As Sharon's terror squads butcher hundreds in Jenin

BOYCOTT ISRAELI GOODS!

As journalists and aid workers finally gain limited access to the rubble of the Jenin camp, the full horror of a major Israeli massacre is being revealed.

The quality press are unusually agreed in their verdict and only has the brutality of the Israeli troops against Palestinian civilians reached new peaks, but the offensive against Jenin was authorised by Zionist chief Sharon with the active connivance of Israel's paymasters in Washington, whose lavish aid props up the racist, settler state. And behind Bush, at every step, is Tony Blair.

But the resistance is also growing. Demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinians are growing all over Britain. 25,000 marched in London on April 15 and 300 in Cardiff. 500 people joined a "die-in" in Manchester. 1800 have marched in Edinburgh and 1600 in Glasgow in recent weeks and there have been regular pickets in Oxford as well as in London.

Activists need to make sure the May 18 demonstration called by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and supported by many other organisations is the largest and most vibrant showing yet of opposition to Sharon's war crimes – and Blair's complicity with them.

But there is something else we can all do ourselves. When people at work, college or school express their revulsion at the massacre going on in Palestine, tell them about the Boycott Israeli Good campaign, launched by the PSC and supported by other solidarity organisations and prominent individuals.

To order leaflets, stickers and other campaign material email: info@palestines.cam.org. Send donations for the IHRC Campaign for BIG Campaign Box BM PSA London WC1N 3XX, cheques payable to the BIG Campaign.
NUT calls for national demo against privatisation

Stuart Richardson

During the Easter weekend the National Association of Teachers Conference passed an amended motion which included the introduction of a conference policy. "The conference instructs the Executive to work with TUC and other trade unions to organise a national demonstration against privatisation of public services." 

The motion was passed with the support of the NUT members at the conference and was moved by the shadow leader John Hamnett to be a key step forward in the fight against the Blair government's education programme and was prominent called for by civil service union Leader Mark Serwotka at the recent Socialist Party conference and union conference.

Although less publicised than other private inroads into public services, the privatisation of the Further Education National Union's role in state education.

The motion noted that the "outsourcing" of LEA services to schools and private companies, "the use of PFI/PPP to fund and implement school capital programmes," and even the "handing over of schools to the private sector.

The near unanimous support for the motion and the reaction reflected a shift by the trade union bureaucracy and the representatives of the TUC General Council Brendan Barber, normally extremely compliant towards the Blair government, was sharply critical of the government's privatisation policy. Whether the NUT leadership will ever carry out this conference decision is open to considerable doubt.

Teacher shortage

The other key debate was on teacher shortages, which are becoming chronic in many parts of the country. In Westminster and Surrey teacher turnover has reached 25% i.e. in four teachers leave every year and some schools in Westminster more than 50% of the staff are supply teachers.
The shortage has placed intolerable burden on many permanently employed staff and severely affected many students' educational progress.

The motion from Croydon NUT called for a minimum of 20% non contact time for all teachers and an end to cover for absentee colleagues the first day of an unemployment absence.

This position was sharply opposed by the National Association of Teachers but since it exposes their dramatic waste year leave on such issues the NUT and the NUT which, with the larger across the board opposition resolution of 1947 to partition Palestine.

Palestine

The most impassioned debate at the conference was Palestine with a motion supporting "the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the territories occupied in 1967 and the right of return for the Palestinian people." An amendment from the Executive which essentially took a neutral position on the conflict was powerfully opposed by Bernard Regan, executive member for Inner London, who stated that the issue was about an occupier and an occupied people.

Cynically, Bernard said although he did not support or condone suicide bombiing one had to understand this was an act of despair of people suffering horrendous oppression.

It was clearly a major victory to commit a union with 200,000 members to the position of solidarity with the Palestinian people. However, as the Socialist Outlook conference bulletin said the motion had a number of weaknesses. It noted that the resolution on United Nations resolutions, rather than a political and historical analysis, of the conflict, it cannot fully satisfy the just demands of the Palestinian people. It was, after all, the UN which, with the support of the Palestinian opposition resolution in 1947, to partition Palestine.

Palestine

Not does the motion address the Zionist nature of the state of Israel, which is at the heart of the dispositions and oppression of the Palestinian people.

An amazing sidestep was the confusion of the Workers' Liberty supporters who were apparently supporting the Executive to canvass and act upon member's opinions on reinstating the boycott of SACT.

Doug McAvoy

The votes for action during the conference and the widespread frustration of ordinary teachers with low pay and teacher shortages all exerted considerable pressure on NUT General Secretary Doug McAvoy.

This was reflected in his statement at a meeting of London delegates that he "had not ruled out further strikes over London pay" and his statement in his final "left-sounding" address to the conference when he said that if the Government failed to deliver in the sums of money discussions on public spending the "Cross Committee" action would be re-introduced.

However it is clear that Doug, so long committed to partnership with the Blair government, will only be moved into action by considerable pressure from below.

New Labour's Newham council derogonises UNISON!

UNISON members in Newham have voted to commence a series of strike ballots following the Newham Labour council's decision to "derogonise" the branch.

As UNISON officials have put it "Tony Blair's favourite local authority is set to be rocked by industrial action.

Since the end of January, Newham council has banned all consultation and negotiations with UNISON, the largest union in Newham. This was followed the Branch's criticism of an £11,000 pay rise given to a manager in the housing department, while regrading a non-paid job.

The council is demanding UNISON withdraws all recognition.

An agreement reached in a meeting in February was today revealed to the NUT executive to the settle the argument was over the Chief Executive, Dave Burbage and backed by Council Leader Robin Weiss.

It is no coincidence that this came at the same time UNISON had tabled strike ballots over London member's wages over £4,000 London weighting claim.

Robin Weiss, chair of the ALG - the body that refused to give the London cost of living allowance - is the same person authorising the decision.

The UNISON branch in Newham has recently had some successes for its members in the housing repairs call centre and for social workers.

The derogonisation of the union is an attempt to strike a blow against the union at its source victories against Newham's agenda of privatising services and introducing flexible working.

UNISON sick of waiting for London weighting

Fred Leplat (London Regional Committee in a personal capacity)

For the last three decades, rates in the cost of living allowance for council workers in London have been pegged to the national pay awards. 29 years ago, Council workers in Balgo (now part of Union) took strike action and won a substantial rise in the London Weighting. The London Weighting is now totally inadequate for council workers, generally low paid, based in London, which is now the most expensive city in the world. Not only do council workers suffer from the high cost of living but also the very low pay in the London Weighting is inadequate for a basic on £4,000 backdated to April 2001.

The employer have responded by stating that this claim was unnecessary and that it was an attempt to lower pay. They also stated that a flat rate was no longer an appropriate and "that recruitment and retention" packages for certain groups of staff may be appropriate.

Unison has just concluded a "consultative" ballot of its members which resulted in a 6 to 1 majority in favour of going forward to strike action. The overwhelming result shows the level of dissatisfaction amongst council workers over pay. Not one branch in London responded to a "no" vote.

The turnout in the ballot was on average 30%, although it was up to 60% in some branches. However the margin between a "yes" and a "no" was universally massive.

The one-day strike by teachers for their London Weighting, also £4,000, gave confidence to members for vote for strike action.

Delegates from Union branches at the London General Council Committee decided unanimously to support a ballot for a quick ballot which would have allowed the first one-day strike to take place on May 1.

The strike on May 14th was the only one of some worthwhile political advantage from political embarrassment. Even so, it was a close run thing as the Industrial Action Committee, which authorises the ballot for a quick ballot which would have allowed the first one-day strike to take place on May 1.

The strike on May 14th was the only one of some worthwhile political advantage from political embarrassment. Even so, it was a close run thing as the Industrial Action Committee, which authorises the ballot for a quick ballot which would have allowed the first one-day strike to take place on May 1.

The strike on May 14th was the only one of some worthwhile political advantage from political embarrassment. Even so, it was a close run thing as the Industrial Action Committee, which authorises the ballot for a quick ballot which would have allowed the first one-day strike to take place on May 1.

The strike on May 14th was the only one of some worthwhile political advantage from political embarrassment. Even so, it was a close run thing as the Industrial Action Committee, which authorises the ballot for a quick ballot which would have allowed the first one-day strike to take place on May 1.
Stop Sharon's war crimes
Victory to the Intifada

Nearly two weeks after the intifadah started on April 13, the media finally managed to break through the Israeli media cordon surrounding Jenin refugee camp. But it is almost impossible for even the best journalists or the most talented photographers to convey the real horror of what has happened inside what The Times describes as the "camp of the dead" and The Independent calls a "human tomb," with "gristy evidence of a war crime." Janine di Giovanni comments in The Times: "Rarely, if ever, has a decade of war reporting from Bosnia, Chechnya, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, have I seen such deliberate destruction, such disrespect for human life." Jenin camp was home to 15,000 refugees, driven off their land by the Zionists in 1948. The much-feared Oslo accord and the establishment of the Basant Beirut Palestinian Authority did not create the possibility for these people to move without the terror in which they have lived for the last 50 years. No wonder Jenin camp and the other camps across the territories have been the site of some of the fiercest resistance to the latest murderous assault by the Israeli state - and the strongest support for the Intifada.

And now hundreds of bodies have been bulldozed, many with people still inside them. Not content with slaughtering hundreds - men, women and children - the Israeli army has blocked ambulances removing the bodies. Corpses have either been left to rot - or have themselves been bulldozed into mass graves.

Many people whose injuries from Israeliammunition were not in themselves lethal-threatening have died to death because medical teams have been barred from access to the camps. Jenin is a particularly vile example of what the Israeli war machine has done - and the one in which so far the greatest number of Palestinians have been slaughtered. It is also tragic that so much of what has been omitted to the Palestinian people by their Zionist occupiers in town after town, camp after camp across the West Bank.

The 1200 people that packed into a London rally to hear the report back from Ramallah by Sussex University students and entertainers Jeremy Hardy got a glimpse of both the horror of what the Palestinian people face day after day - and of their courage in the face of this indescribable nightmare.

This Intifada has a huge echo across the world - and those who are going to the Occupied Territories are acting as human shields are playing a vital role as part of building solidarity with the struggle. Yet again Tony Blair has demonstrated with brutal clarity where he stands in all of this. At huge public expense, he recalled Parliament to conduct an utterly pointless debate on the death of a 101-year-old racist, knoll and scrivener. Of course even Blair's enormous power could not prevent the death of Mrs Windsor - though he sought to exploit it.

But there has been no such measure to discuss the avoidable slaughter of hundreds of Palestinians by an army equipped with British arms, bankrolled by the USA, and given a blank cheque for slaughter by Blair's good friend George W. Bush. The British government does have the power to stop selling arms to Israel, and to stop giving political support to the war criminal Sharon. But Blair's real questions, along with the continuing war in Afghanistan and the threats to Iraq were not even up for debate at the "mother of all party conferences", despite calls from the back benches.

Osage at Blair's criminal stance, together with opposition to the Zionist war machine, has led to increasing numbers of people coming onto the streets across Britain in these last weeks. This political radi calisation has been strongest, of course, in the Arab and Muslim communities, many of whom have seen more accurate pictures of the real nature of the Zio-nazi aggression through Al-Jazeera than on British TV.

But other activists from the anti-war and anti-globalisation movement, from colleges and schools have increasingly participated alongside. Significantly, sections of the Jewish community have also shown their dis gust with what Sharon is doing.

The Palestinian people will not, cannot give up their fight for freedom. It is the duty of every socialist to support the struggle for solidarity with their struggle.

AFTER last year's record low turn-out of voters helped Blair secure another landslide victory in the general election, New Labour faces an even tougher fight to win the electorate in the run-up to council elections on May 2.

Five years in which Labour ministers have maintained the Tory vote-grab on council finances, driving forward repeated waves of cuts, privatisation and closures, have given working-class areas little reason to turn out and vote Labour. And the party's local election campaign, like a right-wing parody of the infamous "tory left" divisions of Labour councils dodging hard issues 20 years ago, focuses primarily on denouncing unruly youth, with plans to crack down on street disorder, youth crime, graffiti and abandoned cars.

Such desperate efforts to make populist capital out of the continuing polarisation and social decay of towns and cities, despite Blair's occasional crocodile tears over "social exclusion," is a feeble smoke-screen to divert from the mounting shortage of affordable housing - and the knock-on impact on staffing levels in key public services, especially in London and the South East - and the problems of desperatelyunderfunded social services.

Even while property prices have spiralled upwards out of reach of almost all working class families, New Labour has done nothing but exacerbate the problem worse. With little or no affordable housing now being built, Labour has in fact taken over from the Tories as the most badly served and private developers of council housing - such plans can go seriously awry, as the recently bloody noise suffered by New Labour's efforts to hive off council estates in Birmingham has shown.

The steady privatisation of elderly care is just part of a constant drive by New Labour councils to undermine many of the remaining areas of locally-controlled public services.

As a result, councils have been renting them-selves increasingly irrel evant as a factor in the development of local areas - and New Labour has also drawn the conclusion from that, seeking to restructure council of the planning and decision-making in the hands of various private developers - or, where they feel they can bamboozle the electorate sufficiently, putting up the estab-lishment of an elected mayor without proper executive powers that would render the election of local councils even more redundant.

The model for such mayors would not be the impo-sitive and horticulturist Ken Livingstone, who cannot even organise a firework party for Londoners, but US-style mayors with genuine executive powers.

Small wonder that the spon-sors of the drive for more elected mayors include not only Blair - a Prime Minister notorious for spending less time in the Commons than almost any of his predecessors - but also Tony Blair's key ally in Parliament and council democracy - are seen as a toast to cha- rade, impeding their deals with the private sector - but also big business interests.

Big business has not the slightest interest in democracy for working people, but sees the establishment of a mayoral system as their best hope of preserving their ever more privated function of the remaining council services.

The PF word is indeed a common strand linking New Labour's policies at national and local level. This is why - while still formally affiliated to the Labour Party - the GPB union, as part of its continuing campaign against New Labour's drive to privatisation, has taken a novel step of writing to all 8,000 Labour council candidates demanding that they sign a 6-point pro-gramme opposing any further privatisation, a condition of GMH support.

Other sectoral union councils could also follow this lead, and pile on the pressure against Blairite candidates in every area.

New Labour's track record suggests that few party candi-dates will be able to pass the GMH test. But that raises the question of which party working class voters should support. Once again the Lib Dems are presenting an apparently pro-gressive and comparatively "left" face at national level, while their council-collaborators in practice whether in Town left, right, or with Labour, or (in as in London) with the Greens - to put forward their own variety of cuts, closing off any real prospect of genuine privatisation.

However there will be a developing challenge this year from the left, with the Socialist Alliance standing over 200 candidates in a number of towns and cities across England, taking up local issues, but also putting forward a common 7-point programme and a platform of consistent support for the needs of the working class. The Socialist Alliance will be the only party committed to oppose privatisation, fighting them on every front - from housing, and challenging central government and councils the cash they need to sustain vital services. The Alliance is the only comprehensive programme of fighting racism, supporting asylum seekers, and opposing the Blair-Bush war.

Given the relatively low turn-out in council elections, there are hopes that local campaign ing by the Alliance can secure a respectable share of the vote, and force a genuine debate on the key issues.

Other socialist and working class candidates are also running, such as veteran anti-cuts campaigner June Hauto, who fights in the Hackney and Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council in her challenge to one of the last remaining flagships Tony councils.

Socialists in many areas now have a real chance to vote socialist and take a stand in defence of public services. Every blow struck against privatisation of the process and every inch of progress won is critical if we are to continue to strengthen the fight for a genuine political alternative for the working movement as a whole.

MARCH for Palestine
Saturday
MAY 18
Assemble 12 noon
Central London
Rally Trafalgar Square
Called by Palestine Solidarity Campaign
Heated debate on Palestine as Alliance agrees next steps

Terry Conway

The Socialist Alliance Executive met on April 13, under pressure to find a way to fit in time to allow comrades to get to the demonstration in support of the Palestinian struggle taking place later that afternoon. The trick and business-like meeting was inevitably a failure to complete its four-ten-item agenda.

Two discussions dominated the time there was. First a report back from the General Union conference and the sulphurous meeting of the trade union committee by Mark Hookinson and a debate around it, all taking place together with a resolution on the great issues from Martin Thomas.

There was unanimous agreement that the conference had been a huge success for the Alliance, a vote in favour of the next Socialist Alliance conference and the thanks for those who had worked so hard to make it possible.

The meeting was also pleased at the three successful fringe meetings that the Alliance had, particularly at NUT and KMT Train Crew conferences, and that the trainings were planned for the all the majorTU conferences to come. Proposals to convene trade union "factions" were amended to talk about networks as comrades were very keen to make clear that the Socialist Alliance had no intention to set up rival spurious groups. The only cause was an issue that the conference from Martin Thomas to organise around in favour of public services was left on the table after it failed to reach overwhelming support in the meeting.

Another proposal from Thomas was also not voted to, to extend the Socialist Alliance to produce a regular weekly bulletin. What was agreed was to produce a national 1-sided leaflet which could be used as a resource either by comrades working in different trade union conferences or at local level.

There was little prevented me asking why the original motion suggested that workplace activists should be the recipients of the general material produced by Socialist Alliance locally.

It is possible (just to hold all these events, particularly if the AGM is combined with a 2-day event) and with the debate on the Euro. But it will only be possible if there is careful planning to make sure that the events are organised in the same way that maximises their effectiveness and far enough in advance that they can be all set.

**Discussion**

It was in any event agreed that there should be e-mail lists for the Alliance and the part of the conference described as "ourselves over the next few weeks" was set up with a proposal on all this to go to the General Council on May 11. The second major discussion was on Palestine, which took place not only in the context of the actual situation in the Middle East itself, but also the situation here in Britain.

Certainly it was a debate that needed more than the 30 minutes we gave it (although from out of a 2-hour meeting that was by far the longest item) - but it was recognised that the meeting in agreeing to add this item to the agenda for the debate at the National Council in May.

It was also clear to everyone that it was a situation about which such a lot of workers are finding the press conferences and conferences on what slogans we should use in the meantime. That was structured around two positions. Secretary Rob Hoveman of the SWP argued that the two main slogans we should use would be "Free Palestine and victory to the Intifada."

Martin Thomas of the AWL on the other hand argued for the end of all occupation, Sovereignty, Solidarity with the Palestinians and Two States.

The meeting agreed that the Alliance should support the Palestinian people whilst the Alliance should be critical of the settlement of Israelis which, in the words of the statement, is essentially far more critical that the position of the SWP.

It was agreed that the Executive should discuss the issue of Palestine at its next meeting, and that the Alliance should begin by looking at the recent developments, rather than not actually say anything at all that these debates were breaking the same.

The resolution as it stood was not something anyone could logically vote against and those who suggested that it should be changed were prepared to be forced to declare their affiliations just hadn't read it. Nor had it been put to the meeting, as I argued, was how it would be made.

Fortunately Marcus accepted at least some of the alterations and agreed that the resolution not be voted on at the May meeting and would be referred rather than by the National Council for a rather a lot of precious time by this point.

The resolution was also referred to the Executive Committee and discussed, and it is interesting to note that a whole lot of items - most notably the report back from the General Union conference were not reached. This is because the Executive Committee, demonstrating the political maturity of the Alliance that was elected is probably more likely to be very concerned with the December conference.

Fred Lopat

UNISON grudgingly consults on political fund

The latest such example was at Labour's NEC on the 28th March when UNISON representatives voted against a motion opposing the political fund, even though a Tribunal had been submitted Tribune editor Mark Benton and Martin Tumur of the GMB.

Unfortunately at UNISON's National conference a delegate will be able to challenge the actions as representatives of UNISON's NEC due to the union's policy.

UNISON's "special relationship" means that only union members who are also members of Labour Party can have a say on how the NEP is run, yet the union encourages all of its members to pay into the NEP. Local UNISON branches are also affiliated against their wishes to local Labour committees.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed only three outcomes: consultation, the Labour Party, a minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates.

In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP. A similar initiative is needed to bring into the Alliance those thousands of young people radicalising on questions of which they currently don't see the Alliance as being an organisation that has anything to offer them.

Clearly this issue can't be addressed solely by organis- ing the conference - we have to win our spurs on the streets and parties like Rifkindstone in Italy have done, but it could be one important focus.

At the same time, the Alliance, the SWP and the Alliance, in December or around that time, there has also been a suggestion that we need a policy conference with a major votes around the question we should take in the forthcoming conference around the Euro. This is obviously a crucial discussion and one on which there are major differences amongst Alliance sympathisers.

Given that the referendum will be an important turning point in British politics, the Socialist Alliance needs to take a clear position - in the view of ISG members a clear position to campaign for a No vote on the basis of inter-nationalism.

It is possible (just to hold all these events, particularly if the AGM is combined with a 2-day event) and with the debate on the Euro. But it will only be possible if there is careful planning to make sure that the events are organised in the same way that maximises their effectiveness and far enough in advance that they can be all set.

**Let us know how much!**

Fred Lopat

It is now clearly time to review the functioning of the political funds, as they are both undemocratic and in the case of the NEP, there has been hardly any return on investment during the last year. Many members believe the NEP is unworkable and that it is not affiliated.

UNISON's leadership is trying to keep the lid on a boil- ing kettle, but will get burnt in its attempt.

One only real exception on the union's political funds has been allowed on to the agenda for this year's conference - and twice ruled out of order.

The consultation on the future of the NEP has proposed three outcomes: disaffiliation from the Labour Party, minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed only three outcomes: consultation, the Labour Party, a minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed three outcomes: disaffiliation from the Labour Party, minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP. Local UNISON branches are also affiliated against their wishes to local Labour committees.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed three outcomes: consultation, the Labour Party, a minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP. Local UNISON branches are also affiliated against their wishes to local Labour committees.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed three outcomes: consultation, the Labour Party, a minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP. Local UNISON branches are also affiliated against their wishes to local Labour committees.

The negotiation of the funds and future of the NEP has proposed three outcomes: consultation, the Labour Party, a minor improvement on the functioning of the NEP, or support for other parties and candidates. In framing the options in such a manner, the leader of UNISON's NEC is determined that a fourth option that would be maintaining affiliation, demonstrating the funds and supporting only those trade unions that support union policy, be left out of the NEP. Local UNISON branches are also affiliated against their wishes to local Labour committees.
Seven reasons to vote Socialist Alliance

- Tax the rich to fund public services
- Stop privatisation and renationalise the railways
- Decent pensions — restore the link to wages
- Defend council housing and comprehensive education
- End the war on asylum seekers and fight racism
- Stop Bush and Blair's肮脏的政策
- Put people before profit!

It was supposed to be the dazzling launch of new Labour's local election campaign. Omaha on 11, but instead Labour's ‘big hitter’ cabinet ministers (John Prescott and Treasury Secretary Andrew Smith) were greeted by a demented PFI privatisation fat cat — and a small crowd of irate socialists...

Local hospitals and staff are being sold off as part of PFI deals, as Oxford's postal workers face huge job losses and as the County Council makes yet another £8 million cuts in Social Services, things are bound to be tough for New Labour. They are increasingly being caught in the political crossfire, a ‘friend’ in the unions and the new force on the left — the Socialists. The Alliance is standing six candidates and wards across the city (Blackbird Leys, Churchill, Headington, Quarry and Risinghurst, Rose Hill and Ifflyke, St Mary’s), following the vigorous campaigning of Andrew Smith in Oxford East in last year's general election.

Discomfort
The discomfort of the socialists of Labour faithful who turned out to hear Smith and Prescott. Rose Hill First School was plain to see, as protesters handed out leaflets publicising the arrival of their ‘big hitter’,

Rough ride for Labour’s heavyweights in Oxford

John Kipling
The region, with a history of standing five candidates in the local elections in 2002, is now concentrating on anti-privatisation and anti-racism.

All the political parties on Kirklees council, including the Greens, have voted unanimously to close old people's homes, sell a local housing estate to a private developer, and set up an arms-length council company to run the rest of council housing.

Kirklees was a flagship New Labour council at the forefront of ‘modernisation’ in local government, until the elections in May 2000 when the liberals became the largest party.

Not surprisingly the remaining Labour councillors, despite the old concern being raised occasionally, have all tooled the Blairite line and have refused to mount any fight against central government under funding and the privatisation agenda.

This will be the third time the Socialist Alliance has stood locally. Prior to the general election in 2001, where we stood a candidate in the Huddersfield Constituency, we had stood in a local by-election. Our experience so far is that despite working hard on the streets leafletting and canvassing, and getting a good response from people on the doorstep, this has not translated into a vote.

Unfortunately Arthur Scargill’s Socialist Labour Party deliberately drafted in an already small socialist voter of about 500 dozen.

This year the SLP are not standing, and we have made a pact with the Socialist Party not to stand against each other.

The Socialist Party are standing in one ward. ‘Their withdrawal from the Socialist Alliance will make very little practical difference, as they never devoted serious resources to it anyway, and we have no idea what their lay members are up to.

The LP have only stood candidates in Huddersfield this year and are contesting four seats in the Dewsbury area. The trend is to ‘tap into the race riots’ which affected Bradford last year. Luckily the fascists have not managed to operate in Huddersfield this year from a base since the late 1970s when any enthusiasm of the movement was met by police setting up their national headquarters.

Since there are some areas of Dewsbury that are not well integrated racially, and the fascists have a history of greater influence there.

Unfortunately we have not yet been able to secure an agreement from a Socialist Alliance branch in Dewsbury, and will we have been able to do is distribute anti-fascist leaflets there, but this did get a good response.

A number of our candidates in Huddersfield have been actively involved in the local refugee support groups, and asylum rights are another of our points in the election campaign.

Of the candidates, one is Asian but unfortunately all are male. After the election the Alliance will have to make a systematic effort to recruit more women, particularly women youth and black.

We will also have to make sure we continue to campaign seriously and try to gain respect from working class people who feel disillusioned with electoralism.

North East: Socialist Mayoral alternatives

Louise van der Hoeven
There are two mayoral elections in the North East in May the Socialist Alliance is standing candidates in both Middlesbrough - Jeff Fowler and Mike Elliott in North Tyneside.

In North Tyneside the election is not being held at a good time for the ruling New Labour Party. The incumbent New Labour Council has run up debts of over £45 million which only came to light last year. As part of their ‘cost cutting’ exercise the council is laying off 170 council workers with the threat of redundancy hanging over many more.

It will come as no surprise to Socialist Outlook readers that New Labour is keen on the idea of elected mayors and regional government. The Labour leadership in North Tyneside opposed the idea of an elected mayor. When the issue was put to a referendum the option for a presidential style mayor narrowly won.

In the metropolitan borough of North Tyneside, which covers the constituencies of Stephen Byers, Alan Campbell and Nick Brown, the turnout for the referendum was higher than in the general election. After the referendum, a split on left/right lines, but a clash of two bureaucrats chasing the top job and a salary of over £80,000.

At the Socialist Alliance selection meeting, Alan Pond from the Campaign for an Independent Mayor gave an open invite to their selection meeting the following week in Whitley Bay. A small delegation of Socialist Alliance members attended this meeting of around 30 - mainly disillusioned Tories and Liberals with a few ex Labour Party supporters.

Kevin Flynn, Chair of the Tyneside Socialist Alliance explained what we stand for and invited those present to join our campaign. At the conclusion of the meeting Alan Pond (former Liberal & Green Party member) was elected by those present as the candidate of the Campaign for an Independent Mayor.

The consensus of the meeting was that they wanted a manager not a politician. Our candidate Mike Elliott stood up and spoke for the need for an elected manager, arguing that people in North Tyneside do not need 'good management' but a mayor that will work and fight alongside them.

Mike is a well-known local comedian and former local radio DJ. He is also a part-time teacher and actor with Live Theatre and has appeared on TV in shows such as Spender, Crocodile Shoes and in the film Billy Elliott. Mike, who left the Labour Party in 1997, was a prominent part of the local fight against pit closures in the 1980s. In the 1990s he was active in the campaign to keep the Swan Hunter Shipyard in Wallsend open.

In an interview with the Newcastle Evening Chronicle Mike said: "I am a committed Socialist and proud of it, this is a serious desire for change not just some publicity stunt. I was approached by the Socialist Alliance and asked if I would be interested, so I decided to give it a go. It’s about giving people more options and choices..."
Birmingham tenants give two fingers to New Labour-privateers

by Geoff Smith
(Birmingham Defend Council Housing, personal capacity)

Council tenants in Birmingham have recently thrown out plans drawn up by the city’s ruling New Labour group to “transfer” nearly 85,000 municipally owned flats and houses over to a group of eleven supposedly “not-for-profit” Registered Social Landlords.

Such a move— which would have effectively privatized by another name— was not simply defeated in the required tenants’ ballot, it was positively routed by a majority of more than two to one (66.8% against the transfer with only 33.2% in favour).

This is a welcome hammering for New Labour’s privatization agenda, not least as it came in one of the largest authorities in the country, with all eyes on Birmingham following the disappointing vote for transfer by understandingly demoralized tenants in Glasgow, this result must stand out as a beacon to all who want to oppose New Labour’s bankruptcy.

Indeed, according to Dennis Mackie, a local Member for Housing, the Labour-controlled City Council said: “The views of different tenants groups are to be taken into account. We are committed to maintaining the high standards of social housing in the city.”

Despite this, tenants had the right to challenge the transfer process and the police were called in to deal with the large crowds of angry tenants who had gathered to prevent the hearing.

Georgina Redfern, of the National Housing Network, said: “The council’s decision is a victory for tenants and a rebuff to the government’s housing policy. It is a clear signal that tenants will resist any attempt to privatize their homes.”

However, despite being bombarded by a small forest’s worth of glossy pro-transfer literature, where economy with the whole truth was the order of the day, tenants showed the New Labour privatization move for what it was. A bid to sell-off stock transfer.

The campaign to secure public investment into the much-needed modernization and extension of social housing must be stepped up both locally and nationally. Writing off social housing debts with no strings attached cannot be fought for. With the possibility of even this New Labour government passing through a bill to make central funds available for the regeneration of council housing by the year 2000 and the pressure needs to be kept up.

Legitimate grievances

Many Birmingham council tenants have legitimate grievances regarding years of under-investment and housing mismanagement (by Tory and Labour run councils) and a lack of repairs to their properties.

The result of these grievances is a lack of trust and when Lib Dems offered the city’s tenants an oppressive transfer, they were never prepared to answer “awkward” questions concerning how the same party nationally has been promoting transfer in Sheffield, Stratford upon Avon, Liverpool, Walsall and Altrincham.

Similarly, the Tories in Birmingham only organise stock transfer because, true to form for the senior capital, they want to take the money. The figures in the business plan did not add up.

In such circumstances, it is surely vital for socialists and all class fighters to point out that such cross-class alliances tie the working-class to the various representatives of capital and class independence is a must.

Unfortunately, the majority of those involved in Birmingham’s social housing DSS saw nothing wrong in providing the leader of the Liberal Democrats with a platform at the Liberal Democrat conference organised by anti-transfer campaigners.

The SWP were up to their necks in this dangerous business, but according to the Lib Dems as “our united front partners” and “sundry nonsense.” It does not require a genius to work out how our Labour colleagues enabled us after being allowed to use our platforms in order to pretend to oppose housing transfer in front of concerned tenants who faced with an utterly bankrupt Labour Party and with local elections looming!

Why the lessons are clear, Birmingham tenants have shown that the Labour’s sell-off plans are a good thing. However, any one of the proposals can lead to the city’s popular candidates taking over the council’s propaganda against the socialists. This is not a contradiction.

The best way to prepare for the future is to pursue decent class politics which seal off the rotten structures of the Liberal Democrats and Tories. If DCC continues to function locally in the future a radical transformation of its activities will be needed.

Proper debate must be permitted inside any ongoing campaign and not frowned upon as was the case in the run-up to the ballot. Similarly, minutes of each meeting must be properly kept and adhered to. More tenants and active trader unions need to be involved in ensuring everything is done to secure a massive injection of public money for social housing investment.

And the Socialist Party must abandon the petty sectarianism it displayed in effectively boycotting the campaign for the first months of the campaign.

Similarly, the SWP must be challenged to break from its quite scandalous cosy up with the Lib Dem groups such as Socialist Outlook and Workers’ Power need to get back to their roots.

NHS: Tories set course for 1947

John Listor
THE SHOCK HORIZON revelation by the Mirror (April 11) that the Tory leadership has developed a master-plan to scrap the NHS as a tax-funded service would be more sensational and surprising if it had not been preceded by months of right-wing journalists arguing precisely the same thing.

The Observer’s Anthony Browne, for one, has been conducting a pro-crude attack on the NHS ever since the case the Sun, the Sunday Times, Daily Mail and other right-wing rags have regularly added their two-parlourful of bile and prejudice arguing for more charges, more private sector involvement, and more private insurance as the only way to inject more resources into health care.

However the cynical scheme, patched apparently behind closed doors by Ian Duckin-
We enjoyed every minute of it!

Terry Conway

Such a description can't accurately be made of many political conferences or meetings, but Civil Rights lawyer, Mr. Christian, in his presentation in the conference to Defend Asylum Seekers held in Manchester on March 23. At around 350 people crammed into the conference, which was jointly organised by Barred Wire Britain, the National Civil Rights Movement, the National Assembly of Anti-Deportation Campaigns and the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers. It gave a platform to a number of asylum seekers who explained in graphic and moving detail the reality of life in Britain's detention prison, and to many other anti-government's racist and draconian policies.

The conference started with a plenary session which set the scene and then broke into 5 different workshops.

After lunch the same workshops ran again and the day concluded with a round up plenary in which there was the opportunity to report back from workshops but to discuss and agree future action.

The tone was set by Suraj Grover of the NCRM. In his opening remarks, he pointed out that this was a unique event, not because there had not been many previous conferences on asylum but because so many of the key organisations involved had come together to organise the event.

He hoped that it would be possible to cement closer working linkages between the organisations in the future. Grover also argued that this conference had seen the most recent legislation and practice yet in which the rights of asylum seekers. These attacks are something we witnessed even under the last Home Office regime.

Campfield campaigner and author, Theresa Hayes, forcefully put the case against all immigration controls saying, "A more just world would be one in which no one is forced to migrate but everyone is free to do so if they have been trafficked.

Lawrence team, on 22 June, and protest outside detention centres on 13 June. This resulted in:

- Backing the national demonstration on 22 June and protests outside detention centres on 11 June;
- Circulating leaflets with posters publicising the protests;
- Encouraging members to attend;
- Sending the branch banners;
- Donating £1 towards the cost of the demonstration and maintenance;
- And sending the motion to the appropriate national and regional bodies of the union (ie as Trades Councils, Constituency Labour Parties and other relevant organisations).

We had met in advance to propose an agreed statement to the conference, which would have been available to all participants when they registered.

There had been prior discussion about a week of action, but people had no knowledge of this until the final session itself. This inevitably meant that there was some argument, including between leading members of the sponsoring organisations, about precisely what the priorities should be.

In the end however, agreement was reached to organise a week of action from June 15-22, which coincides with Refugee Week.

On June 13 there will be a day of action against Detention, with protests outside Detention Centre in Scotland and Harrowsworth in London. (Actually the conference agreed the focus would be Yarls Wood rather than the other two.)

Since the conference, there has been a further for movement among all the sponsoring organisations to take this work forward.

This agreed model resolution should be taken through trade union, Labour Party, and anti-war group etc to build the broadest possible support for the week of action.

Planning meetings for the week of action are fortnightly.

Barbed Wire Beat

Edited by Richard Heering, Directed by Anno-Marie Sweeney (running time 14 minutes)

£5 to individuals and immigration rights groups, 4.50 to organisations, available from close Campfield Campaign, c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford OX4 2DF (07825 378734), All proceeds to Close Campfield Campaign and Barbed Wire Britain.

One particular highlight of the Manchester conference was the opportunity to watch this vibrant video during the break.

The film included interviews and footage shot in France and Germany, the history of the Refugee Rights Centre, a UK Anti-Racism Day celebration, and discussions on the importance of solidarity.

This is a useful tool to show the reality of immigration detention, to highlight the suffering of asylum seekers, and to highlight the importance of solidarity.

The film is available to order at the conference.

Video treat
Train crew are still on the offensive

Greg Tucker - RMT
train crew national secretary (personal capacity)

Despite the undermanning of the South West Trains dispute, rail workers across the country continue to engage in strikes over pay and conditions. The prospect remains that the current disputes will broaden into nationwide action over the summer.

For the media the SWT dispute was all showbocking for advantage in the RMT General Secretary elections. This was an insult to the SWT workers who struck for six days. Their strike was in response to real grievances shared by rail workers across the country.

That is why action is still taking place with Avanti North guards in the north-east, with First North Western drivers in the north-west and with others elsewhere in the country. SWT workers were let down because the RMT leadership was not prepared to confront the political issues involved in the dispute.

The RMT was faced with a choice: what was prepared to use scab managers to run services on strike days and to disrupt non-strike days to starve the dispute? The opposite of the correct path, the same path the government interceded on the side of management through the Railway Inspectorate and the Strategic Rail Authority.

The only way to deal with these attitudes was to build the dispute. The RMT leadership built on any such action. Even what little did stand up and agree to do it failed to implement.

Having set up a national dispute fund, for instances, letters written to ask for donations from other organisations were put up in the post. Instead, behind the scenes, company level reps were mobilised to encourage the weakest elements amongst the workforce to call for the dispute to be ended.

Despite the fact that the workforce was still on strike on strike day the dispute was first suspended, and after the resultant further demonstration finally closed down, having failed to make any serious progress, the RMT's demands. The majority of SWT members had been left angry with the RMT for failing to progress the dispute with the necessary vigour.

However, with the Avanti North pay dispute still going strong, and with FW drivers taking action to halt draconian treatment of staff matters are far from over. The RMT SWT crew conference held this weekend in Portsmouth is a good indication of the current mood. Documents were devoted to the role of the government in undermining the SWT dispute and agreeing to campaign for a truly independent railway health and safety body.

Giving practical support to the existing disputes, they agreed on the new group of fourteen RMT candidates and the national collective bargaining process.

At the same time the prospect of a national train crew strike this summer over rail safety was put on the agenda. After a year of discussion with the RMT, Railway Safety, the Railtrack subsidiary responsible for the Railway Rule Book has abandoned an independent risk assessment that supported the safety functions of train Guards.

It is clear they have done so in collusion with the train operators to keep down staffing costs at the expense of passenger safety. The conference called on the union to progress the issue to a ballot for strike action of train crew in every company if the matter is not resolved at the end of May.

The conference was further hampered by a report from New General Secretary Bob Crow. He has taken immediate action to remove the union's head office to give more support to the membership.

Outlining these changes, said: 'In his words to us we are developing a fighting union, he has also described changes to the union's political stance that were warmly welcomed by delegates.'

On Bob Crow's initiative, the RMT Executive has agreed support to a new group of fourteen RMT candidates and the national collective bargaining process. At the same time the prospect of a national train crew strike this summer over rail safety was put on the agenda. After a year of discussion with the RMT, Railway Safety, the Railtrack subsidiary responsible for the Railway Rule Book has abandoned an independent risk assessment that supported the safety functions of train Guards.

It is clear that the debate on the union's political stance is highly significant. A series of resolutions on the AGM agenda range from support for the changes Crow has implemented, to total disfratification from Labour.

It is almost impossible to find any RMT activist prepared to defend Labour's policies on the railway. But that said the right in the future is not going to be quiet. In the election to fill the Assistant General Secretary post with the retirement of Vernon Hince, the Left has won.

Alongside the defeat of the left in the renewal election of the union's President, this is a serious blow. The right-wing clearly aim to hem Bob Crow, and wait to counter attack at a later date. It is vital that in the current election for Assistant General Secretary to fill Bob Crow's old post the left remain united to ensure we can get elected someone who can give Bob Crow the strategic support he needs from the left.

Pat Sikorski, London Underground top rep on the national executive is already picking up significant support for Neate from around the country and RMT activists should be looking to build his campaign.

Just issued a new book on the Irish trade unions

TORRENTS of ink have been used to debate and analyse the 'Catholic tiger' - boosted by the miracle of economic miracle totally transforming the Irish economy and Irish society.

The majority of these studies and analyses are unanimous in showing that the major trade unions supporting the agreement did not have the same level of support from the RMT.

The fact that the two strikes were by the RMT in the same month over exactly the same issues is a direct manifestation of the fact that the agreement under it. If the employer objected the Government felt that it could do nothing and the union leadership were willing to go any way.

The nurse's strike was an even more graphic example of the workings of partnership. Their union had not signed up to the agreement and they were under the illusion that they were free to negotiate their own agreement. This idea was quickly discredited when bosses, government and the ICTU leadership all combined to stop the struggle and defeat the nurses.

The years of what was essentially a pay freeze were justified by talk of leadership on the grounds that the payload would be a slashing of tax rates (in the South of Ireland 100% of tax revenue comes through the PAYE class, who pay 50% of their wages).

Local capitalists and multinationals avoid tax. Some of the multinationals pay a negotiation - collecting from the tax agency rather than paying in.)

In fact the agreements were marked by a whole series of tax avoidance deals and legal persuaded Irish capital that it could simply use its profits without risk of any sizable tax bill. The result was a boom in the property market that threw the average industrial wage without any affordable housing.

As Prisoners of Social Partnership is issued the nurses have yet again taken industrial action.

There are persistent stories of unions breaking away from the national partnership agreements. All the signs are of a bumpy road for industrial relations in Ireland in the future. Prisoners of Social Partnership will prove an invaluable primer for trade unionists, political academics and students of understanding these coming industrial battles in Ireland and the industrial underdog of 'New Labour' in Britain.

‘Prisoners of Social Partnership’, by Joe Craig
Published by Socialist Democracy
Publication box 105014, Belfast
For further information: 028 90601555

United for Mayday
12 noon, Wednesday 1 May
Clerkenwell Green (Farringdon tube)
March to rally at Trafalgar Square, 3pm
March for the first time, trade unionists and anti capitalists will march together on Mayday from Clerkenwell to Trafalgar Sq. This is also the first time a march will go to Trafalgar Square in support of the current May Day rally. It is going to be an incredible event.

The Stop the War Coalition has adopted 1 May as the day on which to demonstrate against war. In the South, the CNU, UNISON and PCS regions are actively backing May Day and urging their members to attend.

A group of 25 anti capitalist artists has come together to decorate Trafalgar Square on the day.

A Palestinian theatre group are staging scenes from a play called 'Hishamposhas' at Clerkenwell Green before the march starts. Coaches are coming south from Bristol, Brighton, North London, Manchester & Medway. Be there!
Bringing Porto Alegre to Europe

Terry Conway

The opening meeting for a mobilisation from England to the European Social Forum in Italy this autumn saw around 70 people cram into a room no bigger than a lecture theatre. Those in attendance included large numbers of supporters of Globalise Resistance, the delegation from the Green Party, representatives from the Socialist Alliance, the SWP, the International Socialists Group, Red Pepper and a number of trade union militaries and trade unionists.

The meeting heard reports back from Porto Alegre from Hilary Warnamoon of Red Pepper, the parliamentary Forum from Caroline Lucas of the Green Party and from the first day's plenary session in Brussels on March 8th given by Chris Ninham of Globalise Resistance.

A report was also given from the massive demonstration that took place in Rome on March 23rd – which certainly confirmed that Italy is once again at the forefront of mobilising against neo-liberal globalisation and war – and is therefore an excellent place to collect the experience.

The meeting agreed that the political basis of the ESF should be support for the appeal of Porto Alegre – a declaration which is clearly shared as well as globalisation as such.

It should be the way of ensuring that the soft left were not able to take over and reapropriate this space, which was the idea which was raised by Porto Alegre, and the way to exclude those who only want to tinker with the worst elements of today's system rather than create a real alternative to both political parties...

As well as discussing these reports, the meeting addressed the question posed by the Green Party as to whether we should launch a British/English Social Forum at this stage. After debate it was agreed that this wasn't the right time to do so – first we need to build much wider support than was currently represented in the group (however crowded) for the mass movement and then on the basis of that work, launch something permanent here. Johnathan Neale, who was heavily involved in the Genoa Social Forum, pointed out that the Italian Social Forum was only established after the Genoa demonstrations themselves.

There seemed to be some concern from the Green Party that by not creating a Forum as such this stage people were somehow arguing that the fight against neo-liberalism on the ground could be somehow delayed, was not urgent.

But that was not what people were saying at all – rather the question was provoking what new instrument could be usefully deployed on the ground and therefore building something that would in the longer term be broader than what could just be declared at this point.

The meeting then broke into various sub-groups to discuss the political basis of Porto Alegre, publicity, and practically getting people to Italy and came back together again to report on what had been done.

The aspiration is to try and involve as many people to Italy in the autumn as went to Genoa in Italy

The first focus for public activity to build for this will be on the forthcoming May Day marches up and down the country where leaflets and the banner will be handed out.

We are campaigning to get as many organisations as possible to sign the appeal of Porto Alegre

Raphaela one of the co-ordinators of the European Social Forum will be speaking at the Globalise Resistance AGM on May 18. She will be approached to see if it is possible for her to come for longer and therefore speak at meetings in other parts of the country.

There was some disagreement about precisely what the name of the coalition should be – Mobilising Committee for the European Social Forum, Mobilisation for the ESF, Mobilising for the ESF. This will be finally resolved at the next meeting.

Leavelets, stickers and a letter to organisations are currently being produced and will be available very soon from Esf info c/o Po Box 29649, London E12 9DG, E mail: mobilisations@yahoo.co.uk.

Web site http://uk.geocities.com/mobilisations/
Next meeting 4.30pm, Monday 22 April, University of London Union, Plaet St WC1

We are putting together a poster for Erthday March 31st.

International Summer Camp

Calling all young activists ...

- Are you involved in the anti-globalisation movement, the anti-war movement or other struggles against the rotten capitalist system we live under?
- Would you appreciate the space to talk about how we can work together for a different, a fairer, more sustainable, demilitarised world?
- Do you want the opportunity to meet with hundreds of other revolutionary socialists from across Europe get together to do just that.

The camp will take place in Broude, France from Saturday 27th July to Friday 2nd August inclusive. The theme will be "This globalisation is not ours, let's build another world!"

Speakers will include: Jill Bartocci, Daniel Benson, Olivier Besancenot, Penelope Duggan, Michel Husson, Braulio Moro, Catherine Samary, and Francois Vercammen.

We don't yet know much about how it will cost for travel and food – it's likely to be between £150-200 from London, and we should have firmer costs soon. If you want to find out more, get in touch.

RING us on 020 8800 7560, email outlook@gn.apc.org or write to Youth Camp c/o Po Box 1109, London NW4 2UU

Stop Kissinger picket:
Royal Albert Hall, London Wednesday April 24, from 8.30am

The Brazil Solidarity Group demand justice for the landless outside the Brazilian Embassy in London on the day the trial was due to start.

Increasing the chances of a fair trial, free from powerful pressures from local landowners, state politicians and the police, themselves, whose colleagues are on trial.

There are 5 million landless families in Brazil, while 1% of the population owns nearly half of the land, much of it held idle for speculation. The MST's direct action occupations of this idle land have made the movement the most successful of its kind in the world. The Brazilian constitution says that land should be repossessed if it is not fulfilling its social function, but this rarely happens without the landless first occupying the land themselves.

MST settlements are cooperatively run, and are frequently more productive than neighbouring farms. The MST sets up schools and health clinics in the new communities, and their children are often better educated than other poor Brazilians. These successes make landless activists the targets of death threats and assassinations by local landowners.

On 9th July last year José Pinheiro Lima ("Dede"), a leader of the Rural Workers’ Union, his wife Cleonice, and 15-year-old son Samuel, were murdered in their own home by hired gunmen. Dede was leading an occupation of land near where the Eldorado massacre took place. His son Edinaldo, leaving through the pile of documents he prepared to pursue the case against his family’s killers, was murdered.

"This is what's left of my family - a pile of paper. Here are the faces of the murder- ers, but they've never been arrested."

After the family's murder, the rural workers Dede was organising won the land they were occupying.

"I'm proud to say I'm the son of a trade unionist who fought for a piece of land. I'm happy because he didn't sell out to that farmer. He paid with his life."

Rural trade unionists and landless activists are put on death lists by local landowners. Because of his quest for justice, Edinaldo is himself now on that list. The continuing impunity for the Eldorado Massacre makes his murder more likely.
The Fifth Congress of the Italian Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) took place in Rimini from 4 – 7 April 2002. Socialist Outlook editors Inge and Nick Wrack report:

The PRC’s red flags with the party emblem welcomed delegates. Throughout the proceedings huge screens surronding the main conference hall displayed images of oppression and resistance past and present from the civil rights and anti-Vietnam protests of the 60s to the anti-globalization demos in Genoa. Scenes of police and state brutality contrasted with strikes and the intifada.

The party’s tremendously inspirational event. The impact of the upheavals in Italian politics is present, with the Italian working class preparing for a clash with the Berlusconi government. The struggle reflected in all aspects of the congress.

The debate was carried out in terms of revolution, with references to 1917, the Chinese Revolution and Lenin and Trotsky. The PRC leader, Fausto Bertinotti opened the Congress explaining, “There is a new opportunity for the transformation of society. We have to build an alternative movement against war and against neo-liberalism. The idea of revolution is necessary.”

The Congress took place against the background of a prolonged period of growing social and political unrest, beginning with the low point of Berlusconi’s election in May 2001 that was almost immediately followed by the mass protests in Genoa June. The state murder of young Carlo Giuliani provided a massive wave of protest. There have been huge demonstrations against the war in Afghanistan. In January 2002, Nigeria in Rome against racist immigration legislation.

Protests against the government’s attacks on workers’ rights culminated in the demonstration of 3 million in Rome on 23 March 2002, the biggest demonstration in Western Europe for half a century. All eyes are now on the general strike that has been called by the three main trade union confederations for 16 April.

A number of themes dominated the Congress deliberations both in the formal debates and the discussion outside. The “movement of movements” as the Italian communists call the coalition of forces involved in the anti-capitalist protests, especially the demonstra-

The attitude of the PRC has been to turn dramatically and decisively to this movement with the result that the PRC has managed to overcome some temporary hostility towards “parties” and appear as an accepted part of the movement. Another world is possible and its constant refrain throughout the congress.

The second major theme was the party’s anti-war stance. Some of the biggest demonstrations against war in Afghanistan have taken place in Italy that have also been a protest against the PRC. A central part of this theme at the Congress was its absolute condemnation of the state terror being carried out against the anti-war movements and support for their struggle.

Perhaps the most immediate and pressing subject for debate was the response of the working class to the attacks by the Berlusconi government on workers’ rights. Berlusconi is intent on abolishing Article 18 of the Italian labour statutes, which protects workers from arbitrary sackings. As seen by the demonstration on 23 March the reaction has been overwhelming. Art 18 only applies to workers in workplaces with 15 or more workers. However, the PRC argues that the party leadership and the ranks is to involve every worker, unemployed person and person in the general strike with the aim of closing down Italy for a day. More than this, the party calls for the protection of Art 18 to be extended to every worker, regardless of the size of their workplace, whether they are casual or permanent.

Participation in the Social Forums and the other anti-capitalist activities has not only invigorated sections of the party, with the Yugoslav communists claiming to have grown, but has also provoked a major discussion about how the party should relate to the ‘movement of movements’.

The party leadership around Fausto Bertinotti has turned the PRC towards the social movements and argues that this global anti-capitalism is central to the work of the party, including its work in defence of the working class and labour rights. In this the leaders are fundamentally correct. By turning to the social movements, the anti-war protests and now, despite coming under tremendous hostile criticism in the press, in support of the Palestinian struggle, the majority has ensured that the PRC has placed itself centrally within the growing protest movements, rather than being empty issuers of “guidance” from the sidelines.

The majority orientation was challenged fundamentally by the minority opposition led by Marco Tedesco and some Trotskyist groups as well as some adherents of Stalinist current of thought who insisted that the PRC was dissolving itself in the social movements. In this they showed a remarkable lack of understanding about the impact that the movement of movements has had on events in Italy over the last nine months.

While making formally criticisms, their position appeared to be based more on the counter-program of propaganda and struggle while criticising the involvement of the PRC in the social movements. This set them apart from the PRC. The struggle that have developed in every part of Italy can only consolidate the PRC that has adopted. So, their criticism appeared abstract and could be dismissed by the majority speakers, especially Bertinotti, as being empty and irrelevant.

The PRC had a proposal to include statements on the anti-war movement and the achievements of the movement for the rights of Palestinian rights have all been strengthened by the social movements.

Italian trade unionists Luciano Multibauer spoke at the Socialist Alliance conference last month, both in the plenary session on trade union privatization and in a longer workshop session on the conference proper.

In the latter he explained in some detail the political and industrial situation that would lead to the extraordinary event, when 3 million people marched on the streets of Rome on March 23, as well as talking about the debates in Rinfonda in the run up to their congress which are dealt with in the report from the Congress by Inge and Nick Wrack (above).

Luciano is a member of the national leadership of the Sindacato Interconglomerato dei Comunisti di Base, S.Cobas. S.Cobas is an anti-capitalist Trade Union which won control of the PRC in the 1980s from the new movements which led socialist in the factories, in transport, in the schools and in the public sector in general, that gave birth to self-managed committees called COBAS.

This new Trade Union organisation was alternative to the traditional Trade Unions (CGIL, Cal and UIL) and they began to form.

S.Cobas believes that the making of workers must give birth to new tools on the international level, in order to develop co-ordination of concrete initiatives. They want to promote debate and dialogue between all those resisting capitalist globalisation; thinking it is necessary to give birth to new internationalism in the working class.

From this point of view S.Cobas participated in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and in centrally involved in the World of the European Social Forum to be held in Italy in the autumn.

Below we print part of Luciano’s speech:

“It’s a bit complicated to explain about the unions because you don’t have the necessary power. The presence of independent unions in Britain – they only exist in Italy. In France and a little bit in Spain. They were born in the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s. The first were the teachers and then the rail workers and some worker public sector workers and then in the 90s in some factories as well – starting from Albania in Milan.

The trade unionists were to the left from the CGIL and also from the Christian democratic unions in the north of the country – because this region was to the left of the national federation. The splits developed in a dynamic against social partner- ship – but also on the question of decentralizing the unions to put decision-making in the hands of the rank and file.

There was a strong dynamic of this development up to the mid-90s – but today it doesn’t exist any more. The independent unions exist, they have their space, but there are no new splits from the traditional organisations since then. There is also a problem between the different independent unions because of each of them come from a different background: the history of the ALP, the history of the CP, the history of the socialists are not the same. And the leaderships are different too – and so it’s hard to bring them together.

On February 15 we did manage to organize a strike. But there was a strike called by all the independent unions and a march through Rome of about 100,000 people and it was politically very good. But there was a conflict there; there are differences within the independent unions and because of that march was called for March 23rd – where some people are supporting this and others are not. The reason for this is because there is a fear that the decentralisation will be used as an alternative to the call for a General Strike, which at this moment does not seem very probable but never the less these divisions amongst the independent unions are a real danger.

This is particularly the case because they also have very few unions in the traditional unions. For 10 or 15 years we have had the problems of social partnership – particularly since the Ferrandoordo or Truman Crisi. In this case they have even more division, so this will be a very bitter struggle. Two weeks ago the GCIL called a general strike on March 23 for the traditional unions said no – we support the government. There were discussions between the two and there will be a common demonstration on the 23 – but for the strike we still don’t know because everything seems to have much in it.”
On the other hand, there is no doubt that the position of the leadership around Fausto Bertinotti, while correctly taking the party into the movements and speaking in terms of revolution and the need to forge a new workers' movement, leaves open and ambiguous its position of quite fundamental issues such as its attitude towards agreement with the Centre-Left and as to what should happen after the General Strike. Unfortunately, the abstract way in which these points were taken up by the speakers for the majority made it easy for the majority to avoid having to go to the clear path.

So, while correctly criticising its own previous involvement in supporting the last government of the Centre-Left Olive Tree coalition, which carried out attacks on the working class and neo-liberal policies, further deals with the Centre-Left were not ruled out, especially at local level. This was despite Bertinotti correctly explaining that it was the neo-liberal agenda of the Centre-Left that prepared the way for the return of Berlusconi.

Further, what happens after 16 April is left open, concentrating on the preparation for the trial and certainly the protection of Art 18 to all workers. In this way it appeared that the emphasis was being placed on the parliamentary struggle rather than on the extra-parliamentary. Of course, the two cannot be separated but the latter is decisive.

Despite the majority's correctness in its criticism of the minority when he said that their approach would separate the party from the movement, one of the most striking features of Bertinotti's two speeches to the Congress was the clear denunciation of Stalinitism as being incompatible with Communism", he repeated. The PRC has always opposed any form of Stalinist history of oppression and Stalinism. It must reject any form of authoritarianism. He pointed out that it was not just that Stalinism was not democratic, but that it was not socialist. It had denied the emancipation of men and women which socialism would bring. He pointed out that not only Stalin, but Stalin, all the leaders of the October Revolution, were not all saints or even perfect, but that they were part of the revolution.

This was a continuance of the theme of "refoundation" which has been ongoing for one of the key themes of the debate from 1991 but was not dealt with at the Congress or at any previous Congress. It was clearly trying to develop the party's Stalinist past of the 1920s and 1930s as that of individuals while denouncing Stalinism. This was to contrast with the Stalinist grouping which won 25% for its amendments to the majority themes.

The comrade in Bandiera Rossa, the Italian section of the FL, who was representing the majority, giving support to the orientation of the PRC towards the social movements. However, because they made no open criticism of the deficiencies in the majority, he had just submitted "amendments" to the Majority themes, they appeared to have no independent interest or impact at all. This is despite having a number of comrades in the PRC as part of the majority. Whilst supporting the majority orientation towards the social movements, he was a supporter of the Party and programme linked to the struggles should be advanced. The seemingly uncritical support from Bandiera Rossa allows the majority to get away with its lack of clarity about what is to done.

Extract from the majority resolution agreed by the congress:

With this conference our party completes a determined and innovative step forward in the process of refounding modern thought and communist action to meet the great challenge that faces us, with the deep transformations taking place in the capitalist system worldwide in the current phase of globalisation.

The whole of humanity finds itself at a crossroads between the return to barbarism and the construction of an alternative society, that we continue to call Socialist. This development and innovation in analyses and political theory are only possible if at the same time we put into effect a serious, brave and also a harsh balance sheet of the reality of the communist movement of the last century and the experiences of constructing socialist societies.

Those ideas, those conflicts, those struggles, those revolutions have indirectly marked the history of humanity, as for the first time in the history of the world, labour has won its own destiny in this way.

But in this history, which we do not set aside or to falsify, mistakes were made, and also errors - those of the Stalinist age - were committed that we must look at in order to avoid them happening again, in the present or the future.

This is an indispensable and also a possible task today, because we are facing a world-wide movement against globalisation that is fighting for "another world is possible" and that therefore raises questions about the nature and the characteristics of a new society - one without exploitation, alienation and wars.

This search, on the basis of a return to the basic elements and foundation of Marxist thought, must continue and be expanded and our conference is a definite contribution in this direction.

With this conference our party proposes and effects a turn to the left. This has been made necessary by the present crisis in the process of globalisation, that it is an economic, cultural and unresolved political crisis, to which the capitalist system answers with a permanent state of war.

It is necessary in order to be in tune with the growth of the movements, that in our country in particular, we see more and more a meeting together of the movement against globalisation, war and neo-liberalism and the extraordinary upturn in the compatibility of the working class movement itself.

It is necessary because of the defeat of the political project of the Centre-Left and the so-called "third way" put forward by the moderate left, which not just in Italy but on a European level, demonstrates its total inability to face and defeat the right wing, neo-liberalist policies and wars.

We commit ourselves to these fundamental aims on all fronts, be it social, political, cultural or institutional, working inside the movements for their growth and participating politically at an international level.
Where is US imperialism going?

As the Israeli military smashes though the West Bank, piling up the bodies and destroying the infrastructure needed to sustain life — water, electricity, medical facilities, civil administration — the one power with the means to redress the US, refused to do so. ALAN THORNE looks at the direction of US policy.

Empty gestures are made, claims the right of Gold and Powell, which are cynically designed to give the impression of concern, but which in reality allow Sharon a free hand to continue the slaughter. The reasons for this are not difficult to see. For Bush, and for his loyalpied, Blair, the overarching issue is their so-called war against terrorism. This is in reality a war to increase the military, economic and geo-political, and ideological dominance of US imperialism still further.

Nothing could have illustrated this more clearly than the recent meeting of Bush and Blair at Bush’s ranch in Texas. Designed to finalise the main lines of their battle plan for an invasion of Iraq, it took place as Palestine erupted into a bloodbath, in the direct result of US policy since September 11, which not only gave the green light to Sharon’s offensive against the Palestinians, but the green light to Abramoff and others to get as much as they could as needed as well.

If it was right for the US to use whatever military force was necessary against Bin Laden, they claimed, it was right for them to use similar military force against the PLO and Arafat. Israeli terror is the best this manner everyday.

For them being shown off course by the staggering resistance of the Palestinians and the reaction of the Arab countries to Sharon’s naked brutality, Bush and Blair proceeded to discuss and complete their battle plans as if all-out war in Palestine did not exist.

They emerged to announce that a "regime change" was necessary in Iraq, and made it clear how they would provoke the necessary war to effect it.

Saddam would be told that Iraq must implement all UN resolutions or face military action. At the very moment when Sharon had rejected yet another UN resolution to withdraw from Palestinian territory, Iraq would also be told that it must accept UN weapons inspections "at any time in the past and by any one" — conditions chosen consciously because they would be unacceptable.

Why are Bush and Blair so keen to invade Iraq? The first reason is US strategic interests in the region in terms of oil reserves. These exist in Iraq in a way that they did not and do not exist in Afghanistan.

This is also the reason that the US bankrolls Israel, as guardian of those strategic interests. Israel is an utterly reliable regional imperialist for the US — unlike the Arab bourgeoisie regimes who would dearly love to play that role — but as the recent wave of huge demonstrations throughout the Arab world has shown — have to contend with populations with a very different outlook.

The second reason is the drive for even greater US global hegemony worldwide. Invading Iraq would allow the US to engineer a massive escalation of the war drive whilst simultaneously bolstering its regional interests.

There is of course a price to be paid. As invasion of Iraq would shatter the coalition which was got together (through various levels of persuasion) for the invasion of Afghanistan, and it would destabilise the region.

Bush is prepared for that, provided he has Tony Blair and new Labour shoulder to shoulder with him — both for political support and for Britain’s strategic air force bases. Blair is prepared to face down opposition in the Parliamentary Labour Party in order to provide this.

For Bush the priority is to take advantage of the opportunities for US imperialism opened up by the collapse of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s. Their collapse was a result of internal crises, with the West sitting back as a spectator, but this left the USA as the sole world super-power. It was not the only imperialist power, but it was emerging as overwhelming the dominant one, shaking off the Vietnam syndrome which had prevented it from taking military action abroad for nearly 20 years. The military domination attained by the US today is greater than any imperialist power in history.

The 1990s were marked by the rise of US military power towards this pinnacle, building on Reagan’s military build-up. More precisely, it saw the rise in Washington’s ability to use its military power.

The most important landmarks in this were the Gulf war of 1990 (which never quite achieved a new world order) and then the bombardment of Serbia in 1997. They were carried out with the increasing use of air power and with a growing sophistication of the US military.

This is now further bolstered by a $48 billion increase in military spending next year. At the same time Bush is setting out to make the use of nuclear weapons acceptable as a battlefield option. He has a contingency for using nuclear weapons in Iraq if they are needed. A new generation of weapons is being developed alongside the star wars project, which would allow the US to use them without the fear of retaliation.

The 1990s were also marked by the rise of US economic hegemony. This was the US’s longest period of expansion, whilst its principal economic rival of the 1970s, Japan, went into long term recession. At the same time it saw the success of its neo-liberal economic model which characterised a new rapid period of capitalist globalisation.

The fightback against this process of neo-liberal globalisation began in the mid 1990s. In Europe this took the form of mass strikes in France and other European countries against austerity packages designed to meet the criteria for the introduction of Mastricht and the single European currency.

But in South Korea, in India, in Mexico and in many other places radicalisation and mobilisation was taking place against the effects of globalisation itself. The growing instability of global capital was shown by the crisis in the South East Asia economic, which threatened the stability of the whole system.

Seattle triggered the anti-globalisation movement as we know it today, with mass demonstrations every time the international organisations of globalised capital meet to discuss their project. But it was always more than these demonstrations. It was, and remains, rooted in the escalating inequalities which flow directly out of neo-liberal globalisation — both between nation states and within nation states and in the mass movements in the third world.

Bush’s "war on terror" after September 11 was designed to reverse the growing anti-globalisation forces and send them into reverse. It was also designed to further change the balance of forces in the world further to the advantage of the USA and to use the might of the US military to strengthen US geo-political interests and shore up the instability of its political systems.

What emerged was a super-power on the rampage. An unchallengeable military machine in the control of Bush and his closest right, and with political conditions in the USA which were now to show them to use it on an unprecedented scale in an unprecedented way.

The Viatnam syndrome which inhibited the use of the military option by Bush and because of US military is now operating in 100 countries, and even more so in even more. There has been a huge expansion of special forces and secretive services.

The result has been not only the slaughter of tens of thousands in Afghanistan and war against the Palestinians, but more repression in many states and the integration of the US military into a series of countervailing forces that have been able to deploy before.

We have also seen a massive attack on civil and human rights in series of countries across the globe. In short the world has become a much more dangerous place since September 11 — particularly if you are a dissident or in a movement of struggle for national or democratic rights.

So how has the balance of power changed in the world seven months since 11 September? That many more people are dying in the US than those supported, promoted and encouraged by them is clear enough. This US has now continuned and escalate — particularly in Iraq.

That the balance of power has changed to the advantage of US imperialism is also beyond dispute, but its stability is another matter entirely.

We have seen in Argentina that the mass movement has been able to bring down three governments. The unbearable struggle of the Israelis by humiliation has not just a defence of their national rights but a direct response to the war drive of Bush and Blair as it is carried through by Sharon.

If the Palestinians are at this moment the front line fighters against this war, then the whole fightback shows that attacks will provoke fightbacks... and fightbacks are their natural and justifiable. A price will be paid at every stage by the existing system.

Pictures of Israeli tanks smashing through Palestinian refugee camps brought masses off the streets in Egypt to Indonesia. There is the fight against war and anti-capitalist movement. The Brussels demonstrations in November saw up to 500,000 on the trade union demonstration and 30,000 on the following day on the demonstration of the anti-capitalist left.

Piero Allegra was twice as big this
Sharon murders on – with Bush and Blair’s support

The horrific events in the West Bank are causing revulsion around the world. But while the right-wing media focus has been almost solely on the suicide bombings by desperate Palestinians, the sheer scale of the Israeli state terror is beginning to be revealed.

Details are emerging of the bloodbath which has taken place in the Jenin refugee camp, with hundreds killed and hundreds more wounded – many of them dying through the denial of medical treatment and the Israeli refusal to allow ambulances and drive away wounded.

The Palestinians are being subjected to endless murder and humiliation by a state-backed army. Palestinian Jericho has been under a military-occupied and up-to-date battle tanks.

Hundreds have been killed in the past few days as Ariel Sharon has launched all-out war on the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority, and Yasser Arafat.

Pictures of these events have prompted mass demonstration from Egypt to Indonesia. Over 1 million demonstated in the West Bank, to the tune of million in Morocco, 100,000 in Tripoli, 50,000 in Egypt, 100,000 in Baghdad, 40,000 in Jordan, and cities across Britain then backed up pickets and protest demonstration.

Even before the Jenin massacre, the Israelis had killed over 1000 Palestinians since the second Intifada began 18 months ago. And since September 11 the so-called war on terrorism’ launched by Bush has given Sharon every excuse he needed to step up the offensive and to move to destroy the Palestinian Authority.

In the middle of this Bush, after prolonged vacillation, made his cynical decision to withdraw from the Israeli, troops from the West Bank, no doubt prompted by the need to placate the Arab world and in the build-up to a US attack on Iraq.

At the same time any action to enforce Bush’s call was firmly ruled out. Calls for sanctions by the EU were brushed aside.

Considered, sent by Bush to enforce the call has travelled by the scenic route going first to Morocco, then to Spain – making sure that Sharon and his generals had the opportunity to kill hundreds more Palestinians before he got there. No wonder Sharon took note of this. It is not a blind bit of notice.

Powell arrived in Israel only to be seen joking with Sharon, and saying that he has an assurance that the Israeli army will complete their operations “as soon as possible”. Presumably they will always need to complete them as soon as possible.

It is ridiculous to suggest that the Israeli government could resist the demands of the US government if Bush means what he said. Israel is bank-rolled by the USA to the tune of billions of dollars a year, and is totally dependent on the USA. A serious demand by Bush behind the scenes, spelling out real consequences of Israeli defiance, would produce the results.

Instead the US has again shifted its fire towards the Palestinians, demanding Arafat make a humiliating concession of the suicide bombings before Powell would attempt to secure a meeting with him.

Now Powell is in Israel has nothing to say about the Jenin massacre, and nothing to propose.

The flawed Oslo agreement and the so-called “peace process” is dead in the water; and the PLO is (rightly) no closer to accepting the Bantustan option offered by the establishment of a state cency called by the Israelis as an to give the West Bank and Gaza back.

In reality there was little if anything on offer: there was to be no independent Palestinian state, no withdrawal from the border of 1967, no return of the Palestinian refugees, and no compromise over Jerusalem.

Now the only objective of Powell’s visit is to legitimise what Sharon is doing – since the US appears to have abandoned Bush’s call on April 4 for an Israeli withdrawal.

Sharon is operating on the basis that the only solution is a military solution – i.e. kill a lot more Palestinians. The next steps in this hardly bear thinking about: ethnic cleansing of part of Israel itself of its Arab population as Israeli-Arab protest against the war.

There can be no way out of the situation. Bush is not addressing the real issues that have created the situation – the expulsion of the Palestinians and the partition of Palestine in 1948, which gave privileges to Jewish people to the detriment of Palestinians, and the cynical role of British and US imperialism in dividing the Middle East in their own interests.

Since Oslo, thousands more Palestinians have lost their homes and land, while the relentless illegal expansion of the Israeli settlers on Palestinian land, has continued.

Bush and Blair, busily preparing to invade Iraq, demanding Saddam implement UN resolutions have consciously ignored Sharon’s flagrant and long-standing defiance of repeated UN resolutions.

If the reaction of Bush to the events of September 11th has let loose the full force of Israeli brutality, it is the Palestinians (as George Monbiot rightly argues) who have emerged as the vanguard of the resistance to Bush’s war drive – as well as in defence of their own national rights and liberties.

A small people with no army, navy or air force have mounted a remarkable resistance against overwhelming odds.

They are a part of a growing resistance world-wide to a superpower on the rampage and those who act in its shadow to consolidate their own regional domination or crush those fighting for their democratic rights.

They fight alongside those fighting for national self-determination in Chechyna against the Russian army and those resisting military repression in Colombia, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

They fight alongside those mobilised in the anti-war movement around the world and those resisting the onslaught of global capitalism. Anti-globalisation activists have been to Palestine to protest against the repression.

Socialists must support the struggle of the Palestinians for national liberation and justice – for the victory of the intifada and the rejection of Oslo and other dead-end solutions like the Saudi peace plan.

This means supporting those forces on the ground who are attempting to build a real alternative – the draft resisters, the civil rights groups in both communities, and others.

It means campaigning for a boycott of Israel goods, for the end of arms supplies to Israel and for the indictment of Ariel Sharon as a war criminal.

For a democratic secular Palestine, with full rights for all minorities.

For the mobilisation of the Arab masses in defence of the, Palestinians.

Victory to the Intifada

No return = no justice

Dismantle the settlements

End arms supplies to Israel

Boycott Israel goods

I. Be a subscribing reader of the Socialist Outlook and save 25% off the subscription rate.

II. Subscribe now – and save 25% if you are a new reader!

11 issues by airmail for just £30.

Send cheque to IVP

PO Box 112 Manchester

M12 5DW

International

Viewpoint

English language
magazine of the
Fourth International

Subscribe now – and save 25% if you are a new reader!

11 issues by airmail for just £30.

Send cheque to IVP

PO Box 112 Manchester

M12 5DW
The introduction of the Special Powers Act in 1922 was made in the following comment from the Manchester Guardian:

"We shall be watching the behaviour of politicians in the Ulster Parliament as they vote themselves power to use torture and capital punishment against citizens whom they forbid to defend themselves ... some of their own members, like Lord Balfour ... carry wholesale murder to refinements of barbarity hardly surpassed in Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Recent anti-terrorism laws are the latest descendents of the SPA. They might provoke similar comments. Oppressed communities are being targeted in an extension of powers by a state which, with international allies, is perpetrating "refinements of barbarity" in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and possibly Iraq, Plies Morton reports.

The SPA was introduced by the Unionists on the basis that it was only required for a matter of months or perhaps a year. It had to be renewed annually and this made it more palatable. But in 1954 it was made permanent. In the late 1950s the case for basic rights in the North of Ireland was made in an important civilian nationalist community and a militancy movement, the Civil Rights Movement. Under the SPA powers, internment was introduced in 1971. The response was a mass rent and rate strike and the creation of the IRA no-go areas.

These events finally exposed unionist rule. It was replaced by direct rule and the SPA was scrapped. But if the political structure of the country and especially the relationship with Britain was changed, there was little change in new legislation was necessary.

The Emergency Provisions Act (EPA) 1983, the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) were no less sweeping. Like the SPA, they were a weapon of police and the army "draconian" powers: detention, harassment, question, search, arrest and death.

This period witnessed a catalogue of civil rights abuses against Irish nationalists. On Bloody Sunday 30 unarmed civilians were murdered by the British army. The Dublin government (no friend of Republican Ireland) joined the European Court of Human Rights for the use of torture. And trial was abolished.

The EPA and PTA were defended by the Tories and Labour as draconian measures that, like the SPA, would be temporary and were necessary responses to a seriously short term emergency. Like the SPA before them, they would endure for decades until the laws became permanent.

Terrorism was said to be a threat and any individual violating the laws was effectively putting themselves at the mercy of the police. But the law was rarely used and there was little consequence for anyone who transgressed. Of course the opposite happened. The "troubles" raged on as their basic causes - the partition of Ireland, the institutionalisation of an offshoot of the Unionist Party - the repression of the nationalist community, opposing this were if anything stronger.

The key effect of these laws was intimidating: to marginalise, criminalise and silence targeted communities.

An infamous catch-all clause in the SPA revealed much of the true nature of the law.

"If any person does any act of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the preservation of the peace or maintenance of order in Northern Ireland and not specifically provided for in the regulations, he shall be deemed guilty of an offence against the regulations".

No wonder South African Justice Minister John Vorster when introducing a new Coroner Bill under apartheid in 1963 said he would be willing to exchange all legislation of that sort for one clause of the Special Powers Act.

Hundreds (including present Sinn Fein MPs) were arbitrarily arrested from travelling from the North of Ireland to England. To be a UK citizen who was not been charged with any offence was an humiliation.

Every year for two decades some 50,000 Irish people were stopped, searched and questioned. They missed travel connections, were separated from loved ones and subjected to traumatic harassment and humiliation.

All was against a background of anti-Irish racism, the political witch-hunt of those who dared question this status quo and state-sponsored media censorship.

In the 1990s the Irish Republican Movement was abandoned its military struggle. It welcomed the re-introduction of a parliament based on the partitioned North of Ireland. The "emergency" had ended. One might expect draconian powers to go with it. Far from it.

The laws remained, and now we are seeing an even greater extension of oppressive state powers.

The Anti-Terrorism and Security Bill became law in December 2001. It was passed in great haste in response to the September 11 attacks.

It introduced a power of internment (detention without trial). This simply requires the Home Secretary to believe that a person is a risk to national security or is a "link" with someone that is suspected of involvement in non-domestic terrorism.

To get this through, the government had to derogate from the European Convention on Human Rights, the basis that there is a "war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation". Other measures include:

- Increased police powers to arrest, search and detain without reasonable suspicion.
- Power to seize documents from home and office.
- Control over travel and immigration.

The SPA was put to a test during the so-called "arms smuggling case" in which two Sinn Fein members were arrested and later released following a High Court challenge.

The SPA has been used to restrict the rights of political activists and trade unionists. It has been used to prevent the ballot on a public housing issue in Belfast. It has been used to prevent the publication of critical books.

The SPA is a blight that underpins the role these laws play and starts with its history. The SPA is half a century old and in the left, the unions and the communities most directly affected by them.

There is a campaign to remove the SPA from the Statute book. It is supported by many organisations, including the Campaign Against the SPA (CASPA).

The SPA has been used to restrict the rights of political activists and trade unionists. It has been used to prevent the ballot on a public housing issue in Belfast. It has been used to prevent the publication of critical books.

The SPA is a blight that underpins the role these laws play and starts with its history. The SPA is half a century old and in the left, the unions and the communities most directly affected by them.

The SPA has been used to restrict the rights of political activists and trade unionists. It has been used to prevent the ballot on a public housing issue in Belfast. It has been used to prevent the publication of critical books.

The SPA is a blight that underpins the role these laws play and starts with its history. The SPA is half a century old and in the left, the unions and the communities most directly affected by them.

The SPA has been used to restrict the rights of political activists and trade unionists. It has been used to prevent the ballot on a public housing issue in Belfast. It has been used to prevent the publication of critical books.

The SPA is a blight that underpins the role these laws play and starts with its history. The SPA is half a century old and in the left, the unions and the communities most directly affected by them.
Internationalists must learn from Zimbabwe elections

Briis Raftopoulos, Associate Professor, IDS, University of Zimbabwe

Crisis in Zimbabwe Committee.

After weeks of muttering over the devastation of the fraudulent Presidential elections, Zimbabweans are still in a state of shock over what will happen next. Most citizens went to the polls, and that the ruling party had stacked the deck, but having cast their overwhelming turnout would negate any attempts to nullify the results. Thousands braved the awesome stirrup delays, long lines, ruling party harassment and violence, to assert the one individual action they thought they had some control over. Many, usually nonviolently, were arrested for daring to assert this right to vote, and had to prove their nonviolence, and their authentic stance, to a disbelieving, often hostile and corrupt or at least overtly partisan authority state that had taken control of their lives.

The lesson has had to be learned, that politics is not “‘liberal’ politics but power politics” to engage in; that if people retreat into their personal family and lives, ignore their loss of rights and liberties; then the realities of such repressive encroachments will follow them into their particular retreats.

Brian Mugabe is found of lecturing Zimbabweans about how the liberation movement was led by a democratic push of politics to Zimbabweans. There is substance to that statement, for the energies and possibilities, which were unleashed at independence, and the struggle, and the achievements of the independence years were immense.

However, Zimbabweans, including the nationalists, learned about democracy from others from too, including the contradictory practices and promises of colonial rule itself.

One must not assume the nationalist legacy, in its critique of colonial violence, also brought with it experiences of political violence, as the state, as a nation, to unlearn and move away from.

In particular, we need to continue our process of action against repressive practices of the RPF, which involve violence, harassment, intimidation, threats, violence, repression, the use of the illicit power of the state, and other voices the right to be heard, and the non-racist, non-violent manner.

Such a national process is incomplete, and the march toward Zimbabwean democracy, will follow the path of the anti-apartheid movement.

Zimbabwean women must learn from the elections process.

Brian Mugabe is finding that the Zimbabwean election process has been thoroughly败坏 and the Zimbabwean democratic forces.

Mugabe’s campaign of violence and election fraud, as officers of the Zimbabwean police, unwittingly helped to create a legitimacy for the Zimbabwean state. The election process itself has been seriously degraded, that only a return to constitutional reform can offer any hope.

The public broadcasting authority, the CBC, has shown an obnoxious and a daily insult to the Zimbabwean taxpayers.

One must not assume that the nationalist legacy, in its critique of colonial violence, also brought with it experiences of political violence, as the state, as a nation, to unlearn and move away from.

In particular, we need to continue our process of action against repressive practices of the RPF, which involve violence, harassment, intimidation, threats, violence, repression, the use of the illicit power of the state, and other voices the right to be heard, and the non-racist, non-violent manner.

Such a national process is incomplete, and the march toward Zimbabwean democracy, will follow the path of the anti-apartheid movement.

Zimbabwean women must learn from the elections process.

Brian Mugabe is finding that the Zimbabwean election process has been thoroughly败坏 and the Zimbabwean democratic forces.

Mugabe’s campaign of violence and election fraud, as officers of the Zimbabwean police, unwittingly helped to create a legitimacy for the Zimbabwean state. The election process itself has been seriously degraded, that only a return to constitutional reform can offer any hope.

Lop-sided “justice” of Milosevic trial

Geoff Ryan

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic at the Hague has restarted after a three week break, caused by his ill health. A few days later, in New York, the go-ahead was given to the setting up of a permanent war crimes tribunal after the ten nation states ratified the Rome treaty, which establishes the International Criminal Court. The court will hear cases from July 1.

The setting up of the court was greeted by a standing ovation in the crowded courtroom. However, the United States seat was empty. The United States Government has announced it will not attend meetings preparing for the court’s operations since last year.

Slobodan Milosevic signed the treaty during his administration, but the United States has not yet ratified it. The new administration said it was considering “suing” the treaty to shut it down by law. It is possible that the US government wants to exempt US soldiers and officials from the court, thus weakening the treaty.

“Ridiculous and politically motivated” prosecutions.

Although Tony Blair has enthusiastically wel-
comed the court, his differences with Bush are
more apparent than real. Blair’s support for the international court is based on his realistic, paternalistic and fundamentally imperialist view on the conflict.

Blair sees the court essentially as punishing only those who British and American governments blame the war. He, would, no doubt, deny any attempts to indict British or US military personnel for war crimes, as “unfair and politically motivated”.

So, in Blair’s eyes, it is perfectly acceptable to indict Milosevic but not to indict all those in such a situation.

Zimbabweans must learn from the African elections. The lack of any opposition to the elections will destabilize the region, giving the struggle against colonial legacies in his own authoritarianism.

President Mbeki, in particular, has been found wanting, as he has been left to chase Mugabe’s tail, in an effort to remain in the SADC political terms of reference, and avoid South African involvement in the region.

The result has been that Mugabe has effectively toppled South Africa, and its support for Nkomoni, and its support for Mugabe’s position, in the region. The event has been a disaster for SADC, which has lost its ability to organize and mobilize.

The next round of Mugabe’s political strategy is likely to be to focus on the upcoming elections in the region, and to try to divide the region into its own factionalism.

The western countries should not find any success in their attempts to destabilize the region. For there are dominant global economic and financial structures, based on the IMF and World Bank, which will make the Bush and Blair’s priority, in Zimbabwe, a new wave of instability and chaos.

The western countries should not find any success in their attempts to destabilize the region. For there are dominant global economic and financial structures, based on the IMF and World Bank, which will make the Bush and Blair’s priority, in Zimbabwe, a new wave of instability and chaos.
Kenya's pre-election tension

However the run-up to these elections may see something new, with the launch of a new National Alliance for Change, linking three opposition groups, among them a new reformist programme promising a range of measures, including tax cuts and job creation, increased spending on schools and health care, and strict controls on the boom in corruption, and help for Kenya's young jobless. The Alliance argues for measures to bring more workers into formal employment, increase the tax base and create scope for more 'people-friendly' policies. According to Alliance leader Joe Doino their plans include the establishment of an auto and bicycle manufacture in Kenya to reduce their dependency on foreign markets to finance a new programme of low-cost housing.

President Mwai Kibaki, who is expected to play a large role in the final outcome, has also received calls for talks, and in recent weeks, he has been in talks with the IMF to secure a new loan for Kenya. The talks have been ongoing for several months, and are expected to focus on issues such as economic reforms and the elimination of some of the country's debt.

Meanwhile, the Kenyan government has announced plans to increase its spending on social services, including healthcare and education, as part of its efforts to improve the living standards of the country's population. The government has also made efforts to increase agricultural production to boost food security.

Despite these efforts, Kenya remains one of the most economically challenging countries in the region, with high levels of poverty and inequality. The country's political history has been marked by frequent elections, often characterized by violence and electoral fraud.

The upcoming elections are expected to be closely watched, not only by the Kenyan population but also by international observers. The country's democratic trajectory, its ability to hold free and fair elections, and its commitment to good governance and human rights, will be key issues in the run-up to the vote.
The Paris Commune 1871

When workers took state power

On January 28 1871 the Government surrendered. Two conditions were imposed:
1. The line regiments and the Mobile Guard were to surrender their arms and be taken prisoner. The city walls were stripped of their guns, and the forts surrounding the city occupied by the Prussians. So great was the Prussian commanders’ fear of the power of the organised Paris working class that the National Guard was allowed to keep its weapons including artillery and the conquering army occupied a small part of the city, consisting mainly of public parks. Even this they left after a few days.
2. Secondly a National Assembly was to be elected within a few days (!) after the surrender, to decide whether to sign the armistice or continue the war.

Even before the surrender Thierry and his bourgeois cohorts were out in the country campaigning with the only allies they could find, the Royalists, to return a reactionary majority in the National Assembly. Communications were in chaos, many areas only heard of the elections on the eve of voting, so it was not surprising that out of 776 Representatives, 450 were Royalists.

Tensions between the bourgeois Government of National Defence and the working class National Guard were always apparent. On October 21, 1914, a peasant stormed the Town Hall and captured part of the Government. However, they were released and the Government allowed to go on as the only alternative to civil war in the besieged city.

Blanqui and Flouroux; the suppression of Republican journals, laws on overdue commercial bills, the sending of 500 armed Prussians to Hotel de Ville; the transfer of the National Assembly to Versailles; and the renewal of the state of siege in Paris.

The National Assembly appointed three viceroys to represent it in the provinces. The army of Versailles was a state within the state, with garrisons in key cities and towns, all under direct control of the viceroy. The National Assembly did not consider it necessary to occupy the provinces with an armed force, so the administration was carried out by a series of deputies sent by the viceroy. The anti-clerical ordinances were suspended in many places, and the viceroy had the power to proclaim martial law.

The Paris Commune was an expression of the working-class desire to take control of the city, and the struggle for freedom, democracy and social justice. It was a precursor to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the October Revolution of 1917, which together with the Paris Commune, marked the begining of the end of资本主义.
The Selfish Century?

The Century of the Self, Written and produced by Andrew KavSpan, Sunday evenings 17 March - 7 April (four one-hour programmes)

Reviewed by Andrew KavSpan

THIS FASCINATING series, recently screened on BRBC on Sunday afternoons, has been among the popular TV documentaries of the year. A central theme is the deep complexity of psychoanalysis, particularly Freudianism, in this project. The series draws from the ideas of the French thinker Michel Foucault.

The first programme shows how the ideas of Freud were used by US bosses, politicians and advertisers (ironically, given that Freud was Jewish), to manipulate and control, or perhaps the viewer, between Freud and the American and European tiled in the same way, and presenting psychological and interpersonal elements of desire for a wider social change. Cleverly, they worked out that

Edward Bernays, who argued that people were conditioned to accept the rational and could be sold anything, whether products or political ideas, is shown as being in a way associated with their deep unconscious desires. Roosevelt’s thirties NewDeal is presented as an attempt to present a positive alternative to all this: the suggestion is that Roosevelt wanted to reassert the corporate agenda by appealing to people as rational citizens. However, the programme fails to mention the "for the better" fear in the twenties and thirties concerning the influence of advertising and con-artists in the American labour movement who campaigned for a different form of rational, collective identity, based upon class. Example two examines the repression of corporate power and techniques of psychological manipulation. The US after 1945, which created the consumer con

Cathartic

Yet it appears as quite reactionary in a different way - the attempt to stage a cathartic encounter between blacks and whites in which the prejudices of each group would be admitted and people would relate as "individuals". This failed not because the black people involved felt they needed their collective identity as blacks to resist racism. Rather, the series tends to over-emphasise the role of individuals (which is interesting, given its critique of individualism). For example, Reich seems to be presented as the "cause" of the emergence of the new expressive self, without enough attention being paid to the assumptions, which are clearly linked to the structure of the family and the wider bourgeois hegemony as key factors. Its approach can therefore be too pessimistic: it focuses too often simply on the power structure, a concern stressed by the masses and the largely passive masses. Revolutionary Marxists would of course stress the masses’ collective capacity for self-organisation and resistance and their ability at times to take the offensive. Moreover, I think that the ability of the powerful to create new selves as though from scratch (again, shades of Foucault’s) is here very much exaggerated.

While Marxists might have problems with the idea of a fixed, essential self, there are significant aspects of continuity in the self, especially from their own experiences, which for good or ill are deeply-seated and can at times fail to support the socially-personally-motivated resistance to the power-holders.

Nevertheless, this series stands head and shoulders above other recent "police in the pereopds of TV in its sharp analysis of the advertisements and their repercussions on our way to control us and to its construction of a convincing narrative..." and one wonders whether the director’s intelligence (at a time when critical grand narratives are still unfashionable) will be kept up when it is repeated, and soon.
24 Hour Party People
(directed by Michael Winterbottom)
Reviewed by Adam Hartman
24 Hour Party People biffs itself as a tribute to "Manchester!" and its unique contribution to music and popular culture in Britain as seen through the eyes of its narrator and central character Tony Wilson (played by Steve Coogan). Wilson was the moving spirit behind the Factory record label, which launched the pioneering new wave and indie bands Joy Division, New Order, and the Happy Mondays, and the Hacienda club which was at the center of the dance culture of the late eighties and early nineties. An ambitious director could try to make an epic film chronicling Manchester's music and people again and become a cinematic iconoclast in late twentieth century Britain. Thankfully Michael Winterbottom refrains from taking on a basket of tigers and confines his work to a period piece which poke's fun at Tony Wilson's capacity to mythologize himself and which casts him in the role of tragic anti-hero who rises and falls on the waves of the music industry and is brought down by the size of his ego.

This makes for an entertaining film. Coogan successfully portrays Wilson both as a pretentious "post-modern" priest and as a visionary with the energy and determination to make his dreams come true - at least for a time. Although as narrator Wilson says that the film is not about himself but about Manchester and its music, in reality it is about him above all and the mark which he left on the city. In the final scene Wilson has a vision of himself - as God - which I suppose is giving him a whole new meaning to the expression "God made Manchester!". However the focus on Wilson means that so much which should have been there simply went unspoken or left altogether. We see no sign of Joy Division and the Happy Mondays representing new wave and indie but where are the Buzzcocks, Smiths, Stone Roses, James or the Fall? Wasn't they part of the story? And beyond that story there is little context. Although Wilson remarks on the irony of naming his label Factory at a time when factories were closing down all over the city, the film makes no attempt to explore why what people were hearing punk or acid house or what those movements meant to the thousands of young working-class people whose feelings and thoughts they expressed.

The chilling suicide of Ian Curtis (lead singer of Joy Division) is portrayed with sensitivity but we are not shown into his state of mind nor do we probe the darkness behind the band's music and lyrics. The suggestion that the band was influenced by fascism (Joy Division was the name given to Irish women used as prostitutes in the Nazi concentration camps) is dismissed by Wilson with a quip about post-modernism.

Similarly the dance floor scenes later on in the film do not do full justice to the acid house movement although they do convey something of its spirit. The thousands of young people who came to the parties are there in the background but we do not hear their voices.

It was these young people who made rave culture happen and like punks before them they held up two fingers to the state and disapproved of the boundaries of what capitalism will accept.

They organised illegal rave in squatted fields and warehouses, taking over the state and bypassing the commercial nightclub scene. The state reacted by cracking down on ravers and criminalizing the movement through the Criminal Justice Act.

The film charts the demise of the Hacienda as drug gangs fought for control and led to shootings outside and inside the club. Delegates also took control of the door policy and started to turn away party goers who didn't "fit". They had completely contradicted the ideal at the heart of rave culture - the right of everyone to enjoy themselves and the desire to bring down the boundaries which separate people in everyday life under capitalism.

Winterbottom doesn't ask these questions of his characters or even try to criticise him for this. He simply presents the story and leaves it for viewers to ask their own questions. Where the film falls down is in its choice of narrator.

The story of Madchester could be told so much better by the people who were there, rather than what we read between the lines that put you off. Take this film if you want a good nostalgia trip spiced with some good laughs. And enjoy.

Exploring Ireland's legacy from colonialism

The Irish Counter-Revolution 1921–1936 by John M. Regan & Macmillan, Paperback 2001
Reviewed by David Coen

If you want to read a cross about "soldiers of destiny". In the late 1930s, economic crisis, with hundreds of thousands emigrating, they became known as the "Fine Faila". So serious was the crisis that some sections of the ruling class began openly to question whether the country was economically viable or whether it wouldn't be better to remain part of Britain. Concerns between the home and US pressure for free trade from abroad, the Dublin ruling class abandoned its previous policy of protection of native industry and opened the economy to foreign capital. Economic nationalism was dead: in fact, bourgeois nationalism had already identified 1918 as the turning point in the development of the now slyly Catholic tiger.

Attracting foreign capital became the new policy and workers were taxed heavily in order to attract the funds of the exiled capital. Inflation, which was resulting from a combination of the World War I, the economic crisis, and the political situation in Russia, the Irish economy was in a perilous state.

John Regan's book suggests that the roots of the complete about turn in Fianna Fail in the late 1930s can be traced back in the 1921-1923 Civil War. Regan is no Marxist (he's a liberal historian) and instead he wants to put the position that in every revolution a point is reached where: "An attempt has to be made to turn aspirations into realities and in that process come to be frustrated, disheartened and disappointed."

Majority

In 1932 de Valera was able to form a government with the help of Labour and early the following year won an overall majority. Fianna Fail, which remained in power until 1973 with two brief interruptions, implemented the original Sinn Fein policy of protectionist and isolationist policies.

Despite its limitations, this book is well worth reading for the insight it gives into the ways in which the legacy of colonialism continues to shape the policies of "independent" Ireland.
May 2 council elections

Vote for public services!
Vote socialist!

SEE MORE INSIDE, pages 3-4

Don't miss an issue: SUBSCRIBE now!
20 pages of internationalist news, views and marxist analysis each month. 12 issues delivered for just £10. OVERSEAS subscribers 12 issues for just £20.
SPECIAL OFFER (UK only): One year of Socialist Outlook, plus one year of International Viewpoint (Fourth International magazine) for only £35.

PLEASE send me
☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook
☐ 12 issues of Socialist Outlook plus International Viewpoint

I enclose £...

Name
Address
Post Code
Phone
Age

SEND TO: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU