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Inside— Special one-hundredth issue four page supplement
The need for 'Socialist Outlook'

Socialist OUTLOOK

BSE: Capitalism gambles with lives

Market Madness

THE CRISIS over Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and its human form - Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD) has produced a complex array of arguments and counter-arguments.

But what is quite clear is that the dangerous chaos is an outcome of Tory market reforms.

It is a product of the "backward" British parliamentary system and a government in the pocket of the food and farming lobby. Twenty eight Tory MPs have interests in farms including junior agriculture minister Tim Boswell.

The problem for these people is not the possibility of a mass epidemic, but the prospect of a drastic loss in profits. The Tories had scrapped controls over the food processing industry and covered up the evidence.

The spread of CJD is the result of this de-regulation. No wonder Europe will not buy the beef.

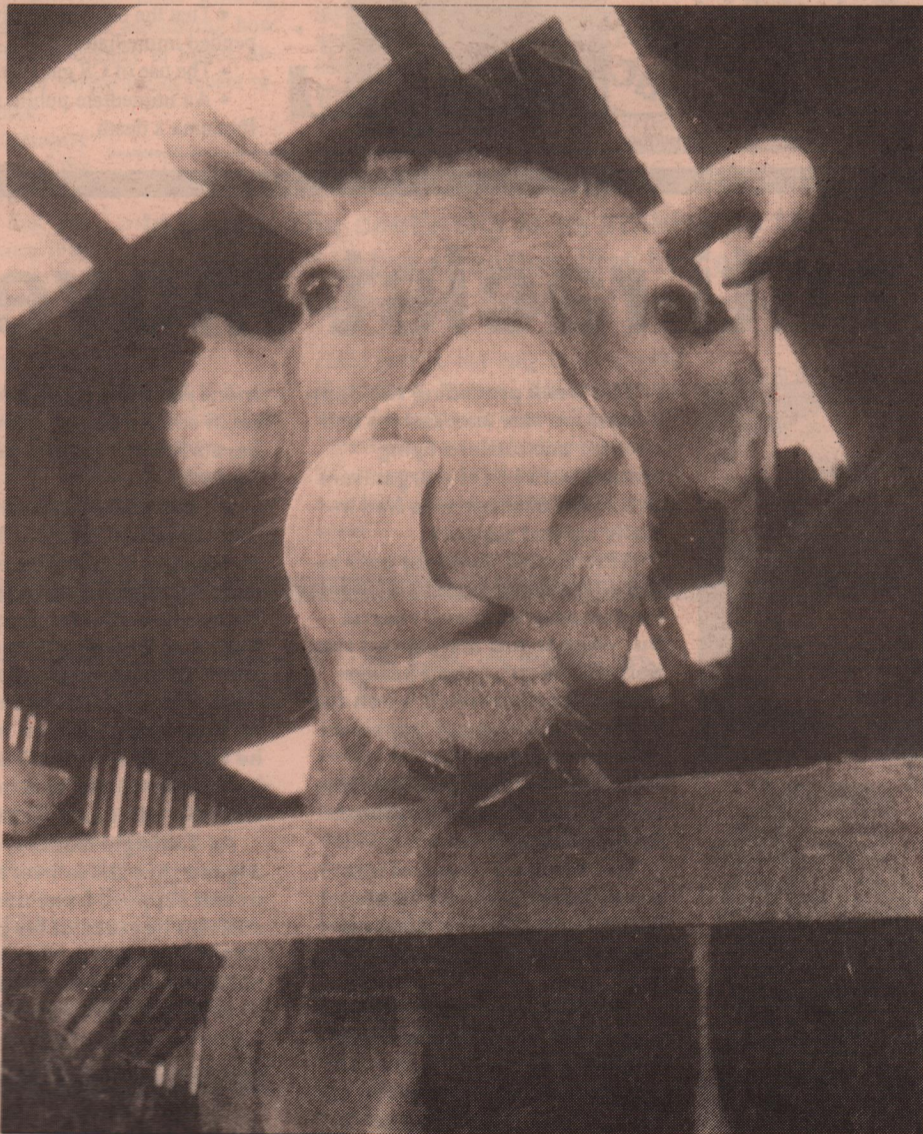
The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee found that BSE may be transmitted to humans. A new strain has been found in a number of young victims.

The disease affects nerve cells in the brain and causes the loss of memory and co-ordination finally ending in death.

Potentially millions of people are at risk. All those who ate beef prior to 1989 (at least) are liable to infection. It will take time to know the full extent of the problem. The worst case scenario points to 500,000 deaths per year.

Cows, which are not carnivorous animals, were fed offal made from infected animals to cheapen the cost of production. This led to the sheep's disease scrapie being passed on.

Scientists working on the disease have been silenced and humiliated. Richard Lacey who has long campaigned about the risk of BSE jumping species has been subject to a



The spread of CJD is the result of deregulation

campaign of intimidation. The microbiologist Harash Narang has actually developed a system to detect BSE in the urine of live beasts. He was rewarded with the sack.

Even still, Heseltine and Mawhinney tried

to keep the lid on the latest findings. Nicholas Budgen came up with the idea of a two-tier meat system. "Customers" could pay more for non-BSE beef, while the working class and poor could do their heads

in.

The Tories are scared by the economic fall-out. Two hundred and fifty thousand tonnes of beef were exported last year. Balance of payments could suffer by one and a half billion pounds.

If farmers are given compensation this will up the bill. If all the herd is killed, this could cost up to £20 billion.

In terms of compensations, the workers in the industry should be the first priority. Already 6,000 jobs have been lost.

The Tories are going cap in hand to their friends in the EU. Even a modest plan to kill 15,000 older cows would cost £3 billion. The effect on the PSBR would be catastrophic. No tax cuts for sure, but also massive spending cuts.

But cows will not be killed because of safety. The government is being forced to act to give reassurances and to prop up the market.

But if BSE is genetically carried, the whole stock needs to be killed.

The Labour Party is equally half-hearted in its approach—sacrificing principles before the altar of the free market. Labour fails to seriously challenge the Tories on this question despite the fact that it could have much to gain, starting at Tamworth.

Socialists must demand that the interests of health come before the interests of profit. What ever measures are necessary should be taken.

Proper money needs to be put into scientific research into BSE and CJD.

The NHS also needs proper funding, not least because of a potential epidemic. Yet under rules just brought in, free long term treatment would be denied.

But these are only stop-gap measures. If the crisis shows anything, it is that capitalism is a sick system. If it is not killing people through poverty and starvation, it is killing them through infection. BSE is just one aspect of a wider problem. If we are to survive as a species, capitalism itself must be destroyed.

The market is bad for your health

Ibrahima Sey - murdered by police

Simon Deville

SHORTLY after the police killing of Ibrahima Sey, a 500 strong demonstration marched from Forest Gate police station to Ilford. The demonstration was lively though disciplined and peaceful. As the march passed through Ilford town

centre roughly the same number again of local black and white working class youth joined on to express their anger at Ibrahima's death.

Just 2 weeks after the introduction of CS gas tests, 29 year old Gambian Ibrahima Sey was killed at Ilford police station. A number of witnesses have confirmed that Ibrahima left his house peacefully when the police arrived to



Ibrahima's body had bruises to the stomach, and cuts and bruises over his face

Photo: Emmaginations

arrest him. Already handcuffed, Ibrahima also left the police van and went into the police station peacefully.

Police have said the CS gas was used

inside the station. Ibrahima's body had bruises to the stomach, and cuts and bruises over his face. These also occurred inside the police station.

Whether or not the CS gas contributed to Ibrahima's death is really a secondary issue - the point is that he was killed by the police. The circumstances of his death does however expose how the police intend to use CS gas. The police have claimed that it is needed to protect them from violent and armed criminals. This case clearly shows the police using it on someone who went peacefully to the police station whilst they were handcuffed and lying on the floor.

Ibrahima's friends or family have launched a memorial campaign to fight for justice for him. They are demanding:-

- That the officers involved are suspended immediately.
- The use of CS gas is stopped now.
- An immediate public inquiry into Ibrahima's death.

So far one officer involved has been placed on desk duty whilst the police "investigate" themselves, and Forest Gate police have refused to stop carrying out controversial CS spray tests. Ibrahima is the fifteenth black person to die at the hands of Britain's racist police force in three years. These are not isolated incidents from a few corrupt coppers. They are an inevitable consequence of the increasing levels of police violence and intimidation directed against black people and the urban poor communities more generally.

The campaign is prepared for a long struggle for justice for Ibrahima, and against police repression. Labour movement bodies, student unions and community organisations should affiliate to the campaign and support the demands of the campaign

CONTACT: Ibrahima Sey Memorial Campaign, PO Box 273, Forest Gate, E7 Tel: 0181 5558151



Deaths are an inevitable consequence of the increasing levels of police violence and intimidation

Photo: Emmaginations

Unite the anti-racist movement

NO-ONE should derive pleasure from the debacle of the ARA demonstration. Demonstrations as small as the one on March 23, together with the negative publicity, damage the credibility of the anti-racist movement as a whole.

As an ever-increasing number of asylum seekers are thrown on to the streets, we need now, more than ever, a strong united movement. This must be able to build the broadest possible base of support both in terms of fighting the racism of the state and the far right and defending refugees.

A concrete programme of action is needed, not just a series of on-paper demands to the state. The National Assembly should establish proper democratic structures to make this a reality and go beyond meetings which are merely talking-shops.

An immediate chance to unite is offered by the demonstration called by the Campaign against the Immigration and Asylum Bill on April 29. The CAIAB demonstration earlier this year, in February, was some 12,000 strong with a large amount of participation from the trade union movement.



A programme of action is needed

The political standing of the Anti-Racist Alliance reached an all-time low when only two hundred people attended a national demonstration against racism on March 23. The police added to the indignity by making the marchers walk on the pavement rather than the road.

The week preceding the demonstration saw accusations and counter accusations flying around between the organisers and some of those who had initially agreed support.

ARA denied they had ever invited a speaker from the Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas. But when it was announced that Kalim Siddiqui, from Muslims against Racism, would be on the platform the damage appeared to be irreparable.

Siddiqui has been a long time advocate of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie.

The National Union of Students, Poale Zion, the Board of Jewish Deputies, the Commission for Racial Equality all pulled out.

The TUC made no public statement but one official said that up until the day before, twenty national trade union banners had been expected on the march, but were dissuaded from attending.

Whatever the effects of the controversy, the march was never going to be large as ARA simply hadn't built it properly. Many labour movement activists never even saw any leaflets.

In the end the tiny number present made it an easy target for fascists, who first attacked it as it passed under the Embank-

ment railway bridge and later on in somewhat greater numbers when it reached Trafalgar Square.

At this point police made several arrests of fascists. The unfortunate coincidence of a security alert meant that the demonstration was temporarily halted at Downing Street and there the national leader of ARA, Marc Wadsworth, made an impromptu speech in which he castigated the entire trade union movement as a bunch of Islamophobes and racists.

At Trafalgar Square, Siddiqui argued that those who had withdrawn support from the demonstration because of his presence "were themselves the racists".

ARA has been something of a spent force since approximately eighteen months ago, when a

large number of its members split to form a new organisation, the National Assembly against Racism. Since then it has been flirting with fundamentalist groups who are, in many cases, anti-Jewish, anti-Hindu and Sikh, and often homophobic.

Both ARA and the Assembly suffer from a lack of internal democracy. Organisation tends to be in the hands of a small number of people and conferences and demonstration are called with long lists of sponsoring organisations who do not effectively participate.

In the absence of a concerted fight against ever-increasing racism, it is not surprising that some in the black community look increasingly to a religious identity and sometimes even to fundamentalism for answers.

UNISON conferences

Numerous UNISON branches have sent motions to the union's annual conference in May, calling for a non-co-operation with the provisions of the bill which require public officials to check the immigration status of their clients.

The Campaign for a Fighting Democratic Union is organising a conference against the Asylum and Immigration Bill on Saturday, May 11 in London. One of the key aims of the conference will be to examine how non-co-operation can be brought about and how members who are threatened with disciplinary action can be defended.

Reformists without reforms?

RUMOURS of the death of social democracy are greatly exaggerated. Writers on the right and the left have rushed with a little too much haste in recent months to proclaim its demise.

Left wing critics of the Labour Party have accused Blair and his cohorts of being "reformists without reforms", of going so far to the right as to go over the edge.

But we said this of Smith before him. And Kinnock before that. They had little more to offer in the way of reforms than the present bunch.

Who was it that began the austerity drive in the 1970s? Not Thatcher. It was the Labour Party's very own Dennis Healey.

It is the case though that Blair is a lot bolder than his predecessors, going further and faster. He has ruthlessly used the apparatus of the party to bully, cajole and splinter all opposition.

The new *Road to the Manifesto* proposals for decision making by plebiscite will further centralise policy making—hand picked researchers will write the policy, the clique around Blair will vet it, and then it will be handed to the party for complete acceptance or veto.

Just like the clause four process the party rank and file will have no chance to make amendments and the leader will churn out the "back me or sack me" rhetoric to turn up the heat.

The speed and extent of the latest right wing offensive has led some on the left to conclude that the party has fundamentally changed. Some have even extended the analysis to include all the social democratic parties in Europe.

This is a mistake. It rests upon a mis-reading of social democracy's past.

EDITORIAL

Social Democracy has always been completely pro-capitalist. Not once has it sought to challenge the rule of capital, indeed it has invariably relied on support from sections of the bourgeoisie.

Similarly the new authoritarianism of family values and hetero-sexuality championed by the shadow cabinet is nothing new.

Was it not that "left winger" Wilson who sent the troops to Ireland, tried to smash up the National Union of Seamen, backed the brutal US war in Vietnam and tried to introduce *In Place of Strife* to shackle the trades unions?

Similarly, the social democratic parties in Europe retain mass working class support. It was astounding how well PSOE did recently in Spain, despite Gonzalez's disgraceful recent record in office.

The continuity is as striking as the changes. It is the situation that has altered more than the basic nature of the parties.

Social Democracy's new range of options has however, led it to re-fashion some of its ideology. This is an important political development.

John Gray's recent pamphlet *After Social Democracy* published by the Demos thinktank is one attempt to give it sense of direction.



Socialist Campaign Group MP Dennis Skinner was one of only two Labour NEC members who opposed Blair's manifesto proposals

Gray, like so many social democratic and liberal writers, rationalises the new predicament and the need to implement austerity in terms of globalisation and the disappearance of the working class.

"The class basis of social-dem-

is nowhere to be found of course. It is still very much with us—indeed one of the biggest problems faced by European capitalism is the continued organisational strength of the western European workers' movement.

But the crisis of its leadership has deepened. Support for the market and the neo-liberal offensive is barely concealed in the rhetoric of full employment these days. None of them pretend to be fighting for socialism anymore.

Mitterand's attempt at economic expansion in the early 1980s was probably the last attempt to implement the traditional Keynesian governmental economic strategies of investment through deficit financing. The favoured

Swedish model fell apart in the early 1990s.

The new Europe has been a big blow for social democracy. Those who have been under the illusion that Maastricht would bring a northern European style order of civic welfare and cosmopolitanism have been harshly disappointed.

This shift poses genuine problems for socialists. The more the leaders of the workers' movement back austerity, the harder it is for us to fight it.

But this difficulty does not mean we should give up the struggle. The mass social democratic parties remain the only possible governmental alternative to the parties of the bourgeoisie.

They continue to be central to the workers' movement and important in determining the nature of struggle. We write them off at our peril.

It was astounding how well PSOE did recently in Spain. The continuity is as striking as the changes. It is the situation that has altered more than the basic nature of the parties.

cratic parties, not only in Britain but throughout Europe, has been eaten away by economic change" he writes, "insofar as it was embodied in a labourist movement, social democracy is now a political project without an historical agent".

The evidence for this disappearance

Network prepares for election

Pete Firmin, officer, Socialist Campaign Group

THE LATEST meeting of Socialist Campaign groups from around the country on March 30 took some important decisions about responding to the latest events in the Labour Party, improving the organisation of the network and preparing for Party conference in October.

It was recognised that Blair's plan to put a bland manifesto out to a referendum requires a big response from the Left on two levels—linking up with all those (like the new organisation, Labour Reform) prepared to defend the sovereignty of conference and participatory democracy, and a fight to try and

win a commitment to certain key policies to go into the manifesto, requiring a two-thirds majority at Party conference.

This entails a fight in various unions, such as UNISON and the TGWU, around issues like the minimum wage and repeal of the anti-union laws, committing them to a real fight with Blair.

This can be linked in with the network's proposals for a campaign in the run up to the election around key policies in an outward looking campaign rather than focused solely on the fight in the structures of the movement.

It was agreed to proceed on both fronts, including a fringe meeting at Labour's Policy Forum around issues of the defence of the welfare state.

This focus was also reflected

in the discussion around the prioritisation of resolutions for Labour Party conference, with a decision to concentrate on six issues

- repeal of the anti-union laws and the minimum wage
- comprehensive education
- pensions
- the NHS
- renationalisation of the railways
- repeal of the Asylum and Immigration Bill

These resolutions will be printed in a bulletin distributed to supporters at the end of April.

There was a decision to re-vamp the newsletter for members, making it longer and more oriented towards discussion, allowing for greater participation and debate among the left in the Party.

Madness and manifestos

A SLICE of bovine spongiform should work wonders in mopping up further sections of the pro-Europe bourgeoisie behind Blair.

The disease may be peculiarly British, but the compensation will be decidedly European.

The New Labour project is clear—to break the party from its roots and to make it as a representative of the pro-European bourgeoisie.

But if Blair is to maintain the support of sections of the ruling class he must continue to chip away at Labour's foundations. "We are proud of our past", he says, "but we are not living in it".

Having got rid of Clause Four, Blair is going back to the Smith reforms and one-member-one-vote.

By the end of the year he hopes to present a pre-election manifesto for membership ap-

proval. This is another attempt to cut out the unions and the conference. It represents a further attack on the left.

At best Labour's conference will be asked to take it or leave it. Amendments will not be tolerated. It will contain nothing specific spending or taxation pledges. All the tricky stuff will be dropped.

No proper discussion or consultation will take place.

Instead of this, socialists must demand proper participatory democracy. This means that decision making should go through the official structures. Unions should play a major role. Critical debate must be paramount.

But Blair is offering a different sort of process.

Members are made to choose for or against the general—autocrats with soundbites.

Jonathan Joseph

Tories move against Brent UNISON

TORY-LED Brent Council in North-West London is attempting to de-recognise UNISON.

A meeting of the Policy and Resources committee on the April 1 backed the decision of the personnel committee to leave the 2,700 strong branch out in the cold.

The meeting was lobbied by 400 UNISON members from Brent and further afield. Brent UNISON now plan a lobby of the full Council meeting on Monday April 22.

The Council justified their unprecedented move by the activities of the regional UNISON official Stuart Barber, who has vigorously criticised the maladministration of social services and mismanagement of finances.

Brent UNISON believes the real reason is the Council's desire to push through further cuts and privatisation before elections in 1998. The Tories

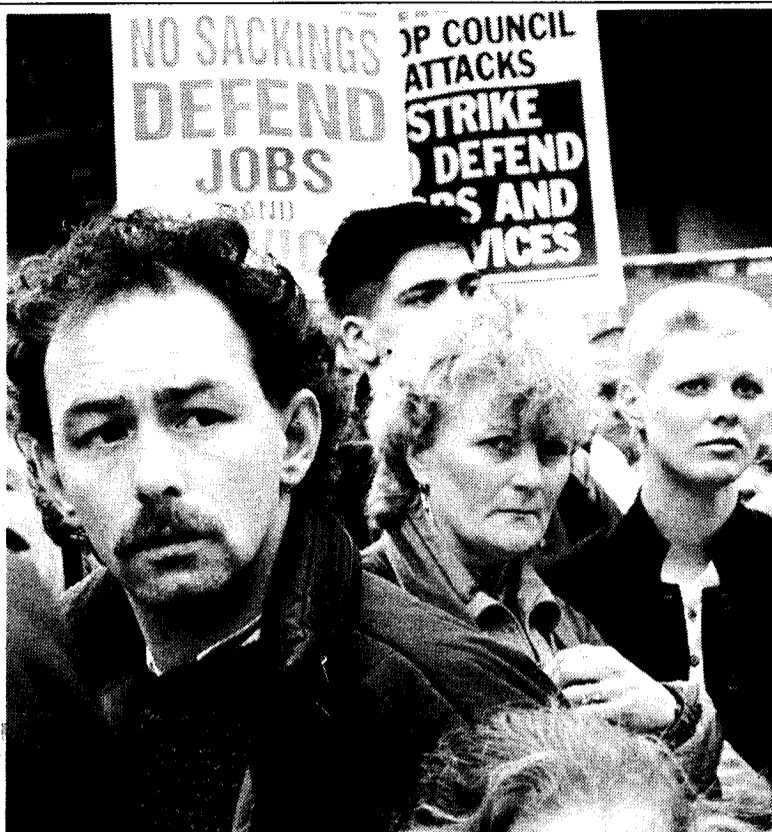
control the Council with a majority of one.

The Council's Labour group voted at the meeting for the recommendation to be withdrawn and for Tory Councillor Sean O'Sullivan to be removed as chair of the personnel committee.

Until recently O'Sullivan was working as an agency worker for Lewisham Council. When UNISON members there heard about his union-bashing activities in Brent they refused to work with him and the Council was forced to ask him to leave.

Brent East Constituency Labour Party have condemned the Tory group for their actions and are pledged to support any industrial action which the union branch might take. They have called on the Labour group to provide office facilities should the Council withdraw recognition.

Brent UNISON branch secretary Brian Butterworth blamed the Coun-



Trade union members must become involved in the fight for UNISON's absolute right to take action.

UNISON and other trade union members must become involved in the fight for UNISON's absolute right to recognition. If the Tories in Brent are allowed to get away with this, it will set a dangerous precedent for other Council's who would like to do the same.

Brian Gardner

JJ bosses continue offensive

LAST October a number of the workers joined the Transport and General Workers Union amidst growing resentment at casualisation, low pay, appalling health and safety conditions and being forced to work long hours with no overtime pay.

The company boss sacked all the workers who joined the union. Since the start of the lock-out they have organised a brilliant campaign. Throughout the dispute the T&G leadership have offered pitiful support for their struggle.

After the tribunal ruled in their favour the workers believed that they had won their demands. On their return to work they were instructed to sign new contracts that enshrined some of the worst practices from before the dispute including no union recognition, no overtime pay and pay differentials—the TGWU leadership advised the workers to sign.

If the trade union movement is to retain any relevance to workers in the sweatshops throughout the country it must show itself to be their staunchest defenders.

Simon Deville

"No-one's got any stability in their life"

THE BATTLE for union recognition at Brent highlights the importance of organising public sector workers. Brian Gardner spoke to Geoff Martin, newly elected Convenor of UNISON London Regional Committee about the union's future.

The merged union brought workers together from many different areas, not only the public and voluntary sectors but also industrial sectors such as gas, electricity and water. One of the principal jobs for the convenor was to develop common themes which would unite all of the membership.

What were these?

The key issue was jobs. That brings in so much: competitive tendering, short term contracts, use of agency staff, casualisation.

It is the major political issue. The feel-bad factor means that many people don't know if, in 12 months' time, they'll have a job or not.

The union needed a strong campaign against job insecurity.

Employers claim that short-term contracts equal efficiency when in fact the reverse was the case.

"Definitely. In the Health Service, no-one's got any stability in their life, so why are well-qualified nurses are bailing out of the NHS in droves. A demoralised workforce isn't efficient."

I don't see any sign of was the Labour Party making any real commitment towards repealing many of the Tory reforms in health and local government. Labour was committed to market testing—privatisation by another name. Shouldn't UNISON demand that under a labour government, all services be returned to democratic control?

"I know exactly what you're saying. At a meeting recently I was banging on about these Labour councils who've embraced competitive tendering, and someone who works in one of the South London boroughs got up and said "Embraced it? They've taken it to bed and shagged it!" Labour had made a very clear commitment to abolish Compulsory Competitive Tendering but it still wanted all councils to tender the services on a voluntary basis.

UNISON's progressive policies on such issues as the minimum wage, full employment, defence of the welfare state, were often not adequately promoted or defended. Was the real problem the fact that the paid officials were often in cahoots with the Labour bureaucracy? How can you in your new job could make sure that these issues were placed at the forefront of the union's agenda?

Along with a lot of other unions, UNISON had been willing for far too long to take a back seat and leave the modernisers in the Labour Party to make the running. This had all got to change.

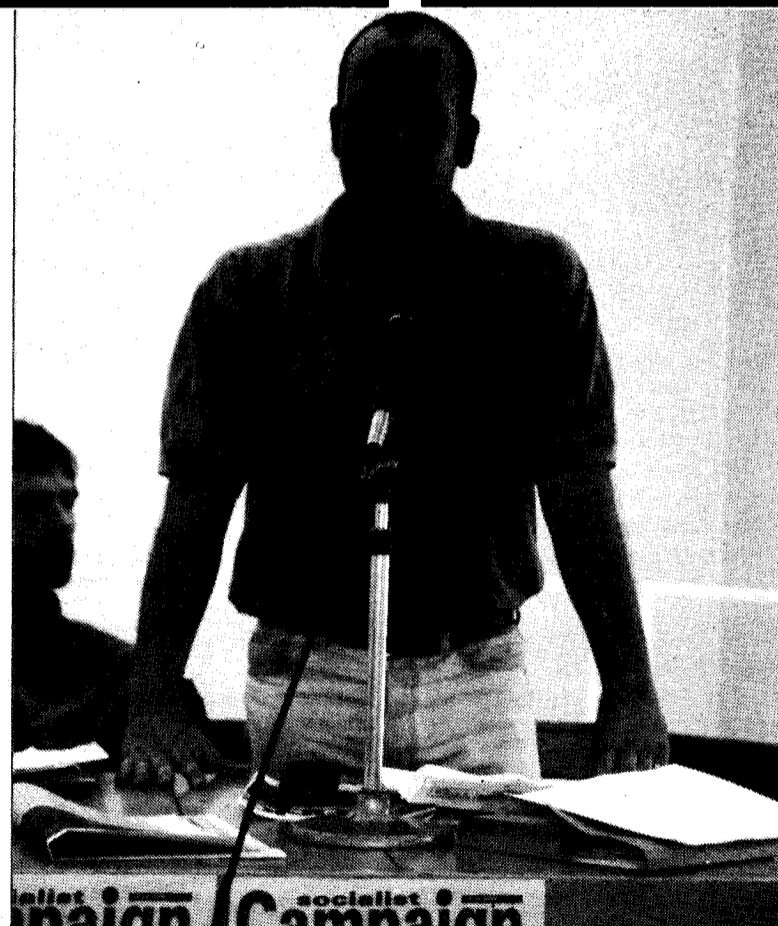
UNISON had been established as a lay-led union and this needed to be re-asserted continuously.

Part of the problem is that we do not at the moment an effectively merged union.

Why did you support Rodney Bickerstaffe in the election for General Secretary earlier in the year as against other candidates who were further to the left. The major broad left grouping in the union, the Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON, which includes supporters of *Socialist Outlook* decided to stand Roger Bannister, a supporter of Militant Labour.

"I just thought it was wrong. The way it was handled allowed Militant to dictate the terms without any real consideration about wider issues in terms of the Labour Party or anything else. It is really dangerous to ask people on the left in the Labour Party to vote for someone who supports running against Labour candidates."

Is this really the problem? Roger Bannister is part of the left in the union and has fought consistently



Geoff Martin

Photo: Simon Kennedy

for the sort of policies which he himself supported.

"We were staring down the barrel of having an "ex"-Tory, as the leader of the biggest union in the country."

As for backing someone from Militant, if we did that we might as well disaffiliate from the Labour Party.

Bickerstaffe has been one of the better union leaders in terms of supporting the campaign against the Asylum and Immigration Bill. It is an advantage that he can now be pushed to do things around such issues?

"Bickerstaffe is distinct from the

rest of the upper echelons of the union".

Your relationship with the CFDU is now somewhat tenuous.

"The CFDU is never going to break out of its ex-NALGO ghetto. It is simply not capable of reaching out to ex-NUPE and ex-COHSE members who were pissed off with Blair agenda and who were getting hammered day in and day out.

The UNISON Labour Left Network is going to be a potent force."

Isn't it better to have one organisation and try to build outwards?

Call for Merseyside general strike

THE STRIKE of 500 Liverpool dockworkers marked six months of struggle against Mersey Docks & Harbour Company (MDHC) with a militant demonstration and rally supported by 3000 people—twice the size of previous demonstrations.

So far the strike has cost largest shipping company to use the docks £4 million, through the Merseyside strike itself and through the impressive solidarity action across the world. The dispute continues to gain momentum.

The dockers now aim to link up with the struggles of the Fire Brigades Un-

ion, and of local government workers with plans for a one-day Merseyside general strike on May 1.

Miners leader Arthur Scargill addressed the rally, giving his support for the general strike.

Lola Onibiyo was warmly received by the rally when she spoke of the deportation of her husband Abdul, and of the threat of deportation faced by her son Ade.

He has since been deported.

The support and solidarity of workers throughout the country and in docks across the world contrasts sharply with the refusal of their own leadership to

give the strike official backing.

Bill Morris and other T&G leaders have been prepared to speak at rallies, but have hidden behind the anti-union laws when it comes to making the strike official.

The sizeable delegation from London included workers from JJ fast foods, and strikers from Hillingdon hospital. Both have been (or are still) involved in disputes against casualisation and super-exploitation, and have been largely left to fend for themselves by their own union leaderships.

David Bedford



A good spirited demonstration marched on Stockholm's British Embassy on March 23, reports Peter Lindgren. Chanting "Scabs Out, Dockers in" — in English — seventy dockers and other trades unionists heard union leaders pledge to invite Liverpool dockers to Stockholm's May Day demonstration. An appeal against scabbing and casual labour, demanding union rights for Liverpool's dockers, as delivered to the Embassy. That week the trades union paper, with a circulation of 720,000, carried two full pages supporting the Liverpool strike.



Women on the Waterfront are organising a women's day on April 10. Assembling at 11 am at the Strand, Bootle they are planning to march to Seaforth Container Base for lunch followed by a meeting. For further details contact WOW on 0151 - 207 3388 or write c/o Transport House, Islington, L3 8EQ

Pressure mounts on Pall Mall

Rod Marshall

SIX months on, determined Hillingdon Hospital cleaners are still continuing their strike against contractors Pall Mall Services, part of a major conglomerate.

The strike began after workers refused to accept a 20 per cent pay cut. The strikers say that scabs are now paid three times more than what pall mall was prepared to pay to them.

Several thousands joined a February 17 demonstration called by UNISON, the strikers union, Hillingdon's Labour council have given strikers full run of Civic Centre facilities for food and fund-raising events. This support is really welcome — but will not be enough on its own. Solidarity is needed from other workers in the health services, by workers employed by Pall Mall and by other work at Hillingdon, including a full one-day stoppage of the entire hospital. Extra pressure must be put on Pall Mall Services by picketing their premises and boycotting their hotels. Such action can force the NHS Trust

managing the hospital to cancel Pall Mall's contract.

Six months into the strike, the 56 workers have been repeatedly denied a branch meeting by union officers. At last month's UNISON women's conference officials used the absence of a formal branch meeting to prevent strikers from raising discussion about how UNISON could be supporting the strike. One striker, Kamla, explained: "People at the conference, lots of people, said this is not the place to complain: it is the place to ask for support."

Last week, national UNISON officials visited the picket line. Another striker, Lela, explained: "We think the UNISON leaders are stopping us having a branch meeting because they are frightened of what we will do at it. We are going to pass a resolution calling for a national strike against Pall Mall, wage cuts and low pay. We are going to elect our delegates for the UNISON conferences, that is the health conference at the end of April and the national delegate conference in June. We will force them to give in to us, just like we did over making the strike official."

NUS sacrificed at Blair's altar!

George Thompson

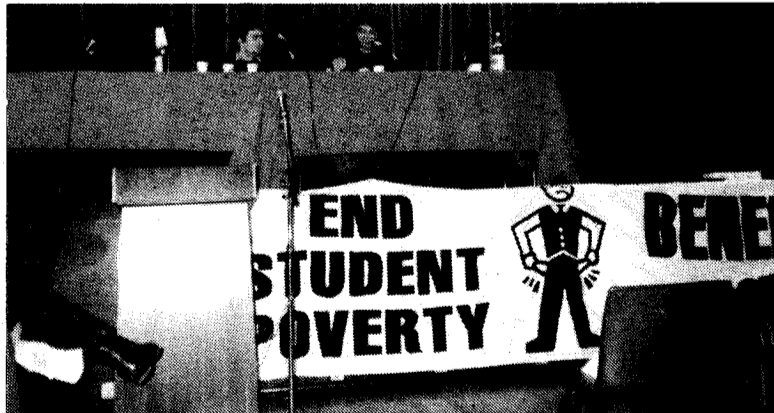
THE RECENT NUS Conference abandoned the fight for free education. Rather than demanding grants and benefits for all equal to their value in 1979, NUS now wants cheaper loans, and applauds a graduate tax.

The Labour Students leadership has blocked the defence of grants from Tory attacks and has attempted to talk down students expectations of a future Labour Government. A special Conference last year defeated earlier attempts by Labour to ditch NUS's full grants policy.

Last month few expected Labour to win the Free Education debate. They won hands down. They also backed college management's suspension of six black members of the Union Executive at South Bank University and the victimisation of students fighting the Asylum Bill at the University of North London and Kingsway College.

Furthermore they received backing to draw up codes up with college authorities to prevent "extremist" influence in colleges.

Defeating the well-oiled Labour Students machine in NUS is always difficult with a low level of struggle. Victories



We need to develop is a tradition of struggle—alongside workers.

are needed in battles like that fought at Kingsway. The students' example in opposing the Asylum Bill and state interference in their union should have been championed by all in the NUS.

Leaflets on the first day at Conference produced by most leftwing groups had no mention of it. Even when a hundred black students from London protested against their mistreatment by NUS leaders, their action was ignored by left groups.

The Free Education Campaign, which mounted the main electoral challenge from the left must in future link up with such protesters.

Now it must concentrate on building up activist groups in colleges to fight

further attacks on student finances and commit local student unions to fight for free education.

The danger for the student left — because of obsession with elections at Conference — is to see defeats there as the end of the struggle.

British students can make a difference to policies, just as the French students did.

We have potentially stronger organisations.

We need to develop is a tradition of struggle—alongside workers.

Labour may have silenced us in the Conference hall, but if it gets in Government they won't keep us quiet in the streets!

Hull Council stops workfare

LABOUR-controlled Hull City Council has kicked into touch the Tories plans to force the jobless to work for their benefits.

The so-called Project Work scheme is due to be introduced in Hull and Maidstone on Monday. Hull City Council was in the frame to provide work placements.

Hull Trades Council has played a vital role in co-ordinating voluntary organisation, trades unions and local MPs opposed to Project Work. *Socialist Outlook* spoke to Nigel Danby, CPSPA branch secretary. "The strength and breadth of opposition to Project Work has been fantastic" explained the trades council delegate.

"First Trades Council comes out against workfare, then the TGWU, then West Hull CLP, then Hull CLP. The Council vote topped it all off. No way did a Labour council want to be respon-

sible for the introduction of workfare into this country."

Not only is the Council's vote a victory for the left. It shows that the Labour Party can still be made to act in the defence of working class people. Top stand on the sidelines and write off the possibility of taking the fight against project Work into the Labour Party would be plain daft.

The fight against Project Work is far from over for Hull Trades Council. A demo is being organised for Saturday April 13, #meeting in Victoria Square at 11 am.

• **Further details: Phone Keith Sinclair, Secretary Hull Trades Council (01482 802050) or Nigel Danby, Secretary CPSPA Employment Service (01482 223171 ex. 365).**

Social democracy in Southern Europe

Convulsions of crisis

Social democracy around the world is suffering a crisis of identity—nowhere more so than in Southern Europe.

But the convulsions of crisis should not be mistaken for death throes.

In Southern Europe the developments are entwined with various other factors—in particular the decomposition of Stalinism, national dynamics, as well as the process of European union.

It is undergoing a profound re-composition.

In Greece, the crisis of the social democratic PASOK party and the legacy of Papandreou is more widely linked to changes in national politics. Potential splits are emerging.

In Spain, the PSOE was defeated after a turn to austerity in recent years, but put up a better than expected showing. The United Left alternative, born out of the Spanish Communist Party and various left groups failed to make much headway.

Vincent Scheltiens, editor of the Belgian fortnightly *Rood*, looks at some of the reasons behind its difficulties, including aspirations to replace PSOE as the main left party and the problem of its relations with the social movements.

With the situation remaining unstable, the PSOE will continue to receive mass support and could soon return to office. The IU will have to find a way of relating to this process more effectively.

In Italy the PDS split out of Stalinism has developed

on an increasingly right wing trajectory, leaving the class struggle *Rifondazione Comunista* party as the only serious left alternative.

The PDS is now tied in with the main bourgeois alliances and the project of European integration. Franco Turigliatto of the Fourth Internationalist magazine *Bandiera Rossa* looks at the effect of the PDS's turn on the workers' movement after the fall of the Dini government.

In all three countries, social democracy is going through a period of flux. But it has not been defeated, and will continue to play a key role in government and the workers' movement. The left must look to how to intervene into these processes to fight the European austerity programme.

Italy: Left at the crossroads

Franco Turigliatto

THE COLLAPSE of all remaining distance between the "left" PDS and the right wing alliance in which the Alleanza Nazionale (AN) is increasingly dominant has opened one of the most squalid pages in recent history.

The political alliance between the right and the PDS has had two important effects.

Firstly the AN has been given legitimacy.

Secondly because the political agenda and the institutional reforms were agreed with concessions from the President and the authority of Fini and his party, people will draw the conclusion that the ideas of Fini are legitimate—if not reasonable.

It is not clear what will be the outcome of the current events. But the damage has been done. Already the events constitute a new defeat for the workers' movement.

The latest break in the PDS can only serve to accentuate the disorientation of sectors of the masses, generate a loss of identity for the left and increase the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the political games which are beyond the understanding of most people.

The latest phase of political convulsion comes after the Dini government imposed pension reforms in which the PDS and the unions were complicit. The defeat has precipitated a dramatic process of demoralisation and depoliticisation.

The beginning of Italy's six month presidency of the EU has brought a new and sudden acceleration of the crisis.

The strategies of the PDS and the Centre Left are now shaken to the roots. They have realised too late that they have ended up on the slippery slope from which they can only come out badly.

Even if a governing alliance between the AN, the PDS and Forza Italia proves to be impossible, the road would be wide open for a heavy electoral defeat for the centre-left and the strengthening of the AN.

How has the PDS drifted so far off course?

Certainly there is the desire by some leaders to be accepted into government



The PDS aim to build a government together with Umberto Bossi's Lega Nord

Photo: Carlo Cerchioli

at any cost. They have been shedding the last vestiges of their history to achieve this objective—and then there is the narrow-mindedness of the leader who is terrified by the prospect of electoral failure.

But also there is a deeper reason.

The leaders of the PDS have made themselves constant defenders of the politics of neoliberalism, supporting the aims of economic convergence decided by the bourgeoisie at Maastricht. They have become the keenest standard bearers of the desire for capitalist stabilisation and the destruction of the welfare state.

While Fini is careful to suggest the need to moderate in some way the austerity policies and to review Maastricht, the PDS leadership has assumed the role of custodian of everything the bankers decided at Maastricht. Not

only because they need to show they are the best managers of the system, but also they have internalised the politics of the market.

For a party that wants to govern—in whatever name—it is inevitable that this agenda becomes an obligation. It is equally inevitable that the PDS having drifted onto the terrain of economic and political neo-liberalism will end up

We need to give impulse to a third pole based around the defence of living standards of workers, the relaunch of an environment campaign and a democratic vision of society

making concessions in the democratic sphere. A battle over the electoral system is already anticipated.

The tendency of the PDS to sing the praises of strong government is also serious because the ideas of the right could exert an influence on the masses.

The defeats, the lack of a real union

organisation worthy of the name and the consequences of the political choices made by the moderate left have all led to a sense of insecurity amongst wide sectors of the population especially workers.

People are anxious about the future which appears ever more gloomy. They suffer the hardship of a decline in living standards, they feel threatened

by the economic conquests and they feel undefended, lacking in the means to organise to fight and to influence events.

They feel a loss of solidarity which makes not only sectors of the petit-bourgeoisie and the underclass feel atomised, but also much of the proletariat.

In the face of the hardship caused by this feeling of impotence, the idea of the strong president is gaining support amongst some sectors of the popula-

tion.

The uneven road of a weak democracy is transforming itself into a dangerous journey towards more complete forms of proxy and towards new forms of authoritarianism. As we arrive at the elections the experience of the last month will weigh like a rock on the consciousness of millions of workers.

We need a different road.

We need to give impulse to the construction of a third pole based around the defence of living standards of workers, the relaunch of an environment campaign and a democratic vision of society.

This is the basis for the relaunch of an anti-capitalist strategy which will oppose the neo-liberal politics of the new government; to join together in the struggle that shook France a few months ago; to oppose economic convergence decided at Maastricht—the screen those who want to destroy the welfare state hide behind.

Translated from *Bandiera Rossa*

Socialist Outlook 100 • April 6, 1996.

For our one-hundredth issue:
a special four-page supplement

Into the new century

FIVE YEARS after its launch on May Day 1991, *Socialist Outlook* has reached its 100th issue. HARRY SLOAN, production editor and then Editor of the paper for its first 94 issues, looks back.

INTERNATIONALISM, anti-racism and a commitment to fight for new, socialist leadership in the mass organisations of the labour movement mark out the distinctive political profile of *Socialist Outlook*.

The first steps from a monthly magazine towards a fortnightly newspaper were driven by our agitational work in opposition to the Gulf War, in which we published a series of broadsheets.

And the new paper drew much of its inspiration from international issues. The very first issue carried a front page supporting the Kurdish struggle for self-determination: issue 2 carried the first of what became a consistent series of analytical articles covering the Irish struggle.

Warning against the attempts to broker a deal involving the British and Irish governments and political parties with the exception of Sinn Fein, we challenged the 'appearance of consensus', calling for a link-up between the left and the Irish community in Britain, to build an anti-imperialist counterweight.

Issue 3 got to grips with the crisis developing in the former Yugoslavia, and the line swiftly developed to one very distinctive as most of the British left tail-ended the brutal expansionism of Milosevic's Serbian regime. Issue 6 carried a detailed article headlined: "Federal tanks crush the old Yugoslavia", and insisted that:

"The failure of the Yugoslav model of 'socialism' has led to a struggle which takes the form of a battle between national groupings.

"But this does not mean that socialists can be neutral in the conflicts taking place. The main feature of the situation is the drive by the Serbian leadership in Belgrade under Slobodan Milosevic to create a 'Greater Serbia' by subjugating other nationalities. ...

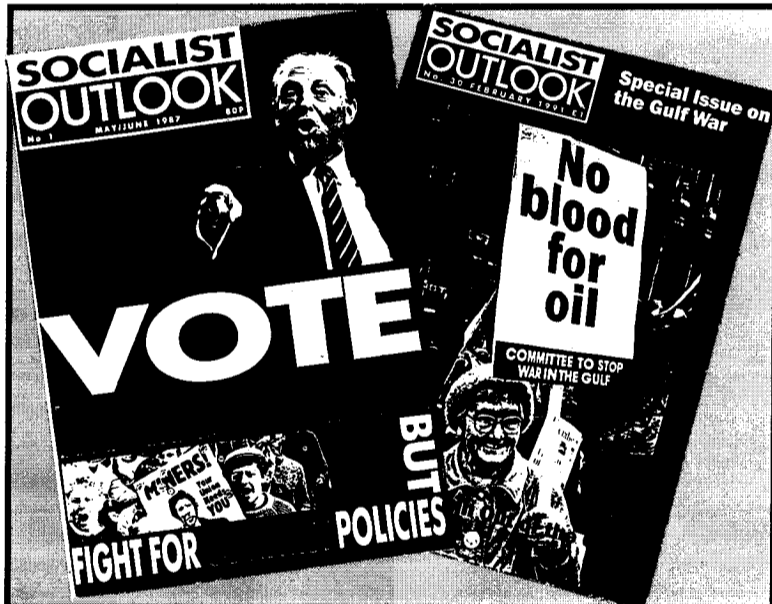
"The key now to any social progress in the region is the fight for Slovene and Croat independence and the revolutionary overthrow of the Milosevic regime."

This early line later developed into our support for Bosnia's right to self determination, and our insistence that the goal to be defended in Bosnia was not a 'Muslim state' but a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Socialist Outlook, working with European sections of the Fourth International, backed a major solidarity effort delivering aid to Bosnia targeted on the mining town of Tuzla. The success of this campaign was reflected in the front page of issue 49: "Workers Aid Rolls into Bosnia". Our paper has also followed and analysed a wide range of other international campaigns and issues, among them:

- the collapse of the Soviet Union and the developing crisis in eastern Europe;

- opposing the US intervention in Somalia;
- rejecting the wretched 'peace' deal signed by PLO leader Arafat establishing new Palestinian 'bantustans';
- the fight against Indonesia's use of British-supplied planes and hardware in their genocide in East Timor;
- supporting the courageous resistance of the Chechen fighters to Yeltsin's military offensive;



Between the 1987 General Election and the Gulf War 39 issues of the bi-monthly, and then monthly, magazine-format *Socialist Outlook* were produced

- opposition to the bloody Nigerian dictatorship.

At home, the issues confronted by *Socialist Outlook* have of course been dominated by the unresolved and historic crisis of leadership and perspective in the labour movement.

It is tempting to regard Tony Blair's rightward lurch as something qualitatively new: but a look back at our 100 issues reveals many analytical articles tracing historic parallels between Blair and Kinnoch, and between these latter-day 'modernisers' and the well-known class traitors of yesteryear.

Our very first issue, in 1991, warned that:

"The change that Kinnochism has wrought in the Labour Party is drastic. ... One thing that is certain is that the smug certainties of Kinnochism are heading to a crash. The next election will either produce defeat, and Kinnoch's replacement, or the most right wing Labour government ever."

Nor have the responses to the rightward drift changed that much over the past five years. In 1991 we analysed the defeat of Militant's 'Real Labour' candidate Lesley Mahmood in the Walton by-election, with a warning:

"The candidature was a tactical mistake ... Standing against the official Labour candidate would have made



The first of the newspaper-format *Socialist Outlook* (left). A major redesign in 1993 (right) led to the use of a second colour until printing costs rocketed in 1995.

sense if there had been a real chance of winning. But despite the Militant hype ... there was none. ...

"Walton is an area of particular strength for Militant, in the most politically radical city in Britain. 2,000-odd votes in this highly special situation does not and cannot translate into the base for a new party to the left of Labour."

Five years later, our paper took a similarly critical line on Arthur Scargill's tactics in launching his 'Socialist Labour Party', which we summed up as 'Scargill's false start'.

But while we have opposed a premature, ultra-left break from Labour, the pages of *Socialist Outlook* have been regularly filled with political ammunition for socialists fighting back against 'new realism' and later against Blair's 'modernisers'.

Nor has our paper stood on the edge of events cheering on the efforts of others. We have been energetic builders of campaigns such as the fight to defend Clause Four, and consistently advocated non-sectarian fighting unity on the left.

And we have always seen the trade unions as a key component of the necessary fight back for socialist policies. *Socialist Outlook* has carried consistent coverage of the political struggles and industrial battles that have shaped today's trade union movement.

We were there for the big battles, with the miners, there with the rail workers; but we were also there for the tough local battles, like the struggle of the Asian women at Burnsalls and other fights.

Our paper was also there to reinforce the left in union conferences including the RMT, UNISON and the NUT, as well as analysing the bosses' scientific methods of destroying the strength of unions under the impact of 'New Management Techniques'.

Two other themes jump out from the pages of our first hundred issues: the fight against racism – both the brute violence of fascist thugs and the state-sanctioned violence of the police and racist laws such as the Asylum and Immigration Bill; and the struggle to defend the Welfare State, and in par-

ticular the front-line services of health, education and social security.

There have been more front pages opposing racism than any other single topic since we launched the fortnightly, and *Socialist Outlook* has played a key, pioneering role in highlighting the issue of detention of asylum seekers in prisons like Campsfield in Oxfordshire.

Welfare state analysis has included blow-by-blow coverage of the Tory NHS reforms (introduced in April 1991), and detailed analysis of Tory and Labour Education policies, as well as support for the growing campaigns against education cuts driven forward last year by the FACE campaign, linking up teachers, parents and governors in a 'revolt of Middle England'.

Underpinning our line on these issues has been our internationalist opposition to the consolidation of a bosses' Europe as proposed in the Maastricht Treaty, and exposure of its racist and chauvinist implications as set out in the reactionary Schengen agreement for a 'Fortress Europe' to keep out black immigrants and refugees.

Equally important has been our commitment, spelled out from the very first issue with a pull-out feature on Lesbian and Gay Liberation, to the liberation and self-organisation of the oppressed: women, gays, lesbians, black people and youth.

The number of contributors over the years is now well into the hundreds, many of them comrades from sister organisations and publications of the Fourth International. We value this strength and variety compared with the narrow circles which stifle other papers on the left.

Of course we are not complacent. But we are proud that *Socialist Outlook* has held high the banner of internationalism and socialism through some of the toughest years ever experienced by the left in Britain.

There is no denying there have been downs as well as ups. We have gained and then lost a second spot colour; been reduced in numbers of pages to meet a financial squeeze; we have always been under-staffed and struggled to meet our deadlines; sometimes people didn't laugh at my jokes, or understand an over-clever headline: but we have never compromised on our principles.

As we head towards a new century, we see distinct signs of life and resistance at the base of the labour movement: an election is looming, and new battles for socialism will need to be fought, in new conditions. With your help we can do even better.

Why not join us, and fight with us for a better future?



Socialist Outlook was formed through the merger of the currents around two magazines: *International* and *Socialist Viewpoint*

The need for 'Socialist Outlook'

Socialist Outlook believes that the future of humanity lies in a society free from exploitation and oppression. This can only be achieved by ending capitalism.

Whatever changes there have been in industry and lifestyle patterns, the basic contradictions of capitalist society remain fundamental in creating a world based on inequality and oppression.

Society is still divided between those who live off the labour of others and those who have to work in order to survive—capitalism needs this exploitation of the working class by the ruling class to function.

This is why we support all those who struggle against capitalism, and the discrimination and oppression that always accompanies it.

But it is not enough for socialists to simply lend their support to these struggles, we also try to take them forward.

Marxists have an important contribution to make, offering both answers to some of the central questions of anti-capitalism, and practical support where we can.

We do not pose ourselves as defenders of some sort of true faith—it is only through the experience of struggle and the political movements that arise out of it that the need for a socialist solution to the crisis becomes recognised by the mass of people.

A small current cannot pretend to have all the answers. We have to learn from others' experience.

Socialist Outlook does not therefore set itself aside from the workers' movement and the organisations of the oppressed.

We have our own views—some of which are similar to other socialists, some of which are different—but we try to show their relevance and importance through practical involvement and debate.



'Socialist Outlook' supporters on London anti-racist demonstration in February

Photo: Peter Lindgren

Building unity in struggles



Experience shows that we cannot rely on the existing leaders to lead a fight

ANY READER of *Socialist Outlook* can see how deep our differences are with the existing leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party.

We believe that by and large they are unwilling to lead the working class even in a minimum defence of its interests, let alone in the struggle for socialism.

But trades unionists and Labour Party supporters still look to them for a lead. Those who share our assessment are a small minority at the moment.

Serious socialists need to find a way of fighting for working class interests that is consistent with the current needs and consciousness of the class.

We reject an approach based on exposure—putting forward demands

which we know they will never support in order to and declare "hah, told you so" when they refuse to take them up.

We therefore fight for the maximum unity in action around the demands of workers and the specially oppressed. The maximum possible democratic debate is necessary in this process so that various individuals and currents can put forward their ideas about the way forward.

Unity is vital. But experience shows that we cannot rely on the existing leaders to lead a fight—they will call it off at the first opportunity or settle for less, and certainly not pursue the struggle as vigorously as possible.

Unity around common demands must therefore be combined with criticism of the leaders where necessary. We should support them in so far as they are willing to lead the struggle, but criticise them unmercifully when they refuse to.

This approach is clearly not designed simply to expose the leadership. It is only through experience that workers come to recognise the shortcomings of the leadership and that there is an alternative.

The fightback in the unions

WORKPLACE organisation is the basic form of defence against attacks from the bosses.

It is important to strengthen the unions through recruitment, building up workplace representation and participation by the membership in all decision-making.

Only with such strong local organisation can the constant attacks of the bosses be resisted.

But we also recognise that the struggles of the working class are often held back by the trade union leaders. This bureaucracy, through its constant closeness to the bosses, its working conditions and much higher pay develops different interests to those they are supposed to represent. They do their utmost to avoid struggle through concessions and compromise, rather than encouraging and developing the fight of their members. A serious struggle upsets their cosy relationship with the bosses and endangers their position.

We refuse to accept the argument that the unions should "leave politics to the Labour Party"—which really means leave it to those who share the political views of the trade union bureaucracy.

If union militants are to recognise the tasks involved in the fight against capitalism nationally and internationally, then political discussion and solidarity are an essential part of union organisation.

Socialist Outlook fights for maximum union democracy, election and accountability of officials.

There is a need to organise in the unions both around particular issues, such as a pay claim, and more generally to transform the unions into fighting, democratic bodies.

Such left formations need to both campaign among the membership and struggle for a new leadership to replace the bureaucracy with militants willing to lead a fight and be accountable.

Continuing the fight in the Labour Party

THE FORMATION of the Labour Party after a struggle in the unions to end support for the Liberal Party was a significant step forward for the British workers' movement.

However, unlike other social democratic parties in Europe, the Labour Party was never a socialist party. The break with the Liberal Party was primarily an organisational one, rather than political and ideological.

This gives the British Labour Party some characteristics all of its own.

It has a mass base among the organised working class, expressed in the union link. But it has always been committed to the maintenance of the capitalist system.

Labour governments, even the most radical ones, have all worked on the basis of defending capitalism. They have delivered important reforms to the working class, but their prime allegiance has been to the continuance of private property relations and, therefore, the exploitation of labour.

Because the existence of a class-based party represents a gain over those countries like the U.S.A. where there is only a choice between different bourgeois parties, it is important to defend the Labour Party—and in particular the union link—from attack from the bosses, the

Tory government and those inside the party who are trying to pull it further rightwards.

We have never believed that the Labour Party can be transformed into

working class as a whole, and its acceptance of capitalist ideology, all mitigate against this.

The Labour Party must be superseded by a party committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

But the need to replace it is only half the story. Doing it is another matter.

The sort of party we need cannot be brought about by simply by declaring ourselves as the "socialist alternative".

The millions of workers who support the Labour Party will not be convinced by us simply planting a flag for

revolution and denouncing all around as sell-outs.

By fighting alongside to force the leaders of the labour movement to carry out policies in the interests of the working class, at the same time as pointing out the nature of the party, we have a better chance of winning people to an alternative than by shouting from the sidelines.

Socialist Outlook is therefore committed to continuing the fight in the Labour Party, and linking it up with struggles of all kinds.

At election time we do not simply call for a passive Labour vote in elections but raise together the need for a vote against the parties of the bourgeoisie and the need to fight for workers' interests.

The millions of workers who support Labour will not be convinced by us simply planting a flag for revolution and denouncing all around

the type of party that is necessary to lead the fight for socialism—a revolutionary socialist party.

The way it is organised, the almost exclusive emphasis on elections, the weight of the bureaucratic leadership which has different interests to the

Fighting for liberation

THE OPPRESSION of black people, of women and of lesbians and gay men is tied up with the division of society into different classes.

The particular forms are different today—than for example under slavery—but its existence and maintenance is still integral to capitalism. The ruling class consciously tries to whip up prejudice to maintain their own domination—as the Tories are doing around the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

This means that socialists have to fight against both structural discrimination though state institutions and deep-seated bigotry—including amongst working class people.

Socialist Outlook has always seen the autonomous organisation of the oppressed as an important part of this struggle to build a movement for liberation.

We have been central to the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, active in many parts of the women's movement and fought for Labour Party Black Sections and black caucuses within the trade unions.

This right to self-organisation extends to the organisations of the far left. We support the right of autonomous organisation even after the socialist revolution itself.



LCLGR led historic, and successful, fights at Labour Party conference

The lesbian and gay movement should not wait for the eradication of homophobia before organising for its demands—it will be stronger if it calls for support from other sections of working people.

So we fight for organisations and campaigns to support the specific demands of the specially oppressed and their right to organise. At the same time we fight for our own ideas in the organisations.

There have been times when they have been left to fight alone, without support of socialists or trade unionists. Victories have occasionally been won in this situation. But the chances are much better if there is unity.

It is militant action such as that of the Suffragettes and the Black Panthers that have won—not an approach based on parliamentary lobbying and asking nicely.

This model, for example, was followed by the National Abortion Campaign which has successfully organised in defence on the rights established in the 1967 Abortion Act.

Initially started by a small group of committed socialist feminists—who certainly waited for no man—the campaign was eventually able to gain support of the TUC and a number of national trade unions.

Ultimately the fight for liberation—for a society in which women, black people and lesbians and gay men are truly equal—is a central part of the fight for a genuine socialist society.

A socialism that is worth fighting for has to be one that is committed to an end to all discrimination and prejudice. A socialism that is achievable has to involve at its core the most oppressed sections of the working class.

There are none so fit to break the chains as those that wear them.

Ireland and Socialist Democracy

SUPPORTING the struggle of oppressed peoples for national liberation is an essential part of *Socialist Outlook's* politics.

This is not because we think nationalism is a solution to the problems of the world's working class and peasantry.

But upholding the right of national self-determination is an intrinsic part of internationalism.

There is the world of difference between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressor. One celebrates struggle and resistance, the other worships oppression and reactionary ideas.

It is from within the struggle for national freedom that workers and peasants can begin to recognise their own interests and see how they are different from the sections of their ruling class which claim to be for liberation.

It is particularly important that socialists in imperialist countries support

the struggle for national liberation against their own ruling class.

To duck this issue is to pander to national chauvinism—even when radical sounding phraseology is used as a dodge.

For socialists in Britain this means support for the struggle for the liberation of the oldest colony, Ireland.

The people of Ireland as a whole have the right to determine their future.

We collaborate closely with Fourth Internationalists in Ireland organised in *Socialist Democracy* who work with the national liberation movement at the same time as putting forward a strategy to link this with the struggle for socialism in Ireland.

Socialists in Britain only earn the right to criticise the way in which the struggle is conducted in so far as we support the right to carry it out.

Socialist Outlook supports the struggle in Ireland, and fights for full British withdrawal. Our support is critical—we reserve the right to disagree with the tactics pursued in that struggle—but it is always unconditional.

The fight for Internationalism and solidarity



Internationalist campaign against US-UN Gulf War against Iraq led to launch of fortnightly 'Socialist Outlook'

SOCIALISM is international or it is nothing.

Capitalism exploits workers and peasants throughout the world without regard to nationality. Whatever differences arise between ruling classes of different countries at times they share common concerns, and are always prepared to overcome divisions when faced with a challenge to their control.

The internationalism of the working class is therefore not just an aspiration—a nice idea—but a recognition of the need for workers to unite across national frontiers.

Internationalism does not mean ignoring the differences

between various countries, saying "all workers are the same". But workers in different countries working for the same multinational company need to find a common strategy to unite against factory closures and speed-up.

This becomes more important as capital becomes more and more organised on a trans-national basis, as trade blocks such as the European Union and NAFTA become more important.

This common interest of workers, and the need to organ-

ise internationally, was recognised by Karl Marx in the inauguration of the International Working Men's (sic) Association in 1864.

Ever since revolutionary so-

port of anti-imperialist forces fighting for national liberation in Vietnam and elsewhere; and, more recently, for international solidarity in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia in ex-Yugoslavia.

The necessity to organise across national boundaries means that we have to build a world-wide organisation of revolutionary

socialists.

An international which starts from conditions in one country, or even group of similar countries, is inadequate.

Support for the Fourth International is fundamental. Through genuine democratic discussion, based on an experience, we strengthen our understanding

cialists have campaigned against their "own" ruling classes—in the two inter-imperialist world wars; for solidarity with socialists and anti-fascists in Spain during the revolution; in sup-

For *Socialist Outlook* therefore our support for the Fourth International is fundamental to our identity. Through genuine democratic discussion, based on an experience of class struggle in different parts of the globe we strengthen our understanding of how to fight international capitalism.

We can mount more effective campaigns when fighting alongside our sister organisations in other countries and continents, such as that organised by the Fourth International in defence of multi-ethnic Bosnia and through participation in international events such as the European Youth Summer Camp.

World Appeal against the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions



July 1991 march for the cancellation of the third world debt was a part of a global effort motivated by the Fourth International

World Bank, IMF, WTO: Enough!

THERE IS little to rejoice as the international community commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Bretton Woods agreement which led to the founding of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the GATT.

The Structural Agreement Programmes imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions to obtain the reimbursement of the debt have led to famine and the brutal impoverishment of the developing world while contributing to the 'third worldization' of the countries in the former Eastern bloc.

While the World Bank's mandate consists, amongst others, in "combating poverty" and protecting the environment its actions have contributed to the dismantling of health and education programmes. Its support of large scale hydroelectric and agro-industrial projects has speeded up the process of deforestation and destruction of the natural environment, leading to the

forced displacement of several million people. In the South and the East hundreds of millions of undernourished children are denied the fundamental right of primary education.

In several regions of the world the brutal compression of social expenditure, combined with the collapse of purchasing power, has led to resurgence of infectious diseases including tuberculosis, malaria and cholera.

The GATT agreement further violates fundamental people's rights, particularly in the areas of foreign investment, biodiversity and intellectual property rights. Several clauses of the Structural Adjustment Programmes are now permanently entrenched in the articles of the World Trade Organisation. The WTO's mandate consists in regulating world trade to the benefit of the international banks and transnational corporations as well as 'supervising' (in close collaboration with the IMF and World Bank) the enforcement of national trade policies.

In the developed countries of the North, similar socially oppressive economic policies are now being applied. The consequences are unemployment, low wages, the marginalisation of large sectors of the population, and racism.

Social expenditures are curtailed and many of the achievements of the Welfare State repealed. State policies have also encouraged the destruction of small and medium-sized enterprises.

In the South, the East and the North a privileged social minority has accumulated vast amounts of wealth at the expense of the large majority of the population. This new international financial order feeds on human poverty, the destruction of the natural environment, generates social apartheid, encourages racism and ethnic strife, undermines the rights of women and often precipitates in countries destructive confrontations between nationalities.

The time has come for humanity to forcefully respond and establish an agenda for social change. We the undersigned — citizens, workers, teachers, writers, artists, civil servants, trades unionists, members of Non-Governmental Organisations throughout the world — reassert the fundamental right of people to national economic sovereignty, democratic development and social justice.

We denounce this destructive "economic model" while reasserting our firm opposition to the interference of the Bretton Woods institutions and the new World Trade Organisation in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

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

Socialist Outlook exists to build a new type of working class leadership, based on class struggle and revolutionary socialism.

The capitalist class, driven by its own crisis, and politically united by its need to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has had determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal Tory high command.

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

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively total surrender, while ditching any pretence of being a socialist alternative. Every retreat encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form of reformism, seeking only improved conditions within capitalism.

We reject reformism, not because we are against reforms, but because we know that full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy, can never be achieved under capitalism.

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

We are a marxist current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change.

We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, to unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth — and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and worldwide.

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

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

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland, Ireland and Wales should be left to await revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now for their demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

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

To strengthen this fight we press for united front campaigns on key issues such as racism and fascism — in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate differences.

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Spanish shake up

Vincent Scheltiens

THE SPANISH Parliamentary elections on 3 March finally gave José María Aznar and his Popular Party the majority for which they had long hoped - but not an absolute majority. Felipe Gonzales was again able to mobilise the left and limit the damage. The ultra-centralist PP must negotiate the formation of a government with the bourgeois Catalan regionalists.

The stock exchange reacted negatively: such a coalition would not guarantee stability. On the left, the result for Izquierda Unida (Left Unity) was qualified: it gained votes and seats, but not enough. A period of debate (or even crisis) is opening in IU. Will a remobilisation of the social movement clarify the stakes?

Julio Anguita, coordinator of IU and general secretary of the PCE (Communist Party), has never hidden his strategy: to smash the hegemony of the PSOE (Socialist Party) and to make IU the largest force on the left. This seemed possible when the PSOE was sunk in political-financial scandals and discredited by its austerity policies. But when the votes were counted, IU were forced to change their tone. The party had progressed from 18 to 21 seats, which counts for little against the PSOE's 141.

In Andalusia, IU had refused to support the PSOE-controlled regional government, and had frequently voted with the PP opposition. The regional elections were brought forward and the PSOE won an absolute majority, advancing from 45 to 52 seats. IU suffered severe defeat, falling from 20 to 13 seats and losing 88,000 votes.

These poor results were grist for the mill of the IU right, around the Nueva Izquierda (New Left) current. Anguita and the PCE think that IU must keep its distance from the PSOE with its austerity, its scandals and its support for Maastricht. Nueva Izquierda, which argues that this position disqualifies the IU as a partner in government, leans towards an alliance with the PSOE.

Anguita is clearly not wrong in his opposition to Maastricht. Any other policy would lead inevitably, across Europe, to capitulation to austerity and the dismantlement of social gains. But the question is how to achieve a majority for a social and economic alternative.

The choice is not between submission to the PSOE or glorious, sectarian, isolation. For those who reject austerity, the problem is to develop a con-



The Basque freedom struggle continues

structive and dynamic link with the social movements in order to become the spokesperson for social struggles. But IU has long had a strained relationship with the social movements. This flows from its "hegemonistic" approach, which rouses the fear of manipulation.

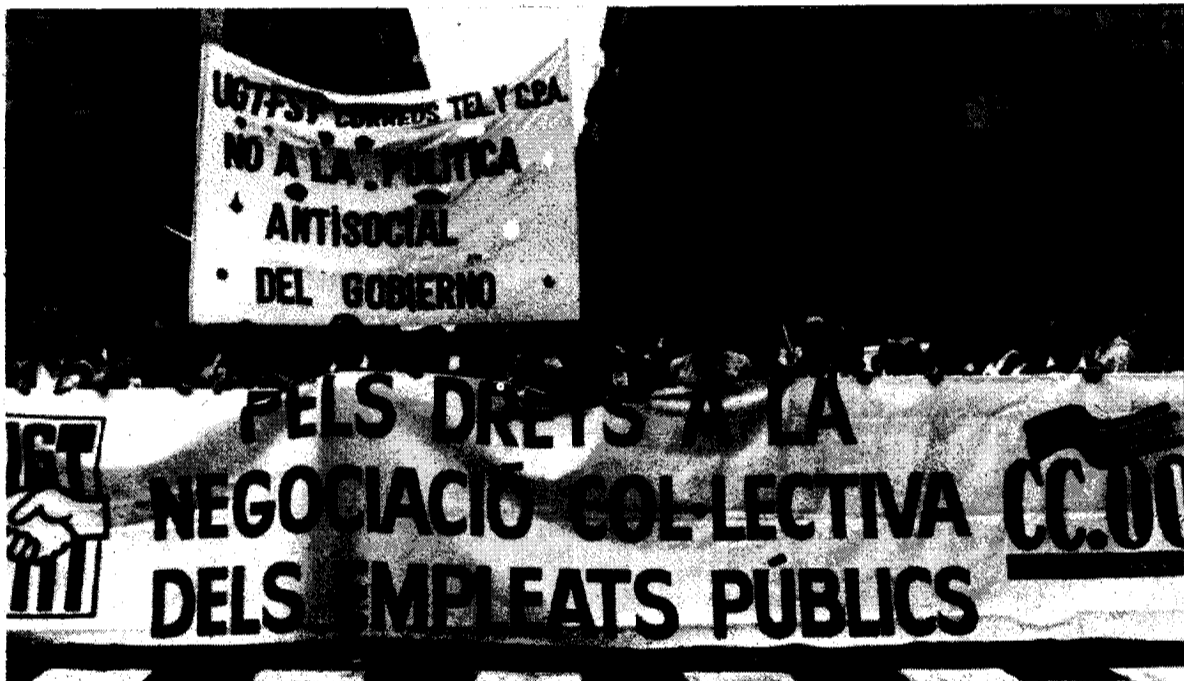
The IU project is no longer sufficiently balanced. Although it has vigorously opposed the PSOE's policies, its own alternatives have often been vague and subordinated to internal tensions. IU wants to be "a political formation of a new type", but what this means in practice has never been spelt out. The question is still how to gain the PSOE's electorate. The Andalusia balance-sheet must be taken into account: a strong anti-PSOE line, dubious alliances with the PP, electoral success of the PSOE.

At the end of 1995 the PCE, the dominant force in IU, held its 14th Congress on the theme "Regrouping the left", which is also the theme of the party's 75th anniversary campaign. Since the foundation of IU, the PCE has been divided by a tension between its own development and developing IU. This tension has been reinforced by the fact that Anguita is the leader of both formations.

The PCE Congress texts expressed

this tension (and confusion) well, using identical formulations to describe the tasks of the PCE and those of IU. Antonio Gramsci was copiously quoted in these documents. Contesting the right's political and cultural hegemony (which implies a confrontation) was presented as a task both of IU within the left and of the PCE within IU. Further, the PCE has long hesitated between its dissolution in order to build IU and a stronger affirmation of its own existence, arguing that IU's organised force and implantation do not reflect its widespread electoral support (2,700,000 votes).

It may be possible to get out of the impasse by looking towards France. A French-style social mobilisation against a right-wing government determined to return Spain to the line of Maastricht is not impossible. IU is well placed to play an important rôle in such a mass movement. In this case a political opening for struggles, which was so grievously lacking in Belgium as in France, could take form in Spain (and in Italy, with Rifondazione). If this happens, the relative electoral setback would not mean a defeat of the left within IU, but the chance for a new left impetus in the Spanish state. Otherwise...



The PCE has held on to its leadership rôle in the CCOO workers' commissions

Greece: Calm before the storm

George Mitrallas

THE NEW Socialist Party (PASOK) Prime Minister Kostas Simitis has won support from left and right for his pro-European strategy.

He wants to end the nationalist hysteria which has transformed the country's political life in recent years. But the situation is so fragile that the ruling party could explode at any time, detonating a recomposition.

It was no smooth transition. The outgoing Andreas Papandreu was a patriarch who had always ruled alone. No one in PASOK ever dared challenge his absolute power.

Yet Simitis' low-profile and modernising image ensured a brief honeymoon with public opinion—very brief.

Even before Simitis was sworn in, the confrontation with Turkey over the Imia ("Kardak") islands revealed the fragility of his position. Simitis' move away from his predecessor's traditional ultra-nationalist stance was seen as proof of his servility towards the European Union and US imperialism.

Simitis' open stance on Maastricht exploits the fact that his opponents support the same thing, but are reluctant to say so openly. While muttering about his "soft" and "un-Greek" nature, the bourgeoisie are attracted to Simitis' project.

These policies are also provoking realignment amongst various left forces. The non-Communist left has also been attracted by Simitis' moderate foreign policy—normalisation of relations with neighbouring states and recognition of the Republic of Macedonia.

However, this is also losing Simitis the support of a hardline opposition inside PASOK. Sections of the social democratic left are also leaving PASOK in disgust at the increasing severity of the austerity and privatisation programme.

This is a paradox. Simitis can brandish his audience outside his own party in order to out-manoeuvre his enemies inside the PASOK government. This cannot last indefinitely. The ruling party could explode at any moment.

This terminal crisis of PASOK would provoke the general recomposition of the party political frame-

work. Kostas Simitis may not be the head of a PASOK government for much longer. But he may return to office at the head of a new formation, or a coalition government.

The left and the trade unions are largely impotent in the face of these grand manoeuvres. Simitis enjoys the support of big capital and the overwhelming majority of Greek entrepreneurs.

The left is paying the price for sup-

porting attacks on workers. Between 1986 and 1994, real wages fell by 12 per cent. Whole sections surrendered to the bourgeoisie's racist, xenophobic, nationalist offensive.

However, the last two months have seen important mobilisations of peasants, farmers, pensioners, naval dockyard workers, civil servants and students. The political situation is very precarious, and the credibility of the major parties is disintegrating.

So this is Greece, at the end of the long epoch which began with the fall of the Colonels' Dictatorship 22 years ago. Like the people of Spain and Portugal, Greeks are taking stock of their hopes and their illusions, buried under the ruins of actually-existing social democracy.

It is a rude awakening. Maybe it will be a refreshing one. It is never too late to present the bill to those who have crumpled so many of our hopes and ideals.

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Gerry Foley speaks to veteran Republican Bernadette McAliskey

Republicanism's future

The Sinn Féin peace process is in crisis. BERNADETTE DEVLIN McALISKEY has been, for the last quarter century, a leading spokesperson of the various mass movements against the British domination over Northern Ireland. GERRY FOLEY spoke to her.

"THE CEASE-FIRE was called with the belief that within some definable period of time it would involve Sinn Féin in direct negotiations with the British government. And 18 months later that had not happened.

There was also an internal reason for the breakdown of the cease-fire. The announcement of the cease-fire was received with great enthusiasm by the Republican rank and file despite the fact that at no stage had the rank and file, or indeed anybody in the organisation below the leadership, had any knowledge of the long-term negotiations that led to the cease-fire.

There was a belief in the initial stages that a breakthrough had been made through a secret agreement. But that was not true. Yet the thing did not make sense to the people unless there had been a secret deal. And so you went from one theory and expectation to another, with people hanging in and hanging in, and the disillusion starting to set in.

Finally the leadership took a calculated risk in the Canary Wharf bombing in order to reassert its own authority within its military ranks: they were heading toward a real possibility that some element of their own organisation or people who had drifted away from it would, out of frustration, make some military move on their own.

The bomb was a spectacular warning shot over the bow of the British. Canary Wharf is a prestigious area. It had a lot of glass. And on a Friday evening, with due care and attention, they would have hoped not to have killed anybody. But you end up with a major bomb and two people dead. And, of course, politically it is impossible to tell where breaking the cease-fire will lead.

The Canary Wharf bombing might have resolved an immediate tension within their own military organisation. But the Republicans remain caught up in the logic of the process they started.

As far as the public is concerned, they shifted the aim of the Republican movement from a 32-county Ireland (socialist or otherwise) to all-party peace talks for an united Ireland. And the IRA cease-fire was called on that basis.

So, people are confused about what the Republicans are doing, since they must have known that a return to military actions would not get them back to the table easily without their being confronted again with the whole issue that was brought up at the beginning — that is, non-violence and arms decommissioning. Now, of course, the Republicans have got their date for their all-party peace talks [on condition that



McAliskey has been, for the last quarter century, a leading spokesperson of the various mass movements

the IRA renew the cease-fire]. But they haven't come up with a new cease-fire, so people are confused as to what their goal at this point is, as to what their strategy is.

There is a very real discontent within the broad Republican Movement. Following the H-Block hunger strikes of 1980-81, you had the IRA as the military representation of the struggle, and Sinn Féin as its electoral representation. But at the community

Sinn Féin were taking people out onto the streets to demand all-party peace talks now, when in fact prisoners were still being denied their basic rights, and at the same time, the grass roots, not knowing what the strategy was, were paralysed, prevented from acting independently of Sinn Féin because they didn't want to be rocking the boat.

There were a number of demonstrations that characteristically, in Northern Irish conditions, led to confrontations with the police, because the police arrived and beat people up. Then, Sinn Féin's allies

in the SDLP and the Irish government would call on them to stop this form of "irresponsible protest." Their argument was that we were now into negotiations, and people had to understand that such matters were the business of political parties and political leaders.

So, on the one side, they have actually disempowered — not intentionally — but this momentum has disempowered the Republican community, who are confused about what's happening.

I have a hard time comprehending how the Republicans could fail to see how deep the water was that they were getting into. The first step in was failing to reject decisively the parameters of the Downing St. Declaration.

The Republicans have got themselves in an irreversible position. I don't believe that a return to military operations is an effective option. I think that if they go back to military operations within the climate that they themselves were a party to creating, then

military defeat, for the first time in 15 years, becomes a very real possibility.

The real question, of course, is how do you build the mass campaigns within current context, because the fundamental context that we're looking at is that there is still an expectation on the part of the broad base of the nationalist community that the present negotiations, when they get started, will somehow lead to a peaceful and fair settlement.

Now, that is not the case. What is very clear from all of those talks is that we are looking at the solution which the British put forward in 1972, some kind of power sharing between the two power blocs [nationalist and Unionist], a referendum to determine the balance between the populations every 10 or 15 years, and such economic and commercial cross-border trade links as are required by the end of the century economic necessities of the European Union. No more and no less.

That is what we are going to get, and that we are in no position at this point to prevent that happening.

Over the 18 months, there has been a stifling of discussion within the broad movement, not just Sinn Féin as a

simply do not discuss their differences. People who become disillusioned, or begin to see that the thing's not working, just walk away. It denies the leadership the collective wisdom that comes out of debate.

In my opinion, the Republicans are making a serious misjudgement of their importance to the "peace process."

The whole momentum has reached a point where if the IRA does not produce a cease-fire, Sinn Féin will not be allowed into the all-party talks. But if Sinn Féin is left out of the all-party talks, that will not be a big obstacle because the Irish government and the SDLP will go on ahead and negotiate without them.

Alternatively, if there is a cease-fire, Sinn Féin will go into the talks, but at some point they have to walk out of them or buy into the agenda [i.e., a revamped version of the status quo] and take responsibility for it.

I think we should hang onto the cease-fire. The special repressive legislation is still on the books, but we can initiate mass action and continue campaigning against that.

If we don't go back to war, there's less chance of everybody being slaugh-

tered. And therefore, there will be people to take the campaign forward. I think Sinn Féin should get out of the "peace process."

Our presence in this

process can do nothing to affect it. Our campaign should be based upon insuring that whatever mechanics they put on this country, we will demand equality of citizenship, as long as we are citizens here, we will demand equal opportunity, we will demand our national identity, we will demand our fundamental human rights, and begin to build a political campaign around that."

There was a belief that a breakthrough had been made through a secret agreement. That was not true. The thing did not make sense to the people unless there had been a secret deal

I think Sinn Féin should get out of the 'peace process.' Our presence in this process can do nothing to affect it

Sinn Féin Ard Fheis Follow the leader

Socialist Outlook's DAVID COEN spoke to JOHN MEEHAN who attended the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis which took place in Dublin on March 23 after the collapse of the 18-month IRA ceasefire.

"THE PERIOD before the Canary Wharf bombing was marked by growing crisis of the 'peace process' strategy of the SF leaders. The republicans' frustration led to collapse of the ceasefire on February 9.

SF leaders have constantly called for all-party talks involving the British and Irish governments and all the main political parties on the island. SF argues that the British government should become 'persuaders' of the Unionists. Unfortunately this plea fell on deaf ears — just as experienced anti-imperialists predicted it would.

Most of the Ard Fheis debates were lifeless. Only one delegate, Dublin's Aengus O Snodaigh, openly criticised the SF leaders' 'peace process' strategy.

He explain to the Ard Fheis how they "don't mention our demands. We want Brits Out. We want a United Ireland. Why are we hiding away these demands in the cupboard? Why does it look like we are compromising our demands before we get to the negotiating table?"

The main decision concerned internal elections in the six counties on May 30. While most delegates preferred a boycott, the incoming leadership was given a free hand.

The boycott depends on what the SDLP do. The elections would be reduced to a farce if both SF and the SDLP boycott them, akin to Willie Whitelaw's 'border poll', contemptuously rejected by the entire national community in the 1970s.

There are now good grounds for



Martin McGuinness

Photo: Mark Salmon

an active boycott of John Major's Stormont poll. SDLP MPs feel the need to denounce this sop to the bigoted Unionists: for example, the Newry and Armagh MP Samus Malon called the electoral system a 'Monster Raving Looney' plan.

However the SF leaders have little stomach for a boycott as it implies

pessimism about the 'peace process'. SF's newspaper *An Phoblacht/Republican News* stresses the comments of Martin McGuinness, the central SF leader, that "Republicans would prefer non-participation but will ensure the Sinn Féin mandate is defended".

Only once did the Ard Fheis spring to life — debating women's right to choose abortion. Women political prisoners at Maghaberry proposed a pro-choice resolution, seconded by men prisoners in the H-Blocks and supported mainly by delegates from Derry and Dublin.

Derry delegate Daisy Mules said that it was hypocritical to support self-determination for people oppressed by imperialism, but to deny it to women in their own lives.

Several male delegates from rural areas attacked the motion, claiming that such a policy would lose votes in Managhan and West Cork.

Anne Speed, speaking for the outgoing leadership, tried to steer a middle course of only allowing abortion in limited circumstances. She asked for delegates to set aside "personal preferences" in "the best interests of the party". Both motions were defeated.

A progressive policy on lesbian and gay rights was adopted. Daisy Mules criticised party leader Gerry Adams for joining New York's St. Patrick's Day parade from which the Irish Lesbian and Gay Organisation had been banned. ILGO receives huge public support in Ireland, a welcome break from the clericalist and homophobic past.

US sharpened Beijing-Taiwan tensions

Duncan Chapple

THE US Seventh Fleet is maintaining build up its of forces around the break-away Chinese province of Taiwan after Chinese military exercises were held near the island last month.

After the social revolution in 1949 the defeated pro-capitalist forces, the Goumindang, fled to Taiwan and claimed themselves to be the true government of China. During the 1970s, the world's most powerful capitalist government's broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan and recognised the Beijing government as the government of all China.

Last month's elections featured provocative statements by the various rightist candidates calling for full independence for the rebel island from the China. President Lee Teng-hui made the demand the key focus for his re-election attempt. Last June he provocatively visited the United States — the first such visit by a Taiwanese leader since 1972 when Washington moved to normalise ties with China, and called for Taiwan to be admitted to the United Nations and World Trade Organisation, deepening tensions between China and Taiwan.

The US government routinely makes threats of economic sanctions against China. Recently the Clinton government delayed up to £6 billion in loan guarantees for US investments in China.

The US is now seeking to manipulate the tensions between China and Taiwan for its own benefit.

In December the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz* and four other warships sailed into Chinese national waters and through the Taiwan Strait. Two groups of US battleships, both led by aircraft carriers, are now off Taiwan's coast. More US battleships arrived days before the 23 March elections in Taiwan. The results of the US Navy mobilisation cannot be foreseen. Beijing has warned Washington to stay out of the dispute and during two weeks last month carried out forewarning military exercises up to 12 miles from Taiwan.

The capitalists from Washington and Taiwan are bitterly opposed to the right of the Chinese people to reunification. China's social revolution was a massive victory for working people around the world and a sharp blow against capitalism's imperialist exploitation of the third world.

Obstructing the reunification of China only aids the allies of the Washington government.

Obstructing the reunification of China only aids the allies of the Washington government.

The fight for socialist democracy and human rights on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will not be aided by the break-away of the province or the strengthening

of US power in the Far East.

The US military build-up should be opposed world wide. It will build up US military bases in Japan and elsewhere in the region. It will strengthen the attempts of the Washington government to act as the global mercenary of the multinational capitalist corporations. It will be a blow against the rights of oppressed people around the world to national self-determination.

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Dealing with the damage

TERRY CONWAY and BRIAN GARDNER examine issues raised in the recent television series, "Our Friends in the North"

WHY WAS it that our first review of "Our Friends in the North" in *Socialist Outlook* seemed so caught up with the question of whether or not its writer, Peter Flannery, would advocate revolutionary change as a way of transforming society?

Not having seen such a large political drama on our screens for some time, we were desperate to detect an authorial standpoint - an overriding moral and political framework for the whole piece.

Many viewers seemed disappointed with the conclusion, seeing both the characters and the writer as having sold-out and descending into the illusion of sugary family values and individual reconciliation.

Such a one-dimensional reading misses many aspects of Flannery's epic drama. *Our Friends in the North* is the story of four individuals - Nicky, Mary, Geordie and Tosker - how they impact on and are changed themselves by the political and moral landscape of Britain in the last four decades of the twentieth century.

One of Flannery's central themes is the difficulty of changing the world and the personal cost to those who try to do so.

The Newcastle to which Nicky returns is experiencing rapid change. Slums are about



T. Dan Smith: The dream is perverted by his own self-aggrandisement.

to be torn down and replaced with 'streets in the sky'. Wilson's Labour party offer voters a "New Britain" and working class culture is being transformed by the new mass media of television and popular music.

A key strand is the disillusionment experienced by individuals when dreams and aspirations

are not fulfilled. Nicky's mates, Geordie and Tosker want to make it big in a group but harsh reality intervenes when Geordie flees Newcastle after a fight with his drunken and overbearing father.

T. Dan Smith or Austen Donohue, as he is in the series, has a dream of rebuilding the

north. This dream is perverted by his own self-aggrandisement and the financial greed of the builder John Edwards or, as he was in real life, the architect, John Poulson.

When Nicky works with Donohue, he sees the aspirations of the latter as compensating for a political vision which his own father, Felix, was unable to give him.

In the earlier episodes, Donohue genuinely believes that the homes he is building and the jobs he is creating will bring permanent prosperity and happiness.

But the tower blocks proved to have their own pitfalls - including cementing a more atomised society than that that had existed in the old back to backs.

Labours paternalism is contrasted starkly with the portrayal of Thatcher's vision. Tosker and his second wife, Elaine, buy into the Thatcher dream of the classless share-owning democracy only to lose almost their entire fortune on 'Black Wednesday' in 1987.

It is not always the working class who want to change the world - sometimes the ruling class need to change it too. In the unforgettable episode dealing with the miners strike of '84 to '85, Thatcher has to destroy the remaining centres of working class resistance.

The episode conveys, in a way that no other fictionalisation or documentary has ever managed, the destruction of an entire community through the economic violence of the state and the physical violence of the police.

Flannery doesn't preach a one-dimensional view in which

society is all and individuals bear no responsibility for their fate and that of others.

Nicky's father Felix, powerfully portrayed by Peter Vaughan, lost his dream when the great Jarrow march failed to bring jobs to the area deeply blighted then, as now, by structural unemployment. He cannot share his sons dreams because he grieves for his own. But while we see the tragedy that is his loss, especially when he suffers in the later episodes from Alzheimers, we are angry at his treatment of his son, to whom he has always been a bastard.

The behaviour of Christopher Collins, an out-of-control young man who terrorises Nicky's ageing mother and father, is partly explained by the treatment he receives at the hand of his own stepfather.

In the final episode we see how thirteen-year old Sean Collins has been damaged both by the conditions in which he lives and the fact that his own father is coldly uninterested in him. Mary's policeman son, Anthony is angry that she and her 'New Labour' party seem only interested in controlling Sean and those like him, not in relating to him.

It is true that Flannery's drama did not call those who watched it to build the barricades.

But it does provide a damning critique of those who, like Blair's New Labour, write off the Sean Collinses of this world as mad or bad, who are not prepared to fight for a vision that can address the damage so many individuals and communities have suffered though the ravages of Thatcherism.

The unions under Attlee

The Great Alliance: Economic Recovery and the Problems of Power by Jim Phillips, Pluto Press £12.99: reviewed by KEITH SINCLAIR

THIS BOOK deals with themes that are very much live issues to-day. It discusses the record of the 1945-51 Labour government and its attitude to the unions, focusing particularly on the docks. At a time when active trade unionists are discussing what a Blair government will do and when the courageous Liverpool dockers are fighting on, it is timely to read this book.

The core of the book is a detailed account of three important industrial disputes: the Dockers' Charter Strike of 1945, the 'Zinc Oxide' Strike of 1948 and the Canadian Seafarers dispute of 1949. The origins of each of

these disputes is explained and Phillips shows clearly that the claims of TGWU General Secretary Arthur Deakin that the disputes were 'red conspiracies' were a nonsense. Deakin had blamed the Fourth International's Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) for the 1945 strike and the Communist Party (CP) for the 1948 and 1949 disputes. Phillips explains the significance of the unofficial movement on the docks and traces the friction between the dockers and their union leaders back to the formation of the T&G in the early 1920s.

There are obvious parallels between the role of the TGWU leadership in the 1945 Dockers Charter dispute with their actions to-day. In 1945, Phillips explains. "In London, the strike committee mocked the official leadership's insistence that due attention to constitutional procedures would bear fruit, 'We have pleaded and begged for the Union to fight for better conditions. The Unions have pledged us that they are going forward, that the official machinery has been set in motion. It has been set in motion, round and round,

getting nowhere, nothing happening.'"

Today the sacked Liverpool dockers fight on with little effective support from the national union. They are gaining excellent support internationally, from rank and file trade unionists at home and from their local communities including the dynamic Women of the Waterfront.

However the current TGWU leadership fulfils the same function as in the 1940s. The role of Bill Morris reminds you of the Manchester dockers leader who had the nickname 'Houdini' because whenever dockers demanded action, he replied, "My hands are tied."

Phillips ends his book by writing, "Only through sharing the Attlee government's appraisal of the positive value of trade unionism and by seeking the active and voluntary co-operation of the trade union movement, can a future Labour government hope to survive and flourish." This may well be true but there is no sign that Blair thinks that way. Indeed, it is almost inevitable that a 'New Labour' government will come into conflict with the unions.

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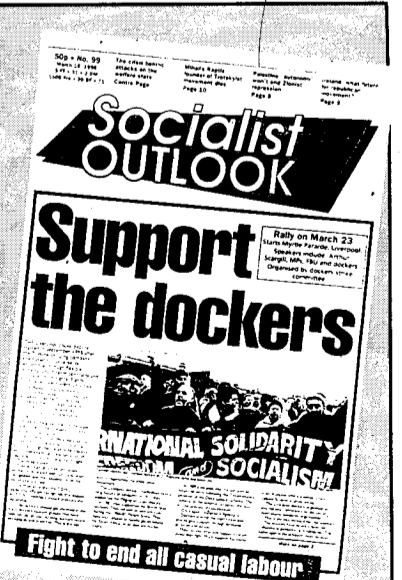
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CPRF opposed constitutional coup: defence of workers' state?

VERY critical support of CPRF

ANTHONY Brain's letter in *Socialist Outlook* 98 makes some good points but reveals a certain confusion as regards the CPRF.

Anthony said that the CPRF won 22 per cent of the popular vote because there is a "battle within the bureaucracy over whether capitalism is restored", continuing that we should back "the struggle of the masses against the restorationists".

He fails to explain that "the restorationists" include the CPRF. The CPRF does not oppose the restoration of capitalism, but only how it is achieved. Like ex-Stalinist parties elsewhere in eastern Europe, it favours more gradual re-introduction.

The CPRF will continue to receive the support of the working class in the absence of anything better. The CPRF is a reformist party which opposes renationalisation but supports the 'voluntary' restoration of the USSR.

Anthony does not refer to the war in Chechnya. The CPRF's position on the non-Russian nationalities is certainly not one which socialists could support.

Can the CPRF lead the working-class? Zyuganov prefers to flirt with the sinister, would-be dictator General Alexander Lebel.

Only independent working-class

mobilisation can stop capitalist restoration.

Critical support for the CPRF? VERY critical.

Jim Padmore, Alava, Spain

Pablo favoured party-building

JOHN Lister (*Socialist Outlook* 99) rightly condemns the dishonesty of polemics by the likes of Gerry Healy against so-called 'Pabloism'. You might think that this would lead him to reassess the anti-Pablo mythology.

For example, according to Lister, Pablo argues in the early 1950s that 'it made no sense for Trotskyists to be building small parties on their own programme and politics: they should be getting into the bigger, Stalinist parties'. This is a complete distortion of Pablo's position.

If Lister bothered to read the actual documents (in the Pathfinder Press series, *Education for Socialists*, rather than Cliff Slaughter's fraudulent compilation *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*) he would find that Pablo did advocate the building of Trotskyist parties in countries like Ceylon or Bolivia where there was no existing mass workers' party. Where such a mass party did exist, however, Pablo advo-

cated that the Trotskyists should engage in entry work inside it.

In countries where social democracy held the allegiance of the majority of the working class, he advocated entry into reformist parties. He proposed entry into Communist parties only where they were mass organisations, notably in France and Italy. In Britain, Pablo supported work in the Labour Party and never argued that Trotskyists should enter the CPGB.

Does John Lister believe that 'building small parties on their own programme and politics' is a matter of principle for Trotskyists in all circumstances? Or has he just failed to think the matter through?

This is not to deny that, in the difficult and unexpected situation that followed the Second World War, the entire leadership did become seriously politically disoriented. We have to recognize this and draw the necessary lessons. However that requires an objective analysis, not the thoughtless repetition of old Healyite clichés.

Bob Pitt, London NW1

Militant self-correction

PETER Lindgren (*Feedback*, SO 99) points out *Militant* incorrectly reported a Swedish demonstration. The article wrongly claimed the demonstration was organised by our sister organisation, Workers' League Offensiv [AFO]. A correction will appear in the 29 March *Militant*.

The report was a mistake, nothing more. Perhaps if Peter Lindgren really wished to point out our mistake he would have written to *Militant*. His letter to *Socialist Outlook* suggests he was motivated by a desire to score cheap points.

Nick Wrack, editor, *Militant*

Peter Lindgren replies:

DEAR Nick, Cheap or not cheap, I obviously scored a point. And frankly I did and do believe someone was lying. You don't explain how a 500 strong coalition meeting can become a 4,000 strong AFO demonstration. You miss one important thing: it would have been a political scandal if the liberal party leader spoke at an AFO demonstration. My letter pointed out this was not the case. Thus maybe, in my own way, I saved AFO's political honour?

125 years after the Paris Commune

«Vive La Commune!»

Geoff Ryan

ONE hundred and twenty-five years ago, the workers of Paris created the first workers' government.

In the midst of the social crisis which followed Prussia's invasion of France in 1879, the Paris Commune was unlike any capitalist parliament.

Its members, like the judges and magistrates, were fully accountable to the electors, who could dismiss them at any time. The workings of the Commune were open to public examination. Officials, almost all ordinary workers, were paid the average workers' wage.

The Commune controlled the police, destroyed the Guillotine and was restrained in the use of force. The conscript standing army was replaced with an armed National Guard in which every citizen was enrolled.

The Commune planned the re-opening of closed factories under workers' control. State support for churches was withdrawn. Education was made free and available to all.

Political refugees were welcomed: a German was minister of labour, while the Italian, Garibaldi, commanded the National Guard.

France's terrified ruling class persuaded the Prussian army outside Paris to allow them to exterminate the Commune using captured French troops. Paris was subject to ferocious bombardment and massive destruction. After the defeat of the Commune, 30,000 'Commun-

nards' were butchered by the army of the 'democratic' republic.

The forceful demands of the Commune stand in sharp contrast to the policies of the Labour Party leaders. Election and recall of all official if working people are to control their organisations. MPs and trade union leaders should be paid no more than the average workers' wage.

Recently the Church of England debated equal pay for clerics — the chances of Tony Blair even opening a discussion on reducing his pay are considerably more remote.

Nor are we likely to see proposals from Labour for secular education or the disestablishment of the Church of England. Given Labour's ambivalence on the Asylum and Immigration Bill, it is unlikely a Labour government would welcome political activity from foreign exiles.

We also have to learn the lessons of the Commune's defeat.

The Communards did not understand the nature of the state. They failed to destroy the existing bourgeois state. They did not pursue the French government to its headquarters at Versailles and destroyed its weak military forces.

This failure allowed the government time to reorganise and, in alliance with their Prussian 'enemy', slaughter masses of Parisian workers.

This is not lost on Labour, which is wooing the capitalist class: the butchers of the Commune. It's no surprise. Louis Blanc, the Tony Blair of his day deplored the violence and brutality of... the Communards!

The Communards did not understand the nature of the state. They failed to destroy the existing bourgeois state.

What's Happening

April

Saturday 13 Stop Workfare demonstration, Hull, phone 01482 215 059

Thursday 18 Lobby of parliament against JSA, called by Unemployed Workers Centres

Thursday 18 Stop the Asylum Bill public meeting Willesden Library 7.30pm with Lola Onibiyo, and MPs Paul Boateng and Ken Livingstone.

Saturday 20 CAIAB demo. Assemble 11 am, Embankment, London SW1 Details 0171 247 9907

May

Friday 10 to Sunday 12 National Conference of Trades Councils, Kettering.

Saturday 11 Conference against the Asylum

and Immigration Bill, 11 am-4pm, Natfhe Conference Centre, Britannia Street, London, near King's Cross. Organised by Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON. Details: Fred Leplat, Islington UNISON A, 1 a Canonbury Street, London N1 2TA.

Saturday 25 National Dockers Conference, 11 am, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool.

June

Fri 21 to Sun 23 Counter-summit to the G7 meeting, Lyon France. Details: Cedetim, 21 ter, rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris. Telephone (00 33 1) 4371 0911, fax 4372 1577.

July

Fri 19 to Sat 27 International Youth Summer camp, Portugal.

Support Haraya!

Help Sri Lankan socialists!

The Nava Sama Samaja Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, is the only party which campaigns in Sri Lanka:

- AGAINST the World Bank and the IMF;
- AMONGST the Sinhala minority to stop the war against the Tamil people;
- AGAINST the austerity measures of the Chandrika government.

Haraya, the NSSP's Sinhala-language fortnightly newspaper needs your support. After the world-wide increase in newsprint prices it is facing financial problems. Haraya needs donations from socialists in Britain and other 'first world' economies.

Please make your donation payable to NSSP UK, and post to 'Outlook International', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Socialist OUTLOOK

Dayton agreement stokes up ethnic cleansing and national divisions

STOP NATO'S CARVE-UP OF BOSNIA

THE DAYTON agreement hangs by a thread. It has enforced the end of the shooting war, for the present time, by the use of 60,000 NATO occupation troops.

However it strengthens the nationalist forces on all sides, facilitates the continuation of ethnic cleansing in a different form, and fails to produce a settlement leading to a unitary Bosnia.

The manner of the reunification of Sarajevo, the principal transfer of territory called for under the agreement — involving the return of the Sarajevo suburbs to Bosnian federation control — has had disastrous political consequences.

Ninety-five percent of Serbs moved out, in a few cases opening up graves in order to take ancestors with them. This flight is a result of the war itself, and of the ethnic cleansing achieved by the Serb leaders through threats, fire bombings and thugs in the night.

Before the war Sarajevo was a

cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic city. It was the war-time beacon of the struggle to defend multi-ethnic Bosnia. Most Sarajevans identified more with each other than with their ethnic origins. They were proud of that, and recognised that they defended a principle for the future in the midst of war.

Recent events have seriously weakened — but not destroyed — this sentiment. The remaining Serbs feel undermined. This effects the whole struggle for the defence of multi-ethnic Bosnia. Serb nationalists across Bosnia cynically use it to stop the return of non-Serb refugees.

The ethnic separation of Sarajevo strengthens Croatian and Serbian nationalism as do the attempts to Islamicise Bosnia, further weakening the fragile Federation.

The dynamic of the Dayton Accords is to consolidate three ethnic blocks within Bosnia. Only a political solution, linked to the return of the refugees from all communities, can prevent that.

After the Dayton accords this political disaster became predictable. It signals that nothing is really settled. All the conditions remain for a resumption of the war after the withdrawal of NATO forces planned for later this year.

Under these conditions the election of an all-Bosnia government, required by the Accords before the end of 1996, is impossible. Everything points towards the development of separate states. Already the borders in Bosnia, patrolled by NATO troops, are the most impregnable in Europe. All institutions in the two halves of the country are developing separately.

It was always preposterous to think that Dayton could have led to a unitary Bosnia. It consolidated a partition of the Republic Srpska from the Bosnian Croat Federation, and created the conditions for the Republic Srpska to become a separate state.

Clinton got what he needed — a ceasefire before the US Presidential elections — but neither an end to the war, nor a withdrawal of the US troops after 12

months, are assured.

The Dayton Accords were not a political settlement but an external partition close to the lines advocated by the Serb leaders. The Bosnia government was given little choice over the carve up of Bosnia.

Despite the weakening Federation (perhaps because of it) Bosnia now faces an additional partition: first by Dayton and Serbia, and now by Croatia. Tudjman was the greatest beneficiary of the Dayton Accords and the situation is ominous. There are still restrictions on the return of Bosnian refugees to Croatian-controlled parts of the federation. There is little reintegration in key towns like Mostar.

The Dayton Accords trapped Bosnia between its enemies and its fake friends. It must escape this reactionary carve-up and return to the position where it can defend both its national rights and the remaining elements of a multi-ethnic society which are crucial to its political future.