willing to support some form of industrial action to secure shorter working hours.

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## THE UNACCEPTABLE FACE . .

On 31 October Amnesty International charged the government with breach of the United Nations code to protect refugees from forcible return to countries where they face imprisonment, torture or death. Amnesty charged that

" . . . as many as 100. and possibly many more, persons seeking asylum in the UK have been summarily and unlawfully expelled without a proper examination of their asylum claim".  
( 'Guardian', 1 November 1990; p. 2).

\* \* \* \* \*

At present levels of payment of the poll tax, up to four million people could eventually be taken to court for non-payment, states the Audit Commission, adding that such a huge number of cases would swamp magistrates' courts. The East London borough of Hackney holds first place among English boroughs for non-payment, with 44% of non-payment.

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'Seasonally adjusted' figures from the Department of Employment indicated that the number of people out of work and claiming benefit rose in November 1990 to 1,742,400 — the eighth consecutive monthly increase.

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A survey carried out by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts published in November revealed that almost 1 in 3 health authorities are having to close a total of more than 3,500 hospital beds for financial reasons.

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In November British Steel announced its intention to close the Clydesdale steelworks at Bellshill near Glasgow with the loss of 1,200 jobs, saying that it was now much more economical to import lower-cost pipe from abroad to be finished in Britain.

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Peter Brighton, Director General of the Engineering Employers' Federation (representing 5,000 companies), forecast in December a loss of 100,000 jobs in the engineering industry next year,

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