Stop Tory Asylum and Immigration Bill

The Conservative government's latest racist law is facing defeat.

Their Asylum and Immigration Bill will force employers to act as unpaid immigration officers. Like the pass law system of apartheid South Africa, every black person will be victimised. It is designed to whip up racism and chauvinism.

Mobilise for March 23 ARA demo
There is no British solution in Ireland

IT'S HARD to say whether the Canvey Wharf bomb which blew John Major's Irish strategy is the beginning of a new IRA campaign or a short, sharp shock to prod the British into the negotiations they promised before the IRA cease-fire.

Peace in Ireland was to be the crowning achievement of Major's term as Prime Minister.

Perhaps the end of the cease-fire was simply a blunder by the British. After all, they and the Unionists could have had a very favourable deal. Sinn Fein had accepted the notion of Unionist "consent" and it is clear from at least the 1993 Ard Fheis, that they were coming round to the idea of an internal settlement, which would of course be presented as a "stepping stone" to eventual unity.

There are lots of areas where treating the whole island as a single entity makes sense, not least in relation to European Union Structural Funds. Business leaders have already made big strides towards "unifying" the country. A few committees looking at agriculture, taxation and economic development North and South, together with a built-in role for Dublin in guaranteeing the position of the Nationalists, would probably have been enough.

"Self-determination" would be exercised by simultaneous referendums North and South to produce a necessary "consent". No British withdrawal, no ending of partition and the copper-fastening of the border. A John Major success. Exit stage Right.

They are other possible ways out of the bloated theory. Perhaps, by the "Six Principles" of the Mitchell Report they would have had not only to recognise violence and give up their arms over a period. They would also have had to commit themselves, in advance, to going along with whatever agreement came out of the all-party negotiations.

In effect, Mitchell demanded a higher price for entry to negotiations than in previous British documents.

Yet Major side-stepped in favour of Unionist leader David Trimble's "elections" stunt and attempted to stuff it down the throats of Dublin and the SDLP as well as Sinn Fein. Careless behaviour, at the very least, from someone who regularly parrots on about "consent".

The conclusion is stark: Major was looking for a break and decided that breaking on elections would be preferable to breaking over the report of an international commission, led by an American.

There are two possible explanations: either he is so scared of losing his Westminster majority that he will do anything suggested by David Trimble, or maintaining a presence in Ireland is so important that they would risk splitting the ruling class even more.

They accepted the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document but when it came to the crunch they would not break from the Unionists.

In the post-War decolonisations the Labour Party, with the help of the U.S., was willing to step in and do what the Tories were incapable of doing, pulling out.

Labour under Blair seems totally incapable of providing a class solution to the ruling class. The best he and Mo Mowlam can manage is to try to be more Unionist than the Tories. Another reason why Major was so weak.

The Ties have clearly been stringing the Republicans along, softening them up for the negotiations everyone expected well before the 18 long months that have elapsed since the IRA dumped arms.

The Communiqué from Major and Tansell John Bruton in November, issued ahead of Bill Clinton's visit to Ireland, promised talks by mid-February.

The British reaction to the report of the Mitchell Commission was the last straw for Republicans because it took away any prospect of those talks. In the end, there was not split in the IRA over ending the cease-fire.

Ending the cease-fire was a mistake. The British will not be prodded into negotiations any more than they could be forced into making concessions by 25 years of armed struggle.

More importantly, the negotiations will not deliver what Republicans want—British withdrawal and a united Ireland. Because even before going sustainable.

It cannot be reformed. No internal settlement will work. The right of the Unionist minority on the island should be protected in any settlement; they have no veto on unity.

No settlement is possible without withdrawal of British armed force.

It has been clear for some time, as the British raised one obstacle after another to even talking to Republicans, that they believed they could gain through clever political tactics what they could not achieve through armed force - a re-enforcement of partition underpinned by democratic elections and guaranteed by Dublin. All these two-clever-by-half tactics have achieved was a growing opinion even among nationalists in Ireland and elsewhere that the British were not honest brokers but were part of the problem.

Major decided that breaking on elections would be preferable to breaking over the report of an international commission.

Sinn Fein were too spellbound by Dublin and Washington to recognise what was happening.

Sinn Fein were too spellbound by the moves and shakers in Dublin and Washington to recognise what was happening or to do anything to mobilise and build on this. In the end, only mass action, North and South, will force the British to leave.

There is a clear danger of civil war in Ireland as a whole now. The British will continue to support the Unionists and Loyalist murder gangs. They would be quite happy if this led to a decisive defeat for Republicans. They would be only too pleased to play "peacekeeper" and "honest broker" in whatever settlement comes out of that.

It could be the first case of "re-colonisation" the British have managed.

Those in the Republican Movement who believe in "purs" armed struggle uncomplicated by "politics" should remember this.

February 11 1996
No Pass Laws Here
Asylum Seekers Welcome Here

Simon Kennedy

LOCKING the doors on people who are fleeing persecution is a central part of the Tories' Asylum and Immigration Bill.

It panders to the right-wing myth that Britain is chock-a-block with illegal immigrants posing as asylum seekers.

Michael Howard's white list of so-called 'asylum charlatans' is an attempt to stifle the debate, create a climate of fear and keep the Tories in power.

Asylum seekers from these countries are effectively classified as beggars—second-class citizens with no right to life, liberty or security.

The definition of a refugee is changed. It is restricted to those who can prove they are victims of the agencies of the state, excluding those who are attacked by opposition groups. The net result is a state of war and a state of peace, where the state is unable to provide protection.

This is the case for example in Algeria, where Islamic fundamentalists have persecuted members of other religious communities and have murdered journalists.

The February 5 changes to benefit regulations are designed to work hand-in-hand with the new fast-track appeal system. Anyone losing their appeal after this date will not receive state benefits. This has not led to yet existing asylum seekers being thrown out on the streets, but it will do so.

Refugees entering the country must claim asylum immediately. Given that most refugees have had to get out quickly and are in a state of fear it is hardly surprising that they do not claim asylum immediately. Yet many people who claim asylum at the port of entry are immediately thrown into detention centres.

Other draconian measures in the bill—denial of housing to asylum seekers; checking of immigration status by bosses; compulsory payments by employers on the immigration status of job applicants; greater powers for internal control by police and immigration officers—amount to the creation of a new class of citizens.

All black people will come under scrutiny and be assumed to be guilty before they can prove otherwise.

One of the effects of this increase in state racism will be a greater number of attacks on black people, whether this be by right-wing groups or others.

Deaths of black people in custody—such as that of Nigerian asylum seeker Shiji Lapite who was murdered by a police officer in Newington police—are likely to increase.

The record of the Labour Party on the bill has been inconsistent. Not wanting to be seen as the party of immigration Blair and Straw originally wanted to achieve consensus with the Tories through an all-party committee of inquiry.

Now they claim to oppose the bill. But it is difficult to get any commitment from front-bench spokespeople that a future Labour government will reverse the legislation and reverse the cuts in benefit. At a committee stage Labour MPs abstained.

Large numbers of black people are aware that the Tories' attack on asylum seekers and immigrants is also an attack on their right to the here as citizens. We need a broad-based anti-racist movement to fight back. It must be more than talking shop; going further than building one-off demonstrations.

Free Satpal Ram

CAMPAIGNERS in Birmingham are calling for the release of Satpal Ram who is in the tenth year of his imprisonment following a racist attack in a Bengali restaurant.

In fear of his life Satpal stabbed one of his attackers in self defence. The Free Satpal campaign is calling for support from the labour movement, from anti-racist organisations and for the right of black people to defend themselves. A benefit will take place at the Red Rose Club in Islington on London on February 29 when Banner Theatre present their latest production, "Criminal Justice".

The campaign can be contacted at 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham (Tel: 0121-507-1618).

Building the Campaign

OPPOSITION to the Asylum and Immigration Bill and the governments slashing of benefits for asylum seekers is growing.

Local campaign have been formed in most major cities. Public meetings have been organised and large numbers of coaches have been hired to take people to the national demonstration on February 24.

Local groups such as the one in People in South East London are monitoring the effects of the benefit cuts and are demanding that the local council should support if refugees are thrown on to the streets.

Like other labour authorities, the council has so far only said that it will not evict people who lose benefit and go into arrears. In Islington on February 5, the day the benefit changes came into effect, children of refugees and their friends protested in a vigil outside the town hall.

The following evening a public meeting sponsored by several local anti-racist groups took place.

Speakers included Jeremy Corbyn MP and shadow social security spokesman, Chris Smith, who stopped short of saying that a future Labour government would re-instate the benefit cuts.

Mohammed Sokkoum of the Algerian Refugee Council said that the fate of Algerian asylum seekers in Britain was being determined by a trade deal in which Chirac had given John Major and British Petroleum a slice of the cake in a contract for oil. Jeremy Corbyn said that Britain had never been the safe haven it was believed to be.

Successive governments, including Labour ones, have failed asylum seekers and introduced racist immigration legislation, added the Labour MP.

Corbyn stressed the importance of the campaign and said that everyone should be at the demonstration on Saturday February 24.

Brian Gardner

Challenges to Benefit Regs Continue

OVER THE past several weeks the government has faced several challenges to the proposed cuts in benefits to asylum seekers.

A group of lawyers paid for advertising space at Heathrow Airport in order to alert refugees that they must claim asylum immediately in order to receive benefits. The British Airports Authority banned the posters on the grounds that they were political.

Despite this on the morning of February 5 members of the Campaign to close down Campfield—a detention centre for immigrants and asylum seekers near Oxford—handed out leaflets at the airport bearing the slogan, "Britain stains refugees".

This got coverage on BBC TV news. Bill McKeth of the campaign said: "The benefit cuts will mean that asylum seekers will be starving and turn to crime in order to survive."

The government is facing a legal challenge in the High Court from the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. The organisation claims that the benefit changes are unlawful because they prevent refugees from fully pursuing their asylum claims.

A full hearing into this question will take place sometime after the beginning of April. The judge refused to grant an injunction preventing the changes from coming into effect saying that he had no power to reverse government legislation.

Ian Wilkinson
Socialist Labour Party in Hemsworth by-election

Falling at the first hurdle

Neil Murray

THE SOCIALIST Labour Party had everything going for it in the Hemsworth by-election. Yet 1,200 votes (5.45 per cent), was hardly worth boasting about.

A mining constituency in Arthur Scargill’s heartland, a candidate associated with the fight against pit closures, the NUM candidate was barred from selection by Labour’s NEC for the second time in a short period, the Harriett Harman schools issue exploding just before polling and the possibility of a “protest vote” in a rock solid Labour seat.

The stage could not have been better set.

But the SLP vote was low, by any standards. It compares poorly, for example, with that of the ex-Militant supporter Dave Nellist in Coventry in 1992. The NUM candidate was not the issue. Getting rid of the Tories was Voting Labour was the way to do it.

By all accounts the SLP did not meet the outright hostility which Labour’s spokespersons talk of, but there was no enthusiasm for the new party.

In an interview before she was chosen to fight the seat Brenda Nixon spoke of there being little support for the launch in the area “people are just hoping to hang on to their job.” But that could change with a Labour government. Workers will start making demands on it, and if they don’t deliver, people will, I hope, start to use their voices.”

This has now been borne out.

The result confirms much of what Socialist Outlook has said since the SLP was first mooted. It is totally out of tune with the mood in the working class that the prime task in the coming general election is to get rid of the Tories.

By setting up as an alternative the SLP cuts itself off from being able to relate to this feeling.

Unfortunately, rather than recognise these realities, it looks as if the SLP will continue on its misguided course, with Scargill declaring after the result that, providing the money is available, the SLP will stand in all constituencies in the general election.

What Assembly for Wales?

Dafydd Morgan

LABOUR proposals for a Welsh Assembly have moved to the centre-stage of Welsh politics following an agreement among Welsh Labour MPs that there will be no further discussion on the powers of an Assembly before the next election.

This has attracted intense media attention and accusations that Labour’s current policy is an unwelcome fudge. These developments can be traced back to last year’s Welsh Labour Party Conference, which adopted a policy document on an Assembly “Shaping the Vision”.

This proposed a body with no law making or tax raising powers, elected by the first-past-the-post system. No provision was made for the equal representation of women.

This is a stark contrast to Labour’s proposals for a Scottish Parliament, with legislative and taxation powers, elected by the additional member system and with 50 per cent of the seats held by women.

The document led to widespread dissatisfaction within the Welsh Labour Party and the formation of Welsh Labour Action (WLA). WLA aimed to strengthen the powers of an Assembly in line with those of the Scottish parliament.

At the same time, Ron Davies, MP for Caerphilly and Shadow Welsh Secretary, let it be known that he favoured electing the Assembly using PR. Although never associated with the left, Ron Davies is seen by many as an antidote to the worst excesses of Blairism. However, at no time did he conduct an open fight within the Party, concentrating instead on pressure from within the executive. The weakness of Davies’ approach is now clear. A meeting of seven Welsh Labour MPs was convened in response to his attempts threatening an all-out fight.

Most involved were opposed in principle to any kind of Assembly, while a few were roped in on the basis of opposition to PR. To his discredit Llew Smith, the only Campaign Group MP in Wales, was involved. He has consistently opposed a Welsh Assembly.

His current stance plumbed new lows, arguing that the debate could not be re-opened because Blair had instructed the last Welsh Conference to unite behind current policy. He went on to explain that people could not pick and choose which parts of the policy they liked. Ron Davies’ response has been to declare that there will not be any discussion of the Assembly in May’s WP Wales conference.

It is now more important than ever that Welsh Labour Action maintains its stance of opposition to the current policy and pushes the debate to the floor of Wales’ Labour Party conference. It is also vital that we continue the task of taking the debate into the Welsh Labour movement and building a network of supporters. We must also reach outwards to those in Wales outside the Labour Party who are campaigning for an Assembly and to socialists in Scotland, whose debates and experiences are more developed.

While it is only the Labour Party which can deliver an Assembly for Wales, the current proposals fall short.

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Socialist Campaign Group: Time to get building

SOCIALIST Campaign Groups from around the country met on February 3 and made important decisions about campaigning and building the profile of the network in the run up to the general election. They also welcomed Ken Livingstone’s call to increase the coverage of the Socialist Campaign groups in Socialist Outlook.

Last year’s AGM rejected Arthur Scargill’s proposal for a new party. An open letter by SWP leaders available to local groups to use at meetings called by the SLP. A debate with the SLP on the day of the next steering committee meeting is planned.

A newsletter for use by local groups will be out soon with articles on key issues as well as calling on Party activists to link up to struggles such as the dockers’ on Mersey-side and the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

Pete Firmin (Officer, Socialist Campaign Group) • The next committee will be on March 30 in Leeds. Contact the Socialist Campaign Group at 3 Blades House, Kennington Oval, London SE11 5TW for more information.
BRITAIN

Socialist Outlook 97 • February 17, 1996.

Dockers dig in

Jonathan Joseph

DOCKERS in Liverpool have been holding monthly demonstrations since they were locked out by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

The latest march drew 1,500 people and the mood was even more militant than usual.

The TGWU bureaucracy has been trying to get the dockers to accept a deal, cobbled together with the bosses, to selectively re-employ a handful of dockers and buy off the rest. Not everyone would get this compensation – a mass meeting of 400 voted unanimously to reject this “offer”. This is despite union bosses Jack Adams and Bill Morris calling for acceptance.

Unfortunately the TGWU bureaucracy is continuing to push for a sell-out settlement. They have now balloted striking members, dividing them into three separate groups.

And this is supposed to be an unofficial dispute!

Thankfully the dockers resolve is rock solid. Results have yet to come in from the sacked Torside dockers and Nelson Freight. However, the dockers who were sacked for refusing to cross the Torside picket line have voted by 271 to 50 to continue their action.

The TGWU leaders have been a disgrace. After an initial donation the TGWU has failed to deliver any further money.

In contrast Italian dockworkers have pledged the money from one hours overtime per month, amounting to £40,000. Maybe the Liverpool dockers should join an Italian trade union!

The action of the Italian dockers reflects a growing solidarity. Profits have been hit by an impressive international boycott.

On February 17 an International Conference of Dockworkers will be held in Liverpool drawing in workers from the USA, Canada, Sweden, France and Italy.

A national conference is also planned. This has the support of the dockers and of the Merseyside County Association of Trades Union Councils.

Lessons from JJ Foods

FOURTY-FIVE sacked workers from JJ Foods have won a victory at a industrial tribunal. It decided they had been unfairly dismissed and that their boss had discriminated against them when they joined a union to press their claim for decent pay and service conditions.

The workers who are mainly Turkish and Kurdish are still pressing for reinstatement but if the tribunal does not enforce this they will each receive sums in excess of 5,000. Rumours abound that this may lead to the company going bust. A campaign mounted by the workers and their support group has successfully stopped a number of contracts with the firm.

Brian McCarthy of the support group said that through united action the company had been brought to its knees. It is said, an important lesson for other bosses who might think about sacking workers when they join a trade union.

The success of the dispute has set in motion a campaign with the T&G textil branch in North London to fight for union recognition among low paid workers.

Ian Wilkinson

Fascists out of our Schools

TEACHERS AND parents at Andrew Marvell School in Hull have reacted angrily to news that one of their parent-governors stood as the fascist candidate in the recent Hemsworth by-election.

Michael Cooper stood as National Democratic Party candidate. In May 1994 he stood as the National Front candidate for Hull City Council.

Cooper slipped onto the school governing body in an unannounced election. An NUT member at the school says: “The staff at Andrew Marvell School were shocked and absolutely amazed to learn that one of their parent-governors, Mike Cooper, was standing for election to Parliament in the Hemsworth by-election. This organisation puts forward extreme right-wing views which are based on racist ideas.

“These views are directly opposed to the ethos of the school and the school’s policy of equal opportunities for all. Teachers and other staff at the school have signed a petition calling for the removal of Cooper from the governing body.

Local anti-fascists have launched a campaign for Cooper’s removal. The Anti-Nazi League has petitioned parents and houses. Cooper is trying to brave out the storm of protest claiming he “has done nothing wrong”. Members of Hull Trades Council and the local National Union of Teachers (NUT) will be ensuring that the parents and teachers of East Hull are made aware of Cooper’s Nazi views.

A Hull NUT member

Support Hillingdon Strikers

Brian Gardner

O

VER 50 low paid and mainly Asian women workers have been on strike for five months at Hillingdon Hospital in West London. Their employer, Pall Mall Management, wanted to cut their wages by 20 per cent and sacked them when they refused to agree.

A company with fingers in many pies Pall Mall is involved in government-backed initiatives bringing more private finance into the health service to run services and build hospitals. To prop up the dispute it is bringing scab labour from as far away as Newcastle.

Newly elected London convenor for UNISON, Geoff Martin, said that while the company was going to great lengths to smash the dispute the women were prepared to stick it out for as long as it takes.

He added however that the dispute needs all the assistance it can get and that winning it was important in terms of the continuing struggle against privatisation in the health service.

The strikers have made links with women involved in the docks dispute in Liverpool and some of these will be attending a demonstration this coming Saturday. The demonstration starts Cuffham Green Hospital at 11.30 am and will march to a rally at the Hillingdon Civic Centre at 1 pm.
Sweeping racism out of Europe

BARRIER of barbed wire has been built between Europe and Africa along the Spanish/Moroccan border at a cost of almost £200,000. Nothing could symbolise the meaning of the new Europe better.

The Schengen agreement is designed to close the borders around Europe to economic migrants. The Bill now before the British parliament echoes legislation which either exists or is currently being proposed in France, Italy, Spain and other European states.

The Tories are always ready to play the race card if they think it will help their electoral fortunes. They hope the Asylum and Immigration Bill will win them votes. But the move in Britain must be seen as part of greater European integration.

Schengen highlights the growing economic differences between North and South—a situation in which Western European governments deal in arms and other commodities, pumping up murderous and torturing regimes in the process.

Co-operation between European bourgeoisies to stop economic migration, and to classify the vast number of asylum seekers as bogus, is now at an unprecedented and sophisticated level.

This Centre Stage looks at the history of state racism in Britain expressed in the Immigration and Asylum Bill, the battle for immigrant rights in Germany and the struggle against the new legislation in Italy, arguing that we need an international socialist opposition to the capitalist European project—one that defends the right of free movement across all international borders.

Simon Deville

IMMIGRATION controls are a relatively recent means through which to encourage racism. They became an essential part of redefining the British national identity in the context of an imperialist power that could no longer rule the waves.

Throughout British history large numbers of migrant workers have come to Britain. This has been a result of both repression in their country of origin and the needs of British capital. Up to the Second World War it was Jewish, Irish, Poles, Ukrainians and Cypriots who came to Britain in large numbers. After the war the Irish and Jewish immigrants who faced the most hostility from the "indigenous" population, Marx wrote in 1870 that "Every industrial and commercial centre in England now possesses a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who lowers his standard of life. There has been a small minority of black people in Britain for centuries, and a long history of racism against them. At the end of the second world war there was a shortage of labour power. The British government positively encouraged people to come here. In 1948 the British Nationality Act guaranteed the right of all Commonwealth citizens to live and settle in Britain.

From the war until the mid-1960s there were relatively high levels of immigration, particularly from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent. On the one hand, the legislation was intended to meet the shortage of labour power; on the other, the government was fulfilling a promise to the British people. But the great majority of the people who were allowed to come here were exploited and discriminated against. This was the basic reason why they became a source of unpopularity and racism. It is this experience that is being repeated today. The anti-immigrant mood is part of the way in which the British government is responding to the economic crisis.

Vibeke Bach Madison of the Danish socialist paper Socialistisk Information reviews their recent book 'Ending the Nightmare'.

THE BRITISH paper Socialist Outlook has published a small book on racism and fascism. It gives an excellent introduction to the background information, both on what racism and fascism represent, and to the political reasons why racism and fascism raise their ugly heads. It also makes some suggestions on how to fight back.

It contains eleven chapters in three main parts: a historical section, which looks at the nature of fascism and its development in Italy, Germany and Spain along with a chapter on fascism and homosexuality. There is another section on fascism in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Britain and France. The final part is concerned with racism in Britain today.

For those of us who do not know a lot about the history it is a very good description of the most important events, going back to the start of fascism in 1919-29.

There is no doubt that the question of racism and extreme right-wing movements is centralised placed in political developments in Europe.

The economic crises which started in the 1970s and mass unemployment have created an instability in European politics which creates room for the far-right. It is therefore necessary for the left to discuss what the far-right represents, whether there are real fascist movements and to put them into a historical context.

It was a great mistake that the left, in Italy, Germany and Spain did not stand together and fight fascism at the time of its early growth. In Germany the Communists—under direction from Stalin—were as far as possible from the social democrats and the fascists were the same, and the situation was quite the opposite. We have to unite with the social democrats to fight the fascists, before we can win over the social democrats.

Another important element in the fight against fascism is the struggle against racism—a central part of our society and the state apparatus. Whether it is racist asylum laws which keep refugees out, or the oppression of minorities. Here, the fight against the criminalisation of asylum seekers and for their democratic rights are important.

Fascism and racism have to be fought against—but racism cannot finally be eliminated without replacing capitalism with socialism. I think the book has its strength as an introduction to certain issues/countries.

If I had to highlight a weakness it would be that the different contributions overlap with one another and do not always go into sufficient detail. The purpose of the book is of course political, to explore the problem of racism and fascism from the perspective of how to fight and eliminate it. People in Europe have an important role in the mobilisation of the working class, mass organisations and collective action.
The banning of the Komala Kurdistan association and the closing down of the Kurdish Parents Association cultural centre in Munich are the latest acts by the Government against the Kurdish community.

Already most Kurdish groups in Germany have been outlawed, for alleged sympathies with the PKK (a communist organisation fighting the Turkish regime), thousands of Kurds are facing prosecution for "carrying on with Kurdish associations and political exiles are being deported to face the brutal Ankara regime."

The Executive of Komala Kurdistan were mostly German, but it was declared a foreign association by a Court and banned. Authorities claimed it was damaging German interests and the friendly relations established between the peoples of Germany and Turkey.

Turkey is Germany's main ally in the Middle East. The Kohl government gave its leaders £3.5 billion pounds last year.

In return, German arms companies, seven hundred of which are based on Turkish soil, have earned massive profits by supplying weapons to a Turkish army slaughtering Kurds.

In the international arena Germany has turned a blind eye to Turkey's human rights record, claiming its success. To get a Customs Union with the European Union, Germany, despite the Kurds, has to allow half a million police to smash down their doors in the middle of the night.

In Bavaria, 16 associations have been banned and the Kurdish people have been robbed almost completely of their democratic, political and cultural rights.

The response of the Kurdish community to the latest outrage, was to occupy the Cultural Centre. The State ordered in special commandos, and a policemen said the situation would be dealt with in the "usual Bavarian way".

The radio lied that the Kurds were going to throw their children out of windows, because a Kurd was seen at a window with a child (it was a Parent's Association).

Demonstrators outside the Centre pleaded with the groups not to use arms or storm the building. German and Turkish fascists descended on the scene to fight supporters of the occupation. It was ended by negotiation, but the promises given to the Kurdish occupiers before they left were almost immediately broken—most are now imprisoned.

The local mayor agreed to allow the Kurds a cultural centre without politics. However a major part of Kurdish culture is their tradition of resistance against repression. Their New Year celebration Newroz is a festival of resistance.

The Kurds are not giving up their politics to satisfy Kohl. Last June they organised in support of Kurdish freedom, the largest demonstration in Germany for decades. 200,000 people marched, but few from the main parties of the German left.

The RSB Vierte International, (Revolutionary Socialist League-Fourth International) has been very active in support of the Kurds' fight against persecution in Turkey and Germany. Comrades have gone to court for giving out leaflets in support of their struggle. In Bavaria, they have helped form a Solidarity Committee.

Real German friendship with the Kurds is being attacked by the State. A stronger German State must be resisted, and defence of the Kurds' human rights in the country is essential in this struggle.

To all the anti-racist campaigns and immigrant associations in Europe,

Dear friends,

Sincerely

PURRED on by a chauninist campaign lead by the National Alliance and Northern League, the Italian parliament has voted for a new decree. If transformed into law it will mean terrible restrictions on the rights and status of immigrants in Italy.

Ten to fifteen immigrants and Italians have demonstrated in cities across the country, and subscribed to our call “Don’t wipe out our rights". Groups of immigrants have gone on hunger strike in Rome.

The decree of November 18 pays lip service to many of the principles which we have fought for, such as the provision of health care and the legalisation of work. But nowhere are there any practical proposals. On the other hand, those bits of law that are being immediately implemented are racist and discriminatory. These include:

- deportations without appeal on the mere suspicion of an offence or anti-social behaviour
- not carrying an identity card is now a crime
- immigrants awaiting appeal are to be put in detention centres
- entry for work is blocked

other than for seasonal work

Last year there were 60,000 deportations. Up to 40,000 people are turned back on the Italian border every year. Most of them are refugees from places such as ex-Yugoslavia and Kurdistan.

The government justifies its law by pointing to other European country’s restrictions.

We ask you to join us in showing that there is another Europe, one that condemns the violation of human and civil rights. Show support by campaigning against Italian embassies and consulates.

Senza Confine co-ordinates over 150 campaigns throughout Italy, we want to show that our campaign is part of a movement throughout Europe.
Resisting the right

Simon Kennedy

AS ITALY enters a second year of rule by an unelected government observers may be forgiven for thinking that the biggest threat to democracy comes from the parties of the centre rather than the right.

Unable to replace the Christian Democrats as the centre pole of politics Italy’s government remains prone to sharp changes and sudden crises.

President Oscar Scalfaro had to consult with 20 groups in parliament before appointing lawyer Antonio Maccanico as prime minister in January. Some like to pass the present period off as a passing problem of “translation”, or as a temporary re-emergence of old ways that will soon pass.

Nothing could be further from the truth. While the government’s crisis and the rise of the right has deep roots in Italy’s post-war political arrangements, it is also a product of very modern developments.

On the face of things the right should be weak after the wave of corruption scandals. After the mass mobilisations of last year, the mass movement should easily hold on to the austerity policy currently being put together by the tough-talking Maccanico. But this is not the case.

In the post-war period Italy’s parties had to operate through a methodically organised system of patronage. Party members were given privileged relations with public institutions.

This “Assisstenziata” gave weak parties both a mass base and permanent government deliberately designed to exclude the Italian Communist Party. The Cold War provided a bogey man to keep the bloc together. But it was not only the “da-whar” after 1989 that threw the order into confusion.

The system itself cost a lot of money. It piled debt onto debt—two thousand trillion lire at last count—that will continue to weigh down the country with its scale of unspent tax evasion by the middle classes, stored up massive economic problems.

RIFONDAZIONE must act simul-
taneously on the political and social front.

We must present ourselves as the only party which struggles consistently for democratic demands. This means demanding elections as soon as possible, so that the population can express themselves on all the questions under debate.

It also means working for a project of radical social transformation. We need to develop our thinking about progressive matters too. A national conference is planned for the end of March.

But we must thoroughly transform ourselves, so as to become a party which can not only organise large demonstrations from time to time, but above all builds living, sustained connections with the masses, in factories, in transport services, the civil service and in each district.

We have to train new supporters who will turn their back on bureaucratice ideas and behaviour which have had too great an influence on the development of the workers’ movement, and contributed to the serious defeats which we have experienced.

Lelio Maitan


But the right remains strong.

Berlusconi’s control of television gives him a mouthpiece to translate the monetarist message into popular language—in the same way Murdoch gave Thatcher The Sun.

The strength of far right authoritarian populism needs an urgent re-
response from the left. The ex-communist PDS has moved mas-
ively to the right. It was the main prop of the right government.

The class-struggle party which emerged from the old CP, Riefon-
dazione Communista, has become the only effective left alternative. Rifen-
dazione was almost the only party which consistently opposed the pension changes.

It has lead an international initiative against Maastricht and opposed sending troops to Bosnia. The party is against collaboration in the government.

How left union led French strike wave

Pete Hooper

FRANCINE Bavay from the French trade union SUD (Solida-
darity, Unity, Democracy) last week spoke about the back-
ground to the December strike movement to a packed meeting organised by Trade Union News.

French Prime Minister Juppe’s social security plan came as a big shock after Chirac’s populist Presidential platform.

The government announced at the same time a massive one-third reduc-
tion in the rail budget, including the closure of one-third of the rural net-
work.

At first the plans were quietly re-
ceived before rail workers and the Paris Metro went on strike on Novem-
ber 24, staying out for the duration of the events. The strike movement rap-
Idly spread to other public sector workers.

At France Telecom where Francine works, SUD called on work-
ers to take action. 21 per cent went on indefinite strike while others, keeping their powder dry for the forthcoming

day of major demonstrations.

The movement spread throughout France—although it was most
strongly supported in the poorer south and west of the country where dependence on public sector employment is greatest.

The movement did not extend to the private sector, although private sector workers generally supported it as a proxy for their own action in more difficult circumstances.

The Communist Party-led Confed-
eration General du Travail (CGT) leadership only called for the with-
drawal of the plan under pressure from militants at its annual confer-
ence. The Force Ouvriere confedera-
tion unusually took a militant line. Joint CGT-FD demonstrations were
organised, the first since their cold war split in 1947.

The CFDT union leadership, close to the Socialist Party, supported the government throughout. However, rank and file CFDT members fully participated.

Under the impact of the strikes, Juppe was forced to withdraw much of his plan, including the increase in pension contribution years and the en-
tire rail budget cuts plan.

The increase in social security con-
tributions went through though. Francine explained that it had not

been lost on French workers that those, such as the rail workers, who had fought the hardest lost the least.

The December movement has changed the balance of forces in French society, which would make it inevitable further attacks much more difficult.

A realignment reflecting this new reality within the French trade union movement is now taking place. The CFDT is now openly divided as a re-
sult of its leaderships betrayal of the movement and its refusal to hold an emergency conference to discuss its role.

Already 700 rail workers centred on the Gare du Lyons and the Marte Valley have voted to join SUD.

Given that only about ten per cent of workers are trade union members in the best organised sectors in France, this is equivalent to perhaps 7,000 in British terms. Further splits from the CFDT can be anticipated.

SUD was itself formed in 1988 as a split from the CFDT and will soon be the majority union in France Tele-
com and is growing rapidly in the postal service.

SUD is led by militants on the far left and members of the Ligue Comuni-

satoomationale, French section of the Fourth International, play a leading role. Finally Francine came for sup-
port for and participation in a pro-
posed European wide demonstration against unemployment, planned to coincide with the forthcoming Inter-
Governmental Conference on the Maastricht process.
Mandela’s post-apartheid South Africa hits its second anniversary

ANC’s national disunity

Post-Apartheid South Africa has hardly lived up to the dreams of those who fought long and hard against the tyranny of racial capitalism. We spoke to SALIM VALLY, the national media officer of the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) about the Government of National Unity and the future for the workers’ movement.

Q. What is the Government of National Unity’s record to date, especially in relation to the much heralded Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)?

SV: The RDP was supposed to address the problems of poverty but it is clear to us that the RDP has got some fundamental flaws which will militate against meeting its goals.

The RDP was primarily directed at the poverty of the people and the need for redistribution but this is supposed to happen through economic growth. Through the social partnership of the private capital, labour and the state, the economy will grow and peoples’ needs will be met.

In practice the aim is really to make South African manufacturing goods competitive internationally.

But South African goods cannot compete in the international market with the Pacific rim countries, it is just not possible. The social contradictions in South Africa, the poverty and the level of unemployment (50 per cent) will militate against that scenario.

And so the premise from which the RDP starts off, that we can have economic growth based on the kind of investment that’s coming into the country which is non-productive, speculative, buying real estate and shares on the stock exchange doesn’t create jobs.

The direction is a 30-70 society. Seventy per cent of people are marginalised and only 30 per cent, the middle classes and some sections of the working class, highly skilled, highly organised workers will benefit.

Q. The Government of National Unity has recently been talking about privatising national assets and although COSATU has threatened strike action they have called off their actions at the last minute. What is happening?

SV: The whole privatisation issue is vitally important for the workers movement in this country. Privatising state assets is really the crowning glory of the pro-business faction in the ANC.

We fully support those unions in between trades unions, regardless of which federation they belong to, other left political parties including the Communist Party, to come together to oppose privatisation.

It needs to be said that some people in the ANC leadership who were called left wingers are the ones who are pushing privatisation.

The first action against privatisation was a two hour strike and was called by COSATU at a time when many factories were closed. The bourgeois press called it a failure.

COSATU also called off the one day strike on the 16th January because they believed that the state had conceded the need for more discussions. The state however has made it publicly known that they haven’t conceded anything to the union movement.

Q. What do you feel are the priorities for the South African working class in the coming years?

SV: I think the main issue is the right to work. Every time workers demand higher wages or a living wage or the right to strike (which has been severely curtailed since the Labour Relations Act was passed last year, workers can no longer strike around issues of dismissals) they are always told that they are being ungrateful, and that they should be thankful they have a job at all given the numbers of unemployed.

The President has said that we have to tighten our belts. This was mentioned quite vociferously by the leaders of the ANC during the recent nurses strike, who condemned the nurses in the most reactionary kind of way.

The large numbers of unemployed in this country are used as a battering ram to threaten workers and them also to keep wages low. So we have an ongoing campaign around the right to work, and of course an issue like privatisation makes it even more important because we know privatisation will mean even more unemployment.

And the other crucial issue is around democracy within unions. Because of the whole social contract approach this has resulted in more and more of a gap between the rank and file and the leadership.

Democracy, the undertaking of mandates and reporting back to the membership was something the union movement in South Africa was very proud of but that is fast being eroded.

Unions leaders now sit on paritarielle bodies like NEDLAC (National Economic Development and Labour Council) which brings together representatives from capital, the state and labour and makes decisions that affects hundreds of thousands of workers.

Of course the only way this can be seriously addressed is through the formation of a political party—a mass workers party—which is also on the agenda for this ANC conference.

Q. How far are we from the formation of such a party?

SV: We need to be very careful. We could proclaim a mass workers party tomorrow but it wouldn’t be mass. For it won’t come about until a significant number of workers themselves understand the need for a mass workers party and take it upon themselves to form such a party.

And the other important thing that is happening is that the ANC has been agitating and working in the unions, working with unemployed youth, in mass constituencies to get them to understand the need for a mass workers party.

Already the National Union of Metalworkers in South Africa, the second biggest union in the country, has passed a resolution supporting the formation.

We’ve had discussions with the executive of the Communist Party in various regions but unfortunately they are still tied to the ANC and in fact many of them have taken positions that are to the right of the ANC.

Many of the CP’s leading cadre are a part of the state machinery and more and more the GMU is coming out in favour of capital and is simply endorsing the dictates of the IMF/World Bank.

We have also had discussions with AZAPO and some leading members have written articles supporting the idea. But at the moment it is the nationalism who hold sway.

There are important constituencies in both AZAPO and the PAC, workers and youth, who we’ve been appealing to. Discussions are ongoing.

WOSA and the 1994 elections

Q. WOSA stood in the 1994 elections as part of the Workers List Party. There was a lot of criticism of that tactic amongst the far left around the world. How successful do you feel you were?

SV: We have had a number of post mortems since the national elections and we feel that the tactics have been very fine: but, not only for WOSA but for the left generally.

We did not agree with the negotiated settlement. We also knew that the cards would be stacked against us but nevertheless we felt quite strongly that would be a platform from which we could put across our case of view.

We have no illusions in parliaments democracy and so it was a partly tactical propaganda exercise.

We were opposed to the “guiding principles” which included the right to hold private property—these were non-negotiable principles—all of which basically would create the power equilibrium between those who hold power throughout apartheid and the masses who didn’t.

We were at pains to stress that none of the nationalists parties will be able to deliver the goods despite the promises, that the Apartheid Debts would militate against any real intervention by the State to address peoples everyday problems. And that these problems could not be addressed within the framework of capitalism as long as the conglomerates maintained control of the economy.

We didn’t get a lot of votes, a few thousand, but nonetheless we were heard across the country and our position has been vindicated. We were involved in the process in order to put across our political message and we succeeded.

The ANC leadership breathed a sigh of relief when they didn’t get a two third majority.

They want to share power with the General, the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Front in this so-called Government of National Unity.
World Bank bully boys of the new imperialism


RUMOURS of imperialism's demise have been greatly exaggerated. Far from dying away with the granting of formal independence to many of the ex-colonial countries, imperialism has found new and devastating mechanisms to promote its exploitation of the raw materials, cheap labour and captive markets of the so-called Third World. Three of these devices—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (formed from the GATT agreement of 1994)—are explored in this new booklet in the series of Notebooks for Study and Research, edited by Eric Toussaint and Peter Drucker.

Although some of the contributors are Marxists, the notebook, subtitled The Free Market Fiasco, does not con- fine itself to a Marxist framework of analysis. As the foreword explains, it combines the work of the Fourth International's International Institute for Research and Development with those of the Brussels-based Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt (COMED).

As such, it is intended as a tool in the hands of a broad international network of movements that have come together around the theme WBO/MF/WTO: Enough.

It also serves to link up the work of leading academics, journalists and Ox- ford's senior policy advisor with that of some of the PP's leading campaigners. The result of this collaboration is an impressive book—remarkably up to date empirical information, facts and figures which fit the lid in particular on the real activities and impact of the terrible Twins of the 1945 post-war Bretton Woods economic settlement—the IMF and the World Bank.

While both organisations have masqueraded—under some success—as bringers of aid to the world's poorest and most indebted countries, this pamphlet relentlessly piles up the evidence to prove that they have in fact acted as the brutal bootboys of imperialist banks and multinationals.

The debt and borrowings of Finan- cially Dependent Countries have proved hugely profitable for the banks and in the imperialist centres. According to the OECD, debts from FDCs amounting to just $900 billion in 1982 resulted in debt service payments of $1.5 trillion over the following ten years, including the repayment of almost a trillion dollars of principle. But by 1991, despite these enormous payments siphoning wealth from the poorest nations to the richest, the FDCs' total debt had increased by 64 per cent to $1.478 billion.

The Bank and the Fund exploit this growing indebtedness of Third World countries to impose stringent monetarist policies which devastate their na- tional economies, opening up new avenues for imperialist multinationals. Countries which reject the demands and preconditions of the Bank and the IMF find themselves cut off from pri- vate creditors and government loans.

In July 1992, over 50 countries were subject to IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) under which they are required completely to subordinate their economy and social policy to paying off the outstanding debts.

Domestic consumption is forced down, and production for domestic markets cut back in order to prioritise production for export. A typical pack- age includes:

- a favourable devaluation of the currency, pushing up prices of food, fuel, medicines and other valuable commodi- ties
- a cut in wages with the "liberalisation" of the labour market and scrap- ping of any minimum wage
- massive cuts in state spending, cut- ting back the civil services and closing down or imposing charges for health and education
- blocking state spending on infra- structure and investment projects, opening the way for multinational con- struction firms
- eliminating subsidies and price controls—which often triggers a crisis in agriculture
- scrapping protective import quotas and tariffs, prompting the collapse of domestic manufacturing industry and creating profitable openings for imported goods and even heavily subsidised food im- ported from the EU.

This 120-page pamphlet—with exten- 
ed studies of the impact on Latin America, Africa and the Russian Fed- eration—rehearses in detail and with many examples the ways in which the IMF's policies has tightened on the economies of Third World and dependent countries.

But it is at this level that the Note- book stops short. The analysis goes no further than exploring how these various ways of capitalist and imperialist exploitation work on an everyday level. The solutions proposed, though some are radical, fall short of any out- 
let for action, or discussion of, so- cialism or social revolution.

Some are straightforward reformist demands, such as "regulatory policies that carefully monitor the activities of the major banks and international institutions and de- nounce the structures of the centre banks". Others are more bold. Of course, it is impossible to see ways to put forward proposals that challenge the debt—major debacles of the IMF, together with the writ- ings of Lenin and Trotsky and the na- tional section of the Fourth International which are fighting both for the cancellation of the debt and for socialism and internationalism.

March for Land and Dignity from La Cumbre to La Paz, Bolivia. More than 400 members of indigenous groups protested at over-exploitation of rain forests by big business.

The World Bank exploits growing Third World indebtedness to impose monetarist policies which devastate their national economies

This indeed the names Marx and Lenin, and the very term imperialism, is origi- 
ally lacking from the pamphlet, de- spite the vivid way in which it implicitly demonstrates the present- day realities of imperialist exploitation.

Lenin's conclusion from his analy- 
sis of the nature and role of imperialism in 1916 was to redouble the fight for a conscious revolutionary party based on the working class.

That task remains to be carried through today, both in the imperialist countries and in the Financially Dominated Countries, which are the most vulnerable of all the industrialised countries.
Unfair to ‘Militant’?

HAVING READ Peter Taaffe’s book ‘The Rise of Militant’ I found Nigel Danby’s review (SO 95) incredulous.

The author’s slanders were clear: “for the windtunnel of US imperialism and all its apologist allies” (p.26). However, “while Militant supported the struggle of the workers and peasants for national and social liberation, it did not uncritically support the Stalinist leaders in North Viet-nam.” Militant’s stance was “because of the social forces involved, predominately peasant masses, any succesful regime in the region would be based on the model of China or the Soviet Union. With a planned economy, but ruled by a cowed party totalitarian regime” (p.25).

On Northern Ireland the September 1995 Militant declared “For a United Workers Defence Force - Workers’ Movement, the Clonard and Divis Road S Specials and pothead thugs - for jobs, schools and homes, take other no-politicos - Catholic and Protestant Workers Fight for a United Socialist Ireland.” (p.41)

In the unions Militant have been at the forefront of rebuilding CPSUA’s ‘Left Unity’ following the Commmunist Party’s splitting of the Broad Left in 1984. With our own union Militant building a new unity across the country a difficult struggle.

Unlike Nigel Danby I would have no hesitation in recommending Peter Taaffe’s book to any socialist. Not just because it rec-ords a thorough social, economic and political analysis of the past thirty years, but because it pro-vides a testament to the he-rocic international struggle of the working class.

Phil Cutshaw

CPRF isn’t socialist

‘RUSSIA: REACTION on Bobit?’(SO 95) was confused and confusing.

The writer seems unable to make up his mind whether or not we should welcome the success of the Com-munist Party of the Russian Federation in the recent par-liamentary elections. He says that “reaction is on hold” and that “the result makes late capitalism’s tri-umphalism begin to look somewhat premature.” However, elsewhere he states (correctly) that the vote was not in favour of socialism “as such” and that the Communist’s pro-gramme was for “a more gradualist introduction of capitalism.” The writer also states that the CPRF has been publicly against the war in Chechnya, and yet he also points to the strong Russian national element in the Communist’s vote. In an apparent reference to the Communist Party the writer claims “Communist’s vote is not throw aside our historic organisations without test-ing them to the full.” Is the CP an organisation of the working class? The CPSU was part of the bureaucratic apparatus of Stalinism, in a fusion of party and state. Its successor organisations reflect the interests of the bureau-cracy, but also attract the votes of many workers in the military-industrial complex. Elsewhere, the writer doubts whether the vote means that the Russian working class is “resuming their (sic) forward march.” Which march is this, ex-actly?

The Russian working class has been atomised and repressed since the 1991 coup. The USSR remained a de-generrated workers’ state be-cause the bureaucracy defended (because they were the source of its power) the organs of collectivised property. After 1991 that de-fense was abandoned and the USSR’s successor states are capitalist states in that the state apparatus pro-duces, builds, and defends private property at the ex- pense of the still massive state sector, which it is at-tempting to sell off. The im-mEDIATE task in Russia is the defence of the remaining gains of 1917. The Commu-nist’s victory may give the Russian workers breathing space in this task, but the CPRF cannot usefully assist us, let alone lead us.

Those workers who voted for the Communists and against the anarchy of the market must be won to the task of building a new revolutionary leadership. Only then can we talk again about the East being red.

Nick Davies, Swansea

Support for Liverpool dockers

AS A REGULAR reader I would like to comment on SO 95. The international coverage was excellent as usual and the anti-culture stuff was fine but for “Britain’s best selling so-cialist fortnightly,” I would expect the cover-age of the dockers dispute to be better.

The support groups men-tioned are only those set up by Trades Councils. Oxford’s Disputes Sup-port Group has also been re-activated, and dockers are pursuing property of official trade union forms in London. Both GLATC and Workers Press are trying to set up London Support Groups, and Bir-mingham TC is now setting one up. In Scotland Militant have organised support in England where Trades Councils are weaker) Mili-tant and the SWP have at-tempted to raise support. Like Workers Press, the SWP’s efforts have been half-hearted and in some cases almost counter-pro- ductive.

This year’s Annual Con-ference of Trades Councils in May will prioritise the dockers and call upon all Trades Councils to set up anarchy of the market. Last year we made several successful interventions not least around the Welfare State Network (WSN).

In Oxford we have been discussing the Socialist Labour Party. We all have res-ervations but Oxford Militant Labour recently or-ganised a successful meet- ing which proposed to set up a Socialist Forum. Person-ally, I would support this but they have suspended their initiative in favour of work- ing with the Dispute Support Group.

There are many unique aspects of the Dockers Dis- pute and to my mind it’s the most important since the miners’ strike. International solidarity is amazing but the response of the (official) trade union movement so far has been disgraceful.

Surely a paper like So-cialist Outlook with its many trade union supporters could be doing more?

Andy Gibbons, Oxford Trades Council Secretary, personal capacity

WHAT WE’RE FIGHTING FOR

UP AGAINST mass unemployment, rampant emplo-yers with no wages and no union laws, and a war on hard-won public services, the working class in Brit-ain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to build a new type of working class leadership, 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 workers, has determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high com-mand.

The Tory strategy has been to shake the unions, and to fragment and weaken the resistance, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defen-sive politics of ‘new realism’, effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encour-aged 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, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism.

As our current, based not on the British totalitarian paro-dy of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of ‘marx-ism’ beloved by armchair academics, but the 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 for mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of indigenous and gay minorities of stude-nt, youth and of those fighting Imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

Socialist Outlook is above all an internationalist current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises in over 40 countries.

Unlike some other groups on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. This degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from struggles in the labour movement, playing into right wing hands.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbi-ans and gays, and the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must or-ganise themselves and fight for their demands, which are a part of the struggle of all workers. But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically organise workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour movement and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key is-sues such as racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to de-bate differences.

If you agree with what you see in Socialist Outlook, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers’ groups meet in cities across the country.

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Britain to blame

The blame for the Canary Wharf bomb lies—at 10 Downing Street. Every bomb and every bullet is a result of the occupation. By calling for elections in a gerrymandered state and thereby re-instating the unionist veto, John Major carried out an outrageous provocation. He must have known that a resumption of the military campaign—if that is what it is—was inevitable. There will be only one channel through which the course of Irish peace will flow. That is by the occupying colonial power leaving the island of Ireland in one peace process. Nothing less will deliver peace to the island of Ireland—on these questions there must be no equivocation.

The whole Sinn Féin strategy of engaging in a so-called peace process based on a framework document that did not question the Unionist veto, and thus the existence of the border, is flawed. Diplomatic manoeuvres which have depoliticised the nationalist community are at a dead end. Sinn Féin has to draw a negative balance sheet of this approach. The whole Sinn Féin strategy of engaging in a so-called peace process based on a framework document that did not question the Unionist veto, and thus the existence of the border, is doomed to fail. The ejection of the occupying forces will be achieved neither by quiet diplomacy nor by bombs that can be heard across London. A 12 county political campaign that will begin on the island of Ireland in one peace process. Nothing less will deliver peace to the island of Ireland—on these questions there must be no equivocation. The whole Sinn Féin strategy of engaging in a so-called peace process based on a framework document that did not question the Unionist veto, and thus the existence of the border, is doomed to fail.

Britain must pull out of Ireland now

The British government were given 17 months of peace and the clear willingness of the republican leadership to compromise and settle for a great deal less than the just and simple demands for an end to the British occupation and Irish reunification. The British government was tied within the constraints of a “nationalist family” with Irish capitalism and had retreated on a whole series of issues. Even the most incompetent imperialist government could have imposed a settlement. The fact that the British government has not means that there is no stable and peaceful solution in Ireland on offer from imperialism. As the peace process was on the flimsy cloud of aspiration around the Downing Street declaration and the framework document began to drift away. Emerging from the mist came the strategy that Britain had pursued since the fall of the old Stormont regime—the return of a local assembly under Unionist control with only the most minimal of concessions to the Catholic middle class.

Britain’s ally in Dublin, John Bruton, had called for the demand for elections to a new Stormont “a mistake” and the continuance of this demand following the breakdown of the cease-fire “pouring petrol on the flames”. This would have only been true if there had ever been a genuine peace process. What we have had is an imperialist offensive—one that will now intensify. We identify the British occupation as the cause of the violence and support the right of the Irish people to use violence in response. We oppose a bombing campaign in England. Stripped of any possibility of mass or class action it becomes pure militarist adventure that can only damage the cause of Irish democracy. The whole “peace process” leaves republicanism much weaker. Twenty-five years of a failed militarist strategy have been followed by illusions in Irish capitalism and British imperialism that have proved totally false. Now we have a movement confused and divided following both strategies at once! The crocodile tears of Major, Blair and company will be followed by a renewed offensive. It is the duty of socialist to oppose it, and explain the basis of a real peace can only come when Britain pulls out of Ireland.

Belfast, February 11, 1996.