Lift the arms embargo!

Troops out of Bosnia!

JOHN MAJOR has won cross-party Commons support for his pledge to dispatch 6,000 more British troops to Bosnia: but far from being a policy for peace, this is a recipe for escalating violence.

The new forces to be sent, as part of a new 'rapid response' unit under joint UN/NATO control, will not be unarmed peace-keepers or deliverers of humanitarian aid: they will be heavily-armed troops ready and willing to kill people.

They will go in part to retaliate for the humiliation of seeing hundreds of British, French and other UN forces being taken hostage by Bosnian Serbs. But the British troops will be almost as impotent to shape events as were their blue-helmeted colleagues. Short of the deployment of truly massive military force – far bigger than any force that could be assembled by NATO or the UN – any troops on the ground will be vulnerable to the Bosnian Serbs – and potentially to the Croats and Bosnians.

In the worst case scenario they might have to fight their way in – and then eventually fight their way out again. The NATO plan to withdraw even the existing troops from the area involves the deployment of a massive 50,000 troops.

There are wide divisions between the key governments on precisely what the troops should do when they arrive, and how long they are supposed to stay. The US is urging on the Europeans, and offering to loan them aircraft, but wisely rejecting any involvement in what could be a prolonged, costly and hugely unpopular war. France vacillates between gung-ho calls to 'punch a corridor through to Sarajevo' and threatening to withdraw altogether.

All eyes are on the ambiguous tactics of Russia, which wants Western loans but supports the Serbs. But if the others pull out, there is a lingering danger of a Turkish intervention on the Bosnian side, triggering a possible Greek alliance with Serbia. Even as the British prepare to step in, Douglas Hurd has warned that the whole exercise could end in failure.

Of course those who have urged more drastic NATO air-strikes and military retaliation, especially against the brutality of the Bosnian Serb army, will hope that this external force will strike only against the Serbs.

For some, like those Bosnians trapped in the beleaguered enclaves, it is understandable that any intervention allegedly on their behalf could be seen as a lesser evil.

But this is an illusion. Only the Bosnian people themselves can guarantee the survival and democracy of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Nobody else can or will do it for them.

The Bosnian army has already begun to show that it is able to defend itself. Its early successes after the end of the winter cease-fire created a degree of panic among the Bosnian Serbs – leading to their new tactic of hostage-taking and pressure.

It is vital for Bosnia that the embargo on arms supplies, which has hit them much harder than Serbia or Croatia, is immediately lifted.

External force

No democratic or just solution can be imposed through the external force of NATO guns: the UN line-up is more against the Bosnian people than it is against Bosnian Serbs.

Indeed any new UN/NATO ground forces would be committed to uphold the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina – and this means defending existing battle lines against any attempt by the Bosnians to roll back the Serbian and Croatian forces and recapture their own lost territory.

The military build-up favoured by John Major, Tony Blair and Paddy Ashdown threatens to trigger new disasters for Bosnia's long-suffering people.

It will not bring self-determination, but will seek to consolidate a brutal carve-up of the most multi-ethnic and secular of the republics of ex-Yugoslavia, bringing the danger of a new wave of ethnic cleansing.

No troops to Bosnia. Lift the arms embargo!
André Lommen, of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, witnessed the recent shelling of Tuzla

Terror attack slaughters 68

Thursday May 25th,

8:30 PM. Everything has been quiet for more than a week in Tuzla. The weather is perfect; a sunny, late spring day. A perfect day for a picnic.

Many young people meet here; they have no money or opportunity to do anything else. Discos are closed, there are no other amusements. As always, the centre of activity is Kapija, an old square, which is filled with people, most of them between 18 and 25 years old. There is no indication that a disaster is about to happen.

Six people are studying Bosnian in the HCA office. Around 9pm there is a big bang. Everybody drops to the floor. Panic. Seconds later, you can hear the screaming, the moaning. People come in to the office, most of them hysterical.

A girl is brought in, wounded in her left leg. Fortunately it is not severe. She’s been lucky.

Slowly information dribbles in. A grenade fell in the middle of Kapija, two people were killed and three Bosnian Serbs on Mount Majadja twenty kilometres east of Tuzla.

Reaction

The shelling is the reaction of a Serbian unit to the knocking down of Pali by NATO forces.

The number of casualties is not immediately clear. Ten, maybe even twenty people dead and many more wounded. But, after one and a half hours, when I have gathered enough courage to look outside, I can easily see that these are low estimates. People are covered with white sheets, drenched with blood, which are used to cover the dead. I count at least forty of them.

Why we oppose UN/NATO attacks

By Roland Rance

Following the shelling of Tuzla by Bosnian Serb forces, International Workers’ Aid received several facts from contacts in Tuzla. We print an eye-witness account from a western aid worker.

IWA also received copies of texts sent by Tuzla’s mayor, Selimi Beslic, to the UN Security Council. After describing the massacre, he wrote:

“Tonight parents of Tuzla were collecting parts of their children’s bodies on the streets of Tuzla... there is no dilemma any more - the UN’s inaction participated in this crime.

“After this terrible crime you again stay silent; if after this you do not act using force as the only legal way left to protect innocent people from Karadzic Serbs’ crimes, then without any doubt you were and stay on the side of evil, darkness and fascism...”

“Surely there is only one possible action. You must bomb the artillery positions on the hills around Tuzla. You must bomb all the heavy weapons positions of Bosnian Serb forces in Bosnia.

“If you do not, there will be no difference between you and the killers of our children here.”

Although we share Mayor Beslic’s contempt for the UN Security Council, we oppose any attacks by NATO or the UN in ex-Yugoslavia.

Any such attacks would enable the Serbian forces to portray themselves as victims of imperialist aggression, they would encourage war-manias and chauvinist racism in our own countries, and they would be designed to impose one or other of the west’s ‘peace plans’ (ie carve-ups) in Bosnia.

Every intervention which has led to a worsening of the situation for the people of Bosnia, as well as for the forces of opposition within Serbia itself.

The governments which control NATO and the UN always supported the division of Bosnia along ethnic lines. They legitimised the racist project of Greater Serbia.

Their so-called ‘peace plans’ have all been designed to formalise this project. Any armed intervention which they cannot now is not in the “interests” of the people of Bosnia, but merely to protect their own forces and to save face.

The imperialist governments, alongside Russia, believe that they have the right to carve up the world and its peoples. They are the primary forces of ethnic cleansing and the division of Bosnia.

Socialists and opponents of imperialism must oppose the imperialist intervention, and argue that the ‘international community’ can play no progressive role in Bosnia or anywhere else in the world.

We call for immediate withdrawal of the Serbs. We also demand an end to the arms embargo, to enable the people of Bosnia to defend themselves, their families and communities against the murderous policies of both the forces of ethnic cleansing and the division of Bosnia being carried out by the forces of Greater Serbia.
You’ll get no change out of that Tony Blair

Will the real author please stand up?

WHO IS writing Tony Blair’s speeches? Commentators scrutinising the bold, right-wing policies of the Labour government have seized on numerous possible answers in the last few weeks, ranging from unavailing Tory politicians to Bank of England governor Eddie George.

One opinion, and Mr. Howard seems to supply a final draft for Blair to tuck away, is that he simply copies from John Major’s speeches.

But on the question of Europe the possible ring of authorship is clear. According to the Times, Blair’s most recent policy statement was written by Douglas Hart. Blair would like to have been able to deliver it. But the author could have been one of many. The Times estimates that Tony cabinet Eurosceptics “probably agree with” the words of the Labour leader’s lecture.

Possible suspects also include the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party and even the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. His speech programme could easily have been formulated by Herr Kohl’s European speech-writers.

There is no doubt that Blair’s brand of politics is everything more popular than the European bourgeoisie than it is among British bourgeois.

Blair was speaking on May 26 to an audience of several hundred people in Bame. Appropriately for its right-wing content, the speech was delivered in the Friedrichsriet Ebert Foundation building, named after the notorious right wing German SPD leader, who with Schlie mann and Hekia presided over the repression of the post WWI German revolution and the murder of socialists Rosa Luxembourg and KarlLiebknecht.

The burden of Blair’s speech was Labour’s total commitment to closer links with the bosses’ European Union, and in particular with its dominant driving force, the German bourgeoisie.

Maastricht

He promised that a Labour government would immediately sign up to the Maastricht Treaty, which imposes drastic restrictions on public spending and borrowing.

Blair is also committed - with reservations - to supporting a single European currency: all this is music to the ears of European businessmen irritated by John Major’s vacillations.

Small wonder, that, as Socialist Outlook and now the Times have pointed out, Blair is now the first choice of many EU leaders as the next Prime Minister, and they are planning to postpone the end of the Maastricht Treaty until after the next election.

How much lower can he go? The European Union is eager to see the end of the Maastricht Treaty, which imposes draconian restrictions on public spending and borrowing. Blair is also committed - with reservations - to supporting a single European currency: all this is music to the ears of European businessmen irritated by John Major’s vacillations.

Socialists have no choice but to step up the fight. They’ll get no change out of Tony Blair.

Conflict

Any government committed to maintaining this system is committed to conflict with those exploited by it.

Many of those union bureaucrats whose block votes against Clause Four set up the coming confrontation will have to contend with the anger of members forced to fight a government they are being told will solve their problems.

As Blair toughens up his fight for Tory policies, the challenge is for the left to organise throughout the Labour movement to fight back.

That’s why the June 17 conference ‘Socialist Policies for a Labour government’ supported by the Clause Four campaign, the Socialist Campaign Group and Tribun, is especially important.

Socialists have no choice but to step up the fight. They’ll get no change out of Tony Blair.
Students beat back the right

By Anthony Brain

ON MAY 30 the left won the big battle in defence of free state provided education. At the National Union of Students one day special conference it defeated a right wing proposal on education funding.

This is the first time in years that the right has been defeated. The vote went 60:40 in favour of the right to free education.

The left was able to make these gains largely because of the free education campaign.

It was organised as a single issue united front coalition and centered on mass action. It was also democratically organised.

The turning point of the conference was probably Clive Lewis’ speech. It was a clarion call for international action.

In the face of the declared need for coordinated protest with students in France, Germany and other European countries he received a standing ovation.

Up to now the popularity of the free education campaign has been one of its strengths. All tendencies have been allowed the right to express opinions and all decisions taken by majority votes. It was a shame therefore that at the conference fringe meeting Socialist Outlook and SWP speakers were not taken.

Things got even worse at the second meeting - conducted from the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty announced a national conference of the campaign on June 17. This was the first time anyone had heard of it. There had been no consultation.

Socialist Outlook urged unity of the campaign with the FASC campaign against school cuts.

It is important to bring the organised working class into play and link up with the parents and governors if we are to construct a powerful mass movement.

Now we have to forge international links and build for a one day international day of protest.

The struggles of students can act as a catalytic to mobilise the working class and its allies against the austerity or slash of capitalism.

Barclays Bank gets offensive

By Dave Carter

A SECRET contingency plan by Barclays shows how worried the bank is by the threat of a second one day stoppage. The bank intends to bring in a special force to back strikers, to withdraw staff loans and to photograph pickets.

The one day strike on May 30th stunned the bank. It was called by the normally docile In-house union Unif (formerly the Barclays group staff union) and supported by the TUC affiliated BUFU.

Unif are traditionally against the 2.75% imposed pay deal, but was a vehicle for staff to vent their anger at job issues at a time of record profits.

It was in effect against the macho management style of Chief Executive Martin Tonti-Tourte, who never worked in a bank in his life.

Barclays staff have a reputation for being the most “moderate” of the clearer bank employees so their action should not be underestimated.

Barclays Bank called its “emergency plan” in response to the march of BUFU.

The bank claims “only” 200 branches closed, but this is not big enough as it is relatively easy to provide a back up of managers or a few staff.

The strike was the most solid in the large corporate sector which control the cash machine network. These are being targeted by BUFU.

It is the spread of new technology that is enabling the banks to staid as many jobs. Ironically it is the work of these “high tech fakers” which now have the power to bring the bank to a standstill.

This is why the bank is forced to live in the consequences against strikers, yet at the same time claim the dispute was a failure.

The mood may spread to other banks. They could be next as demoralisation amongst the staff at all banks is at an all time high.

The banks created staff associations to combat the spread of trade unionism amongst their workforce.

It is high time that the leadership of the staff associations in companies, the TUC and the press becomes increasingly desperate to find issues on which they can go on the attack.

In this context, Labour’s local authority equal opportunities policies are a sitting target. Union members must be ready to defend them.

Not just any woman!

LABOUR’S National Executive is trying to impose all-woman shortlists of parliamentary candidates on Constituency Labour Parties in some marginal constituencies.

Here JANE KELLY opposes the imposing of shortlists.

WHILE socialists should support the right of Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) to select from an all-woman list, the real task is to select a left-wing candidate.

It is not surprising that the decide by Labour’s leadership — that some CLPs must select their candidate from a woman-only shortlist — caused a backlash. For the Blair team, getting more women candidates is a question of image, not policy.

For the right has come the recue that it will be hard for a woman to win “in this area”. Some women argue the old story of “women can’t win” except on their own merits.

In the face of these prejudices the leadership’s decision seemslausible. Some of these CLPs — which appear marginalized, likely to be won by Labour at the next election, should be set aside for women to win by having a woman-only shortlist. At the same time, we support the democratic right of CLPs to choose whom it wants as its candidate.

So now any woman selected and elected from a women-only shortlist will not be dependent on, or accountable to, any of the women’s structures in the Party. If she gets elected as a result of the leadership’s imposition of a shortlist, she will not feel accountable to the CLP either.

We should be opposed to any imposition on a CLP by the leadership, and support the fight against it — not to take the party to court, but to win the argument within both the unions and the party.

No politics

This is especially the case when Emily’s list, simply a version of the “all-party” attempt to get 500 women MPs in the 1980s, takes no account of the politics of the candidates.

Politics is the point. We are not in favour of just any women candidates. A right-winger is a right-winger, whatever their gender.

Does it make any difference that Harriet Harman is a woman? The support for the leadership down the line, only raises women’s issues within that framework, and doesn’t even fight for its specific minimum wage even though it would especially benefit women.

For feminists should be fighting for policies that give women more power: better jobs with equal pay, the right to choose free, safe, abortion and contraception, access to affordable housing, proper levels of benefits from the state for single others. Today only left women will fight for these things inside the Labour Party.

We should also fight attacks on the Labour Women’s Conference.

Only with greater power within the party, and the ability to link up with women in trades unisons and campaigns, will Labour’s women MPs be held accountable.

Islington council child care scandal: the truth behind the headlines

By Brian Gardener, Islington UNISON “A” Branch

A REPORT has made damning allegations against Islington council’s management of its child-care services.

The report by Oxfordshire’s Director of Social Services is an overview of 13 previous investigations. Many of the allegations contained within it are not new, and relate to the period when Margaret Hodge ran the council.

Her squeezing of social services into a dehumanising neighbourhood structure resulted in lack of specialist management and sex of child care issues.

During this period the NLCC, blankly warned Hodge that the structure she had invented would not work. Not only response was that “professional issues” were too complex for the trade union, and that it was entirely for councillors to decide how services were organised.

Following publication of an extremely critical report by the social services inspectors in 1994, the council beleaguered organised social services.

Some of the recommendations of the report are extremely worrying.

It is stated that over a period of 20 years, more than 32 staff have been guilty of some extremely serious allegations, including sexual and psychological abuse of children in care.

It states “It cannot be a coincident that a number of these were from ethnic minorities or gay men.

It goes on to popular prejudices by equating homosexuality to paedophilia and blames the council’s equal opportunities policies for creating a climate in which managers were afraid to dismiss black and gay male staff.

It also states that at this time a mass media attack on Islington and its culture of “political correctness” - the red line - was also part of the council’s policy.

The response of the present council leadership is to review its whole equal opportunities policy.

The national relevance of these issues cannot be underestimated.

As the national Labour leadership continues to clout itself in Tony policies, the trade union and the press becomes increasingly desperate to find issues on which can go on the attack.

In this context, Labour’s local authority equal opportunities policies are a sitting target. Union members must be ready to defend them.

Blame Hodge, not equal opportunities!
FACE prepares for next round in battle against school cuts

All out for September 30!

by Harry Sloan

JUST AS predicted by teaching unions - and by Education Secretary Gillian Shephard - up to 10,000 teaching jobs are set to disappear as a result of the squeeze of extra spending in education budgets across the country.

A campaign by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers has identified 4,600 threatened school jobs in schools - to which must be added the thousands of posts being shed through early retirement and the non-renewal of temporary and short-term contracts.

'Needs budgets'

Pressure is being piled on those head teachers and school governors who have stood out against cuts and opted for 'needs budgets'; but some are still standing firm.

Amid this evidence that the mobilisation of tens of thousands of parents, governors, school councils and other opponents to the government's education proposals has increased, the association for September 30.

"We won a lot of the arguments and the publicity battle against the present round of cuts, but our campaign was too late in starting," argues the new FACE Broadsheet.

"The campaign didn't really take off until after Christmas, and FACE was only launched in February. By that time massive cuts had already been decided by the government. The writing was on the wall."

The lesson, argue the FACE Steering Committee, is to get the retaliation in first, before the government policies have now been established.

"Of course it will not be easy to keep the campaign active through the long summer vacation period without the focus of fighting specific new cuts.

However the autumn term will bring many parents, governors and teachers up against the new reality created by the present round of cuts.

New wave

September 30 will aim to focus on a new wave of anger, and raise the level of battle in the next few weeks. Already there are predictions that the next round of cuts in many counties will be far more draconian than those now hitting schools.

"We have to convince people that the time to act is now, before it is too late," says NUT Executive member and FACE treasurer Roy Leach.

"The government is a march on us last year, and that is once too often. Children are now paying the price. We are not going to let that happen again. September 30 is going to be the day we turn the tide of education cuts.

The June 10 conference will aim to consolidate the widespread support of local campaigns and groups which have sprung up across the country, and to develop the debate on policy for the fight ahead.

It will be clear that FACE is now growing in several areas of London and in other big cities where the cuts have developed in a different way from the shire counties, and there are possibilities of a breakthrough into Scotland, where Strathclyde Labour council is developing its own cuts package.

The new FACE Broadsheet is available, 50p including P&P, from FACE, 60 St Giles Middle School, Hayes Lane, Enfield, Coventry CV7 9NS. Affiliation to FACE is £25 (org) £10 (individual).

- The National Union of Teachers ballot on strike action against increasing class sizes is due to be completed just after Socialists Outlook goes to press.

Early indications are that the frenzied witch-hunt mounted by General Secretary against any notion of action, coupled with the threats from the National Association of Head Teachers to intimidate and victimise striking teachers may have taken their toll.

Picking up the pieces after Clause Four setback

Unite the left to fight Blair

by Pete Firmin

THE JUNE 17 conference called by the Defend Clause Four campaign and Tribune providers an opportunity for the left to both assess where the defeat over Clause Four leaves it, and to begin to prepare for the coming battles.

Tony Blair has hardly rested on his laurels since his "defining moment" in defeating clause four on April 29.

In his contribution to the bosses' conference in Scotland he assured his audience that a Labour government would keep the Tory anti-union laws.

He has to have got an agreement with the TUC not to put a figure on the minimum wage in advance of the general election - and to give the bosses a key say in what the eventual level is to be.

The local council election results have put wind in the leadership's sails. While trying

with the hated architect of the policies, Thatcher herself.

But outside the confines of Walworth Road the desire for action is spreading way beyond the traditional sections of the labour movement - the REN Bank strike and the RCN's contemplation of industrial action are expressions of a growing mood.

Blair is mistaken to believe that ditching support for FACF has set its sights on even bigger campaigns beginning in September

UNISON test for left

UNISON's second conference on May 27 was the third of possible industrial action in the NHS. Further privatisation of hospital services, and the opening shots in the General Secretary's battles with mass disaffection with conditions in hospitals. Hospital nurses and privatisation of hospital services, there has been no such an opportunity to organise industrial action for a long time. The national leadership has at last began to respond to the growing mood in favour of action by planning an administration against cuts on October 4.

The demo should be used as a springboard for a national day of action with the public services in defence of the welfare state before the election.

The conference will be the first serious challenge for the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Labour Party. The conference has already called a national meeting in the summer.

This means beginning to link the fight around policies with support for struggles taking place, and making clear that while we are unequivocal about wanting a Labour victory we are not prepared to give up our criticism of the disastrous policy Blair is pursuing.

This fight over Clause Four showed that the struggle in the Labour Party and the unions is inextricably linked, but also that Blair and his supporters are going to set the agenda in the coming period.

The defence of clause four brought together the Labour Party and trade union activists in a way which has not happened in a long time.

June 17 can build on that, laying the framework for an organisation across the whole labour movement that can tackle the political tasks ahead.

Praising Blair as 'best thing (for Tories) since Galtisall!

by Pete Firmin

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Blair is mistaken to believe that ditching support for clause four underlines his political movement. There are battles to be had on what the policy of a future Labour government should be. However, Blair has made it as clear as he will ignore decisions he does not like. It is not therefore surprising that the unions vote at conference.

This means ignoring the huge unpopularity of Tory policies - Blair has even been exchanging compliments
June 24: National Day Of Actions against detentions and deportations

Close down these prisons!

By Bill MacKeith
President Oxford Trades Union Council, Campaign to Close Campfield

Mayor of Campfield

THE NATIONAL Day of Actions is going to be a great success.

In towns centres and outside detention centres and prisons around the country pickets and vigils will be held to denounce the government's increasing use of detention and deportation of black people to internment and divide opposition.

The actions will also remember those like Jay Gamar who have died as a direct result of the government's violent racist policies.

Over 10,000 people coming to Britain are detained in a single year in prisons, police cells and detention centres. Asylum seekers are detained without charge for an indefinite period without proper reasons given and with little chance of adequate legal advice.

In judicial terms, they are treated worse than those charged with crime.

Half of the 600-700 people detained at any one time are held in prisons such as Glasgow Greenock, where six Italian exiles are on hunger strike; Winson Green in Birmingham, where NUI member and newspaper editor Raghib Singh is held as a threat to national security; Belmarsh in Kent, where Kurdish leader Kani Yilmaz is held on similar grounds; Rochester, where a second 100 place 'detention wing' is being prepared; Manchester (ex-Strangeways); Holloway and Brixton.

There has been a recent expansion of detention places in Gatwick Airport. And up to 400 are held at the detention centres at Campfield (Oxford); Harmondsworth, north of London's Heathrow airport; HM Prison Haslar near Portsmouth and other places. This outrage has been denounced in special reports in the past six months by human rights bodies such as Amnesty International and Liberty, as well as by organisations of migrants and refugees and by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants.

DAMNING
The report on Campfield by the chief inspector of prisons Judge Tumini was damning. Of course to call for closure was outside Tumini's remit.

Home Secretary Michael Howard's proposed immigration legislation would mean even more internal policing - by employers, nurses, doctors, teachers and DSS officials.

But the Labour Party leadership is hell bent on playing the same race-bait cards in the general election game as the government is now showing in its hand.

To judge from Jack Straw's remarks upon Charles Clarke's resignation from the government on a get tough platform, it will be compliance.

And have we heard any Labour leader call for a halt, let alone a reversal of the never ending programme of new detention centres and 'detention wings'? More than ever it is vital for trade union, local Labour Party and other organisations to refuse to accept the Blair/Straw line and demand that it be reversed.

Last month the annual conference of Trades Councils in Bristol carried a resolution from the Oxfordshire County Association calling for all detention centres to be closed and an end to detentions. Now it should be a priority for activists to move resolutions in advance of the Labour Party and trade unions' national conferences and executives.

During June and July there is to be special activities in support for migrants and refugees in Europe.

The National Day of Actions in Britain on the 24th comes at an appropriate time. Readers are urged to join or organise events on that day at detention centres, prisons (over 20 regularly hold immigration detainees), or town centre near you.

Please phone 0171-837 1450 or 01865 724452 to give or receive more information.

Immigration controls can kill!

By Simon Deville

Since the Asylum and Immigration Act became law in 1993 the number of people detained has more than doubled. Over 10,000 people are detained every year and around 800-700 are detained at any one time.

These detainees are held in specially built detention centres such as Harmondsworth or Campfield, or in prisons. Although the Home Office designated particular prisons for the purpose, most medium to large sized prisons will hold immigration detainees. Immigration detainees can be held without charge for indefinite periods.

Even when refugees aren't locked up, they are forced to live in fear with the threat of deportation hanging over them. People fleeing oppressive regimes will often face repression on being detained simply because they tried to leave their country of origin.

Now police powers that have already been introduced, or are currently being proposed, are targeted at black and immigrant communities. Police have already started using these powers to harass black people on the grounds that they suspect them of being "illegal immigrants".

Such is the climate of fear created amongst immigrant communities that a number of people have committed suicide rather than face deportation.

Last year in Hackney Kewenlie Stihca climbed out of a window and fell to her death when the police knocked on her door, as she thought they were immigration officials. There are numerous such incidents.

In September last year nine Tamil refugees were found dead on the Polish-German border. They were part of a group of 22 who tried to cross the river during the night. They had no safe route in to "Fortress Europe", and a number of them couldn't swim so they formed a human chain, but the chain broke.

Last month's Annual Conference of Trades Councils called on closures of all detention centres and for an end to immigration detention. A Day of Actions has been called around all detention centres and designated prisons for June 24.

Campaign

Of course, these actions in themselves will not end immigration controls, but they can be used to build a mass campaign throughout the labour movement.

In particular we should campaign to commit a future Labour government to such a policy and to build a movement that ensures Labour carries out its policy.

The European network UNITED is also calling for a European wide day of action in support of refugees on June 16. Activists in Britain are asked to bombard the German and French embassies with fax, telephone calls, letters.

It is significant that right wing nationalists are far more organised and co-ordinated on a European level than left wing nationalists.

This is because they see quite clearly that their class interests are served by a strong, reactionary Europe.

It's time that the left started to use initiatives such as this day of action to develop a European wide movement to oppose this reactionary project.
Danish nurses lead the pay fightback

By Bodil Rasmussen

THOUSANDS of Danish nurses have been locked out following industrial action.

47,000 nurses have been up against both their employers and the government since May 1 over a pay claim. Not content with the miserable 3.5 per cent over two years being offered to all government employees accepted by the Municipal and County Councils' (KTO) they have begun a campaign for a decent increase.

One day strikes and working to rule were met by the lockout of thousands of nurses from the hospital employees' councils which negotiate on behalf of the municipalities.

The Social Democrat government then passed a law forcing the nurses to return to work on the same terms they had already rejected.

Government intervention was immediately met by nurses protests. 12,000 nurses demonstrated in Copenhagen. There were buses from all over the country. Another 450 from northern Jutland arrived in specially chartered aeroplanes.

A special commission has been set up to analyse the system of wages within the public sector. Many consider the commission an attempt to introduce new individual wage agreements. So-called "flexibility" is at the top of the government and employers' agendas.

Poul Bjørn Berg, a nurse from Aarhus active in his local campaigns, told us: "The talk is all about efficiency, increased hours and increased flexibility - it is a provocation. We have always been very flexible and have always accepted a large amount of overtime. We want a better basic salary, not more overtime.

The nurses are responding with a work to rule. This includes:

■ demanding work time tables four weeks ahead
■ demanding written notice of overtime the day before the work
■ demanding cancelled overtime is paid when it is withdrawn at the last minute.

Flexible

A shop steward in Gladsaxe Police Nielsen comments: "This shows the extent nurses have already been working very flexible hours.

The employers now have to keep to the rules and pay overtime wages. This will be both difficult and expensive for them."

Going to temporary agency work has been another popular form of protest. "Young nurses think that this is a good way of hitting back" says Bjørn Berg, "they are really angry and find this step very attractive. But it is a poor idea - we need a strong collective presence in a workplace acting as a united group to win our demands. It is also a problem that a lot of rights, like pensions and childcare, do not exist for those working for agencies."

The nurses' action has not been supported by other public sector unions in the KTO- cooperation. Many nurses are now contemploting withdrawal from the alliance.

"Instead of pulling out we should stay and try to make the other groups fight for their claims," argues Bjørn Berg, "during the struggle a lot of nursing assistants have realised the character of their own leaderships. Now they are going to fight for higher wages - we should stand shoulder to shoulder with them."

Nevertheless it has been a weakness that the nurses have been on strike almost alone. Now the inspiration must be spread to other groups of workers.

If the nurses are seen to win better conditions because of their action others will be more likely to follow the lead. Now we must take forward the challenge to unite around opposition to the employers and end the divisibity between the public sector union.

■ Reprinted from Socialist International information paper of the SAP, Danish section of the Fourth International.

Labour, imperialism and "neutrality" in Ireland

By Simon Deville

IN RECENT years the Labour Party leadership has hardly forged its identity through clear statements of policy commitment. One area in which it has become categorically clear, however, is in relation to Ireland and the "peace process."

The central thrust of the leadership's position is that they have absolutely no differences with the Taoiseach.

This is not just in terms of acceptance of the general principles of the "Free Lance document", but even down to Major's insistence on the Republic's unilateral decommissioning of arms, an amnesty for political prisoners, and even Major's condemnation of Gerry Adams' visit to the White House.

Although Labour adopted a formal commitment to a united Ireland in 1981, which was further elaborated in the "democratic socialist program" published in September 1988, Labour has never developed a policy that challenges the role of British imperialism in Ireland.

The "commitment" to a united Ireland never went beyond that of the SDLP or any of the parties in the 26 counties. Under pressure from the developing mass movement around the hunger strikes and the loss of votes of Irish living in Britain, Labour now has a formal commitment, while at the same time avoiding any concrete proposals for a British withdrawal, while denouncing the nationalists who were trying British imperialism.

The appointment of Mo Mowlam as Labour's Shadow Secretary for Northern Ireland marked a decisive shift in Labour Party policy on Ireland. As the Independent put it, "a central part of her job is to explain why the government is right."

Labour policy has effectively moved from the "constitutional nationalist" camp to that of the overt pro-imperialists. The formal commitment to a united Ireland has been dropped without discussion.

According to Mowlam: "I understand that the language of the [framework] document is nationalistic, but once the Unionists get beyond that, there is plenty for them to talk about. It is important that in any talks the Maginot line is also on the table."

"Impartial"

Thus the Labour leadership is claiming the same role that British imperialism has always claimed in respect to its oldest colony, that of an "impartial" peacekeeper caught between two "backward warring factions."

According to this view, the Unionists' demand to maintain their position of minor privilege over Catholics and nationalists in the six counties is no less valid than the nationalists' demand for national self-determination.

This shift in policy raises some fundamental questions, firstly over democracy and how Labour policy is increasingly being changed at the whim of the party leadership in contradiction to democratic and elected policy.

The framework document offers no solution to the national question. Partition was established precisely to divide and rule the Irish masses and cover up the role of British imperialism.

For sections of the existing republican leadership to be taken on board in this process may further hide the role of British imperialism, but it will not resolve the question of oppression of nationalists in the North.

Weakness

One of the important problems in all of this is the inability of the left in Britain to oppose "our own" imperialism.

The largest section of the anti-imperialist movement, the Troops Out Movement, has little basis within the trade unions of Labour Party. The Labour Committee on Ireland is now semi-detached. Much of the rest of the left has been thrown even further into confusion over the whole "peace process."

Such is the conclusion that Malignant Labour now describes the Progressive Unionist Party, the political wing of the Ulster Volunteer Force (the sectarian gangsters with the closest links to MI5 and to fascist groups in Britain and Europe) as socialist.

The lack of opposition to Labour's turn shows the need for anti-imperialists to organise a strong current within the Labour Party and the broader labour movement to demand a British withdrawal and end to partition.

If the current demobilisation of nationalists in Ireland continues, this may prove an extremely difficult task at present, but it will remain a necessary task for all socialists.

THE TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT AMD is deciding to relaunch TULIM, a campaign against labour movement bipartisanism.

CAMDEN IRISH CENTRE Weds June 28: Irish Peace Initiatives launch with Michael McLoughlin.
Genocide in the
land of a thousand
hills

By Balu Kumar

"Imana yirirwa ahandikare I
Rwanda: God spends the
day elsewhere but always
comes back to spend the
night in Rwanda".
(Rwandan proverb)

CAN WE even begin to comprehend what has happened in Rwanda?
In a country between the size of Wales and Belgium, one million
people were killed after April 6th 1994. One out of every seven inhabi-
tants had lost a family member as a result of the genocide and 80%
of the minority Tutsi community.

What shocked us as much as the attempted genocide of an entire people
was our helplessness to do anything about it. "Call in the United Nations" non-governmental
organisations demanded, fuming that the several hundred UN troops were to
called out.

"An African peace force" pleaded others, critical of the UN record in Somalia let alone its role in the
Congo two generations ago. Yet the killings and atrocities only
stopped when the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had driven out the
Kigali government and its mur-
derous regimes, the Rwandan army and the Hutu supremacist quillins to the
borders.

Myth of tribalism
Colonized first by the Germans and later the Belgians, Rwanda's
present grief has much to do with the transformation of its economy and
society in that period. The Banyar-
wanda or people of Rwanda are
drawn from three communities; Hutu, Tutsi and Twa.

Census figures always unreliable suggest their proportions in the
population were up till last year 90
per cent, 9 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. What is not in doubt is that it is
unethical to view recent events in Rwanda and for that matter in the
sub-continent through the prism of "tribalism".

Tribes is the historical and scien-
tific sense has long since ceased to exist in most of Africa along with their
mode of production.

This word is not indigenous to African languages and was intro-
duced by the British following their encounter with certain tribes in
South Asia.

It is a word so loaded with racist and imperialist connotations that it
compromises all who use it. For better

ter is the term "ethnicity" which has
the merit of allowing for the dyna-
mism in the formation of identities and its location in certain historical
moments.

In any case the Hutu and Tutsi are
not "tribes". All three communities
speak the same language, Kinyar-
wanda. They live among each other
sharing a common culture and tradi-
tions. The facile belief that all Tutsi are "tall and fair-skinned" and all
Hutu are "short and dark-skinned"
was conclusively disproved during the genocide when militias killed
Hutus mistakingly believing them to
be Tutsis.

In fact the most reliable method
these roaming gangs used was to de-
mantle to see a person's identity card
before deciding whether to kill.
Identity cards which were intro-
duced by the Belgians state the "eth-
nicity" of their bearer.

The Belgians had their own novel
way of deciding who belonged to
which category. They decreed in the
1950's that anyone with ten or morehead of cattle was Tutsi and the rest
were Hutu. Where they were right
was in the identification of cattle
with wealth and thus status in soci-
ety.

Where they were wrong (not that
it would have mattered to them) was
in seeing those identities as fixed,
rigid and impermeable.

Pre-colonial Rwanda like its twin Burundi, were societies in which pastoralists known as the Tutsi, mar-
ing cattle, exercised political domi-
nance over agriculturalists and non-cattle owners called the Hutu.

They had acquired this dominance probably from superior military
strength which marginalized the in-
digenous Twa who were hunter-gath-
erers and subjugated the farmers.

This process took place from the
15th century onwards and was con-
solidated by the 19th century. In fact it is more correct to interpret this as a
combination of caste and class rather than ethnic formation. What the Bel-
gians did was similar to what the
British did in India and that was to freeze unfinished social formations
and revive pre-capitalist institutions.

It had up till then been possible for mobility in this hierarchi-
cal society. Through a ceremony
called "kwihutara", a Hutu who had acquired many cattle and adopted
the ways of a Tutsi including
a Tutsi wife would cease to be a
Hutu and become a Tutsi instead.
Likewise a Tutsi who had fallen
on hard times, sold or lost his cattle and turned to subsistence farming
would lose his Tutsi identity and
come a Hutu. He would then be expected to marry a Hutu and his
children would be regarded as Hutus too.

So this oppressive system, in
which Tutsis were always overlords and Hutus their serfs, owing the for-
mer their labour and a proportion of their crop in return for parole,
had an inbuilt safety valve.

Colonial state
As a small coun-
try with vast terri-
tories to plunder,
Belgium opted for indirect rule through
making a minority group their agents. It also served to bind the Tutsis closer to the colonisers upon whom they were
now dependent for political survival.

Hutu chiefs in the north-west were
replaced by Tutsis. Belgian anthropologists and administrators gave
sanctuary to myths strewn the divine
gate of the Tutsi in rule and their
unique leadership qualities.

When the authorities wanted free
labour for their infrastructure
projects they used the Tutsi chiefs to
gulp Hutus, and the latter had
the Tutsi even more for it. However
some Hutus began through missionary
education and integration into
the colonial economy to enrich
democracy, and a middle class was
born which challenged their institu-
tionalised oppression.

Meanwhile in the 1950's, radical nationalist was overthrowing the col-

munist and in its wake anti-colonial
movements. Many Tutsi shared these ideas. Belgium was fearful of
losing its influence and it promptly
switched support to Hutu leaders.

Exclusively Hutu parties were
formed and from 1959 onwards at-
tacks between the two main com-
munities became commonplace.

The Hutu movement, which over-
threw in 1961 and Rwanda became
legally independent in 1962 under a
Hutu government. The tens of thousands of Banyarwanda were
thrown out of the country, they had
been singing out as Tutsi and they
began to identify themselves as such.

Thirty years later it was these
refugees some who had left as ba-
bies, who were to form the leader-
ship and core of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

Neo-Colonial Economy
Political changes were being matched by dramatic economic ones, principally the transformation in the agrarian system from food crop production to that of cash crops for export. In the 1920's coffee was introduced into Rwanda and by 1987 it constituted 79 per cent of export earnings.

Unlike tea which is the second largest export earner, coffee is
grown by small-holders. While coffee
prices were good and farmers received a guaranteed price for their
crop, the economy did well but the commodity price (which is set in London) began to fall in 1987. When the International Coffee Agreement which is a cartel of pro-
ducers fell apart in 1989, coffee lost
50 per cent of its value within a few
months. Farmers who had taken up coffee cultivation originally under coercion from the Belgians and later to survive under a capitalist rather than exchange system couldn't afford to buy food and couldn't eat coffee.

There were few alternative
means of livelihood for the rural
poor. A narrow band of sugar cane
industry was plunged into crisis and the door opened to intervention by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

Structural Adjustment Programme
In return for balance of payments support and loans from the
IMF and the World Bank, countries began a structural adjustment
programme in 1989. Western donor countries had made further disbursements of aid conditional upon neo-liberal eco-
nomic policies and with reduced revenue from its traditional exports and the regime's desperation to cling onto power it didn't argue.
On course to confront rich? RPF fighters exorted Hutus to kill, urged them “not to spare the children unless last time”. This was not some spontaneous outburst or “tribal frenzy”; it was a carefully planned and executed campaign.

When the so-called “international community of nations” that is the oppressors and exploiters of the world’s dead crocodile tears for the Rwandans we should recall that this is a tragedy for which they bear a heavy responsibility.

Refugees

As the new government which includes Hutu democratic parties but is dominated by the RPF rebuilds the country, an issue it must quickly face is the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced and the millions of refugees in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi.

In these refugee camps they are easy prey not only to disease and hunger but also to the chauvinist propaganda of Hutu extremists linked to the old regime. Many of the militia leaders and their families are sheltered here. They have been successful in persuading the refugees that they will be punished if they return to their homes.

Unfortunately the RPF has fuelled these genuine fears in the Kibeho massacre. Its troops were ordered to close down and evacuate a camp within its borders where extremists were in control when some refugees ran through RPF ranks, soldiers opened fire killing hundreds.

In the ensuing stampede thousands were trampled underfoot and the final toll may be over 5,000 dead. The new government has made a full apology for the atrocity and promised that soldiers would be punished.

It has accepted that an independent commission of inquiry has to examine the facts. The acid test of its “national” credentials will be whether it confronts the abuses committed by its own forces and take action to prevent its repetition.

Independent reports confirm that there have been few officially sponsored attacks on Hutus.

Where RPF soldiers are implicated, they tend to be those who joined last year in response to the murder of their families and for whom the pain and anger is greatest.

It seems that there are three viable options to the refugee dilemma.

1. They should be allowed to return, accompanied by human rights monitors to their homes, equipped with seed and tools and enough food until the next harvest.

2. They could be allowed to stay in the neighbouring countries and settle there, but retain their Rwandan nationality.

3. They could be naturalised as citizens in those countries and be given full and equal rights.

Rwandan Patriotic Front

It was inevitable that the RPF would be dominated by Tutsi. After all it was they who formed the majority of refugees and the opposition post 1959.

However the progressive aspect of the RPF is that it has seen itself since its formation as a liberation movement of all Rwandans. Its executive is majority Hutu and it has Hutu soldiers in its ranks. The RPF chairman, Colonel Alexis Kanyereyewe is himself a Hutu. It is more than symbolic that the President and Prime Minister appointed by the new government are themselves Hutu.

Although it is widely accepted that the key figure is Major-General Paul Kagame who is deputy President and Defence minister and a Tutsi.

The RPF in a multi-class formation. It was created to be as broad as possible and on a minimum platform of demands. There are three trends within the RPF.

Some would have liked nothing better than to ally with the Hutu elite and be part of the ruling class. There are others who insisted by the Majority regime in Uganda and favour an economy open to foreign capital but where instead of multi-partyism a strong state raises above ethnic association.

The third trend are those militants particularly from the student milieu who recognise that the neo-colonial economy which spawned the genocide remains intact and has to be dismantled.

Even if they are content to carry forward the modest eight point programme the RPF adopted in 1990, this sets them on course for a confrontation with the rich and the property owners who are the main target.

Cancel the debt!

Rwanda cannot be seen either in isolation from the rest of the region especially Burundi. Throughout this century events in one country have had impact on the other.

Their problems are similar and the way out equally applicable. If western countries really care about Rwanda and regret their role in the past they can demonstrate it by cancelling its foreign debt and returning the war criminals who now reside in the plush suburbs of Nairobi and Brussels to face trial.

In the genocide neighbour turned against neighbour. The victim and the attacker knew each other. Not everyone can or will be punished. The most important are the politicians, the army high command and the militia leaders of whom an example must be made.

Never again must there be a repeat of last year’s events. Never again must the criminals go unpunished.
French play for big stakes in Africa

by Charles Mullet

As the armies of the Rwandan Patriotic Front moved to take control of their country in the wake of the genocide in spring last year, France rushed troops to the region.

Their aim was to protect French interests in Central Africa, interests which involved a long-standing alliance with the forces in Rwanda responsible for the genocide.

The emergency deployment of French troops—covered by the usual made-to-measure United Nations mandate—was the latest in a series of some common misconceptions about today's world.

Firstly, the myth that the rich nations are not interested in Africa and that the notion that modern imperialism can live without its historic roots in crude colonialism.

The former French empire, apart from distant Indochina, was concentrated in a continuous swath of territory stretching from North to Central Africa. In the 1950s and 1960s, France ceded direct colonial control of this region to formally independent regimes over which it has strives to maintain a decisive influence ever since.

There is a junior minister for "Francochocism," the alliance of French-speaking countries is called, in the government in Paris. Francophone Africa's African members have been economically tied to France through the Community financière africaine (CFA - African Financial Community). At regular intervals, these countries' leaders assemble for mutual back-scratching summits.

Francophone Africa is a land of one-party states and sometimes even one-party dynasties, such as that of Bokassa in the Central African Republic or Mobutu in Zaire. This is an inevitable state of neo-colonialism. If the nation was democratic and popular, they would no longer be reliant on France for their survival. Despite occasional French criticism of the policies and programs, France has been consistent in its support for some states in the region.

Just like the Americans in Latin America, France wants to be in charge in Africa.

But, France is in all material respects a far weaker country than the United States. Since the Cold War it has only been able to pursue its "independent" policy thanks to US tolerance and with many concessions to the latter's global strategic framework.

Now, with rivalries between North America and Europe intensifying, the French ruling class knows that it has reached a strategic crossroads.

This is where Europe and the United States come in. Only through a common European defense and foreign policy can France find the resources necessary to sustain her role. But creating the institutions for a common policy requires bargaining with the European partners.

Unusually, Germany tends to be in favor of a stronger European Commission and Parliament in which national differences are blurred, while French President Chirac is in favor of a retention of the role of the national governments.

Europe is all very well, but there must still be a French army, and a French bomb under French control. Meanwhile, Africa suffers a multitude of plagues. Among them that of being cast in a supporting role in the psychodramas of imperial megalomania.

Is Burundi on the brink?

According to the May issue of Africa World Review there are more than seventy international journalists in the Central African state of Burundi, waiting to report on "genocide."

Our Belgian sister publication La Gauche interviewed Colette Braeckman about the parallels with Burundi's neighbours Rwanda, which saw such tragedy just over a year ago.

In the light of recent events, can we say that Burundi is on the way to another Rwanda?

There is a real fear of a similar bloody cycle. The situation is particularly worrying, as the world has become accustomed to the idea that Africa is becoming a bloodless continent, with which the character of the army and the military is defending the whole population, whether Hutu or Tutsi.

Are there Hutus in Burundi who want a Hutu president, or Tutsis who want a Tutsi president?

There are the Lolw (Nyongoma) and Tutsi leaders who have taken up arms and have guerrillas based in Zaire.

They have linked up with Rwandan militia who are well-armed and are, I think, supported by the Zairian leader Mobutu. These people have twice committed massacres.

The first time after the assassination of President Ndadaye in Burundi and the second when they were refugees in Rwanda. They have the same ideology as the Interahamwe.

Do they have popular support?

In some places including the district of the capital Bujumbura, they have support, if not at least some are protected. It is hard to know if the support is voluntary - there is almost certainly a mixture of ethnic solidarity and intimidation.

What is the army's role?

The UN Secretary-General's envoy in Burundi says that the military are defending the whole population, whether Hutu or Tutsi.

That's what the army wants people to think. It may perhaps be the desire of the leaders.

However, on the ground, there are family links with the Tutsi extremists. My impression is that the army repression is aimed at Hutus rather than Tutsis as a result of family ties.

This is the army which murdered President Ndadaye in Burundi and it does not control its own elements.

What power does the President have now?

The regime, and the President in particular, are very weak. They are torn by internal contradictions.

The President claims to dismiss Hutu extremists, but there is evidence that he keeps contacts with them. As the army says they destroy the Tutsi militia but also maintain contacts.

Will there be a national dialogue?

This is planned, but it has not yet begun. It is essential if things are to change for the better. The government power-sharing agreement must be applied. I don't think that as outside intervention could change anything.

Indeed, contextually, I think such an intervention would be highly dangerous. The army is against intervention and would fight it; it could bring about the very catastrophe which everyone is trying to avoid. The UN representative, Odd Abdullah has said he would resign if foreign troops are sent.

This is different from the situation in Rwanda, where I supported an intervention. There, the army and militia were massacring the unarmed population. In Burundi, the army says it wants to maintain calm. It must be forced to do so. Observeurs must be sent.

That said, the UN force did nothing. It was withdrawn when it should have intervened. Today it is still there, at a cost of many millions of dollars a day, but it is useless.

The governmental agreement was reached after the coup d'état. Some say it is simply to follow up to this coup.

It is clear that the agreement does not correspond to the results of the elections, which gave an absolute majority to Mr. Borelli. But the agreement reassures the Tutsi minority.

It is also the result of the balance of forces, because the Tutsis, although a minority, have strong presence in the bureaucracy, industry and trade.

Hutus have been recruited into the army over the past few years, but the military hierarchy is 100% Tutsi.

Have the fall in the price of coffee and the impact of structural adjustment programmes had the same destabilising impact in Burundi as in Rwanda?

Yes. Another destabilising factor has been the creation of a free-trade zone around Bujumbura. It is aimed at attracting foreign businesses.

They employ a small local labour force, but do not pay Burundian taxes. This zone was created with the support of the IMF and it plays a key role in the trade in gold and gemstones, especially from Zaire. Trade in gold is close to gold-smuggling. The zone attracts smugglers.
Interview with veteran revolutionary marxist ERNEST MANDEL

The old crisis and the new poverty

SINKING IN a trillion-dollar sea of debt, international capitalism is divided and uncertain over its future. GEORGE MAIDEN, a veteran leader of the Fourth International, discussed with ERNEST MANDEL, a veteran leader of the Fourth International.

THE cabinet of statistical indicators may be a cop-out, a resumption of growth. It seems real, but what is its depth and does it signify a resumption of capitalist growth in the medium term?

It is necessary to distinguish two kinds of fluctuation in the capitalist economy. There are not only short cycles, but also what are called "long waves", expansionary and depressive.

The long expansionary wave in general dominated the capitalist economy from 1949 until the late 1960s and early 1970s. The long depressive wave which began in 1973 is characterised by the fact that, independently of what happens conjuncturally, underlying unemployment has increased. Everyone knows that the official figures are false.

My estimate is that in the imperialist countries this figure is currently more than 50 million and that this is going to rise uninterruptedly. In the third world, the figure is in the hundreds of millions. To say the least, a wave must be added to the down and out, the marginalised, those living in what is called the "periphery" or "newly industrialising countries" who as well are numbered in the millions, and whose number is growing.

In the third world, the number cannot be estimated. It would be necessary to go back to the worst moment of the economic crisis of 1930 to find phenomena of this character. Those living below the poverty level in the imperialist countries represent, depending on the country, from 10 per cent to 30 per cent of the population, with a few exceptions. But exceptions, like Sweden and Switzerland, will not last long, for these are world phenomena. It is in the inability of the capitalist economy to halt this movement which justifies the use of the term long depressive wave.

In the countries of the third world, and in the countries of eastern Europe and Russia, this evolution is accompanied by a disastrous decline in the standard of living (for example, in Mexico, in the space of some years, the standard of living of the majority of people has fallen to what it was before the Second World War). In some countries, we are increasing use of child labour, a kind of semi-slavery, in new breaking conditions.

All this does not exclude a conjunctural movement inside the long depressive wave, for the latter does not imply a continual fall of production. Today there is unquestionably a revival of production in a series of imperialist countries, not in all cases at the same level. This presents an opportunity for the trade union movement, to say, like the German metalworkers, "production is increasing, profits are increasing, we want our share of the cake." It is then the moment to pose realistic demands.

We speak of a crisis of the consciousness of the proletariat. Today there is a crisis of leadership and of consciousness of the bourgeoise.

Mandel, with Alan Thornett (left) and Ann Conway (right), featured speakers at a Socialist Outlook rally in London.

long term growth, two conditions are necessary; an increase in profits, but also an enlargement of the market.

The capitalist regime cannot function on the basis of macro-economic indicators. Each commodity is specific and it has to be made to a specific demand. The producers of machine tools do not work for the consumers who buy shoes. We are confronted with a new theoretical problem.

Underestimated

Up until now, Marxists, including the Fourth International, have underestimated it; when we speak of the globalisation of the economy, it is as if there was a quasi-magical phenomenon, above relations between human beings. One of the great merits of Marx and Marxism is to understand that at the basis of any economic evolution - of all fundamental socio-economic relations - there are relations between human beings.

What has happened then? There has been an accentuated phenomenon of international concentration and centralisation of capital. But this is accompanied by a series of other phenomena, whose breadth must be appreciated. First, we are witnessing a partial "re-privatisation of money"; it is the consequence of the enormous power of multinational companies, which are increasingly escaping any kind of governmental control. The policy of devaluation as carried out by Reagan and Thatcher is not the cause of this phenomenon but precisely its consequence. To give the most important example of the significance of the phenomenon no one knows the volume of capital circulating on a world scale. What you don't know you can't control. As long as the expansionary long wave lasted, the phenomenon was circumscribed. But after the depressive long wave began, there was a coincidence between two phenomena. On the one hand, these multinationals disposing of enormous means, and on the other hand the narrow limits of productive investment. And in these conditions, we have seen what we call the phenomenon of over-liquidity; the transformation of a significant part of merchant capital into money capital, liquid or quasi-liquid capital. Which is shown through speculation, in the stock exchange or property.

Today the electronic means exist for almost instantaneous transfers of capital on the world scale. Again, we should quantify what we're talking about. Every working day on the exchange markets and those linked to them, business is done equivalent to the annual volume of world trade! This marketisation of capital also prolongs a phenomenon which had already existed. The capitalist economy, after the Second World War, launched itself on an ocean of debt, world indebtedness was colossal. Everybody speaks of the third world debt, but this debt, which concerns half the human race, is hardly 15 per cent of the total volume of debt! There is the debt of the imperialist enterprises, of the capital, which is the debt of households, there is the debt of non third world governments. These figures have become in calculable, representing some trillions of dollars of debt. And there again we touch on a fundamental phenomenon which explains why an easy exit from the long wave is not likely.

Multinationals

Speaking of multinationals, it is wrong to regard them as a "black": There is a phenomenon of concentration of multinationals, the figure is cited of some six hundred who predominate on a world market.

Some predict that it will be down to a hundred in a few years. This appears a little excessive to me, but you never know. The dollar is in free fall. And the absence of a hegemonic imperialist power has as a consequence the incapacity of the world bourgeoisie to impose solutions.

The meetings of G7 generally end up on a note of impotence, without any decision. We are accustomed to speaking of a crisis of the subjective factor, of a crisis of the consciousness, the leadership, of the proletariat. But today there is a crisis of leadership and of consciousness of the bourgeoisie. And this is a political reason that there is no easy exit from the long depressive wave likely for the moment.

* Taken from La Gauache.

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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Do we need another leader like Wilson?

by Geoff Ryan

Perhaps one of the worst crimes of Tony Blair is that he has made many people think back fondly on Harold Wilson. Because Blair is so reactionary, the recently deceased Wilson appears, by comparison, to have been a defender of working class interests. Yet the differences between Blair and Wilson are much more apparent than real.

Wilson, it is true, was opposed by some capitalist interests. Colonels Stirling and Walker talked of setting up private armaments organisations aoup. Peter Wright’s revelations in *Spycatcher* demonstrate how members of MI5 conspired against Wilson. But these were all relatively minor sectors of the capitalist state. The most important sections of the capitalist class by no means saw Wilson as a threat to their interests.

As Prime Minister Harold Wilson was certainly prepared to sanction significant amounts of government intervention – Blair clearly is not. Wilson created the National Enterprise Board, the National Board on Prices and Incomes, various offshoots of the National Economic Development Council, and other organs of class collaboration which appeared to give voice to the unions. Such bodies are anathema to Blair.

**Curb unions**

However, all Wilson’s efforts at state intervention had a single aim – defending capitalism. From the very beginning he pledged not just to regnerenate British (capitalist) industry, but also to cut the power of the unions (which was always described as ending “restrictive practices”).

In the 1960s and early 1970s the ruling class were quite content to use state intervention to safeguard capitalism – hence Wilson’s anti-interventionist measures, up to and including nationalisation.

In the 1990s the capitalist class (at least in Britain) have no interest in interventionism – hence Blair’s commitment to the logic of the market.

In other words, Wilson and Blair reflect not differences within the working class but differences within ruling class strategy. When the ruling class sanctions state intervention Labour leaders are interventionist - when capitalism opposes interventionism so does the leader of the Labour Party. Any independent working class strategy was as much absent under Harold Wilson as it will be under a Blair government.

Of course there were a number of important reforms under Wilson. The Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, liberalisation of abortion laws, and the liberalisation of laws against homosexuality were – for all their weaknesses – important gains. Capital punishment was abolished.

But their introductions owed little to any “progressive” policies on Harold Wilson’s part. Such reforms were introduced because women fought for Equal Pay and an end to discrimination. Black people fought back against racist immigration laws. Gay men refused to continue to be criminalised.

Reforms were even being proposed by Liberal leftists like David Steel. And, in the social and political climate of the 1960s and early 1970s, such moves were genuinely popular. A Labour government that had failed to back such measures would soon have found itself facing even greater levels of hostility than confronted Wilson.

Despite making some concessions on these social issues Wilson also adopted a tougher approach on other issues, particularly immigration. Under Wilson immigration laws became even more explicitly racist.

Wilson remained deeply committed to defending capitalist economic interests. In 1966, when confronted with a strike by members of the National Union of Seamen (sic) Wilson denounced “a small group of politically motivated men” (one of whom was a certain John Foyclone) and organised a massive witch-hunt against the strikers. Three years later, following strikes in the engineering industry, Wilson introduced his “In Place of Strife” anti-union proposals.

**Wage controls**

Massive working class opposition forced Wilson to withdraw his proposals. By then his government had lost sufficient support to allow a Tory victory in the 1970 election. But Wilson remained committed to tamting the unions. Re-elected in a new economic crisis in 1974, his government began by upholding Tory wage controls before imposing its own, more draconian wage cuts under the guise of the Social Contract – or “Social Contrac” as it was known at the time – which attempted to integrate trade union leaders in policing the working class.

After 1976, when Denis Healey had done his deal with the IMF, the mask was dropped, and the pretence of co-operation was replaced by naked wage controls.

Of course Blair’s approach to the unions is different. He makes no pretence of sitting down to “beer and sandwhiches” (not even chablis and caviar) with union leaders. But, again, the difference is more apparent than real. Wilson had no choice; the unions remained strong and able to mobilise active opposition. Even Heath had eventually to recognise that.

Capitalism in the 1960s and early 1970s was willing to integrate the union leaders. By the 1980s it was no longer prepared to do so. Thatcher took on and defeated the miners (aided by the passivity of the rest of the union leadership).

The union leaders were rapidly marginalised. They were no longer able to gain a hearing in Downing Street. In fact the only place they were able to make their voice heard, however feebly, was in Brussels – hence their newfound enthusiasm for the European Union.

Blair is hostile to the unions because that is what capitalism demands. If capitalism felt it necessary to incorporate the union leaders, as it did in the 1960s, Blair would no doubt adopt policies similar to Wilson.

Whilst Wilson aimed to make Britain safe for capitalism, he certainly didn’t confine himself to purely British affairs. Indeed, Wilson’s foreign policy was as reactionary as that of the post war Labour government had become under the direction of Cold Warrior Ernest Bevin.

Probably no government in the world was so enthusiastic about Blair’s claim that he has made many profound capitalist reforms. He modernised the Labour government’s brutal war against the people of Vietnam. Despite the opposition of the Daily Mirror, despite the opposition of the Labour Party itself, despite massive demonstrations, Wilson’s government slickly supported the American war effort.

Nor did Wilson protest about the American invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965. Wilson’s craven support was not some aberration. Labour governments have always backed American imperialism. “Alliances” and “the special relationship” were developed by the 1945 Labour government, leading to Labour sending troops to support the imperialist war in Korea.

The only time the Labour Party openly opposed British imperialism was in 1956 over the Suez crisis – when the USA was also opposed to the British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt.

If Blair looks today towards the European Union it is not that he has differences with Wilson’s approach. Wilson was “Aid’s friend” because the dominant sections of capital were. Today, the dominant sections of capital look to Europe, so Blair follows suit.

**Vietnam**

Wilson was not only an enthusiastic supporter of American imperialism’s war against the people of Vietnam. He was involved in his own colonial war, in Africa, until Britain was finally forced to withdraw in 1967 and recognise the independence of South Yemen.

Withdrawing from Aden was quickly followed by intervention in Nigeria on the side of the military government against the Biafran independence movement. Britain not only sent arms, tanks and mortars, but British officers also took part both directly and indirectly in the war.

Wilson was also capable of the most cynical realpolitik. In 1968 the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia. Wilson (and the Americans) were aware of the invasion fully one week before it took place. Wilson (and the Americans) cynically suppressed this information, and failed to inform Czech Prime Minister D. Havel. Whether Wilson had indeed to protect ‘Czechoslovakia from Russian imperialism’ was simply for public consumption.

The most enduring “achievement” of the Wilson government was the continued presence of British troops in the North of Ireland. Wilson’s decision to send troops to Belfast and Derry in August 1969 was not motivated by a concern that Nationalists might be murdered by Loyalists but a fear that the Nationalist people might defeat the armed Loyalist thugs of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

In every country, a victory for the Nationalists was a real possibility. British troops went there to prevent the defeat of the U.U.C. and to reinforce the imperialists. Twenty six years later they are still carrying out the same role.

Tony Blair is, of course, a disaster for working people. But let’s get sentiment for Wilson just because Blair is so awful. Attacks on trade union rights, witchhunts of strikers, support for imperialist wars, ever more racist immigration laws – and sixteen years of misery under Thatcherism – are the grim legacy of the Wilson years.

Though Blair is now not even offering reforms, there was a not so subtle reformism: instead of making us soft and sentimental, Wil- son’s death should remind us of the urgency of rebuilding a principled socialist current in the labour movement, to ensure Blair does not have the same freedom to betray.
Blue was the colour


Reviewed by K. GOVINDAN

It is 1989 and that book by Salman Rushdie is about to hit the headlines, into the maelstrom lands young Shahid.

A second generation Pakistani born and bred in Kent, Shahid lives the family travel agency to seek fulfillment in London suburbia. He is accompanied by our disorientated and undoubtedly lesser hero as he negotiates the possibilities of his new world.

Two are presented. One: the fellowship of his intellectually stimulating white teacher with whom he shares an adoration for Prince (hence the book named after a bootleg album) and some orgiastic sex.

Secondly: there’s a group of Asian students who combine their disdain for all

things western with a fervour that as believers in Islam they have identity, purpose and the promise of Paradise.

**Sub-cultures**

This is also a novel about London and its sub-cultures - a social landscape devastat

ated by Thatcherism. From rundown lodgings and seedy pubs in Hammersmith, to East End council estates where Asian families live in fear of racist abuse, from weekend raves and popping ecstasy in south London warehouses, to love tribes in Upper Street Islington, this is Shahid’s terrain.

Throughout Kureishi avoids the temptation caricature Muslim fundamentalists.

When an autobiographer is sealed away and in its flesh a divine message is thought to be revealed supporting the fatwa on Rushdie, we laugh at the spectacle and not the fatwa.

There are plenty of vivid observations and lovely lines woven into the text, “What sort of people born books and read autobiographies?”

I’d heard that books were on the way out. I never imagined they would be replaced by vegetables."

We sometimes get so caught up in the search for whom we belong and ‘who we are’ that we don’t realize that these questions have already been asked and answered in our everyday lives.

The Black Album is a funny and pithy Kureishi regrets, delays and experiences us with an experience of growing up black in Britain. Brilliant.

First ever African Liberation Day demonstration

By Bill MacKeith

Movement denounced the war on the African people in the south of the country by the Arab government in Khartoum.

Urgency

All stressed the urgency of putting the African liberation struggle on the political agenda in Europe, of building grass-roots anti-imperialist solidarity for the popular democratic struggles being waged against poverty, exploitation and repression.

NADCO (UK) - in coalition of all British based African pro-democracy organisations opposed to the military dictatorship, has launched a petition and organised a Nigeria Demo-

racy week (June 9-17):

June 11: demo (2pm Imperial War Museum, march to Trafalgar Square)

June 12: picket of the High Commission in Northumberland Avenue from noon to 5pm

June 14: picket of Shell HQ, Waterloo 2-5

June 18: picket of Downing street from 2-4 pm

NADCO can be contacted on 0171 627 1299

Further Info: ALISC, Box 256, London SE11 5TH. Tel: 0181 202 6292

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Hull dockers proudly showing their new Blue Union cards

HARRY CONSTABLE was a key dockers’ leader, one charged at the Old Bailey in 1951 for leading an unofficial strike.

In the mid-1950s he was a full-time official with the Blue Union, in regular contact with militants on the Hull docks.

This is not just another pamphlet, but I’m worth being recognised as an important document. Its description of the TSSU port workers’ grim struggle against the ship owners and also, at that time, the inability of Transport and General Workers Union to safeguard its members’ interests is brought out very clearly.

There are those who would have us believe that after Arthur Denkin, the TGWU became a leftward looking union. Denkin’s replacement Tiffin died soon after taking office and Frank Cousins then took over as General Secretary.

A few years later, they used their block vote at Labour Party conference to support the motion for unilateral disarmament. This in itself was a leftward move.

However far as far as the port workers concerned he could see no sign of any leftward move: he felt betrayed.

This feeling was the greatest on the Merseyside, Hull and Manchester and to a lesser in London and elsewhere. Keith Sinclair has obviously done a thorough job in researching his facts.

I lived the historical period throughout the years from 1944 to 1959 and travelled the ports helping to form a national Committee. If the TGWU had been doing their job, port workers would have been on our efforts.

The idea of a National Port Workers Committee in 1945 was to be a pressure group to force the TGWU to come out of its shell and become the fighting force it originally meant to be.

It has been suggested by Al Richardson that dockers were not told about the Bridlington Agreement which prevents TUC unions “poaching” each other’s members. When considering a move to the Blue Union.

Before Hull and other Northern ports applied to join the NASDU, I always made it clear there was a “Bridlington” Agreement, but was of the opinion that if it was not rescinded it should be broken: that it was a ball and chain on the Blue Union.

I voiced my opinion on the NASDU Docks Section on frequent occasions. Finally this opinion was voiced at the historic meeting at Canning Town Hall, where the whole meeting endorsed the recommendation to accept Hull and the other ports.

Those Hull workers who lived through the period that Keith Sinclair writes about will find it in every way very refreshing — and the later generation will, I hope, admire them for the great efforts they made to improve their lot.

The architect of the ruins
UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant employers with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won public benefits, the working class in Britain faces a critical crisis — an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook seeks to build a new type of working class organisation based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism. The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workforce, has determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command. The Tory strategy has been to stoke the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time.

In response, mass TUC and Labour membership, embraced the defeatist politics of "new realism", effectively total surrender, while frittering any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every major union announced the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights. New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism. We reject reformism.

There were no real breakthrough in the TUC, but we know that full employment, decent pay, decent conditions, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism. Nor, as we argued long before Stalinism, could these demands be met under the bureaucratically deformed workers state, where workers whose regimes survived expressed the working class. We are a Marxist current, based on the Italian totalitarian parodies of state fascism, nor on the time, timelessness version of "socialism" beloved by other academicians, a revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to destroy the corrupt and reactionary rule of the capitalist class.

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

Join our monthly draw, get a free subscription to Socialist Outlook and a regular newsletter.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

JUNE

Sat 10
MARCH for Justice for Brian Drummond assembly 12 noon The Peace Park Common march to Kennington Park SE11 Details: 0117 785 7700.

Sat 17
SOCIALIST Policies for a Labour Government One-day conference sponsored by Defend Classes 4 Defend Socialist and Tribune 11.30am -4.30pm Carrs Lane Community Hall Birmingham (0117) 733 3403.

Sat 24
NATIONAL day of action against immigration detentions and deportations at Campfield, Hammondsworth, Hidal, Rochester, Winton Green, Holloway, Doncaster Ring (071) 857 1540. (01636) 724452 or (071) 713 7907 for details.

Wed 28
BRM Briottsburgh Socialist Outlook and Libereation public meeting: State Ream and Fortress Europe Speaker: Rita Kamar 7.30pm Queens Tavern Essex Road.

Thurs 29
LEEDS Socialist Outlook public meeting Unions & Labour with speaker Glen Voit.

JULY

Sat 3
NOTTS Welfare State Demo: 0115 9625259.

Sat 7-Sat 9
SOCIALISM beyond the market: CSE conference Newcastle.

Sat 9
CRIMINAL Justice after the Bill: day conference sponsored by the Haydane Society of Socialist Lawyers. 9.30am - 4pm Camden Town Hall opposite St Pancreas Bridge (0110) from 28-29 Tavistock Court E4.

Sat 15
SMUC conference: 'New' Labour and the Unions 10.30am-5pm South Camden Community School NW1 tickets £5/£3 from 3 Gordon House SE11 STW.

Fri 22 - Fri 29
INTERNATIONAL Youth Camp in southern France. Send £25 deposit to 'Liberation Publishing Association', PO Box 1109, N4.

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THE TIME to fight is now. That’s the message of the Barclays Bank pickets, the railworkers demanding decent wages, the health workers and the further education lecturers who are balloting over pay.

People are sick to death of this discredited, divided and corrupt government. And they’re fighting back.

Teachers are balloting on a one-day strike. Barclays bank workers are traditionally seen as “conservative”. There was no sign of it last week – they’re turning on the super-profits the Bank has screwed out of its staff and customers – £1.56 billion last year. They are not prepared to put up with it any longer.

It is the union’s first-ever national strike. One in nine of the bank’s branches were completely shut down.

While the rest of us are having to work harder, in worsening conditions for less money, the bosses are dishing out telephone number rises for themselves complete with international prefixes.

ASLEF and the RMT are talking about joint action on the railways. The pay fight is the last chance for united action before the railways are broken up. Workers want a proper rise before the end of national pay bargaining.

**Privatisation**

A successful battle for six per cent would be a massive kick in the teeth for the Tories, and put a stick in the spokes of privatisation: big money will not be so keen to buy up the companies if the Tories can’t guarantee a compliant workforce.

Transport secretary Brian Mawhinney has had to go blathering to Kenneth Clarke to lift the three per cent pay limit. It’s dawning on the Tories that they may not be able to hold the line if industrial struggle takes off.

But rail workers are finding the same problem as others who want to fight back. They’re hamstringing their own leaderships.

The RMT’s officers have done next to nothing to build the demonstration on June 10. Militants in the union have had to battle for activity at every stage. Doug McAvoy the head of the NUT has written to every member of his union asking them to vote against the union conference’s strike call. Christine Hancock the general secretary of the RCN has broken ranks with other health unions to go for a separate deal: as a result UNISON has put back its ballot on action – by another six weeks.

The only people who can save the Tory’s bacon now are the union leaders – and they’re doing their very best!

Blair is joining the chorus. He’s gone craven cap in hand to the bosses, assuring them that a future Labour government will do nothing to alter the balance of forces between bosses and workers.

All those who want to roll back the years of Tory attacks have got to support industrial action over the summer. We must combine this with a strategy for the future.

The Labour left conference on June 17 offers an opportunity to both build links with trade unions taking action, and to discuss a way of battling back against the right-wing politics of Blair and his cohorts.

Organising the left is a vital task if we are to be successful. Building a left in the Labour Party must go hand in hand with fighting for action in the unions.

**SOCIALIST POLICIES FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT**

Conference sponsored by Tribune, Defend Clause 4, Socialist Campaign Group of MPs. Clause Four may be defeated, but the fight goes on for socialist policies in the Labour Party and the unions.

**BIRMINGHAM**

Saturday June 17
Carrs Lane Community Hall