As US carpet bombing signals the start of mass slaughter

We CAN stop this war!

JOIN the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
Sunday November 18,
12 noon, Hyde Park
**Socialist Outlook**

**Labour off the rails**

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**Railtrack:**

new plan just means fat cats

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The government’s decision to stop pumping money into the bottomless pit that was Railtrack and to press forward with plans for a not-for-profit company to replace it has been applauded in some quarters as the first signs of a second-term resurgence for social democracy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Despite all the hand wringing from Railtrack shareholders the deal is now done and dusted. Major institutional shareholders have already awakened to the fact that if they were not properly compensated for their losses, Railtrack would be the only company they would buy shares in. Of course some shareholders have lost out, but the ability to get fat on massive profits when a government subsidises the sector.

Now the not-for-profit replacement for Railtrack will be another profit-making outfit - Public Private Partnership. Train operating companies will be brought in to take control. Rather than running “in the interests of the travelling public” the new company will operate in the interests of Branson, Souter and the other train operators.

Instead of public money going to richer train operating companies it will go to the shareholders of Railtrack, shareholders who will have a vested interest in keeping fares up and services down. The money should have been spent on improving services. Instead, it will be used to pay off the shareholders of Railtrack.

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**Tube strike confusion**

Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory is a time-honoured tradition in the trade union movement. It is unfortunate that the new layer of rail union leaders seems intent in giving the appearance of reverting to type.

LUL members had voted for strike pay. Now they have struck. One settlement was reached with union train crew members of the RMT. It was argued that there was no stomach for a fight. This, of course, was seen to be a ploy to the test. Even if that was true, it was quite clear that tube drivers were prepared to act. ASLEF and RMT members were united. Even this small dirty little media campaign that implied the whole idea of industrial action was displayed, trayourn只要是我们的同志，无产阶级的力量是不可战胜的。Of course, all deals of this nature rely on subsequent interpretation where each side has to put their best spin on the matter. But in this case it does seem that LUL was backing away even before the ink was dry on a verbal agreement.

The best that can be said is that the dispute has been allowed to be suspended until the new year, when each side will have to review whether it goes back on the offensive.

Not exactly a sell out, but nevertheless union leaders, and Bob Crow in particular, need to be warned that it is dangerous to take your membership for granted. The rail unions have a history of being taken for granted by the powers that be on the hill and then marching them down again.

The current RMT General Secretary electoral campaigns are about ensuring we get a different type of leadership. The RMT left is rightly united behind Bob Crow as the best hope in delivering such a change. The other candidates want to tie the union to all the right-wing policies of the past. But there are no blank cheques - rather the union is in a position to make its own deal.

Attorney General and Lord Chancellor, and all other candidates are dependent on the confidence of and in its members.

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**PPP bidders aim to soak it to commuters**

Previous articles in this publication have exposed the economic madness that Labour’s privatisation policies imply for London Underground.

It is clear that privatisation will be hugely expensive and deliver no real benefit whatsoever.

What it will deliver has now become clearer - more expensive, more crowded, less frequent, PPP preferred bidders have been revealed which tell us exactly what they plan to do. If you want to buy socks this is for you. If you want a cheap efficient, safe, system, get Metronet. Bidding to run the Docklands and Central Lines, proposing to spend £420 million on refitting 32 stations (that’s more Societé Nationale du Chemin de fer à voie métrique or SNCF stations to you and me) whilst spending just £320 million on signalling and £420 million on escalators and lifts. That pattern is repeated for the other bidders on the rest of the network.

Any regular user of the tube knows things are stations are generally a bit fast at 9pm or at least the least worst, the escalators and lifts are always breaking down and are often out of action for months at a time, and that managers are clipped out and lead to the chronic delays that plague the system.

So the privatisation process turns the real priority needs of the system on its head. In fact the targets that Metronet et al are to be given in improving the number of trains run every hour have been described as “truly pathetic” by the DfT and will not even reach standards over half a century ago.

This is, of course, an accident. In order to make a profit the companies need to be able to develop the full economic potential of their (that is to say currently “our”) assets. Renting out modern commercial units represents a far quicker return, it is something they actually to deliver a better transport service.

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**SWT: strike ballot in fight against victimisation**

As we go to press the RMT is in the final stages of organising ballots for industrial action on South West Trains. Two ballots will combine all the company disputes over pay with a train crew dispute over victimisation of activities.

SWT is Britain’s largest train operating company. It has embarked on a policy of divide and conquer among the trades unions, trying to forcibly the main drivers’ unions ASLEF whilst launching attacks against the all-out Union, RMT.

Last year SWT victimised key RMT drivers rep Sarah Finney. Now they have brought back to ticket checker. As well as issuing them with final warnings against a number of other RMT representatives.

In Greg’s case, it is clear that one of his key crimes was to stand as a Socialist Alliance candidate in the general election. Indeed the decision to kick-hunt Greg appears to have been taken the day after the Events. Standard ran a three-page piece on Greg’s election campaign suggesting his role in analysing an RMT strike in SWT that day.

It was vital this dispute is properly prosecuted if RMT organisation in SWT is to remain effective. The dispute has already suffered delay and obstruction as a direct result of RMT officers’ procrastination - by Acting General Secretary Vernon Hinch nor by local organisers and right wing candidate to replace Jimmy Knopf, Phil Bialyk. The union leadership has now got to act together to win these ball votes - and once won any strike given practical backing by the broad movement.

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**Don’t miss the Navigators!**

Privatisation has been shown to be an abject failure - profits first inevitably meant concentrating on safety, with dramatic results.

What that means for rail workers is graphically highlighted in Ken Loach’s new film, The Navigators.

Written by former rail worker, Rob Dawber, who tragically died earlier this year from mesothelioma, developed as a result of his job as a track worker, the film guides us through the gradual descent of a gang of rail maintenance workers as their workplace is privatised.

Despite their best intentions they find themselves pushed from one new boss to another, ending up as lump labourers whose first concern is their own much reduced pay packet rather than their collective safety.

Their strong sense of collective strength is reduced to a struggle to individually survive.

This may sound pessimistic, but the film’s tragedy is tempered with a strong comic vein.

Highlighting a political defeat, in heart-breaking human terms, you long for the film to have been able to point to some hope for the future.

The struggle by maintenance workers to defend their conditions, and to unify the industry in public hands is far from over but falls outside the scope of this work.

Nevertheless, as an indictment of rail privatisation Loach and Dawber have produced a timely addition to the armoury of arguments why Labour should stop its plans to sell off London Underground.
As imperialist military effort runs into problems

Step up anti war campaign

Bush and Blair are finding their murderous war against Afghanistan much harder going than they hoped. The illusion that they tried to create when they started to bomb the poorest country on the planet was that their mighty war machine would swiftly and clinically exact revenge for the tragic deaths on September 11.

Of course, as increasing numbers both in Britain and across the world are coming to recognise the real agenda was to strengthen the hand of reaction both at home and abroad.

And the brutal reality is increasingly becoming obvious.

There is no such thing as a surgically clean war. Cluster bombs and other weapons of mass destruction have already cost thousands of civilians lives in Afghanistan, as well as destroying hospitals and two Red Cross facilities, one of which contained significant supplies intended for people already dying of starvation. Now with the move to carpet bombing, the death toll is set to increase significantly.

Nor have the imperialist plans to foment a revolution in the Middle East come to anything. When Abdul Haq was captured by Taliban troops, while trying to win support among his fellow Pashtuns in the south of the country for the overthrow of the existing government, his American friends were unable to rescue him before he was executed.

Nor has Hamid Karzai, supporter and distant relative of the deposed king, who apparently entered Afghanistan shortly after the bombing began, had much more success.

As the Northern Alliance things are even more difficult. Pakistan's military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, under enormous pressure at home, has vened any suggestion that they should be allowed to take Kabul without allies from amongst the Pashtuns.

So the next plan was that they would take Mazar-i-Sharif and thus open a corridor through to Central Asia. But so far they have made little ground.

Ideally American strategists hoped taking Mazar-i-Sharif would allow them to make bring in some humanitarian supplies before the bitter winter leads to countless more deaths. Six million people are estimated to be at risk inside Afghanistan, not counting those in desperate need beyond the country's borders.

No wonder the majority of aid agencies working in the region have been so vociferous in calling for at least a pause in the bombing to prevent a calamity of unfathomable proportions.

These difficulties for imperialism on the ground have led to a situation where now the Bush administration has made clear their will be no let up in the war during Ramadan – though there also seems little prospect that there could be a ground invasion during the holy month.

This is even less likely given the rapid retreat of the US Ranger troops sent in to take what they thought was an undefended target – only to be drive back by stiff Taliban resistance. The assumption of immediate military superiority on the ground has been thrown into serious doubt, and as a result the carpet bombing – designed to slaughter the maximum number of defenceless Taliban – has been stepped up.

In the meantime, here in Britain at least things have become increasingly rocky for President Blair. Headlines like that of the Daily Mirror of October 29, screaming out "This war is a fraud" across its front page and carrying a powerful article from John Pilger showing how Bush's supporters have been in many other parts of the press.

A n opinion poll in The Guardian published as Blair made his speech to the Welsh assembly not only showed a majority of people wanted a pause in the bombing so that aid could get through but that support for the war itself had dropped by 12 per cent in a week.

Last polls indicate that Blair may have retrieved some of that ground at least temporarily, but all campaigners against the war know that there is almost no enthusiasm for this war amongst ordinary people.

Huge meetings and demonstrations across the country are increasingly showing the size and breadth of the anti-war movement.

There is therefore the real potential to get out and mobilise for the biggest anti-war protest this country has seen for many decades on November 18.

This has to be the key task for every socialist over the weeks and days ahead.
Welsh Assembly debates bombing as anti-war campaign grows

Coalition to lead anti-war fight

Outside the Assembly, the campaign to end the bombing in Britain continues to gain support. Two coaches from Cardiff (one from Swansea) were sent on the London Demo on 11 October; the centre of Cardiff has been regularly leafleted and the movement is gathering momentum. The coalition of the Assembly on the two occasions that the war has been discussed in plenary sessions. In addition, there is a daily vigil at the Nye Bevan statue in the city centre, on Fridays at 12:00 noon. The coalition is also beginning to hold weekly organised pickets and meetings at 7.30 p.m., and is gearing up for a demonstration on Cardiff November 10 (jointly organised with the Plaid Council for Wales) and the next major London demonstration on 18 November. Although the majority of Welsh Labour MPs, like the AMs, have backed the government, a handful of them have spoken out against the war, including Julie Morgan, Llew Smith, Martin Cacon and Derfyn Davies. It is to be hoped the recent Labour Party conference in Sheffield will give a lead to the party activists in Wales who are opposed to the military option, by playing a full part in the coalition.

The Assembly speech by Richard Edwards AM

"We must seriously question whether a military onslaught by the richest country on the planet on almost the poorest will not end the world of terrorism we have known. Afterall, we have never been and do not begin to address..."

Anti-war campaigns

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Over 1000 people attended an impressive meeting in Small Heath, Birmingham on Monday 20th October to oppose the war against Afghanistan, one of the largest political meetings Birmingham has seen in years.

The meeting was mainly composed of the local communities of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, but there was also a diverse, socially diverse group from outside the immediate area. Unfortunately, the organised labour movement was poorly represented, but all those that have been put right in the next stage of the campaign.

Speakers included George Monbiot, Guardian columnist and Globalist Resistance steering committee member, who gave a powerful and informative analysis of the conflict. John Rees, for the Stop the War Coalition, who gave an upbeat message about the growth of the anti-war movement.

Zaid Shakir, an Islamic scholar and professor of political science also spoke. He made a useful humanist introduction to his speech, which was then followed by a much longer religious contribution. The event shows how local opposition to the atrocities being committed by the Afghan people in the name of British and American citizens is mounting. Such was the commitment of the audience, that the platform only began taking questions from the floor after ten o'clock.

On the negative side, there was one person excluded from the meeting after giving a leaflet criticizing accommodation to "Islamic Fundamentalism". This action was roundly condemned at the following meeting of the Stop the War Committee on Wednesday October 31. Also, many members would have found the reserved segregated area for women to sit as unusual.

However, people left the event determined to build the next national demonstration on Sunday 11th November in London.
All out for November 18
Conference call

The meeting took place in the context of considerable mobilisations across the country, which have continued to build the breadth of opposition to the imperialist crusade.

In town after town, from Exeter to Abergavenny, from Newcastle to Oxford, demonstrations and public rallies have shown the sheer numbers demanding that the war stop, but the diversity of their backgrounds and political views.

The regular meetings of the Stop the War coalition in London had drawn into discussion (and from the Muslim community, from direct action networks, from the mushrooming student networks and anti-globalisation networks as well as the far left - including many activists from the New Alliance.

Now it was time to link up more effectively with groups springing up across the country, as well as to clarify the demands of the campaign and direct an effective steering committee.

Speeches from George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn MP and Lindsay German opened the day, taking the climate of the conference as the "coalition against terrorism.

Despite what we are told in some of the media, this is not going well for the imperialists either in terms of public support or in terms of actual military action.

Terrorism is the weapon of last resort, the weapon of the weak. There has been a massacre in the streets - there is less and less enthusiasm for Blair as Prime Minister. Blair is doing service for his paymaster in the White House.

The interim steering committee had drafted a statement for the conference to agree, which argued that the slogan of the coalition should remain as simple as possible.

Stop the war should be the main slogan, and we should also continue to raise demands in opposition to the most basic backslash and in opposition to the erosion of civil liberties.

One change was welcome from the position that had been previously taken by the SWP, who have played a pivotal role in launching the movement, was the inclusion of a condemnation of the attacks on September 11.

Previously, this had been opposed by the SWP, who thought it was inappropriate for those who were killed in the attacks - and that condemnation was not the right formula for other the left or the anti-war movement to adopt. It is welcome that they have subsequently changed their view, as in fact in order to build the broadest possible movement against the imperialists eventually it is necessary to take this stance.

Two other resolutions were put forward as to what should be the aims of the coalition. The Communist Party of Great Britain and the AWL put forward a joint resolution, did two members of the interim steering committee, Moayed Ahmed and Dastal Jamil.

In these two resolutions, though different in detail made the same fundamental political point - that the coalition should oppose both fundamentalism and terrorism.

The resolution from the CPG/B/AWL did so in more measured terms, while the other resolution was more dramatic as could be seen from both its headline: "Stop the atrocities of both Left and Right imperialists!" and one of its slogans, "No to US, NATO and Islamic fundamentalism!"

The conference rightly rejected both resolutions overwhelmingly. The confidence of those present understood that it is necessary to build the broadest possible movement to stop this war, and that these types of demands would cut across our ability to do so in the most dramatic way, especially in terms of raising the mass movements and unprecedented involvement of the Muslim community.

Such an approach should always be the one adopted, and should be the one that builds unity from working people. At the same time of course, we have an obligation to argue for our own politics within the movement.

Opposition to the repressive ideology of the Bush administration is a vital point for us to raise. However we will do so with due respect for those who oppose it. This is a shift away from the media's overemphasis on the Bush administration.

The key decisions on the objectives of the movement, the conference went on to elect a new national steering committee.

Unfortunately this was to prove a rather messy and unsatisfactory affair. An impressive list of nominees had been drawn up by the interim steering committee and further nominations were invited, resulting in a rather long list.

Members of the steering committee eventually voted on the list. Christine Shawcroft from newly formed Labour Against the War and a representative of the Socialist Alliance.

The anti-war movement in Manchester has been very strong and active for some time. There have been numerous public meetings in various parts of Manchester, which is a real black in the main shopping area every Saturday on a very wet day.

On Sunday, 30th October there was a rally in the House of Commons by an ex-Royal Engineer in the Royal Tank Regiment, James Thorne. He was so outraged by the attacks on Afghanistan that he carried out this protest in the nude carrying a banner reading: "This is a war of rich against poor."

Having called the hard press, he carried out his protest, then phoned the police himself and demanded to be arrested. The police came, arrested him, and he was later charged.

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NHS trust chiefs see stars as Milburn puts the boot in

The wrong type of patients – or is it the wrong type of policies?

The difficulties have been magnified by escalating shortages of key staff, and by the pig-headed refusal of ministers like Milburn to base NHS policies on the actual situation, rather than on the discredited, second-hand policiesLabour, which borrow from Thatcher’s Tories.

The key factor which Milburn and his team have consistently ignored is the rising tide of emergency admissions of older patients requiring medical rather than surgical treatment.

These patients often have to stay longer in hospital for treatment, and are more likely to require a package of care to support them back into a nursing home place before they can be discharged.

If the beds are not available, these patients, admitted as emergencies, wind up waiting hours on end on trolleys and often lodged haphazardly in beds in surgical wards – with disastrous consequences for waiting list times.

For almost ten years both Labour and Milburn have insisted that the numbers of admissions could be reduced by switching extra resources to primary care – GPs, district nurses and other staff.

It is now quite obvious that this strategy has failed. GPs are not willing and lack the resources to provide in-home support for frail elderly patients, and instead send them to hospital.

But the hospital Trusts, many of them still reeling financially from the three years in which Labour stuck to vicious Tory cash limits, lack the cash for staff to open the extra beds they need to deal with this situation.

The only answer is for the public sector to step in and provide a service that the private sector will not offer, the NHS should be urgently opening up nursing home places in areas – notably in Greater London – which have shortages of places. They could deliver care quality, free, to patients waiting at home for front-line hospital beds for those who need more intensive and hi-tech nursing.

Labour’s NHS fiasco

When the going gets tough, New Labour goes private…

John Lister

The selection of large-scale, top-down, slimming standards of care in hospitals should sound new alarm bells over Labour’s further effort to extend privatisation in what is currently the monopolar market of all public services.

Health Secretary Alan Milburn’s immediate reaction to the Audit Commission findings that trolley waits and delays are getting worse rather than better in hospital Accident and Emergency departments was to announce extra money – for buying operations from private hospitals.

Another £40m will be used to encourage Trusts to divert another 25,000 waiting list patients into the private sector. This is a marked escalation of government targeting in an area where ministers, and a number of Labour MPs, have repeatedly stated that they want to see “progress”. The most likely motives are to placate the most vocal and destructive elements of the Tory market reforms – the introduction of competition between rival NHS Trusts – may be on its way back, under the guise of expanding “patient choice”.

One of the very few positive outcomes of the NHS reforms after 1997 was the restriction of choice to the “internal market” – the costly and complex process by which hospitals contract between health authorities to provide the best price and place of competition for patients and revenue, Trusts were obliged to cooperate with each other in a controversial split between “purchasers” and “providers” of health care was maintained, and it now seems that by seeking to use patient choice as another way to clobber failing Trusts, Milburn would be bringing back to the revival of the bad old days of the Thatcherite reforms.

All the statistics are beginning to provide solid evidence that Labour reform have done little if anything to improve the NHS for the purposes of treatment in A&E units are actually longer now than they were under John Major.

Instead of shouting at the staff and managers who are trying to implement the open-ended system of care, Milburn should be rethinking his basic assumptions.

If the present course continues, we can expect the worst of all worlds: long waits, blocked beds and an accelerating exodus of key staff from the NHS, while private hospitals hoard cash while consumers face a profits bonanza.
Calderdale counts the real cost of PFI hospital

Another PFI-funded hospital is expected to be in trouble, with the cost ballooning from £100m in 1994 to a hefty £10.3m today. Although some of the changes flow from the need to upgrade and expand on the plans before it, Calderdale has plunged Calderstone and Huddersfield Trust’s £4.28m into the red, after an earlier debt of £10m was written off by regional health chiefs.

Another factor giving rise to the new hospital’s problematic “efficiency savings” is moving all acute beds onto the new site. Staff have also failed to materialize, while the reduced numbers of beds in the new hospital have forced the Trust to spend much more on services in the Kildemmore, one of the areas hardest hit by PFI-driven bed cuts, a new plan calls for an extra 20 beds, and will increase spending on the Kildemmore Hospital site. The case for retaining services locally is undermined by the chronic pressure on beds at Warrington in light of the opening of the PFI-funded Royal Infirmary. Campaigners have warned that Worcestershire Health Authority would not be able to close any hospitals until the PCTs have the resources to cope with waiting lists that are still long.

Green light to export NHS waiting list to Europe

The NHS may be frantically importing doctors and nursing staff from anywhere it can find a pool of qualified English-speaking recruits: but Health Secretary Alan Milburn has now given the nod to the export of patients for treatment in under-used hospitals in Europe.

A first patient to take advantage of this new situation of NHS rules and receive a knee replacement in a German hospital is a 50-year-old woman from Wiltshire, who had been waiting 2.3 months since she was first referred by her GP.

Jackie Whitley and her husband will have to fork out for airfares and accommodation in Germany.

But the logic of Milburn’s NHS plan which has cost the NHS £6.6m to finance the operation in Roedalen, near the French border, rather than financing that the hospitals have the resources to cope with waiting lists is still clear.

PCTs have now been empowered to

Labour still won’t pay the full cost of care for elderly

There are also fears that decisions on which band is appropriate will be inconsistent between one area and another — a new form of "postcode discrimination" — and that decisions will be influenced by the financial plight of the health authority.

Age Concern has warned that many older people will be "latterly disappointed" at the level of funding they will get. Anger will be even greater in England, because in Scotland nursing home carers have similar needs but should get all their nursing and personal care paid for by the government.

The government has given health authorities just £100m to fund the changes between now and next April, despite the fact that the cost is estimated at £1.4 billion in a full year. Each PCT has been told how much it has to spend.

The criterion for nursing care is also very restrictive, covering only services delivered by a registered nurse but in many nursing homes the bulk of all care is delivered by nursing assistants, with only a very small proportion of a registered nurse in post, as proprietors seek to maximise their profits by holding down salary costs.

But the logic of deciding on behalf of the health authority and social services what level of care should be "free", and paid for by the NHS, has to be carried out by a specially trained registered nurse.

Meanwhile doubts are being raised over the apparently free care to be provided in Scottish nursing homes.

A recent article in The Scotsman newspaper highlights the fact that anyone receiving the "free" care will lose the £3.30 a week Attendance Allowance (currently paid to 1.3m Scots pensioners). Attendance Allowance payments will continue for those receiving nursing care in England.

To make matters worse, the actual cost of personal care is significantly higher than the £9.50 a week which the Scottish Executive will pay — leaving "subsidised" rather than "free" social care.

Campaigners, and health unions, are fighting for all health and nursing care to be provided free of charge and funded from taxation may have won the backing of the government’s Royal Commission, but there is a long way to go before they win the policy in practice - north or south of the border.

Tensions such as cancer and hip replacement.

The policy appears to flow more from the government’s defeat in the European Court, and its fixation with increasing links with the private sector, than any serious attempt to plug gaps in local services.

No extra cash is being provided to pay for overseas treatment. And the new arrangement is thought to be most attractive to patients from the south east corner of England, where they may be offered a free trip to a French hospital than one in the NHS.

Why Germany has beds to spare

The estimated 20% surplus bed capacity in German hospitals, which has led to German firms touring across Europe for additional patients to fill them up, gives the lie to the hoary old notion that demand for health care is "infinite", some kind of 'bottomless pit'.

According to advocates of this policy who normally then proceed to argue that individuals should be obliged to pay for their health care or take out private insurance) no sooner does a new service come on stream or a bed open up a queue of patients forms waiting to use it.

But, it is clear that not only has Germany’s expensive health care system met demand within Germany, it has exported it to other countries. According to the latest available figures, Germany spent over £3bn on exports, of its Gross Domestic Product on health care in 1998, the highest share of GDP recorded for any country in almost 80% was public spending, with the remainder made up by private treatment. By contrast the UK spent less than 7% lower, percent near almost every other European country can find OECD figures also show that the UK had fewer acute hospital beds per head of population than any OECD country other than Turkey, and one of the lowest proportions of practicing physicians per head, while only Mexico, Korea and Turkey had fewer practicing physicians.

Scots to stay nearer home

A very different line has been taken by Mr Milburn’s Scottish counterpart, Susan Deacon.

"Why send a person from Falkirk to France when perhaps they could be treated in Fife?" she asked, pointing out it would be easier to 'cross to a different Health Board than to cross the channel looking for treatment.

The Scottish NHS is in many respects the process of paying for patients to be treated, in hospitals outside their area of residence.
How should the Alliance elect its leadership?

Terry Conway

O

f the contentious issues in the run up to the Socialist Alliance Conference on December 1 is the question of how and whether a new Executive should be elected coming ele

mentary of the conference.

Firstly, there has been opposition on the Conference Arrangements Committee from both the Socialist Party and the CPGB to the idea that this conference should have elections at all. As both of you should put this much energy into bringing a confer-

ence to sort of a conclusion ... and then carry on with the same old structures until some time in the future, transformed extraordinary to the rest of us.

This would take some of the guts out of the party itself – and worse, leave us without an adequate mechanism to carry through its decisions without ever that they may be. There needs to be a new leadership elected at the conference: the Socialist Alliance as it now is and which is committed to taking the organisation forward to its next stage.

It is convenient for some that there are logistical problems with fitting in elections at this conference as we have now set it up – as time has gone by it has become more and more apparent that the JSG was right to argue for a 2-day conference.

This would have allowed much broader discussion of the candidates and the campaigning priorities of the Alliance and would help to ensure that we can develop as a political alternative to new Labour.

It is possible to make elections much more straightforward and easier to follow – there should have been enough time between agree-

ing a system of election and imple-

menting it to ensure that the pro-

cess ran smoothly.

This will be particularly difficult to ensure given the fact that the different constituencies put forward as proposals to the conference give different shapes to the executive and different voting systems.

The next Executive Committee of the Socialist Alliance on November 17 will debate this question and put a recommendation to the con-

ference as to whether the elections should take place or whether a sub-

committee should be elected.

The JSG will continue to argue a step by step development and a new Executive is elected on December 1. Given the substantial development of the Alliance over the last year, it would be completely wrong to just con-

tinue with the existing leadership. This from our point of view is the key argument – though it would take a strong group of members that could be better used elsewhere to organise another conference.

Nor do we believe that the election of the Socialist Party on this issue is actually the formalities of the situation – in reality they don't want an election precisely because they are not committed to seeing the Alliance develop further – despite all their formal raising of the question of a new mass workers' party.

The second issue that has aroused such great interest over the last year is the system of elections. The JSG, together with the SWP and others is proposing that this be done on the basis of a slate system.

In our view, this is vital because the Executive we need coming out of this conference must be able to be assessed as and to work as a team. Only a slate system allows the presentation and election of a politically and practically balanced leadership.

This proposal seems to have met with a fair amount of opposition though many of the arguments have happened on e mail lists, in meetings or conversations which make them more difficult to pin down. What they were on the printed page.

There is an assumption running through these arguments that the SWP, as the largest organisation involved, can control the outcome of an election by slates – though apparently not by other means. The weakness of the position is that such an apparent control will be used to create or destroy an Executive.

There are a number of problems with this argument.

Firstly, administratively, at a political level, there is nothing in the current development of the Alliance which suggests that the SWP have any intention to act in this way.

The submission of the protocol on the elections makes clear that the SWP intends to oppose the slate. To adopt any other position would be to fragment the important unity the Alliance has been able to develop. The SWP have no more interest in doing this than anyone else.

Not are there any easy organisational ways round such a danger, were it to actually exist.

The third issue is that of the SSAF's role. Whether this is right, sets out a system whereby the National Executive would comprise a number of different sections elected in different ways, with the existence of a central executive committee, representing a right to direct representation.

Why the Socialist Alliance needs a publication

The International Socialist Group is submitting the following resolution to the Socialist Alliance conference on December 1:

(a) The Socialist Alliance should produce a regular internal and external publication in the form of a bulletin or magazine. This should be a vehicle for promoting the politics of the Alliance at a local and national level – that would help to raise money, contribute to the campaigning priorities of the Alliance and would help to ensure that we can develop as a political alternative to new Labour.

(b) Such a publication should be produced as a bulletin in four issues a year. The Board elected by the National Executive should reflect the political diversity of the Alliance and may involve people who are not members of any of the Alliance's political groups. The Executive together with the Editorial Board should also discuss how to create an effective financial system and distribution network to make this project viable as soon as possible.

(c) The bulletin should be developed as an integral part of the Socialist Alliance and should be seen as an integral part of the necessary propaganda for the Alliance at a future date.

The Socialist Alliance has taken important steps over the last year, particularly through the high profile of the campaigns that have been a substantial part of the Alliance's campaign. However, since that time, there has been a difficulty about maintaining the same level of activity.

As we prepare for a new year, it is important that we develop our organisational mechanisms to make sure we can continue to distribute a bulletin, sell it and get the money back. However, this would be of benefit in strengthening local groups, ensure that all supporters were regularly involved and helped us maintain a profile at local and national events.

All this requires a leap to the Socialist Alliance. However, it is not as big a leap as was the decision to stand candidates in many seats in this year's General Election. Making that leap produced the biggest impact the Socialist Alliance has so far made in its development, the greatest increase in membership and support.

As the ISG says in its resolution, we think that a decision to produce a regular magazine should be a first step to producing a newspaper. However we don't think that the Socialist Alliance is yet ready to take that step.

From December 1, we need to make sure that the Socialist Alliance is continuing to go forward in becoming a serious political alternative to Blairism. In our view committing our-
The future of the Socialist Alliance

It is important as it is, however, that the future of the Socialist Alliance should not be shaped by its past. We are rebuilding from scratch and the con-
stitution we are seeking to adopt will provide a democratic structure for the election of a leadership, the participation of the members, and the functioning of the Alliance.

The issue of the political role the Alliance will play, particularly between elections, is not yet adequately resolved. There is little opportunity at this (unfor-
tunately one-day) conference for an adequate discussion on it.

The purpose of this text therefore is to raise the question: What is the role of the SA to be in the next stage of its development: i.e. after the December conference and what this implies for its development longer term? What role would the SA seek to develop?

The SA should not develop purely on the basis of its experience so far. More weight needs to be given to the role of the Socialist Alliance in the context of the wider Left. The SA should not be seen as an independent party.

A more important question is, what role should the SA seek to develop in the context of the wider Left? The SA should not develop in isolation from the other parties on the Left.

The SA should be part of a broader Left coalition that includes the SDP, the Liberal Democrats, and other left-wing parties.

The SA should seek to build a new party that can represent the interests of the working class and the working people of Britain.

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Our amendments to the Alliance constitution

As well as the resolution on publications (see facing page), the ISG is submitting two other important amendments to the constitution, both of which are in line with the ISG's own objectives.

Amendment 1 (see facing page): The ISG is submitting an amendment to the constitution which would allow the party to adopt a new policy on a broad range of issues.

The amendment would allow the party to adopt a new policy on a broad range of issues, including the economy, foreign policy, and social issues.

Amendment 2: The ISG is also submitting an amendment to the constitution which would allow the party to adopt a new policy on a broad range of issues.

The amendment would allow the party to adopt a new policy on a broad range of issues, including the economy, foreign policy, and social issues.

Before Profit, adopted for the 2001 general election, constitutes the current agreed policy platform of the Alliance.

We have submitted this because we think that the current constitutional provisions in the draft constitution are inadequate. We want to give a clear picture of what we are doing, and we have worked hard to ensure that the wording is clear and unambiguous.

We also think that the adoption of the manifesto, People before Profit was a major step forward for the Alliance. This is by far the most comprehensive statement of policy areas we have made so far and it is a very useful document not only in setting out our attitude on a wide range of issues but in outlining our general approach.

This document needs to be pro-
jected as the culmination of our policy discussions to date.

We hope that the changes will be a good step forward and that the Alliance will move forward with new confidence.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely to be sufficient.

The changes need to be accompanied by a commitment to carry through the changes in a meaningful way.

We hope that others will give serious thought to what we are suggesting so that significant changes can be made.

We believe that we should not be afraid to build a serious political alternative and that these issues also need to be taken on board.
US dockers refuse to join Bush’s war hysteria

Report by Jack Heyman
At the ILWU Local 10 members meeting on Sept. 20th in San Francisco, we had an extensive discussion on Bush’s declared “war on terrorism”, Congress’s unanimous approval and how it will affect our union and us.

At the end of the discussion, Local 10 voted overwhelmingly to send a letter to Congresswoman Barbara Lee commending her for her courageous sole vote against the war. In a sense, it was a working memo-dum on the undefined, unlimited “war against terrorism.”

It began with a report on port security and those measures being considered on Capitol Hill in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. PMA, other employer associations and anti-union politicians in Washington have been trying for years to impose restrictive laws on longshore workers, with the constant贴心 by the companies and union leaders.

The union hall being discussed in the past year they’ve killed it as part of “drug war.” It’s been a difficult political fight for unions but to date we’ve been able to forestall any labor board. Now, in the bipartisan fever pitch of the “war against terrorism” is a renewed effort to impose these totalitarian measures, like a ghoul running the tomb.

It didn’t happen at a worse time with the most critical contract negotiations in years just around the bend. PMA has been making demands about going after our hiring hall, the backbone of our members strength, and eliminating all jurisdictional disputes through electronic technology.

However, the employers have been trying for years to shake us off with the Rail Labor Act, which would effectively deny our right to strike. Without that basic trade union right, labor has no negotiating leverage, no real collective bargaining, the employers know that. And they’ll have to be marginalized – given the present hysterical atmosphere of “national security and the fight against terrorism” – try to take away our fundamental trade union rights.

Instead of defending the Charleston 5, we’ll be wag- ing a struggle to defend the rights of all American longshoremen. Cooler heads must prevail.

Who is a “national security risk” that is a question that was used successfully by employers and the government to divide the ILWU. They tried to deport ILWU President Harry Bridges. Four times, but to no avail because the ILWU rank and file stood solidly against that red-baiting witch-hunt.

Former ILWU President Jimmy Hoffa, when he was a ship’s clerk, was banned from working on the Army dock because he was considered a “security risk”, What had happened was the Committee Against waterfront Screening during the repressive, anti-commu-nist McCarthy period, in order to defend longshoremen’s and seamen’s rights to employment in the maritime industry.

If you opposed the war in Vietnam or criticized the “war for oil” in Iraq, are you a “security risk” and banned from the docks? We must not allow our war room-mates to be victimized under the guise of fighting terrorism.

Another question raised during the discussion was what should we do about these suicidal attacks. The answer: The U.S. government’s blind support for bloody Western regimes which have humiliatingly forced Palestinians into squatter refugee camps, while denying their right to self-determination and resulting in deaths of thousands.

The point was made that while the deaths of 5,000 innocent civilians in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center is totally unjustifiable, 5,000 children die every day in Iraq because of the U.S. Block- ade.

So, who will be the targets of a U.S. military terrorist, a village by village, one of our friends, neighbors, whose Qeeks network was trained and financed by the CIA in Iraq, the government of Greece, whose Qeeks network was trained and financed by the CIA in Egypt, the government of Egypt, whose Qeeks network was trained and financed by the CIA in Jordan, the government of Jordan.

The answer: We must support the resistance of the world wide class, the working class, against the war.

French people begin to organise against the war

Students lead US challenge

Michael Schroeder

In the USA, the initial out- pouring of opposition to Bush’s war was significant, although generally modest in size. A total of some 15,000 took part both in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, which were called by a front group of the non-Stalinist Workers World Party and endorsed by a broad range of organizations.

Smaller events occurred in other major cities (1000 in Chicago, 2000 in Los Angeles, 1000 in Atlanta, etc.).

The size of these events was especially significant given the fact that the trade unions (with a few notable exceptions) has lined up behind the US war effort, and even the major nationalization organizations have netted away before the pre-war hysteria.

In addition, hundreds if not thousands of universi-ties, colleges, and high schools held anti-rally and “ teach-ins” during late September and October. Over 150 campuses held events during a "National Day of Action " The largest single event following the commencement of bombing was a rally in New York City on Oct. 3, which most sources say drew around 10,000 to 12,000 people. Since then, however, anti-war events have notably smaller. On Oct. 27, the Workers World “coalition” sponsored events in a few US cities. Rarely 500 came to a teach-in in San Francisco, 300 attended a rally in Chicago, and a few hundred rallied in New York.

To no one’s knowledge, no major demonstrations are planned for the near future. In early November, regional student-organizing conferences will be scheduled for Chicago (Midwest region), Berkeley (West Coast), and Connecticut (East Coast).

Nevertheless, the move- ment does seem to have entered a quiet phase. We expect that anti-war movement will not grow to any great extent until the war dramatically escalates, with the commitment of large contingents of US sol-diers to the ground war and high casualties and deaths among the U.S. forces.

French people begin to organise against the war

François Duval

ROUGE

ROUGE for the 1st time in the French ruling class – including the so-called left wing government – have been driven to join the US war to defend their interests.

But public opinion remains rather hesistant. The LCR and other organizations opposing the war are not so isolated as during the Gulf War or, worse, during the bombing of Serbia. Of course, the main obstacle to building a mass movement on the issue is that the main parties of the left are linked to the policies of the government.

And the French public opinion remains rather hesistant. In fact, most French people by a large majority do not support the war. The CRI (a youth organisation linked to the LCR) and ancrac- chet groups, it was not a massive demonstration – few hundred – but can be regarded as a first and emergency riposte.

In October, several demonstrations were organized by all the components of the emerging movement against the war in the main cities of France. More than 30,000 people participated.

Another difficulty is getting people involved is the feeling that the French government, unlike the British one, is not directly participating in the US war machine. In addition to that, the fact that the people have become fed up with the terrorist attacks in New York, and that many people are very sensitive about the fate of the Afghan people, especially women, under the rule of the Taliban regime.

But it is not enough. To defeat the war, the working class must make its voice heard louder and louder.

That implies that revolution

American public opinion pow- ers to the police and allowing the opening of cars, checking of personal identity and the searching of "suspects".

One trade union of judges and several associations for Human Rights have protested against these measures which they consider as a dramatic restriction to individu- al freedom.

You don’t dare to be very clever to understand that you may become the next victims of such controls.

Now, the most "hospitable" on the agenda will be on November 17th, where several demonstrations will be held throughout the country.

Anti-war campaigns

Angry New York firefighters protest against Mayor Giuliani’s decision to ban the search for bodies – including those of hundreds of missing firefighters – in the wreckage of the World Trade Centre.
Resolution of the International Executive of the Fourth International on the September 11 attacks and the aggression against Afghanistan

1. The imperialist aggression launched by the United States as a supposed "war on terrorism" at the beginning of September 2001 — which struck the very heart of the world's territory for the first time — is not an act of legitimate self-defence. It is an act of military aggression against a whole people. The US has resorted to a pretexts on the pretext of protecting their right to be among the oppressed people — the Afghan people and the Iraqi people from 1991 up to the present.

Nor is this aggression a means of eradicating terrorism. On the contrary, in responding to terrorism with imperialist state terrorism, it is increasing feelings of resentment and hatred among oppressed peoples. It is feasting on the grievances of the oppressed who share with the oppressors the same contempt for the human life that does not belong to their own camp.

This third aggression is taking place at a time when the US is engaged in a war that has once more been on the rise since 1999, after having stabilized for a few years at a level equivalent to the average level of the so-called 'Cold War' period.

For the third decade in eleven years, the US has thrown itself into a new, large-scale imperialist aggression, thus confirming its choice in the hegemonic confrontation course in the post-Cold War period. A major new step has been taken, after the step taken with the Kosovo war, in transforming NATO into an interventionist military bloc that has no geographical limitation.

However vile and abominable the details of the oppressor powers may be, they are in no way justified by the social and political systems, and it is not a mass murder as horrible as the one that took place in September 2001. What is in question here is not only revolutionary humanism, the basis of the moral superiority of the socialist and transitionalist struggle against all oppressions. It is also an awareness of the nature of the struggle and the struggle's social preconditions of those who share with the oppressors the same contempt for the human life that does not belong to their own camp.

Imperialist domination can only be defended on two preconditions: mass mobilization of oppressed peoples in the dominated countries, and the pressure of a mass movement in all the countries of the world to show themselves against the imperialist war their governments are waging.

From this point of view, vile attacks like those that took place on 11 September 2001 are doubly nefarious:

- Carried out by conspiratorial networks, they reduce the people they claim to champion — the status of peoples — to that of instruments of the confrontation between two logics of terror.
- Indiscriminately killing people of the countries against which they are fighting, they give these peoples to their governments, and thus allow these governments to accentuate their warlike and repressive course.

These attacks have nothing to do with anti-imperialism, not even a twisted anti-imperialism. The use of mass terror is an expression of reactionary policies and movements that oppose the fundamental rights of people.

Fundamentalists of the Bin Laden type suffer from the capitalist and imperialist system. They are or have been linked to bourgeois factions and to sectors of several reactionary state apparatuses, like the Saudi monarchy and the Pakistani and Sudanese dictatorships.

These groups want to impose a discourse on the dominated peoples that places religion, anti-Western rather than anti-imperialist, over the social conditions of the masses, like the anti-Zionist. They want to impose ultra-reactionary theocratic political regimes like the Taliban in Afghanistan and these religious fundamentalists against the Palestinian cause to disguise these reactions.

Symmetrically, the terrorist practices of imperialist governments and of the terrorist regimes in the independent countries, in the name of 'eradicating terrorism' and defending the civilian population in their own countries, only expose civilians to more and more serious risks.

Violence in the service of political and social injustice engenders violence. The more crushing the means put to work by the oppressors, the more individuals will rise up among oppressed peoples who are really ready to go to the worst extremes in order to inflict the most pain on the 'other side', necessarily targeting those who are most vulnerable, that is, the civilian population.

The true eradication of terrorism as an indispensable precondition the eradication of all forms of terrorism, government terrorism as well as that of terrorist groups and networks. It can only be achieved on the condition that the political and social injustices perpetuated by physical violence be eliminated.

Conditions must be created everywhere that give their full meaning to peoples' right to self-determination: civil liberties and political democracy in every country, every people's right to self-determination, and reorganization of international relations on the basis of law and peace.

Respect for human life cannot be selective:
- The embargo against Iraq, which has caused the death of almost a million civilians in the last ten years, and continues to kill civilians each year according to UN figures, half of them young children, must be lifted.
- The debt imposed by the banks and rich countries' governments on the dominated countries, which perpetuates famine and poverty and block development, must be cancelled.
- We must impose the massive production and distribution of medication that can wipe out epidemics like AIDS, which are decimating entire populations in the world's poorest regions, particularly in Africa.

4. The terrorist fanaticism that struck the US on 11 September has its specific source in tendencies fostered and favoured by the US government. It and its oil war, the Saudi monarchy — the world's most obscenest and reactionary state — have propagated and amplified the fundamentalism in their struggle against progressive nationalism and 'communism'.

This use reached its apogee in their common support for fundamentalist factions in Afghanistan for more than two decades. Acting as the sorcerer's apprentice, they contributed in this way to train those who today are turning against them the methods that they themselves inculcated.

The Western imperialist powers are constantly revealing their boundless cynicism and hypocrisy. Sworn enemies of Islamic fundamentalism in the name of democracy and women's rights when this fundamentalism puts on an anti-Western face, as in Iran, they do not have a word to say against the most total absolutism and the most vile oppression of women when Islamic fundamentalism were the face of the Saudi monarchy, imperialism's privileged tool in elaborating the resources of the Arabian peninsula, the world's main reservoir of oil.

5. Oil — central sine of the capitalist system and major cause of ecological desequilibria — has always been an essential moving force of imperialist policy in this part of the world. This fact is all the more prominent when administers were imperialist, and they have office that are directed by herself of interests of the oil companies as the administrations of George Bush senior and junior.

This is how the 'fight against terrorism' has become the pretext for projects that have nothing to do with this pretension. The US has unilaterally appropriated the function of the planet's judge, jury and executioner, seeking to impose its fist on the rest of the world while placing itself above the law and out of any form of international juridiction.

At the beginning it presented its aggression against Afghanistan as a military police operation aimed at the destruction of a network of a few thousand 'terrorists'.

The operation's real objective emerged very quickly: to install another assortment of fundamentalists and reactionaries of all sorts in power in Kabul, doctedly subject to the US government.

In short, the operation's real goal today is to bring its culminating the constant effort made by the US for over a quarter-century to strengthen its domination of the whole region and establish its domination of the region as a platform for its geopolitical designs complementing the one it has next door in Pakistan.

The Western powers' aggression is setting the match to several Muslim countries, of which Pakistan is the strongest link, thus creating conditions that could bring religious fanatics to power in this country, which has a nuclear capability.

The international situation remains today the urge of struggling on several fronts. The US is trying to push its war of aggression against Afghanistan, to defend the rights of Afghan women and the right of women to their self-determination,

Russia is naturally put an end to the murderous escalation of the permanent aggression and state terrorism carried by US and its allies against the Palestinian people, to defend the Palestinian people's legitimate rights.

Russia, the deadly embargo of Iraq, China and other major countries finally have reached the end of its murderous aggression against the Chechen people.

Afghanistan, after years of dragging by the imperialist powers on the negotiations now underway under way over Palestine, Colombia and Ireland, by threatening to consider these countries as military objectives of the world, which is a new and more expensive salvo in their militarist, imperialist campaign.

The fight against racism and the fight against apartheid, while condemning fundamentalist terrorism, must recognize concessions against all forms of racism; to denounce discrimination against women in the all Western countries;

To organize a fight against the frontiers set by these racist states and agrarian policies in Western countries. It is no longer just immigrant communities that are ravaged by the US but all those with a similar social and political background, but rather all social movements. The repressive escalation aimed at breaking the powerful upsurge of the movement against neoliberal capitalist globalization, from Seattle to Genoa by way of the G8 in G8, is thus being confirmed and reinforced.

To fight against the massive layoffs, for which the economic crisis is being used as a pretext, at the very moment that governments are encouraging banks and funds to make up for the falling revenues of certain capitalist sectors;

To fight for a just disarmament and a radical reduction of military spending, replacing it with social spending and mass living standards;

To fight against plans to open a new round ofaggiement against Iran, one of the WTO, who are aiming at expanding the neoliberal offensive to agriculture and services at the expense of the interests of the planet; and
to demand the elimination of tax havens and laundering networks, along with control and taxation of capital flight.

While respecting the diversity of the mobilizations and motivations of those in struggle, the international movement must be to push forward all the mass struggles for the common purposes of different aspects of capitalist global offensive.
Support Samar and Jawad

Appeal gives rubber stamp to frame up of Palestinians

At the same time as Tony Blair was in Gaza, laying down the line to Palestinian President Yassir Arafat like a colonial governor reprimanding a minor official, relations between Britain and Palestine were further soured with the release of an official document detailing the measures of the appeal of Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh against their conviction and indefinite sentence in relation to the bombing of the Israeli Embassy and Zionist HQ in London in 1994. ROLL AND RANGE reports.

As readers of Socialist Outlook will know, Samar and Jawad are two Palestinian left activists framed for responsibility for the bombings, and sentenced to 20-year prison terms, in a trial marked by withholding of evidence, official lies, and manoeuvring to interfere with witnesses and other serious misconduct. The words of Samar and Jawad’s solicitor, Gareth Peirce, “...are uncomproachable, they will be a serious, worrying, terrible miscarriage of justice”

Indeed, the charges against the only person accused of the actual bombings were thrown out before the defence presented any evidence, since the case against her was so obviously flawed. So the bombers, whoever they are, are still free. The Samar and Jawad case has clear similarities to other miscarriages of justice. Paddy Hill, one of the Birmingham Six who spent many years in prison after a similar frame-up, has been active in their support. Amnesty has expressed its concern at the use of P11s, saying this “violates the appellants’ rights to a fair trial.”

It is unfortunate that, after months of delay, the appeal took place following the attacks on New York and Washington, since this increased the possibility of “guilt by association.” It must be remembered that Samar and Jawad are secularists and leftists, with several Jewish friends and a history of open political activity. This is not the background for bombers.

They now face the prospect of many more years in prison, while their trial is made in the House of Lords, and eventually, if necessary, the European Court. It is almost inconceivable that the European Court will accept the fairness of the original trial, which should lead to their release. But this will not be a speedy process.

The defence campaign must now assess where to go next. While it is necessary to pursue all legal channels, it is now vital to raise the political profile of this injustice. Socialists should be raising the issue in their unions, inviting speakers from the campaign and pressing MPs and other union bodies to support the release of Samar and Jawad. The campaign should also be taken into the heart of the anti-war movement, which is raising concerns over the threat to civil liberties. Samar and Jawad are innocent. Six years in prison for something they didn’t do is six years too long. Without our support, they face a further 14 years, and then deportation. Join the struggle for Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad.

Further information is available at the campaign’s website, www.freedom4samar.co.uk

Statement by Jawad - November 1, 2001

“We have had an unfair trial that was followed, after a long wait, by an unfair appeal. This was a political trial from day one and we are totally innocent. The real perpetrators remain still free. We were only convenient scapegoats. A huge amount of evidence is still hidden, all of which points away from us. We have carried on the struggle for our freedom and justice as part of the larger struggle for our people’s freedom.

Evidence, including eye witnesses, evidence about a report written by a senior MI5 manager—points positively towards the involvement of Israeli in the bombings. This report would not have been written without strong supporting intelligence or evidence or information. The court has totally ignored this.

The court has also refused to hear a witness that would have pointed towards the further existence of undisclosed information in the hands of the prosecution and the secret services. Justice cannot be served with all this cover up.

The British authorities have followed an alarming familiar Israeli agenda in dealing with us as Palestinians. The Israelis in Tel Aviv and the policymakers at ten Downing Street should understand that without justice for the Palestinians there will be no peace.

Therefore, any declaration from Tony Blair about Palestinian statehood is frowned upon in the Palestinian and Arab streets. Tony Blair wants the Arabs to believe that he will help restore human rights of all Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation when the British authorities have failed in upholding human rights of two Palestinians living in the UK.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have anxiously been waiting the outcome of this case to assess the seriousness of the proposals made by the British government for bringing justice for the Palestinians. What we faced in this trial is racist and prejudicial attitudes towards Palestinians and Arabs.

These attitudes extend them the assumption that keeping Palestinian prisoners in jails is an act of justice for the community and families and people falling in line behind a peace process. The case of Samar and Jawad is no different. Nobody could have dreamt of a peace process and of another. Nobody could have dreamt of a peace process and of another. Nobody could have dreamt of a peace process and of another.

Statement by Samar - November 1, 2001

"Today, justice has lost, injustice won. In our case we fought the same battle. We have gone through a legal system that is biased and that is not prepared to look for the truth. We have been condemned in a trial that is prejudiced in our favor, and for the sake of a false security law. We were forced to face these trials and prove our own innocence in a system that was marred by bias and injustice. Today's sentences are an affront to our people and to the international community. We will continue our struggle until we achieve justice and freedom for the Palestinian people."
I AM INNOCENT and nothing and nobody will make me a terrorist. As a Palestinian and a human being, it seems seeking justice is like asking for the moon! 

Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act. But similarly as a result of repeated secretive one-sided hearings before, during, and after trial (June 1990, July 1991, October 1991). The catalogue of “human errors” by all the concerned – police, prosecution, security apparatus – is the same highly specific and serious warning against the travesty of justice. Worst is the judges’ acceptance of such ridiculous canards.

How can fairness be claimed when mountains of evidence or information are hidden or are not held, even from the trial judge (if only because in the house of justice in court in October 2001)?

Politicians, prosecution, and judges concerned against justice through PIL. Today justice has become the tool used to maintain our wrongful conviction. I AM INNOCENT and nothing and nobody will make me a terrorist. As a Palestinian and a human being, it seems seeking justice is like asking for the moon! I refuse to be buried alive with the hidden evidence, and do not accept the ruling of a system lacking both transparency and fairness, and seeming to be able to unjustly murder anyone.

I have to continue to be deprived of precious liberty for nothing. I have to continue to be one Israeli responsible for one crime against the whole world. I have been in Lebanon for the past 5 months or 5 or 10 years to come. Injustice and pity may not be right.

I will never regret being part of the group that has brought Zionism’s struggle for justice and basic rights, for life with a minimum of dignity, humanity, and freedom.

Everyone’s life and freedom are most precious. If my life and freedom have to be compromised in the name of seeking justice or in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice in the name of freedom and justice.

I remain hungry and angry for justice, for the right to have my voice heard, to have a say in the future of my life. I respect today’s wrongful judgement and reserve the right to a full appeal in the judicial future. I wholeheartedly express my gratitude and appreciation to all my family, friends, wonderful legal team, and all those who supported me.

Down with oppression and good, guided by a Marxist interpretation and progressive and democratic values. It is also a democratic, pluralist, non-sexist society that guarantees the full protection of the rights of all people.

It has opposed the Oslo sell-out from the start and has always vigorously advocated the need for the return of Palestinian refugees to all of Palestine. Although seriously hampered by losses in the first Intifada, by Israeli brutality, and by occasional PA repression, it has maintained its structures, has built significant grassroots bodies, and claims the support of some 10% of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

However, under the twin pressures of military occupation and PA repression, the PFLP has retreated over recent years from its demand for the establishment of a unitary, democratic and secular Palestine.

In its recent political statement, it calls for “the establishment of the State of Palestine on Palestinian territory that was occupied by Israel in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital, and with the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of refugees to return, the right to self-determination, and to demand that the implementation of all relevant international resolutions be an integral component of any future settlement.”

It sees this as “transitional measures on the way to establishing a democratic state in historic Palestine.”

The current strategy seems to be to fight more consistently than Arafat and Fatah for a Palestinian bantustan, and then to use this as a platform for waging the continuing struggle against Israel and Zionism.

This strategy will not achieve its aims. The only Palestinian “state” that will emerge will be that of the bantustan. The real conflict will be between the bantustan and the “Palestinian state” – it will be demilitarised, authoritarian, and-relying on cooperation with the Mossad and CIA to prevent the emergence of a genuine Palestinian state.

It will not be established as a result of the PFLP-led struggle. The struggle’s continued existence as a “Jewish state” is the key to the political, military and financial burden on Israel (and its US backers) of continually fighting a low-level war.

It is time for the PFLP to return to its understanding that the liberation of Palestine is an integral part of the liberation of the Arab world as a whole from the repressive feudal monarchies of the Middle East to the fascist republics which govern it in collaboration with US interests. The establishment of a Palestinian people would not be in the interests of the Palestinian people, nor in the interests of the Jews.

The PFLP is not an Islamic organisation, like Hamas; it has a vision which we could share of a future world: a world of justice, of progressive, not of oppressive, like the PA. Its members and activists, including the serious activists, it has widespread respect among a broader section of the Palestinian people, and its development links with parts of the Israeli left.

As such, it deserves our critical support. But such support must be clear, extending the PA’s path towards integration in the imperialist reordering of the world.

Bigot’s death triggers new Arafat attack on “war against terror”

Over the past month, the Palestinian conflict has spiralled even deeper into vicious bloodshed. A Palestinian PM Ariel Sharon attempted to explain that the west’s “war against terror’ to further his own expansionism and terror. This threatened to undermine the peace process and lead to a conflict with the Arab world.

Like Sharon himself, like the sentenced Yitzhak Rabin, and like former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir, the PA’s General Secretary Ahmad Sa’adat notes, “Israel’s aggression does not need an excuse to broaden its aggressive operations against our people. The Israeli occupation has never stopped its aggression nor in increasing forceful confiscation and occupation of our lands.”

“Of course, we need to establish our Israeli brothers in Gaza and the West Bank in order to establish a Palestinian national government,” wrote the PA’s General Secretary Ahmad Sa’adat. “Israel’s aggression does not need an excuse to broaden its aggressive operations against our people. The Israeli occupation has never stopped its aggression nor in increasing forceful confiscation and occupation of our lands.”

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Zionist aggression fuels resistance from Hamas – but also from the secular PFLP

Zionist aggression fuels resistance from Hamas – but also from the secular PFLP.
Argentina's economy is cracking under US and global pressures.

"The so-called 'vote brochure' or spoiled votes, which reached almost 30%, show that a large part of the population is fed up with and no longer believes in the whole political system.

That includes some layers of the popular movement who have been involved in struggles and who in the last presidential elections voted for the centre-left Alliance government.

In those elections the governing Alliance lost 5 million votes. The Peronists lost votes too, even if they won more than the Alliance.

The progress of the left, on the other hand, is the first sign of a real change in popular awareness. The left began to channel the dissatisfaction of the workers, the unemployed, the students, and the impoverished sections of the middle class.

So a part of those broke with the Alliance and the Peronists, but refused to vote, while another part voted for the left.

In total the left won 1.3 million votes, which is very significant.

At a national level that represents almost 12% of the vote. Within that, Autonomists, Freedom, and the former Trotskyists, the Real Left, which has positions opposed to corruption and to payment of the foreign debt, but with no very clear programme, capitalised on much of the discontent.

The United Left (U), which is an alliance between the Communist party and the Trotskyist Socialists Workers Movement (MST), also made gains, as did the PO and the MAS, two former Trotskyist currents, and the Humaitarian Party, which got more than 300,000 votes.

In Buenos Aires, three parties were led by workers or by mass groups: the Peronists, by people who have been involved in the popular movement, and who have been involved in struggles and who in the last presidential elections voted for the centre-left Alliance government.

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In Buenos Aires, these parties of the left won 4 or 5 members of parliament.

In some other provinces they did the same. So this is a real change in Argentina, because previously the left has not done well in elections, even though the country has seen one of the most intense levels of populist rage and radicalisation anywhere.

The problem is that these 1.3 million votes don't translate into a unified programme from the left. They are the sum of different projects, currents, organisations, which don't even have an agreement for joint work in parliament or in the town halls.

Nonetheless this is the biggest vote the left has ever won in Argentina, and means that an important part of the population is rapidly becoming more political. In the past it was the main opposition party that always capitalised on the crisis - the Alliance when the Peronists were in government, and vice versa.

On the basis of these electoral gains, do you see any chance of overthrowing the division which has characterised the left in Argentina for so long?
“Not a bullet, not an ounce”? When even surrender is not enough

In Ireland, the scent of decay surrounds the Good Friday Agreement. The peace process is faltering, and the political landscape is becoming increasingly divided. The prospect of a decommissioning of weapons and an end to paramilitary activity is far from realized.

The decommissioning of arms is seen as a crucial step towards peace. However, the process has been fraught with delays and obstacles. The IRA and the Provisional IRA have both committed to decommissioning, but the pace of implementation has been slow. The British government has insisted on the disarmament of all paramilitary groups, while the Irish government has sought to negotiate a phased approach.

The lack of progress has led to growing frustration and a sense of disappointment among those who hoped for a rapid resolution. The failure to disarm has allowed for the continuation of paramilitary activity, which has contributed to the persistence of violence and the inability to move forward.

The political landscape in Ireland is complex, with multiple parties and interests at play. The Good Friday Agreement promised a new era of peace, but the challenges facing the political leaders are significant. The decommissioning of arms is just one of the many issues that need to be addressed if lasting peace is to be achieved.

The vote no to Catholic attack on abortion

Sharon Dods, Belfast, Northern Ireland, is a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and a vocal supporter of decommissioning. She argues that decommissioning is a necessary step towards peace and that the IRA must take responsibility for ending the cycle of violence.

"We must abandon the old mindset of violence," Dods said. "We need to move towards a future where all people can live in peace and prosperity. This is not just about decommissioning, but about changing the culture of violence and the mindset that has been embedded in our society for so long."

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) has been active in Northern Ireland for decades, and its actions have been a significant factor in the region's history. The group was formed in 1919, during the Irish War of Independence, and has since been involved in a series of conflicts with the British government.

The IRA's decommissioning is a key part of the Good Friday Agreement, which was signed in 1998 and marked the end of the Ulster Troubles. The agreement called for the decommissioning of all paramilitary weapons, but progress has been slow.

The IRA has made significant strides in decommissioning, but questions remain about the thoroughness of its efforts. critics argue that the decommissioning process has been rushed and incomplete.

The issue of decommissioning is complex and contentious, with many differing opinions and perspectives. However, the goal of ending violence and promoting peace remains a priority for those involved in the Irish political landscape.
Seven decades of struggle for Marxism

Memories of Charles

Terrily Conway

International Socialist Group member and one of the founders of the Fourth International, Charlie van Gelderen died peacefully at home in Cambridge on October 26 after a short illness at the age of 88. Charlie was the last survivor of those who attended the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in Switzerland in 1938. He was an observer on behalf of South Africa of Trotskyists, though he was already living in Britain by that time. Charlie was born in August 1913 in the small town of Wellington, 40 miles from Cape Town. He lived in various parts of the Cape until December 1935, when he came to London.

Charlie became politically active as a young man, initially joining the Fabian Society but then in 1931 became an enthusiastic supporter of the ideas of Leon Trotsky. Together with his twin brother Herman, he was instrumental in setting up the first Trotskyist organisation in South Africa; the International Marxist League.

Charlie was also involved in setting up the Commercial Workers Union in the Cape and for a time became its full-time secretary. At a time when trade unions in South Africa were segregated in practice though not yet in law, he fought for the union to involve both black and white workers. He lost his full-time position when opponents of an integrated union split, taking their financial resources with them.

The South African Trotskyist movement split in response to the "French turn," the position put forward by Trotsky at the time urging his French supporters to join the Fourth International. Socialist Party Charlie supported Trotsky in this, but others disagreed, and the organisation split.

This was Charlie's first split, and all his life he disagreed that the movement were far too quick to divide organisations on tactical grounds. Charlie was instrumental in founding a new organisation, the Communist League, and edited its paper "Wing into the Future." In 1935 Charlie followed his comrades and girlfriend, Millie Mathews, who was to become his first wife and mother of his daughter, to London.

Though Charlie left South Africa as a man who was deeply committed to the political struggle there. He stayed in contact with comrades on the ground, and events, events, events. The recent strikes against privatisation in South Africa, and militant trade union action elsewhere in the continent were examples he was holding up to others in the last years of his life.

Once he arrived in Britain, Charlie linked up with the Marxist Group whose basic member was CLR James. The Marxist Group had been active in the Independent Labour Party, but was discussing the possibility of creating a new Labour Party - the cause of bitter arguments between the leader of the Group, Bert Mawat and James, who was opposed to this move.

Charlie himself was told to go straight to the Labour Party and soon became very active in the rate of Islington branch of the Labour Party, which was dominated by Trotskyists, speaking regularly at the weekly open air meetings they organised at Highbury Corner.

By the time of the founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938, the Marxist Group had dissolved, and Charlie was a member of the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) which worked in the Labour Party as Militant, which James had gone on to found his own organisation, which he represented at the Conference. The biggest Trotskyist Group in Britain at the time was the Workers International League which involved both Ted Grant and Gerry Healy.

The Fourth International was founded following the rise of Hitler in Germany and the defeat of the Spanish Republic, the Moscow trials and under the threat of impending world war.

Charlie was convinced of the need for the new International, under these conditions, as an alternative to the betrayals of Stalinism, and remained so for the rest of his life. Writing at the time of the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International he said: "The historic conditions of the day were crying out for a new International, a new revolutionary general command of the workers and the oppressed peoples of the world. It was in these conditions that, urged on by Trotsky, we launched the Fourth International."

During the Second World War Charlie joined the British Army Medical Corps and travelled first to Iraq and then to Italy. One of the high points of Charlie's varied life was this time in Italy. He went on to help form the first Trotskyist group in Italy with Italian comrades and American Trotskyists also stationed in the area.

Charlie arrived in Italy just after the fall of Mussolini when the Italian working class was very much on the offensive. He participated in enormous demonstrations, dominated by banners calling for the working class to take power for itself.

Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party had been in exile in Moscow during the war and returned and, true to form and reflecting Stalin's line for the Communist Parties in western Europe, called on the workers to lay down their arms. In Italy, Communists were called on to support the government led by a Field Marshall, where the king had appointed to succeed Mussolini.

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The importance of Charlie's role in Italy was undervalued, he...
The international summer camp where Charlie van Gelderen (below) spoke on the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International

However the transformed party by Tony Blair led Charlie — along with many others — to feel that those days were now over. This he welcomed the formation of the Socialist Alliance, became a member of its Cambridge branch and looked forward to becoming a “born again activist”. Charlie often said that when we call on the workers of the world to unite we must look at ourselves at the same time. This is also why he was so inspired by the development of the Socialist Alliance: it was not just an alternative to New Labour but the most important united initiative by the left for many years.

Charlie is deeply missed by his wife Christine who he married in 1989, his daughter Leonora and Tems (both revolutionary socialists), and the rest of his family, and by the many comrades in Britain and across the world that knew him. Charlie never lost his hatred of the capitalist system and the brutal misery it brings in its wake.

His column for this newspaper which he kept up until illness struck him in the summer pulsed with his fury against the burden of debt, the scourge of HIV and the profits of the multinationals, the hypocrisy of new Labour.

The best way that we can celebrate his life is to continue the struggle to which he dedicated himself with such energy.

PAT JORDAN
By Charlie van Gelderen

This is not an obituary. I am, unfortunately, not physically fit to undertake this. My memory, also, is not all that reliable.

I first met Pat through Ken Casta. The two of them were trying to restore the viability of Transylvania and the Fourth International after a short and unhappy experience with the Hulsh group after they broke with Safjan.

Pat had a second-hand bookshop in Nottingham and there is where I first met him. His main activity was helping to write, edit and produce The Week.

This was produced as an old-fashioned duplicator. Pat typed every stencil and copied in everyone he could, including myself, to turn the handle and collate the pages. Once he joined the Fourth International, Pat was indestructible. No task was too big or too small for his help. He was always ready to go anywhere to serve our movement — Paris, Nigeria or wherever.

His enthusiasm in demonstrations was infectious. I can still see and hear him singing the last lines of the International song with four fingers in the air.

The unfortunate lapse which led to his exclusion from the IMT did not diminish his enthusiasm, and he was always looking for ways to do something with that brain-hamorrhage — typically at a meeting.

In his active days he was an example and inspiration to us all.

This was the last article sent in by Charlie to Socialist Outlook before he died.

A memorial event in celebration of Charlie’s life will be organised shortly. We will keep readers and supporters informed.

Turning a page of history

The International Group was formed, which later fused with the WSL to form the International Socialist Group in 1987. Charlie was deeply involved in various events that took place to commemorate the 50th and particularly the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International. Charlie used every platform he could to argue for the left to fight for socialism.

Charlie was pleased to be invited to attend the Fourth International’s Youth Summer camp in Denmark in 1998 to speak there on the occasion of the 60th anniversary. I was also going there and some of my fondest memories of Charlie come from that time.

For various reasons we had an extremely tortuous journey, taking more than a day to get there and spending hours on freezing railway stations in remote places in the middle of the night. However, Charlie, already in his mid-40s, remained cheerful throughout, regaling me with stories from his political and personal past.

When we finally arrived at the camp, Charlie lapped up every minute of it. He thoroughly enjoyed meeting young comrades from across the world and was subsequently invited to speak in both Italy and Germany — engagements he was again more than happy to accept. He told me that he was very glad these young comrades were on the same side as they would have terrifed him as opponents.

I have other memories of Charlie, from games of bridge we shared, to many occasions both at meetings and outside where he stood up for different aspects of his life but that time in Denmark stands out above them all.

Charlie was a loyal friend as well a comrade. For example though he parted company in organisational terms with CLR James back before the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, after the war he got to know the CLR and CLR James quite well personally and visited him regularly until his death.

Tony Cliff and Charlie Rosenberg lived with Charlie when they first came to England, in a tiny flat that Tony Cliff said was never big enough for them all, but they lived a luxurious life. Again what they parted political company when Cliff developed the theory of State Capitalism, Charlie always respected Cliff’s incisiveness and integrity.

Charlie was a member of the Labour Party from September 1936 until March 2001. In many bitter debates in the Trotskyist movement, he argued that this was where revolutionaries should be active in order to win others to their political ideas.

LIVIO MAITAN
With the disappearance of our comrade and friend Charlie, we have lost not only a great revolutionary, but also always with a lucid enthusiasm. In this respect the category of professional revolutionaries — which so many bureaucrats have decried — is not absolutely obsolete.

Half century

For my part I still remember the meeting in London a number of years ago, and it is difficult to believe that Charlie has been with us any more. No one could deny that throughout his long life Charlie respected the commitment that he made in September 1938: he has made a valuable contribution to the construction of our movement, not only in South Africa but in Britain and elsewhere — and always with a lucid enthusiasm. In this respect the category of professional revolutionaries — which so many bureaucrats have decried — is not absolutely obsolete.

Finally on behalf of all the Italian comrades I can assure you that we will not forget the example that he gave in helping the formation of our movement in Italy during the Second World War.

Here is proof that one can still do something for the revolutionary movement while being obliged to be a soldier of an imperialist army.

Yes, a page of history has been turned. But the history of the Fourth International and of the revolutionary movement will continue.
Revolution by Night

Claude Cahun, 'Self portrait'

In the case of the Surrealists, a number of women, such as Man Ray, Oppenheim and Lee Miller, who may have made contact with the Surrealist group as younger lovers of older, established male artists, nevertheless worked to develop their own artistic careers. And there is some evidence, as the catalogue points out, that the men could be actively supportive of these choices.

The work of artists such as Remedios Varo, Leonor Fini and Leonora Carrington tends to take the Surrealist idealisation of women away from its association with women of the night, mystery and nature, as a means of empowerment, rather than as something to be radically criticised.

Pablo Picasso's painting The End of the Earth (1949) shows her naked, semi-immersed in dark waters while around her float animal shags repelling the exhibition's viewer, which she characterised as "too brutal and cruel to survive". Nearby in the exhibition is Carrington's wooden idol, Cat Woman (1951) which likewise represents a positive take on "essential" femaleness.

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For Freud, the majority of these misclassifications of desire were socially unacceptable, to be labelled "pathological" and neutralised through psychoanalysis. For the Surrealists, they were to be celebrated and made flesh, whether through attempts to depict the world of dreams (illuministically, as in the case of Salvador Dalí's Freaks), or "automatic" drawing or painting, as in the work of Miró or Masson (where conscious control is supposedly abandoned in order to allow images to come from the unconscious to manifest themselves), or, literally, through choosing to live sexually open lives.

One positive feature of the exhibition is its cultivation of "impropriety". Traditionally in Western aesthetics our encounter with the artwork is supposed to be passive, to interest, elevate above normal experience, to restrict the imagination. Here, suggestive iconography, juxtaposed with violent and shocking imagery, forces us to confront the shock of the real.

By contrast, the experience offered by this exhibition is deliberate "inappropriateness": the viewer is made aware that their viewing is inevitably compromised by desire. The first room, dimly lit, is painted deep pink. On one side Max Ernst's representation of the (hetero)sexual act, Man shall know nothing of this (1923), hangs brightly lit in the middle of a dark space behind glass, while recording of a human heartbeat plays. This sets the tone for the presentations throughout.

The generosity is often limited: in one part of another room, a woman's organic thighs rather discretely emanate from a corner display case, whereas, in the original setting for which this tape was used, so the catalogue tells us, the fishes filled the room. Desire here is, if not bound, at least lobbed. One wonders what mechanisms of censorship and self-censorship are operating in such circumstances.

The relationship between Surrealism and communism as art, as these authors conceived it, is summed up by Salvador Dalí, writing in 1910 in his pre-Fascist manifesto: "there is a dialectical potentiality in the fancy whereby the title of Max Ernst's picture...". In the catalogue's entry, it is further observed that the desire must be the "exclusive day of dialectical materialism".

What was this revolution by night? Essentially, it meant the liberation of sexual desire through the unleashing of the forces which Freud had identified in the unconscious. The repression of the "night" into daily consciousness would undo the psychological mechanisms which regulate everyday life under capitalism.

In the case of the Surrealists, a number of women, such as Man Ray, Oppenheim and Lee Miller, who may have made contact with the Surrealist group as younger lovers of older, established male artists, nevertheless worked to develop their own artistic careers. And there is some evidence, as the catalogue points out, that the men could be actively supportive of these choices.

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On occasion issues of sexual inequality are stated overtly. The catalogue commentary on the Photographs of Bianca Coca by the surrealist photographer Man Ray with her throat cut (1932) evokes that irritating post-Madonna phenomenon of finding the most degrading representations of women to be in some way empowerment or liberation. Here, the woman who has had her throat cut takes the form of a praying mantis writhing on its back.

It may be important, as the catalogue does, to refer to the fact that female praying mantises devour their mates, so that she is "more than just a passive victim", but it should be clear that the perception of the female as a threat here only serves to legitimise the violence done to her.

"The exhibition challenges the notion that the Surrealists were uniformly homophobics. One famously anti-gay text by Andre Breton is alluded to in the catalogue, but there is much material on display by male as well as female Surrealists, which suggests that they frequently recognised the limitations of conventional heterosexuality and acknowledged that gender roles are fluid, not pre-given.

Man Ray, for instance, photographer Marcel Duchamp as his female alter ego Rose Selavy ("Eros, c'est la vie", or "Eros, that's life"). In this context it is good to see photographs and photomontages by the recently rediscovered lesbian artist and writer Claude Cahun, which explore the intersection of gender as a kind of masquerade. In one marked image of herself (Self-portrait, 1932), she dons a big wig and heavy make-up in an elaborate parody of doll-like femininity.

One reason Cahun is currently fashionable among art historians is that her work seems to anticipate what are taken to be "postmodern" attitudes to identity. Her well-known statement about identity is stencilled on the wall above her photomontage: "Under this mask another mask. I shall never finish stripping away all these faces".

This is taken to mean that there is no "true" self underneath the shell and that conventional identity and the "I" can be replaced with it.

The title of the exhibition, Woman with her throat cut, is a reference to a film made in the late 1920s by Jean Cocteau, who asked his&&(null)
The SWP and the Stormont Agreement: The bread and butter of revolutionary politics?

David Coen

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he process of creating a viable bourgeois rule on the island of Ireland is of major importance. Even after the Republicans destroyed some of their weapons, elements of the Unionist Party demanded that Ulster be a separate state. In order to save Ulster’s rule, the loyalists have to blow the deal by demanding a more complete and public surrender on the part of the Republicans. As in 1974, the current British administration in Northern Ireland (what Republicans, until recently, called a "failed political entity") is ready to offer enough pressure on the loyalists to undermine the whole 6-country system again.

Increasingly the left in Britain seems to be bowing in behind the entire system of the Irish state in order to make Ulster an unassailable entity. In a recent issue of Socialist Worker, Kevin O’Dowd sketched the process thus: “[The] process is about reaching an accommodation between politicians representing Catholic and Protestant communities. It can reproduce the sectarian division that is built into the Northern Ireland system. But it does provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests against sectarianism.”

There was a debate in the 1970s about whether or not there were two nations in Northern Ireland. Official Sinn Fein – now disappeared into the southern Irish Labour Party – agreed with the Communist Party in Britain and one of their offshoots in Ireland, the British and Irish Communist Organisation. The main problem in Ireland was not the British presence (the national question), but the division between Unionists and Nationalists. The solution to this problem was to focus on “bread and butter” issues – the belief that once working class people from both sides worked together to defend their material interests (jobs, housing, wages and conditions of work) they would in time be able to resolve the political differences over the national question.

Not in hidden agendas? Blair and Ahern both want to establish capitalise rule

variants of this "solutions" can be seen in Sinn Fein's previous (and now Republican Sinn Fein's) concept of a federal Ireland, whereby the Unionists would be entitled to a say in their own state within a unified Ireland. Most recently it is repeated in John Hume's description of the problem in Northern Ireland as being not a geographical division but a division among the people. The British of course have always been keen to portray the problem in their last colony as really a religious divide, a problem of backwardness whereby religious conflicts, which have died out elsewhere, persist in Ireland because of a kind of irrational throwback into pre-modern times. The parallel with their view of the Arab world is very interesting in this respect. It enables them to maintain their rule by posing as peacekeepers between the two "divided communities".

The solution is the "peace process" whereby the warring "communities" will be indulged in working together by the British until such time as they mature enough to decide how they will be governed. The problem with this view is that it locates division, not in class or even politics, but in the "irrational" attitudes of people in the North of Ireland: in other words, it is idealist.

We might say with Marx that it is not consciousness which determines social being; rather it is social being that determines consciousness. This is not to say that the attachment of people in Northern Ireland to ideas about religion or politics are unimportant and can be ignored. Plainly they cannot, nor should they be. But the fundamental
tal division in the North is one of class and if socialists lose sight of that we will be lost. This can be seen most clearly if we look at Loyalism – working class Unionism. These have been among the strongest and sometimes the most sectarian opponents of any concessions to Nationalism. Culturally they are the most damaged by the British Crown, often to the embarrassment of the more "refined" opinion here. At the same time, while they also provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests against sectarianism.

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On the Loyalist side the problem for socialists is how to win them away from their alliance with the Unionist ruling class that derives most of its strength from in alliance with the British ruling class. This is very – even at times impossible – difficult but at least it understands the right direction we need to go. It doesn’t make the mistake of trying to destroy the imperial power (Britain), the main obstacle to achieving socialism on these islands, as a benign partner in creating the conditions for the struggle for socialism. Britain, which claims to have “no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Ireland”, has a very definite political interest, that is a stable capitalist government.

The acid test for British revolutionary policy is to be militant on behalf of struggles going on elsewhere, much harder to confront your own ruling class, not just on the “bread and butter” issues but on the question of who owns the bakery and creamery.

In Ireland, it was not the handover of weapons that signalled the end of Sinn Fein as a revolutionary nationalist force but that they did so in order to continue their coalition with the Unionists. This, more than any other factor, alienated the moderate unionists, they spent 30 years trying to destroy.

In the case of the English class, nationalist and loyalist, have not yet contemplated this betrayal.
Blunkett’s variations on a racist theme

Stop Labour jailing more asylum seekers!

Campaigners in defence of asylum rights took to the streets in towns across Britain with even greater determination on November 3 for a day of action in defence of refugees.

Early that week Home Secretary David Blunkett had unveiled his supposedly radical reform of the asylum system. Certainly the media were right to argue that the new proposals were a slap in the face for predecessor Jack Straw, who had both introduced and defended the hated voucher system.

More than a year after the new Labour government stated its intention to review the voucher scheme, which forces people fleeing terror and torture at home to live on vouchers of £30.54 a week plus £10 cash, Blunkett announced his changes.

The voucher scheme will be abolished, but only on the basis that even more asylum seekers are rounded up and effectively imprisoned in new “reception centres” the government plans to build, with 3,000 beds in total. Anyone who leaves will lose all entitlement to any material support.

At the same time spaces in actual detention centres will be increased to 4,000. Already the government detains without trial some 1,700 asylum applicants in any given week. Now, as the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers (CDAS) say “the Home Secretary is sieving on the tragic events of September 11 in the USA to justify increasing the use of detention”.

Refugees will be issued with a “smart card” carrying their fingerprints and photographs. They will be used as guinea pigs for the assault on civil liberties new Labour wants to carry through by introducing identity cards for everyone.

In the short term there will be an increase in the value of vouchers – in line with the increase in social security payments. This will do nothing to address the fact that inexplicably the government believes that it is possible to live more cheaply if you are an asylum seeker than if you are a refugee.

Afghan refugee, Mohammed Asif, currently dispersed to Glasgow’s poverty stricken Sighthill estate, rightly argued that the government’s proposals “are not for reception centres, they are for prisons”.

Blunkett made clear that his proposals are motivated not from any concern about the rights of asylum seekers, but to deter people from coming here in the first place.

In the meantime, Bill Morris of the TGWU, one of the most powerful players in the fight for asylum rights, issued an ambiguous press release in response to the proposals.

It argued “In moving forward, the government must ensure that its programme is underpinned by social justice.

“We would not want to exchange the paper voucher for a plastic voucher, which would retain all the problems of stigmatisation and division of the present system.”

“Nor would we wish to see the new approach be just a quick fix to use the system to trampoline asylum seekers around a series of centres before bouncy them out of the country.”

It then went onto argue that it would be keeping a close eye on the detail of the White Paper.

All campaign groups for social justice must ensure not only that they are campaigning publically against the government’s iniquitous proposals, but that they keep up the fight in the trade unions to commit as broad a range of organisations to do likewise.