DANGER AHEAD

MAJOR DIVERSION

WILL John Major last, or won't he? Will there be a leadership challenge now, or in the autumn? Who will replace him? Who cares? It's all a cynical diversion from the real problem!

The Tory press is again full of speculation in the aftermath of yet another government fiasco over Europe, in the run-up to likely election defeats in council and European elections, and with the Scott Report on the fraggate crisis looming in the autumn.

Media bosses increasingly see Major as an electoral liability, and have bolstered those criticising his government.

But Major's abysmal poll ratings don't reflect personal hostility to him as an individual. They show huge hostility to the Tory Party and the brutal Thatcherite policies foisted on working people over 15 years.

Whether John Major stays or goes, and whether he would be replaced by an outright Thatcherite 'bastard like Portillo or a populist bastard like Pits butcher Heseltine, his removal would offer no relief. Thatcherism would continue.

We don't want Major removed, we want the Tories out — out of council seats, out of the European Parliament, but most importantly out of government. A massive Labour vote on May 5 will show the extent to which the government has lost any mandate to govern: and it will underline the need for Labour to press now for a General Election so we can clear the lot out before more damage is done.

KICK OUT the TORIES!
Tower miners fight closure

by Daiydd Rhyd.

MINERS AT Tower colliery, the last deep mine in South Wales, voted to resist closure of their pit which would mean the loss of 250 jobs in an area suffering 17% unemployment, with male unemployment at 31%.

Tyrore O'Sullivan, chair of Tower Lodge NUM said, "This is a tremendous blow to the result, under intensive management pressure, which shows the Tower men feel that jobs in the future are more important than the quick-fix of redundancy.

We hope people will now rally to Tower and give us the support we need to push back British Coal. We hope our stand will help to start a fight back against unemployment and for all the lost pay and unemployment in Brit- ain.

Tower colliery will now go into the government's review procedure, but as Tyrore explained, "We know the review won't deliver the goods on its own: what it will do is buy us time to campaign against closure. Our immediate aim is to force British Coal to restore production at the pit."

"Butchering last pit in Wales: Hosekina pit."

Tower was one of the 19 'core pits' guaranteed a future by Hel- skine's review. Last October British Coal (BC) announced a cut of nearly half a million tons in Tower coal supplied to Aber- thaw power station. When the Lodge refused to accept the 250 redundancies, BC demanded all bonuses were cut until the target was met. 200 men were forced to leave before Christmas.

February saw a further cut in coal supplied to Aberthaw and more redundancies demanded. Pressure was further increased with the announcement that the redundancy terms on offer would end on April 30. The closure announcement was a logi- cal step in the continued cut down of the pit over the last six months.

The Tories want to destroy the unity and mili- tancy of Tower colli- ery NUM, which stands like a bea- con in the sea of un- ion collaboration and capitulation in South Wales. It is no small irony that the most militant South Wales pit in the 1984-5 strike is the only one to re- main open.

The government plans to sell off the coal industry area by area. Tower will be sold as part of a package. Such a large investment is out of the reach of Tower man- agement who would like to buy the pit. By closing it before pri- vatisation they hope to buy it out.

Hence the ploy of deliberately running down the market for coal while spending large amounts of money on the pit in the month before the closure announcement.

The decision to fight the closure is a tribute to Tower Lodge NUM which have cam- paign against de-investment in the coal industry. We must make every effort to deliver the support they deserve and en- sure a reversal of the closure decision. A vigorous campaign will now be launched by the Lodge which all trade unions, Labour Party branches and Miners' Support Groups are urged to support.

Messages of support to Tyrore O'Sullivan, Tower Lodge NUM, Tower Colliery, Hir- waun, Mid Glamorgan. Tel: 0685 811199.

Hunger strikes fight detentions

By Bill MacKeth

THE NUMBERS OF immigration prisoners on hunger strike has considerably reduced since the UK's largest ever hunger strike started on March 11.

At Campfield, six strikers are now in their fifteenth day of taking only sugary liquids. Others, dispersed from Campfield, contin- ue in their hunger deten- tion centres.

The strikers have successfully in drawn attention to the trebling of immigration detentions within the last year.

Media coverage and an ad- vention debate in the House of Commons has followed demonstra- tions of support outside Campfield, Winson Green, Exe- ter, Hull and other prisons and through a letter to Major signed by 100 Oxford academics. The government has taken a 'get tough' threat. Two Alumni given temporary admission have been re-arrested. One had spoken out publicly at a demonstration at Campfield and on TV. The basic demand for at least temporary ad- ministration has yet to be won.

Group 4 attempts to restrict demonstrations at Campfield have met with limited success.

Numbers are the key. Support is needed (Saturdays, 12.30pm - particularly 30th April). Close Campfield!

A vital step in this struggle will be the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION on SUNDAY 4th JUNE.

(11am, St. Giles, Oxford - feeder march; 1pm Exeter Hall car park, Kiddleing (main march assembly); 2pm rally at Campfield. Posters and leaflets are available - Tel: 0865 724452. Money is urgently needed to fund this work. People are asked to send donations to: Campaign to Close Campfield, c/o 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford.

Black agenda for anti-racism

By Charlie Langford

200 PEOPLE met at the 'Communities of Resistance' rally, called by the Rahman family Defence Committee in Manchester last Saturday.

There were speakers from many other campaigns, including anti-deportations, legal frame-ups and racist murder. The rally basically represented the black agenda for anti-racism and anti-fascism.

Key speakers Anwar Ditta and Mohammed Ikthid, from the successful campaigns in the 1980s, made it absolutely clear that success in avoiding deporta-

tion is entirely due to the strength of the campaigns, the legalistic details were the state's excuse for surrender.

There are several other cases - Cardiff 3, Guildford 4, Bir- mingham 6 - that prove this.

Bridget from the Campfield campaign also spoke. None of the people recently al- lowed out on bail from the con- centration camp would speak because of fear of re-arrest.

The common factor in every speech was that the state is doe- ously racist in its laws, its po- licy, its judiciary and its prisons.

This alone shows the pain-

tlessness of campaigns to change the law. Who will imple- ment the new racial harassment law pioneered by ARA? The only point where the rally was weak was in the dim view of the white people who some speakers called for a network of campaigns and in an embryonic form this now exists.

But it has to develop into an open, democratic, non-sectarian and anti-racist campaign. It is the key to solving the racism problem.
Time to get tough with criminal Tories!

IT'S OFFICIAL: Inescapable evidence has now been produced to show that Britain's crime wave is linked to the rise in unemployment. And real unemployment — much of it concealed by the massaging of official statistics — is now at over 5 million.

Statistics from the Association of Chief Officers of Probation show that a massive 70% of last year's convicted offenders were unemployed. These figures are based on a 20,000 sample, but exclude most metropolitan areas, where unemployment levels are even higher.

They were revealed in a week as an internal Home Office briefing document, leaked to The Independent, admitted the link between crime and 'relative deprivation' created by Tory economic policies.

For far from deception, Tory Chancellor Clarke is actually intending to rub salt in existing wounds by cutting dollop payments to young workers by 20% from 1996 as he leads the attack on the welfare state.

The civil service document concludes that improving prospects of employment would be the biggest single contribution the government could make to reducing the risk of unemployed youngsters sliding into crime.

Wooden headed

This news will come as a shock only to the Tories, who have wooden-headed ignored all the obvious evidence that their cavalier and divisive policies of 'feathering the nests of the rich by ripping off the poor have created a mounting social crisis.

A whole generation of working class youth growing up on neglected council estates or inner-city wastelands, with no prospect of a stable job, a decent wage, a house or enough money to match the media stereotypes of 'success', have been alienated, ignored, and occasionally subject to police repression when their revolt has boiled over into riots or larger disturbances.

Unable to afford trapping of 'success' such as smart cars, videos, or designer clothes, some have taken the individualism promulgated by Tory ideology to its logical conclusion, showing, stealing to raise money to buy what they need — or stealing just for fun, to relieve boredom and frustration, as much of the 'joyriding' of fast cars.

None of this is a secret: the crime wave has reached such epidemic proportions that insurance companies will no longer provide anti-theft cover for houses in some inner-city areas. Car crime is rampant, and, like most petty crime, is largely ignored by police.

For the Back to Basics Tories, the answer is simple: Home Secretary Michael Howard is demanding more police power to protect the capitalist market economy, and arrest the opposite direction: fewer full-time jobs, lower pay, more casualisation, fewer prospects, fewer houses, and a growing gap between rich and poor.

Labour politicians, keen to score opportunistic points from the crime wave, have called for the publication of the Home Office briefing. But the issue, like that of taxation, is a double-edged sword for Labour.

The harder they argue the link between unemployment and crime, the clearer it becomes that anything short of the most radical and hard-hitting socialist programme for economic expansion and reconstruction will fail to make any impression on the problem.

Capitalism has failed a generation of youth, and offers no escape.

John Smith's timid opposition, which Labour front-bencher Jack Straw now ludicrously argues is stronger for not having any specific policies, falls far short of the answers that are needed.

Even Bryan Gould and union leaders like GMB chief John Edmonds have released the need for a radical re-think to make full employment a central plank of Labour's electoral platform.

Gould and others argue for a Keynesian policy based on extensive government borrowing.

This is bolder than John Smith, but still fails to grasp the scale of the problem.

Labour must promise a job-creation programme based on a public programme of public works, financed in part by a steeply progressive taxation of the rich who have pocketed billions under the Tories and in part through the nationalisation of key banks and finance houses.

Social security and unemployment benefits must be uplifted, with Tory cuts reversed.

It is by tackling these roots of the social crisis, rather than fuelling the reactionary Tory 'law and order' crusade, whose main victims, as ever, are black communities and working class youth, that socialists can answer crime.

Bosnia: we need vehicles for solidarity

By Ian MacDonald

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid (IWA) West London has existed for approximately one year. Two months ago, after six months collecting we had £3,000 for a lorry to send to Tuzla via Split for 7 April. We had bought a lorry and filled it with tea, muus, rice and medical supplies.

Mary and Sheila Nadim from the campaign set off on April 1 — first stop Paris. We reached there at 5am April 2 and immediately took part in a meeting of IWA which was very successful and collected another £100 for the campaign.

On April 3, 100 miles south of Paris, disaster struck. Without any warning the double offside wheel bolts sheared and we had to get out of control down the auto route. We eventually hit the central reservation and toppled over.

Obviously we were shocked — and lucky to be alive — but our main concern was to be able to salvage most of our load and get it to Tuzla.

We were also determined to go out again at the next opportunity. We managed to organise sending our cargo on to Tuzla with help from the French comrades from the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire who were able to divert a lorry from Belgium to pick up most of the load.

One positive thing has been achieved already. The local paper has carried a very positive story about the amount of work that went into the campaign and has also put out an appeal for another lorry.

This is essential if the campaign in West London is to continue.

The West London campaign is a focus for building the campaign in Britain and organising more convoys to Tuzla.

Comrades should phone 0171-731 5010 if they can help or have any ideas how to obtain another lorry.

Convoys starts rolling

INTERNATIONAL Workers Aid convoy number two leaves the Croatian port of Split this week. Bound for Tuzla. Five trucks and a crew of 15 will negotiate the route through the mountains by road and the Alps by train to build a programme, organised jointly with the miners' union Tuzla.

Trucks from Belgium, Germany, Sweden and Denmark compose the convoy, which has established a warehouse facilities. (The lorry from Britain crashed in France.)

IWA plans to send one convoy every ten days or so through the route to Tuzla. The convoy will supply the depot in Split. Part of the convoy will divert to Sarajevo on the return journey, where IWA has been invited by unions to participate in the city's May Day celebrations.
Teachers on the warpath put NUT leaders under fire

By Keith Sinclair, NUT delegate (personal capacity)

DELEGATES voted to maintain the National Union of Teachers’ (NUT) boycott of SATs and to pursue militant policies on a number of other issues at the union’s conference held over the Easter weekend.

The increasing confidence amongst large numbers of members was evident throughout the four day conference.

Many recognise that the government is weak and therefore can be confronted and indeed defeated. On a number of important issues pressure from the organised left resulted in progress being made on union policy.

The results of the national executive elections were announced just before Easter. They showed increased votes for the left although there was no overall breakthrough and the left only gained one extra place on the executive.

But this year’s conference confirmed that the left in the NUT is one of the largest and most effective of any union. Case in point, a founding member of the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), was elected vice president of the union.

Anti union laws

Conference opened dramatically with the first debate being on the Tory anti union laws. Socialist Outlook supporter, Roy Leach, moved the successful motion that called for a campaign to repeal all anti-union legislation and for the union to refuse to co-operate with anti-union legislation.

The executive attempted unsuccessfully to take all the key points out of the motion.

This is the first time the left has managed to get such a motion passed at NUT conference.

The injunction against NATFHE’s March 1 strike clearly had a significant impact on the thinking of NUT activists.

George Wakin, speaking for the executive, even resorted to lying when he claimed that only a handful of very small unions had such a policy. As a Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) bulletin pointed out, calling UNIONV is a very small union stretches even the most liberal imagination.

Whilst there should be no illusions that NUT general secretary Doug McAvoy is going to lead action against the law never-theless the passing of this motion is an important victory for the left.

Need for national action

The key task for teachers is to force the union into national action against the Tories. The best option was a national fight on pay. Unfortunately the left was unable to commit conference to national action against the 2.9% imposed pay award.

Similarly the executive and their supporters managed (just) to vote down a fighting policy for next year’s claim.

Their margin of victory - 325 votes in a card vote of 150,000 shows how close victory was.

The left should now campaign for a special salaries conference to show the union has clear policy for next year’s claim.

Anti union laws continued into Section 11.

Campaign

The government intends to reduce the level of Section 11 grant from 75% to 50% by 1996-97. Section 11 payments are used to fund teachers for students where English is a second language. The cut in funding will have a severe effect in many areas including areas such as Tower Hamlets and Birmingham.

It represents a national attack and needs a national response.

A national day of action will now take place in the summer term and accompanied by local strike action.

Class size

It was agreed to call a lobby of parliament to start mobilising members behind a serious campaign in support of the union’s objectives for smaller class sizes.

This follows the executive’s failure to implement last year’s policy that aimed to get the campaign moving twelve months ago. A significant change has been the success of a very small number of schools who have fought and won on this issue.

Education policy

The main motion on education policy was moved by Socialist Outlook supporter Gill Lee. The motion clearly explained that while the Dearing review has addressed some problems of workload it has left the fundamental principles of Tory educational policy in place.

It was agreed that the boycott policy should continue until standard national tests are abandoned. This debate was important in bringing out the ideological implications of the changes in government policy on the board a method of operation where all decisions appear to be made by the SWP with the lack of democratic structures.

The left

The NUT left is large and well organised. This is helped by NUT conference being a large conference of over a thousand delegates.

There are two left organisations - the STA and the smaller Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CFDU). The two groups worked fairly well together at this conference. A joint slate was agreed for the Conference Business Committee and this led to the slate winning three of the four available places.

Much of the friction surrounds the position of the SWP, who are the single largest tendency within the NUT left. The SWP are members of the STA but played very little role within the organisation of STA at the conference.

There is much talk of the need for unity between the STA and the CFDU. Socialist Outlook believes there is no principled reason why the two left groups could not be united in one organisation.

However it is generally agreed that what is really needed is a united left tendency that includes all those currently in both groups and those who could potentially be attracted to a merged organisation.

There are clearly a number of areas where all the left should be able to work together in the coming months. Most of those areas of work are obvious from the key debates of conference as outlined. Another area is the election for NUT general secretary.

The overall assessment of conference must therefore be very positive. On a number of issues the NUT has improved its formal policy.

The job of the left over the next few months is to unite the national executive to implement the agreed policies.

The leadership of the NUT will come under increasing pressure from the government and the leaderships of the other teachers unions.

The left needs to mobilise the members to ensure that the executive is forced to maintain the SATs boycott and to pursue vigorously the policies agreed in Scarborough.

It’s not cricket!

ENGLAND lose ignominiously against the West Indies and fail to qualify for the World Cup. Who’s to blame? Obviously it is the crotchy teachers of the 70s and 80s with their ‘progressive’ ideas. The remedy? Compulsory team sports for all. Simple - no need to consult; no need to evaluate the evidence; and if it means extra hours for teachers then so much the better.

John Major’s latest wheeze is but the latest of the ‘back of a fag packet’ ideas to come from this lot.

Truancy

Ignore all the evidence that most truancy is highly collective with PE featuring high on the list of subjects cut. Yet, schools have sold off playing fields to finance essential capital expenditure that’s what the Tories’ way to make policy.

The NUT’s continued boycott is unthinking. With the Tories down, but not out, it’s time to put the boot in and finish them off once and for all.

Fight NASUWT scabbing threat!

LAST YEAR the NUT and the rival teachers’ union NASUWT united to defeat the Tories national school tests.

This year another union, the ASWUT have not only called off their boycott, but in a scandalous speech, NASUWT leader Nigel De Gruffydd has urged the NUT to consider external markers to break the NUT boycott.

This is an absolute disgrace from a TUC affiliated union. Every effort must be made to get both NASUWT members to condemn De Gruffydd and to oppose any attempts to use NASUWT members to undermine NUT action.

In the event of external markers being sent in by the NUT, teachers on the NUT boycott need to contact NUT offices in external markers to break the NUT boycott.
Time to broaden out UNISON's left wing

Discussion article by a London UNISON activist

AS UNISON delegates across the country prepare to pack their suitcases for the first annual conference in Bournemouth in the middle of May, the question on many minds is "What the hell is going on?"

With the merry-go-round of internal full-time officer appointments still creating a noise, with branches of the office buildings scattered across London, and with a national membership system which lurches from crisis to crisis, the services to activists and members of the three former unions, COHSE, NALGO and NUPE, have collapsed like a pack of cards.

The Union’s finance section is so paranoid about members finding out the state of play that

Setback as Telecom strike ballot is lost

BY 5048 (57%) to 3776 (43%) London BT engineers voted against taking one day strike action in protest at the introduction of a new contract.

The turnout was 47%—quite high for a postal ballot.

This means BT now has a green light to continue its policy of subcontracting contract for direct labour on all divisions.

In order to head off the strike threat BT has had to pledge the extension of its policy of no compulsory redundancies during 1994/5, to limit the number of contractors to 150 this year (out of a London workforce of 19,000), to find permanent posts for office workers who are currently without them, and to review the use of contractors later this year

Promises

These promises may well prove worthless, but the London branches will be campaigning to hold management to their word.

A serious assessment of the defence was started in the union.

Debate has centred on the isola

Minority Rights bosses get tough with unions

by Steve French

QUESTION. Who said 'I am sick of your filthy insubordination. You are my subordinates... and you will do what I say.'?

War II: (a) John Major about the 'barristers', (b) The editor of the all-party appeal to his staff or (c) a manager of the Minority Rights Group (MRG)?

Three points for C (one point for A; two points for B)

The worker who faced this abuse, Deborah Knight, has now been sacked after unionising a majority of staff.

MRG is a high-profile agency with an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory agenda in the development/human rights field.

It receives funding from the EU, London Boroughs Grants Scheme, Oxfam and Scandinavian governments.

However MRG has no more than a draft Equal Opportunities policy, and has existed for 25 years without proper procedures for grievances, disciplinaries and appeals and without union representation.

Grievance

After the abuse, Deborah's union (TGWU/ACTS) brought a grievance. Management's response was to try to have Deborah suspended. They failed but brought a disciplinary 'for behaviour bordering on gross misconduct'. This was challenged by ACAS. Management withdrew 'without reservation'.

ACTS members then

withdrew 'without reservation'.

ACTS members then forced the union to accept a new contract.

Deborah had to clear her desk before the ballot was held.

Deborah says, 'MRG works for the rights of minorities, yet it was bullied and intimidated and victimised by sacking just two days after the union appealed for recognition'.

Support for Deborah's campaign for reinstatement has been won by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, Region 1 T&G, Southern District RMT and London UNISON 'A'.
**Birmingham benefit staff walk out**

by Bob Smith

MORE THAN 150 UNISON members in Birmingham City council’s benefits section began indefinite strike action on Monday 23 March in support of their claim for regrading.

The council launched a multi billion system designed to improve efficiency and increase the uptake of benefits, but unfortunately the staff, who rank with the hardest of the council’s employees, are struggling to make ends meet.

Staff will now be assessing and paying council tax benefit, housing benefit for private and council tenants, free school meals as well as advising claimants of their entitlement to welfare benefits.

Benefits service was already a force with a massive backlog of over 150,000 claims built up from April of last year.

Benefits claimants are being asked to take six months to process – the legal requirement being 14 days.

UNISON members took the brunt of tenant dissatisfaction with abuse, threats and violent attacks.

Following limited industrial action new security arrangements were made and 80 temporary staff employed.

Obviously the problems were not solved. There is still a 40,000 backlog – only interim payments have been made and rebates yet to be assessed. Poor training of temporary staff meant many assems were inaccurate.

- **Not feeling the benefit of right wing council policies: Birmingham UNISON strikers**

Massive overpayments were made and written off due to the impossibility of collecting the money.

Certainly, the ideas behind the new benefit service are supported by UNISON – a shift away from a ‘business culture’ concentrating on administration at a minimum cost to a ‘benefits culture’ concentrating on efficiency and maximum take up which should benefit workers and claimants.

In reality an apparently unaccountable management have ditched council policy and gone for ruthless cost cutting. Cuts in training, and a cheap adaptation of the computer system have only heightened the crisis.

Theresa Stewart, Labour Party council leader and ‘left’ victor over the ‘business administrator’ Sir Richard Knowles, is using the excuse of Tory backcuts.

**Jobs froze**

In fact millions have been saved by freezing jobs and making cuts in other social services while April’s council tax bills have been reduced to bribe voters.

The UNISON branch are making a determined stand against the council’s policies.

**UNISON strikers are only receiving basic strike pay and need financial support as well as picket line solidarity.**

For donations, speakers at the TUC cell’s of its early contact UNISON no. 1, 3rd Floor, Mercury House, Cornwall St, Birmingham B3 2EE, 021-233 3045.

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**Blacklisters move into a new League**

by Dave Osler

TWO former managers of the now-defunct Economic League blacklist outfit have set up a consultancy to keep tabs on “anti-business” pressure groups, trade union activists and socialists.

Going by the politically neutral name of Captair Limited, it operates from a post office box number in Redditch in the West Midlands. Companies House records list the directors as Stan Hardy, a past director general of the Economic League, and Jack Winder, the organisation’s director of information, who can hold 30 £1 shares.

The house has been sent photocopies of what appears to be a regular bulletin, Captair Monitor, spelling out the wide range of McCarthyite services now on offer.

As well as traditional Economic League “labor-screening” activity, which enables bosses to vet the political and trade union background of prospective employees, Captair also offers an “anti-business monitoring service” which targets the “many and varied organisations whose activities threaten a company’s freedom of action.”

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade and the Ethical Investment Research and Information Service are given as examples.

The Economic League, established in 1939 to combat the Bolshevism menace on the shop floor, went into voluntary liquidation last year with creditors of £300,000.

- **Unlikely victim of anti-left blacklist: MSF chief Roger Lyons**

As recently as 1987, it claimed to have 15 employees in its London offices, 60 others across the country, and an income of £1,000,000 a year. But with union militancy on the wane and a flurry of swindles and smear campaigns, Captair is reportedly doing a roaring trade.

The organisation was heavily criticized for effectively keeping people out of work on the basis of inaccurate or false information.

People were blacklisted for campaigning against hospital closures, signing nomination papers for candidates standing in local elections for the Communist Party or simply for being mentioned in Left-wing newspapers.

**Paid spies**

The League used paid spies in at least one trade union, the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and even the Liberal Party, and monitored such “vehicles for subversion” Christian Aid, Greenpeace, the Child Poverty Action Group and Oxfam.

The names of mainstream unions and trade unions were written out on the basis of inaccurate information.

When the league was at its peak, Mr Winder was owed £24,000 and Mr Hardy £9,591. Peter Shepley, who specializes in smear attacks, was paid £1,679.

- **With union officials advocating playing it safe within the law, frustrated and impatient employees may be more likely to listen to those urging militant action.**

- **Capiro Monitor**

when she was 16.

At the time of its collapse, Mr Winder was owed £24,000 and Mr Hardy £9,591.

Peter Shepley, who specializes in smear attacks, was paid £1,679.

The League kept files on at least 50,000 individuals, and vetted anything up to 400,000 job applicants a year on behalf of over 2,000 leading companies.

- **"With union officials advocating playing it safe within the law, frustrated and impatient employees may be more likely to listen to those urging militant action."**

“Caprio can supply the information a trade union needs to act straight forward and/or to initiate legal proceedings.”

Of the two groups named, CAAT is currently running its “Together we can stop the Hawks” campaign against the sale of British Aerospace fighter-trainers to Indonesia, and is researching the company’s involvement in the Al Yamamah arms deal.

Campaigner Will McMahon commented: “I’m glad the Economic League is concerned about what we have on BAE. It bloody well should be.”

EIRIS’s executive secretary, Peter Webster, said that his company regularly supplied information to clients interested in arms sales drawn up by the customers themselves, and that companies are always told what is said about them.

One edition of Capair Monitor, dated July 1993, turns its attention on the far Left, said to be “on the move again” after years in decline. Militant Labour and the Socialist Worker’s Party are singled out.

“Militancy among teachers, firemen, railway, bus and tube workers, far from attracting public odium, has drawn some outspoken support. The silence of the TUC, its betrayal of workers’ unity against the closure programme, can be portrayed as yet another betrayal of trade unionism by its leaders.”

The"far Left has always got one or two people on the line of any significance. The difference now is that the industrial relations climate is set to change ... With union officials advocating playing it safe within the law, frustrated and impatient employees are more likely to listen to those urging militant action.”
Italy’s right wing thieves fall out

The right-wing coalition of Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, the federalist Northern League and the neo-fascist MSI has stepped into the vacuum created by the collapse of the corrupt centre parties who have run Italy for decades.

Here Livio Maitan looks at the significance of the elections and the weakness of the parties of the workers’ movement.

The winning coalition is far from stable. Public arguments have raged between Berlusconi, Northern League head Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Fini of the MSI. Attempts to form a government have been postponed until after April 15, with no guarantee of success. New elections could yet be on the horizon.

This is a new phase in the crisis of political leadership in Italy, which broke out in 1992. A coalition distinguished by its inclusion of neo-fascists now has to form a government.

This coalition does not have an absolute majority of votes cast (42.9 percent for the Chamber of Deputies, 39.9 percent for the Senate), but because of the “first-past-the-post” electoral system, it has an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber and is only three votes short in the Senate.

The political and ideological weakening of the workers’ movement and the parties of the left over the last 15 years and the growing apart of socio-economic structures because of the growth of stagnation, meant that political divisions only partially corresponded to social divisions.

The Progressive pole dominated by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) won its votes primarily amongst the working class and sections of the radicalised petit-bourgeoisie. However, the elections confirmed that the Northern League is supported not only by sections of the middle and small bourgeoisie but also on a much smaller scale, by workers.

The results confirmed that the neo-fascists have a fairly large electoral base, already indicated by the municipal elections in Rome and Naples. Forza Italia was also successful in popular quarters of major cities in the North, alongside spectacular results in regions of the South.

The industrial bourgeoisie appeared divided. Minority sections of the employers organisation Confindustria opted for Berlusconi whilst some put themselves on the side of the Progressives, with even a few standing as candidates. Most continued to support - discreetly - the centrist parties. Naturally there will be new realignments and Confindustria has already said it is prepared to support a government led by Berlusconi.

Such a government would represent a real turning point. Further conservative and reactionary measures will be added to those already adopted by the Chirac government. There will be further attacks on the remnants of the welfare state and economic policies will be changed in a more authoritarian direction.

But it is not clear to what extent a Berlusconi government could produce stability in a country which has always known acute social conflicts and a combative working class. The right-wing are divided, illustrated by the often heated polemics during the electoral campaign and in its immediate wake.

Berlusconi will have great difficulty in carrying out his anti-social act whilst maintaining an opening towards part of the centre, which may prove necessary from the viewpoint of parliamentary balance.

Other factors could set off further instability. The European elections in June will be conducted under proportional representation, with alignments perhaps very different from those of March 27-28.

Finally, the political developments will take place alongside an economy which, despite partial improvements, remains marked by stagnation and the prospects of increased unemployment.

The ruling class has gambled on a heterogeneous coalition, the most important component of which was only set up in the last two months by Berlusconi. He is considered by the “historic” bourgeoisie to be an “up-start” without any “traditions”, expressing a totally superficial overall ideology and his party is composed of members whose effectiveness is largely untested.

The right’s main opportunity is the weakness of the left, who were rejected because they didn’t have an alternative to a disintegrating political system. The PDS secretary, Achille Occhetto, never ceased proclaiming the supposed gains of the existing government.

For its part the PRC appeared as the left wing of the Progressives but not as a force intent on imposing a radically different dynamic, an anti-capitalist perspective.

A recomposition of the bourgeoisie camp remains precarious but the reconstitution of the workers’ movement hasn’t even started.

A Hot Spring in France?

by Jeff Lowe.

The crisis of the Ballard government in France is escalating. The victories at Air France and over the government’s attempts to cut wages for young people have encouraged a new wave of struggles.

In France, a six-day strike of Paris, Renault workers have been occupying their factory since March 7 to oppose redundancies, defend trade union rights and to wage increases. On April 7 the whole of Paris ground to a halt as workers on the Metro, buses and local rail services took 24 hour strike action. Their action was to protest plans to cut subsidies, break up the RATP (the authority which controls all transport in Paris) and eventual privatisation.

The same day workers in France Telecom, the Post Office and the Societe Generale bank took strike action. Although the transport workers strike, combined with torrential rain, reduced a protest demonstration in Paris to only three thousand, larger demonstrations took place elsewhere. Six thousand marched in Nantes, five thousand in Vierzon for example.

These demonstrations were joined by students fresh from their victory over attempts to cut the minimum wage for young people and by unemployed youth.

In true Stalinist fashion the Communist Party union officials tried to prevent contact between these radicalised youth and trades unionists. Struggles around social issues are also continuing. In Lyon large demonstrations have demanded the right of trade unions to continue to represent workers, in Nantes two deported Algerians to return to France. Even the local court has demanded their return.

Trade unionists throughout France are now organising campaigns against unemployment and for the 35 hour week. The first leg of a “right to work” march set off from Albi in the south of France on April 6. Numerous other legs are planned and will meet together in Paris on May 26-28.

Mitterrand shrugs it off.
Fight for the right to strike

Socialist Outlook spoke to Steve French, Assistant Secretary of Lambeth Trades Council about the conference to be held on April 23, 9.30am - 1pm, Lambeth Town Hall

WHAT is the significance of the conference? UNFORTUNATELY the British labour movement has yet to respond to the threat posed by the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act, the results of which are graphically posed by the recent NATFHE court ruling. NATFHE's recent strike was deemed illegal after the union had been forced to hand over its membership records to the employer. This is the first confrontation of any significance to counter this threat.

WHAT response has there already been from the labour movement? THERE has been great interest across London and even wider.

A supportive statement will be sent by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. We want to encourage labour movement organisations to send messages of support for the initiative and delegations where possible.

WHAT specifically do you think should come out of the conference? IT SHOULD lay the foundations for a national labour movement campaign in defence of the right to strike. We should ensure that the conference goes forward with an appeal for the labour movement, from top to bottom, to campaign on this issue.

The leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC should be urged to organise a conference in the near future on this subject.

Further details from LU-TUC, 14 & 16 Thornton St, London, SW8 0BY. Tel 071 733 5135.

TRADE UNIONISTS in Britain are faced with an increasingly sharp dilemma every time they contemplate industrial action to defend themselves: if they walk out, they break the law, but if they don't, the employer can put the boot in.

The stores and pitfalls of the barrieges of anti-union laws brought in during 15 years of Tory rule make it almost impossible for many sections of workers to take legal strike action.

This was starkly exposed when, at the end of February, a democratic ballot vote for strike action on March 1 by college lecturers' union NATFHE, which had registered 62% in favour of action, was overturned by Appeal Court judges.

They ruled that the 50,000-strong union was obliged to have informed management in advance of the individual names of all those members who would be balloted — and that its records for this purpose must be accurate to "within the number of fingers of two hands".

If this restriction remains in force, almost every union would be potentially in breach of the law in conducting a ballot, since few have records anywhere near that accurate. The only workplaces where this would not be a problem would be the declining number in which all union members pay contributions through check-off systems administered by the employer.

ATTACK on DOCAS

One crucial aspect of the most recent (1993) anti-union laws was to mount a serious attack on union membership by undermining the direct deduction of contributions (the DOCAS system).

All unions are now obliged by this autumn to get each individual member to "sign up" a new authorisation for subs to be deducted from their wages, and to repeat the exercise every three years. To make matters worse, employers have been given the right to approach union members every year, or every time deductions are adjusted, to ask if they wish to pull out.

This attack is aimed at the soft underbelly of Britain's bureaucratised unions, the gap that has grown over the past decade between national leaders and the active members at branch level on the one hand, and the more passive layers of membership on the other, many of whom see little in the way of direction or leadership for their subscriptions.

Some unions are already predicting heavy losses of membership, although if properly organised, sign up campaigns can strengthen branch organisation and revitalise a drooping rank and file.

Assuming unions retain the large majority of their members, they still face a succession of carefully-placed obstacles in mounting any firefight.

The rules on balloting are so rigorous it is now impossible to take legal action quickly. The time-honoured tradition of an instant walk-out after a show of hands at a mass meeting has been outlawed by the Tories — though it remains in a glorious moment of defiance on March 8 when 5,000 Sheffield council workers defied the legislation and stormed out on strike.

All legal immunities from civil liability for industrial action are withdrawn if a strike is not preceded by a majority vote in a secret ballot.

But to satisfy the law, even a majority yes vote must be followed by a week's notice to the employer, who must also be told whether the action is to be "continuous" or "discontinuous" — allowing strike-breaking measures to be put in place if deemed worthwhile.

To make matters worse, the union must also in giving notice of a strike "describe" to employer the employees involved. According to the NATFHE judgement, this means listing the names and numbers of members to be balloted.

This would clearly enable hard-line employers to embark on systematic intimidation and victimisation of union members: it would certainly make legal strikes for union recognition almost impossible.

In addition, the ballot must be:

HELD not more than four weeks before the action;

HELD separately for each union participating;

HELD separately on each location covered by the employer;

ASK a question with a simple "yes" or "no" answer;

REFUSE specifically to a particular dispute;

CONDUCTED BY POST if more than 50 employees are involved;

NOTIFIED to the employer in advance.

Under 1990 legislation, unions are legally responsible (and thus liable to civil claims for damages) for any industrial action that does not have official backing, unless it gives notice to each member involved that the union repudiates the action.

Employers have been given the right to sack workers who take unofficial action. Individual members of the public can seek court injunctions against those staging unlawful industrial action.

Breaks of injunctions by un-
Tory laws are taking liberties

'YOU do not have to say anything unless you wish to do so, but what you say may be given in evidence'

These famous words may well be a thing of the past if the Criminal Justice Bill passes through parliament and becomes law, reports HELEN SHAW.

The CIVIL libertés organisation Liberty says, 'the absolute right to silence exists because historical experience shows that to compel answers to questions leads to repression, injustice and ultimately to tyranny'.

The decision to lead more miscarriages of justice.

Howard intends to ignore the advice of two Royal Commissions (1981 and 1993) and abolish the right to silence which both felt was an essential safeguard against miscarriages of justice. Removing the right to silence demeans the presumption of innocence in the current criminal justice system.

As victims of miscarriage of justice still languish in jail, the racist police still fail to solve racist crime and continue to harass the black community, the Tories talk up the rise in crime to create a climate of fear and obscure the real causes of collapsing social structure in society.

Their solution is to introduce the Criminal Justice Bill. It will be debated in parliament on April 12 and contains a plethora of draconian measures which attack fundamental civil liberties and rights.

Particular groups of people and activities have been targeted including squatters and travellers, ravers, festival goers and peaceful protesters. Many of the new proposals have major implications for the trade union and labour movement and on the rights of all communities.

An amendment to the bill was announced on Friday 6 April by Home Secretary David McLean, ostensibly to deal with 'weapon-carrying gangs, amounts of heavy and unlawful law'.

Police will be given powers to stop and search people within a limited area for 24 hours which can be extended for 6 hours if violence breaks out. Records will be kept by the police of people stopped and searched.

Currently the European Convention on Human Rights insists that there must be 'just cause' before searching an individual. The specific individual needs to be suspected of a crime.

This amendment gives police blanket power to use their judgement about the likelihood of violence breaking out. This will be open to abuse and used to justify the harassment of the black community as were the ‘sus’ laws.

Included in the Bill are many public order provisions which criminalise dissent and diversity. New offences of aggravated trespass and holding or attending trespassory assemblies will be created. These proposals criminalise legitimate forms of dissent, undermine the right to peaceful public protest and breach international human rights law.

Knock-on effect

Whilst many of the clauses in the Bill are targeted at particular activities they have knock on effect for other activities. Clauses aimed at stopping the activities of hunt saboteurs and curtailing activities like the Stonehenge festival – in themselves a bad enough attack – could also be used to stop pickets of workplaces, protests outside foreign embassies, local protests outside nuclear establishments.

Clause 54 provides that an order can be obtained to ban assemblies which are likely to be held without the permission of the owner, and which may result in the serious disruption to the life of the community.

By its very nature most protest involves disruption. Large scale demonstrations in Lon don, such as those organised by the labour movement or by anti-racist organisations may be particularly vulnerable to the proposals.

In practice these measures could be easily used by the police to arrest and detain people even if they are not subsequently charged. This will deter people from participating in legitimate protests. The potential application of the proposals from entering the workplace, and encouraging them to support a strike, could be guilty of aggravated trespass.

Three months

As a result, you could go to prison for up to three months, even if the protest is well-managed, good humoured, and involves just a handful of people.

If you stand on the town hall steps to protest about the reduction of nursery facilities, you could be guilty of aggravated trespass and go to prison for up to three months.

There is no requirement of proof that actual disruption took place – only the police judgement that it is your intention to disrupt.

Clause 55 gives the police powers to stop people whom the ‘reasonably believe’ to be on their way to an assembly which ‘reasonably believe’ is likely to be prohibited under Clause 54.

They can direct them not to proceed. The effectively rubber stamps the illegal police road blocks mounted during the miners strike of 1984/5, in which they excluded people – thought to be striking miners – from certain areas.

Bail conditions

In addition some of the proposals on bail conditions have implications for anyone likely to be involved in political protest.

The Bill gives the police new powers to impose bail conditions if they consider someone might not surrender to custody, commit or absconce, or otherwise obstruct the course of justice.

The response from Labour has been lamentable, with the front bench going along with many of the recommendations.

But better late than never: a fightback against this legislation must begin now. If not we might find increasing numbers of labour movement and political activists unwittingly winding up as guests of Her Majesty.
Rail union faces crisis in leadership

BR carve-up signals new confrontation

As preparations to privatise the railways move into top gear and railworkers ballot for strike action the Rail, Maritime, Transport Workers union (RMT) is in special conference discussing issues fundamental to the very survival of the union itself.

On April 1 British Rail (BR) effectively ceased to exist. Signalling, track maintenance workers and other staff were transferred to a new state-owned company - Railtrack. Most of Railtrack work will be put out to tender, then the shell will be sold off.

Large parts of the remnants of BR were reorganised into 'train operating units' - the precursor to being sold off over the next few years. If private offers do not come forward the government is preparing the ground to give these 'units' away cheaply to management buyouts.

On the same day RMT rail members began to receive ballot papers asking for a mandate for strike action against the immediate effect of this privatisation - the break-up of BR means the end of national redundancy transfers arrangements which have protected railworkers for many years.

Whilst activists are hopeful a vote for action can be won it is clear that the ballot has come far too late. Despite agreeing such a policy at last summer's RMT AGM it was only the election of new left activists to the union's national Executive that precipitated the ballot.

For many the question remains - how do we translate a successful ballot into action, especially after the recent NAT-MHE court case? Any dispute will be legally challenged by BR/Railtrack. Few RMT members have any faith that the union leadership will be prepared to challenge any adverse legal ruling.

The only positive sign has been the decision this week of RMT members on the London Underground who voted by nearly 2 to 1 for strike action. This at least opens up the prospect of combined RMT/R Kill action - a previously successful strategy.

While these moves go on a Special General Meeting of the RMT has been convened to discuss the union's financial position. A failure to properly integrate the NUR and NUS after merger leaves the two sections of the union still mainly separate has been financially disastrous.

Lost members

We have also had to deal with BR stopping the checkoff of union subscriptions. Up to 20% of BR members have fallen out of the union. The sheer effort of reorganising to collect subs through a network of collectors has done immense short-term damage.

Looking for a way out? RMT chief Jimmy Knapp
despite the positive side effect of bringing many members into more regular contact with the union - in effect every member has to renew their commitment to the union each week.

Put together the union is in financial crisis. Tough measures will have to be taken. But the choices put forward by the leadership go totally in the wrong direction. Instead of cutting back on bureaucracy they have opted for a package which protects themselves while attacking the fundamental democratic rights of ordinary members.

Big test

All this means a big test for the RMT left - organised in the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union. The CFDU has grown in influence over the last year. But now it needs to go beyond being a useful place for discussion and start to try and impose its agenda on the union.

That RMT members are fed up with their leaders is clear. The General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary narrowly held on to their positions in recent elections with the AGS candidate associated with the CFDU coming within 1% of unseating the incumbent Vernon

Hince.

This deep seated lack of faith in the leadership needs to be harnessed by the CFDU. Up to now the CFDU has met on an ad hoc basis with no consistent convenor and has had as its main function winning the support of branches and district councils to its general policy aims. It has always refused to have a formal structure of membership or affiliation relying instead on loose sponsorship and open discussion.

This may have been fine originally. Certainly many supporters were reluctant to go down the road travelled in the early 80s of a rigid Broad Left tied to the coat-tails of one political group. But as was clear at a recent CFDU meeting in Manchester this lack of structure is no longer sufficient. The failure to come to any decisions at that meeting was a real set back.

We have to move forward, agree a basic structure and set immediate campaigning initiatives. In particular, we need to be able to place maximum pressure on the Executive to stop any recurrence of the debacle of last year - when the BR strikes were called off for want of a two-thirds majority on the Executive to call another day strike.

We have to discuss out, and decide how we do this through the structure of the union - whilst at the same time building open action aimed at ordinary union members through such things as mass lobbies of the Executive when they discuss the ballot results.

In this light the meeting opportunely called by the London Midland District Council for this Wednesday will be a valuable forum for working out how we proceed.
After Hebron massacre

Repression reverts to normal

By Roland Rance

THE MASSACRE by an Israeli settler of dozens of Palestinian worshippers in a Hebron mosque on 25 February led to an upsurge in demonstrations and other acts of resistance against the Israeli occupation. The response of the Israeli military, which was not surprisingly, to tighten the occupation in the Occupied Territories. Hebron was placed under total curfew for a month, while the rest of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were under military closure. The army continues to murder Palestinians, to destroy their homes with anti-tank weapons, and to deny access to hospitals. A new ‘security’ road, which Palestinians are forbidden to cross, has divided Hebron in half. This has not deterred the PLO from continuing to negotiate with Israel on the implementation of the imperialist agreement.

Policing lessons

Let us suppose that Israel will permit the stationing of a small, unarmed “international police force” in the Occupied Territories, while senior commanders of the new Palestinian police force for Gaza and Jericho are trained in community policing at the British Police College at Bramshill. According to the Guardian (8 April), “The experience in Northern Ireland, interroga-

Hebron massacre was rooted in long-term Zionist repression of Palestinian people, revolution techniques, treatment of offenders, police accountability and human rights will be on the syllabus.” Despite the continuing PLO concessions, it seems unlikely that Israeli forces will indeed withdraw from Gaza and Jericho by 13 April, as promised in the agreement. Meanwhile, the official Israeli inquiry into the massacre at Arafat’s mosque has established that five of the six soldiers supposed to guard the mosque failed to turn up for duty on 25 February, that the video surveillance camera was broken, and that Israeli troops opened fire at the mosque to prevent Palestinians from fleeing from the massacre. As an army commander stated in evidence to the inquiry: “You have to understand the basic situation. A Jew has a weapon to defend himself. An Arab who is carrying a weapon is a terrorist. A Jew with a weapon is defending himself and he is allowed to shoot. We forbid soldiers in the IDF to open fire at them.” Israel’s leading intellectual, Professor Yeshayahu Lellooz, has argued that the killer, Baruch Goldstein, is the authentic representative of the country’s current culture and regime, and that the real guilt lies with Prime Minister Rabin.

Groups banned

In an attempt to shift this blame to a minority, the Israeli government has banned two right-wing Israeli organisations, the splinter of the racist Kach movement founded by Rabbi Meir Kahane.

Economic development is impossible under the Israeli occupation, which is characterised by confiscation and control of land and resources, establishment and expansion of settlements, treating the Palestinians as a captive market, and control over the Occupied Territories’ imports and exports.

“A first step towards socialism is to reject the Israeli-PLO agreement”

DR ADEL SAMARA, an independent Marxist economist from occupied Palestine, has spent 8 years in prison – 2 years under Jordanian rule and 5 years under Israeli occupation. This article is based on his address to a Socialist Outlook public meeting during a recent visit to London, and subsequent conversations with Socialist Outlook.

IT WAS NOT necessary to wait for the Hebron massacre in order to understand that Israel is still not ready for a just and lasting peace with the Palestinian people and the Arab world.

During the three years since the start of the imperialist settlement process at the Madrid conference, Israel has intensified its repression in the Occupied Territories, with more killings, expansion of settlements, more settlers ‘imported’ from the ex-Soviet Union and other places, and a tight siege of the Occupied Territories.

The occupation of Principe’s Vlora and Kabul is an indirect annexation of the Occupied Territories with no hint that Israel will withdraw, and no discussion of the Palestinian people’s right to return to their homeland.

It is important to understand that this agreement is primarily about economics rather than politics. What we are seeing is a re-ordering of capital in the Middle East.

The agreement closely mirrors the proposals of the World Bank mission which visited the Occupied Territories just after the Madrid conference. The over-press of the World Bank, and of the imperialist settlement, is the creation of a Middle East Market, in which Israel is accepted by the Arab world as the local representative of the imperialist world order. Israel would be the economic centre of the region, and its gaze would be towards western Europe and the US, while Turkey would have a secondary role as the gate towards central and eastern Europe. This project, which would prevent Arab economic integration and perpetuate the underdevelopment of the region, is in truth a Middle East Market, but a market in the Middle East.

Economic development is impossible under the Israeli occupation, which is characterised by confiscation and control of land and resources, establishment and expansion of settlements, treating the Palestinians as a captive market, and control over the Occupied Territories’ imports and exports.

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO ABANDON THE ROMANTIC IDEA THAT THE PLO IS A FRAMEWORK FOR ALL THE PALESTINIAN SOCIA L CLASSES”

This agreement does not offer any possibility of Palestinian independence, and I have never heard of a political status between occupation and independence. Therefore, this agreement is not intended to develop the Palestinian economy. Under the guise of a move towards Palestinian self-rule, it merely offers the annexation by Israel of the economy of the Palestinian popula tion.

The agreement has been negotiated and promoted by the imperialists, Israeli, Arab and Palestinian capitalists.

The Palestinians who support this agreement are the bureaucratic and capitalist leadership of the PLO. Imperialists inside the Occupied Territories (mainly sub-contractors for Israeli companies), Palestinian emigrants of foreign institutions and NGOs in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian and foreign capitalists in the Diaspora, and westernised and renegade communist intellectuals. These forces are all parasitic in the PLO. Imperialists inside the Occupied Territories (mainly sub-contractors for Israeli companies), Palestinian emigrants of foreign institutions and NGOs in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian and foreign capitalists in the Diaspora, and westernised and renegade communist intellectuals. These forces are all parasitic in the PLO.

This Popular Classes Programme should be based on the establishment of a democratic socialist society and the creation and consolidation of a cooperative mode of production as a prelude to a socialist mode, with disengagement from the Israeli economy, the struggle for producers’ democracy against bourgeois political democracy, and the self-management of producers against the private ownership of the capitalists and their appointed managers.

This programme cannot be confined to Palestine. Only through a struggle for socialism in the Arab world as a whole can the plans of imperialism be frustrated. A precondition for this is the rejection of the Israel-PLO agreement.

‘Autonomy’, which will act to strengthen rather than end this structural dependency.

This new regime will consolidate a capitalist socio-economic formation, in which class differences and struggle will be even sharper than today. It is important to recognise this, and to abandon the romantic idea that the PLO is a framework for all the Palestinian social classes.

Faced with this alliance of the various capitalists against Palestinian rights, the Marxist and socialist forces must put forward a programme which can confront the capitalist exploitative programme.

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PLO chief Arafat

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We note that many of them are already adjusting the economy of the Occupied Territories to meet the needs of the world market, and planning joint projects with Israeli capitalists as part of the regional economic collaboration outlined in the agreement.

The Palestinian delegation was appointed rather than elected. This anti-democratic beginning leads us to expect the establishment of a bourgeois dictatorship in any Palestinian
Sri Lanka opposition victory rocks UNP chauvinism

K Govindan continues his look at Sri Lanka

MARCH has been a month of elections in Sri Lanka and hopefully a sign of things to come.

First there were local government elections in the Eastern Province amid much controversy, voting in this ethnically mixed area splintered on communal lines.

Splits

The Sinhala vote was split between the United National Party (UNP) and the Opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The Muslim vote was split between the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Tamil see vote by three independent groups fielding Tamil candidates.

Considering the UNP government's belligerent stance on the Tamil question, the disappearance of 5,000 Tamil youth in the East and its shaky control of the region — the minorities deserted it giving the independent groups a clear victory.

Some Tamil parties such as the Eelam peoples revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRFL) and the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) refused to contest the poll and called on voters to spoil their ballot.

Mockery

'A mockery of democracy' was EPRFL's spokesperson in Europe, K Tamilselvan, opinion of the exercise.

Speaking to Socialist Outlook he said that a free and fair election when thousands of people are living in refugee camps and a war is being prosecuted in the North East was an impossibility.

The UNP motive for the election was two-fold. They have to communicate to the western donor community that they are sincere in seeking a political resolution to the ethnic conflict.

Also it was a carrot to the donor of Sinhala chauvinism in the north and east.

Referendum

True to form, shortly after the polls President D B Wijetunga declared that a referendum would be held to de-merge the province.

In the north and east of Sri Lanka is where the Tamil community has historically been concentrated and a marginalized province with a unitary authority has been one of the key demands of the liberation struggle.

Later on in March elections were held for the Southern provincial council. By recent standards the UNP suffered a crushing defeat reduced to 23 seats while the Peoples Alliance (PA) won 32 seats in the 55 seat council.

The PA is composed of the bourgeois SLFP, Lanka Sama Samaja Party, Communist Party and Janata Vimukthi.

The PA's campaign was led by SLFP's Chandrika Kumaratunga who is the Chief Minister of the Western province. She is seen as left leaning, and an outspoken critic of the government's economic policies and its war drive in the North East.

The Nava Sama Samaja Party (NPPS) contested all seats and marginally improved its vote to 1.13% but didn't win any seats. In spite of tremendous pressure to unite the non-Tamil separatist peoples, the alliance contested independently denouncing the impact of international Monetary Fund and World Bank dictates and the genocidal war against the Tamil people.

National question

The TULF urged Tamils to support the NPPS as it alone has the clearest position on the national question.

President Wijetunga has been taking a hard line on war since his infamous remark last year that, 'there is no ethnic problem, only a terrorist problem'.

He has rallied against the demands of Tamils for justice as an attempt to make the Sinhala people 'second class citizens in their own country.'

Meanwhile since June 1993 over 18,000 Tamils have been arrested in the capital, Colombo, solely on their ethnicity and accused of being terrorists.

Switzerland has announced that it will repatriate Tamil refugees causing widespread concern among the 150,000 Tamils seeking asylum throughout Western Europe.

India has sent back 36,000 Tamils, many forcibly, to refugee camps within Sri Lanka as their homes are war zones.

17 year rule

Presidential and Parliament elections are due around the year's end. The United National Party has been in power for 17 years now.

Recent draconian emergency regulations on the press highlight the danger that authoritarianism there could be a slide into dictator ship.

News of the government defeat in the South led to a slump in share prices at the Colombo Stock Exchange. It's hope that with the next set of elections they take a dive.

(The article in SO 59 was wrongly accredited, and was by K Govindan)

Sex: Tories favour ostrich position

A health promotion worker looks at the hysteria of sex education

THE LAST few weeks have seen repeated bouts of outraged tabloid newspapers, top Tories and assorted big ooms complaining over sex education.

Now most thinking people would logically respond to categorical inconsistencies: the prejudices (already the highest rate in Europe) and in numbers become HDV positive, by insisting that more information must be directed to those most at risk.

The Department of Health in its Health of the Nation policy, sets targets of reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS and cutting teenage pregnancies by 50% by 2000.

Prudish

But the Department of Education, House of Lords, and the tabloid press — happy to use sex to sell papers, but equally happy to exploit the indignation of prudish types who find it rude — are not run by logical or thinking people.

Education Secretary John Patten has forced schools to remove teaching of contraception, abortion and prevention of AIDS/HBV from the secondary school science curriculum, and made it possible for parents to keep their children out of any sex education classes.

He was swift to butt in to the first big row that erupted when a health promotion nurse, Sue Brady, giving sex education to 10 and 11 year olds in school in Leeds, dared actually to answer the questions the children raised.

Patients made it clear he would prefer the kids did not know the answers: in effect his policy is to reduce sex education to the traditional method — behind the proverbial bike-shed.

The second controversy surrounded the withdrawal of Your Pocket Guide to Sex, the Health Education Authority's booklet by Just 17 age shy uncle Nick Fisher, giving frank advice on contraception, protection against AIDS, and answering a wide range of other concerns and queries.

All copies of the pamphlet were withdrawn on instructions from Health Minister Brian Mawhinney after complaints in the House of Lords, the tabloid press and also members of the HEA board (rumoured to have been started by the Bishop of Peterborough). None of the critics in the age group aimed at the booklet — 16 to 25. Some of the complaints focused on the 'tartney' language used. But anyone who has heard House of Lords debates will be glad most of the information we need for our daily lives is not couched in the language of the average Lord.

Equally, anyone over 28 who has tried to involve themselves in a conversation with a group of 18 years olds will recognise the culture gap and loss of comprehension that can follow.

The average GCSE grade in English in Britain is an "F". When a group of 16 year old males were asked recently what 'penetrative sex' was, they said: "When you force her to have it."

The other complaint against the booklet was that it did not specify that a child should take place in a permanent, loving relationship. This school of thought, insisting that sex for pleasure is basically wrong, and that it should only take place for the purposes of procreation, is clearly held by only a small minority which misconstrues the health of the nation.

Such zealots have a right to live their lives, but no right to tell others how to live.

In any event we all know that what for one generation was allowed to tell young people about sex, teenagers will continue to be told in the same way. This is not a problem that will go away if ignored.

However there is a more sinister political threat behind the crude and hypocritical headlines — from same tabloids which a few weeks ago were reveling in the steamy details of Gillian Taylforth's Range Rover blow-job libel case.

Running for cover

Why did the Health Education Authority, which commissioned the booklet, not stand by its decision?

The explanation is that the Tory government holds the purse strings on the HEA, and decides each year how much to allocate to health promotion. This financial year's allocation has still not been agreed — even though we are well into April.

Under this blackmail, the HEA is held politically under the thumb of Tory ministers. This is also why there is so little informed discussion of the links between social class, poverty and sex education.

The HEA has been forced to walk a tightrope, oozing out of the gutter to promote better health while not criticizing government policy which the HEA considers the poorest.

By following the whip again over this booklet, the Tories have again tightened the gag on the HEA, which wins neither effectively subscribing to the view that health promotion is an individual issue rather than one of social policy.

No sex please, we're Tories: Patten

The same group said that "a peer group was a group of people at the end of a peer."
**Dramatic cure for Major depression**

**Beautiful Thing** by Jonathan Harvey, performed by the Bush Theatre Company at the Donmar Warehouse, Covent Garden until April 23 then on tour. Reviewed by PETER PURTON

WHAT A JOY this is! What an achievement! 'Beautiful Thing' started its run at the Bush Theatre while the campaign to equalise the gay male age of consent was at its height. In the aftermath of its defeat, this wonderful play is the perfect antidote to depression.

Growing up poor, and living in south-east London, Thamesmead, are both pretty strong grounds for depression. Being a gay teenager as well could make this a story of misery and despair — as indeed so many works of art and literature on this theme have been. Instead, this is a triumphantly uplifting and hilariously funny as well.

The young cast of five play out the drama as Amelia Brown's Sandra (a burkha) struggles to provide for her schoolboy son Jamie (Mark Letheren). Next door lives Leah (Sophie Stanton), expelled from school and in the house on her own most of the time, heavily addicted to Moma Cas, and on the other side Sia (Shann Dingwall), a schoolmate of Jamie's, whose alcoholic father has a habit of regularly beating him up.

To top off the list, Sandra's latchkey boyfriend (Richard Boneville) is a self-proclaimed artist and complete clown.

This may not sound like promising material, but Jonathan Harvey's play spins it into a tale of young love blossoming between Jamie and Leah amid all the hardship daily realities.

Moments of drama and deep emotion mingle with delightful comedy — none more so than the scenes where Tony, the new boy friend tries to "talk to" Jamie about his life and things, or that where they all try to cope with Leah high on speed. Even 'The Sound of Music' has a part to play.

Reviews usually criticise, but this play is so good that it blows away the weaknesses in a deluge of delight. Being a young gay — and even living in south-east London — in early 90s Britain clearly isn't all bad. See 'Beautiful Thing' and believe it!

**Finding key to the present in the past**

**War in Eastern Europe: Travels Through the Balkans in 1915** by John Reed. Published by Phoenix. Reviewed by GEOFF RYAN.

John Reed is best known to socialists for his classic Ten Days That Shook the World. He is perhaps better known to a wider audience from his portrayal by Warren Beatty in the film Reds. In 1915 he travelled extensively throughout Eastern Europe. The reappearance of this account of his experiences is very welcome as it has been out of print virtually since it was first published in 1916.

Like the best socialist writers Reed relates to a wide variety of human experiences. He describes the horrors of war, the typhus epidemic raging through Serbia, the conditions of the Jewish town of Rosm in the Plateau settlement and, with equal fluency, paints vivid portraits of individuals, crowds or scenery.

My favourite chapters are those on Constantinople. Not only does he give a wonderful picture of the city but also shows the hypocrisy of the war.

Despite Turkey being allied to the Central Powers, English, French, Russian and American officials mix freely with the Germans, Austrians and Turks with whom they are supposedly at war.

Members of the Turkish ruling class are expected to buy themselves out of military service failure to do so would be seen as an admission they were broke!

**Single parents: proud to be poor?**

**Soul Providers:** (Writings by Single Parents). Edited by Gil McNeill. Published by Virago. Reviewed by Sue Woodford.

The timely publication of Soul Providers comes as both rumours and suggested plans by the present government are being taken up by the media.

The possible cessation or reduction of child benefit for single parents after the first child is an example. Another is the loss of prioritised access to low cost local authority housing for single parents.

The status of the single parent, never high in a culture which prefers to see itself as made up of predominantly nuclear families, has still further been dissected. The Conservative government is seeking ideological scapegoats to blame for its gradual clawback of funds from important social infrastructures.

By using the writing of the parents themselves this book does indeed go beyond statistics and allows the reader to journey through the various lives of a group of such parents and share the experience of both their achievements as well as their pain.

Its editor, Gil McNeill, wishes it to be a celebration of skills, dedication, resourcefulness and sheer hard work. For me, reading Soul Providers was a very moving and uplifting experience.

A single parent myself, I kept recognising small fragments of other people's stories that I also had known, an incident here, a similar feeling there.

Unfortunately I was already convinced of what most of the book is trying to say in order to carry out its task of debunking myths about single parents. Somewhat it will have to reach out to those who read myth accepting others out there.

The point that this book fails to address, however, is the one which is most commonly mentioned by the single parent contributors, namely poverty.

As a single parent who has experienced this poverty I can assure you it is nothing to celebrate. By housing the individual or individual family unit, the possibility of cooperative support, planning and responsibility by society for all children is lost.

Several of the contributors comment on positive alternatives in society or in extended cooperative groupings but there is no attempt to draw out any analysis from these approaches. Ultimately there is left with my glow of linked companionship, my poverty and a metaphorical pat on the back.

Only by radically changing society's allocation of resources can parents and children be enabled to make parenting a real success. That requires a revolution of class interests: sequel perhaps, Virago?
 Courts open lid on British nuclear dustbin

by Bala Kumar

GREENPEACE has lost its legal battle to delay the operation of THORP.

Justice Potas ruled that the government had not acted "unreasonably and irrationally" in approving the Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant (THORP) without first holding a public inquiry.

A record 64,000 objections to its coming were received from the public.

This overwhelming concern was echoed in its judgment on the grounds that £2.85 billion had been spent building the installation and that billions of pounds of orders awaited. THORP's purpose is to extract uranium and plutonium from radio-active waste from reprocessing and to store military use while disposing of the waste itself.

However, as Paul Lenderland of the Nuclear Control Institute said, "Who will guarantee the safety, security and peaceful use of this extraordinary material during its shelf life of hundreds of thousands of years?"

Certainly the owner of the place, British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL), can't be trusted when they have placed profit margins above the health and safety of the workers, who pay for their retirement and the residents of Sellafield in Cumbria, where THORP is located.

On top of the high incidence of leukaemia among children in the region, one study estimates 600 deaths from cancer worldwide within the first ten years of the plant's operation.

Waste to be reprocessed would be transported across great distances increasing the risk that these consignments could be hijacked by terrorists because of lead and carbon waste that they contain.

Thus the domestic nuclear industry will be a major customer, so will countries like Germany, Japan and Switzerland. Many western European countries with high environmental standards and vocabularies are dumping waste they can't or won't store themselves, on Britain.

The British government seems quite willing to make Britain a nuclear dump. As long as science is unable to treat nuclear waste and its presence is a hazard to lives and livelihoods, nuclear power is an unacceptable source of energy.

Meanwhile the traditional alternatives like oil, gas and coal are themselves major sources of pollution. They contribute to a global warming and acid rain.

The £1 billion subsidy the government gives the nuclear industry annually should be used instead to fund research into renewable and clean forms of energy.

The campaign to shut down THORP often saw trade unions and environmental groups at loggerheads. Trade union officials were actively supporting BNFL to protect the 5,000 jobs that would be created at Sellafield. But at what price do they accept this?

Meanwhile the green lobby who were denounced as "ecofundamentalists" must take seriously the consequences on communities of mass unemployment.

Both camps must bury the green movements and start talking to each other. We need to combine each other's skills to begin the conversion of these industries to socially useful ends.

As for THORP, people who are exporting waste to Britain have begun campaigning for the cancellation of these orders. That would defeat the economic rationale for the plant's operation.

We haven't lost the battle to close THORP, we've only just begun.

Further information from: Stop THORP Campaign, BOX 33, 136-138 Kingsland High Street, London, E9

Together we can stop the Hawks

Protest outside the 1994 British Aerospace AGM

IN SPITE of 200,000 killed in East Timor British Aerospace (BAe) continued to sell Hawk ground attack aircraft to Indonesia.

Since the invasion of East Timor in 1975 one third of the population have been killed. The UN has voted that the occupation is illegal.

Despite evidence that previous Hawks sold have been used against the civilian population in East Ti- mor in 1993 BAe accepted an order for another 24.

The Hawks are due for delivery in 1996.

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade will be launching its Alternative Shareholders Report, which will argue for conversion and highlight the results of alternative military equipment.

Join the protest outside the AGM, 12 noon, April 25th, Grevener Square, London.

Facing mass unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-earned education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis - a crisis that has been created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically conscious to the point of maximising profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tony high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to frag- ment and weaken the resistance of the unemployed and the unemployed, by marketing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full power of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of "realism", effectively pro- claiming total surrender on every front, while denigrating any pretense that they of- fer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of reformism, seeking to make more improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook advocates reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class -- for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy -- can never be achieved under capital- ism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically and bureaucratically controlled and degenerat degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a Marxian current, not based on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state capitalism, nor on the tame, toothless version of "liberalism" beloved by think- tanks and the reformist "left", but to be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolu- tion. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which is part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politi- cally educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for United Front campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascists -- in which various left currents can work to- gether for a united front and the conditionality re- maining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country. Contact us now, get organised, and get ac- tive!

Please tell me more about Socialist Outlook

Yes, I want to become a Socialist Outlook supporter

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Send to Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

WHERE WE STAND

DEC 77
Real issues in Ireland debate

IT SEEMS TO ME that those Gibbons and Hughes say either too much or too little in their critique of the coverage of Ireland by Socialist Outlook, p.37. Their criticism of Macaulay/Coomen articles is in fact the assertion of an alternative line which the comrades are too shy to spell out.

That line is that we support the republican leadership: support a line of unity with Irish capitalism; support a false choice between a strategy of military adventures or political capitulation.

It means also supporting a line that goes beyond demon¬

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What's HAPPENING

Want your event included?

Send details by April 22 to What's Happening?
P.O. Box 3109, London N4 2UU.

APRIL

Friday 15

STOP the fascist Picket of Italian Embassy, 6.30-8pm

Saturday 16

CAMPAIGN Against the Child Support Act national conference at Kingsway College Sidmouth Street off Grays Inn Road Kings Cross WCI, details PO Box 227 NW6 5QU

END THE Blockade: Cuba Solidarity Campaign day school Conwy Hall Red Lion Square WC1, 10am-5pm.

Sunday 17

BERT JANOSCH plays benefit for campaign against M11 link 7.30pm Heathcote Arms Grove Green Road London SE1 E1 £4.50/£2.50 details 081 527 9857

Monday 18

STOP closure of GUY'S HOSPITAL. Campaign meetings every Monday, 7pm, Notting House, La¬

tone St, London SEI.

Wednesday 20

MEDIA WORKERS against the Nazis launch rally, with Tony Benn, John Pilger, Paul Foot, Darcus Howe, 7pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

Friday 22

CAMPAIGN Against the Arms Trade Candlelight Concert 7.30pm at Martin¬

in-the-fields Trafalgar Square Tickets £12/£9/£6 from 071 930 0089

REMEMBER Stephen Lawrence: Benefit Evening 7.30pm-2am, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, SW2. Tickets £5 in advance, £10 on the door.

Saturday 23

RACIAL VIOLENCE and Justice. People's Tribunal in memory of Stephen Lawrence, 10am-5pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

NEW Agendas for Peace and Justice - a Day for Edward Thompson, Ruskin College, Oxford, £5/£2.50, Contact: R. Bulkeley, 0865-56069

Sunday 24

NICARAGUA Solidarity Campaign screening of film Darzon, 12 noon, Phoenix cinema, High Rd, East Finchley, London N2. £3/£3.50

MOZAMBIQUE Angola Com¬

mittee AGM 11am - 3pm BDAA 22 The Ivorries 6-8 New¬

port Northampton St Islington N1 tube: Highbury & Islington

Tuesday 26

LOBBY of British Aero¬

space AGM Marriot Hotel Grosvenor Square W1

Thursday 28

MARCH to commemorate Inter¬

national Workers Memo¬

rial Day 12.00 Euston Station to Parliament details Construction Safety Campaign 071 537 7220

CAMPAIGN Against Haz¬

ards in London meeting 2.30pm - 6.30pm Church House Dean's Yard off Great Smith Street details 071 226 5436

LOBBY of Parliament against deregulation 2.30pm - 7.30pm

GATT, Globalisation and People's Resistance. Meeting called by LONDON, 6.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Details 071-713-7007

JAZZ NIGHT for Nicaragua with The Westbrook Trio, Annie Whitehouse's "RUDE", Keith Tippe, Zubob, 8pm midnight, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC.1 6.30/£6.50.

Sat 30

LIBERATION/ editorial meeting 11am sharp South Manchester

LEEDS TUC May Day march and rally 11.30am assemble outside the art gallery

MAY

Sunday 1

MAY DAY FAMILY Festival with live bands, top com¬

ics, food, beer, labour movement speakers. MARCH from Kennington to SERTUC Rally on Clapham Common. Assembly 12 noon.

Saturday 7

GERMANy's role in Europe: day-long seminar with Peter Gowan (New Socialist Outlook) and Gut¬

ter Minnerup & Gus Fagan (Labour Force on Eastern Europe). Details: Peter on 071 807 2789

Tuesday 10

Manchester SOCIALIST OUTLOOK educational on Cuba, Vietnam and China, 8pm, Unicorn pub, Church St

Wednesday 11

ANGOLA Emergency Campaign Lobby of Parlia¬

ment 7pm Committee room booked in the name of Bob Hughes MS Details: 071 387 6771

Sat 21

NATIONAL free speech day - picket your local McDonald's details London Greenspeace 5 Caledonian Road N1 0DX

Saturday 28

ANTI NAZI League Carnival march from Kennington Park to carnival in Brockwell Park. South London Note venus changed again

JUNE

Saturday 4

DEMONSTRATE to close down Campfield Woodfield, Oxford

Saturday 11

FIGHT for Full Employment! Socialist Campaign Group Supporters Network confer¬

ence Manchester

by Jake Farring in Amsterdam

This year the Fourth International's youth summer camp will be in Areezo, near Florence, Italy (22-29 July)

Attended by 800 young people from Europe and beyond it is run by young people themselves.

Representatives of socia¬

lly youth groups from 14 European countries, in¬

duding Netherlands, Britain, recently met in Amsterdam to agree the programme.

There will be a chance to hear about the main struggles of young people in France and Portugal against government cuts and the deepening fight against racism.

In extending the anti¬

sexist context, there will look at the attacks on women's rights and against women and chil¬

dren, racism, trade union work, men and feminism plus much more.

Struggles against racism, "third world" exploita¬

tion, for democracy and for ecological alternatives, the new world order and imperialism will also be highlighted.

But its not just heavy policy.

Discussions include the bashing of drugs, AIDS and HIV; the integration of disabled people into soci¬

y; enjoying safer sex and more...

Lots of different social events will finish off days filled with a wide range of leisure activities, all in the heart of beautiful Tuscany.

Cheap transport from Britain is being organised by supporters of Libera¬

rit. The all-in cost will be around £150

** Next week our £35 Re¬

post, or write with two first class stamps to Libertyline, PO Box 1109, London NW4 2UW
Stop UN air strikes: troops out of Bosnia

Lift the Bosnia arms embargo!

UNITED NATIONS air strikes launched by American F16s against Serb forces in Gorazde were not an action in defence of Bosnia but a continuation of Western policy leading to the ethnic partition of the country.

To the extent that the western powers have a policy in Bosnia it is to end the war, stabilise the situation, get rid of a difficult political problem and prepare the conditions for the re-introduction of capital into the region.

They lack sufficient direct material interests in the region to have much stomach or direct involvement in the war. This is what has made western policy a vacillating mess from almost any standpoint, leaving even Paddy Ashdown looking decisive.

Although they have launched air strikes to stave off the imminent fall of Gorazde – which had been designated as a "UN safe area" – in the Bosnian Serbs, the UN had chosen to ignore the fall of the towns of Zvornik, Foca, and Visegrad over the past two weeks.

In fact the spring offensives of both Serb and Bosnian forces have been in progress for weeks and until now the UN have played down the implications of this for their policy.

The Serbs on the other hand have played their advantage to the hilt.

Cease fire

They exploited last week's one day cease fire to launch their offensive around Gorazde, using weapons moved from Sarajevo, and to capture strategic ground overlooking the town – which they want in order to securing that part of Eastern Bosnia and open a new route into Bosnian Serb-occupied areas to the South East.

Western policy is a mess, but no less dangerous for that.

The practical expression this policy has been the negotiations over the last week for a generalised cease fire between the Serbs and the Bosnian army.

This is a goal which links directly to Serbian interests since any cease-fire would freeze the current battle lines into borders under conditions where the Bosnian Serbs currently occupy 70% of Bosnia.

This is why the Serbs were prepared to accept the "ultimatum" in Sarajevo.

The UN air strikes carried out on Sunday therefore do not represent a defence of Bosnia but the continuation of a policy which will result on the destruction of Bosnia.

If the spring they represent a major and unacceptable escalation of western intervention in a region which is against the interests of all the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia.

Surrender

Bosnian government support for the air strikes is seriously misplaced. The UN acts directly on behalf of western powers who is seeking to force the Bosnians into surrender.

The UN is the instrument of that policy.

The only force which can defend Bosnia is the Bosnian army and the Bosnian working class and those who give it support.

The UN should get out of ex-Yugoslavia and allow the Bosnians to defend themselves. The Bosnian government has repeatedly called for the arms embargo to be lifted.

The effectiveness of the BH army if properly armed is not in doubt. Despite being confined to light weapons their spring offensive has been remarkably successful in some parts of the country. Substantial territory has been liberated in the North - to the north and west of Bregalnica and north of Travnik. Pressure has been relaxed on the small Bosnian enclave of Maglaj and the BH army has liberated Zepce.

At the same time the US and the West continue in pushing Bosnia into the reactionary federation with Croatia. Leading to the ethnic cannibalisation of what remains of Bosnia Herzegovina. Military intervention will increase the pressure in this direction.

The hardship of every day life remains a direct pressure on Bosnia to settle as well. Conditions in central Bosnia remain essentially the same as they have been for the past year, and most UN aid convoys have now been suspended as a result of the air strikes.

The role of the UN perpetuates this situation and imperialist leaders are happy to see it continue as a means of achieving western aims.

Until UN forces are out of ex-Yugoslavia and the Bosnians allowed arms in order to defend themselves and their country there cannot be a lasting peace in the region.

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