

# Socialist OUTLOOK

TGWU threatens to pull the plugs on year-long dock dispute

# Dock Solid

Pete Firmin

AS LIVERPOOL dockers commemorate one year on strike, there are moves in their union, the TGWU, to drop any support.

After refusing to cross picket lines in support of those sacked for objecting to being told to work overtime without notice, all the dockworkers were sacked.

Since then, they have put up a magnificent struggle, resisting several attempts by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company to buy them out and building impressive international solidarity. Dockers around the world recognise the need to fight against casualisation, which threatens them all. Liverpool-based ships have been blacked and delayed and MHDC's profits have been hit.

The dockers have received less support in Britain. The TGWU, despite the "left" majority on its executive, would not give official support because the

dockers' action is "illegal", ie outside the Tories' anti-union laws. Ironically, much of the publicity drive by dockers abroad would have been illegal here.

Instead the TGWU has given token support, with Bill Morris occasionally speaking at rallies, and supposedly collecting money for the dockers - very little of which has been seen.

Morris's main activity has been trying to sell the dockers out. He has brokered deals with the MDHC behind the dockers' backs and then tried to get them to accept.

The dockers have stood firm and rejected deals through which they would lose their jobs.

Now, there are threats that the National Executive meeting on September 16-20 will give the dockers an ultimatum: accept a deal they have already rejected, or lose all TGWU backing.

Some on the executive have pledged to oppose this, if necessary reshaping the left in terms of who is

and who is not prepared to support the dockers.

Loss of TGWU support would mean exclusion from the TGWU's Liverpool office, and possibly the TGWU informing other unions and dockers unions internationally that they have withdrawn support, making it harder to win solidarity action.

This scandalous threat by the TGWU leadership is made easier because the dockers have never really challenged the TGWU's lack of support. The dockers' leaders have argued that they are stronger without official backing.

This does not prevent Morris trying to sell them out. Last week, he threatened the TGWU delegation at the TUC with disciplinary action if any of them moved suspension of standing orders to allow the dockers to address congress. This would have been more difficult for him if the dispute were official.

When they have had access, dockers have won support. Union conferences they were allowed to address have given magnificent amounts and many workplaces have made regular donations.

Whether or not the TGWU cuts support, solidarity with the dockers must be extended. The demonstration on September 28 should be a massive celebration of one year's struggle, and socialists and trade unionists around the country must step up support. If the TGWU drops support, there must be a deafening roar of protest from union branches, particularly TGWU ones, demanding not only that support is maintained, but that it is made official.

## Beating Blair's betrayal on post



Postal workers are ready to escalate action

**TUC CONGRESS** produced one of the strangest sights for years. Blairite union leader Alan Johnson of the Communication Workers Union was forced to criticise Blair's call for a ballot in the postal dispute and defend the decision of his executive to escalate the dispute.

Blair's intervention into the dispute calling for a ballot on the ACAS agreement was a stab in the back for postal workers.

In the middle of a bitter three month long dispute, it showed clearly what Labour's calls for binding arbitration will mean in practice.

It is to the credit of the CWU executive that it has resisted massive pressure from Royal Mail, the government and from Tony Blair. A ballot at this stage of the dispute would have

the effect of demobilising the membership and place them under enormous pressure to vote for a settlement.

The issue of the ballot has created a discussion on what tactics can win the dispute. A number of divisional representatives supported the ballot call, claiming that it will show Royal Mail that a majority of postal workers are still behind the union executive.

While this is a well-intentioned error unlike Blair's betrayal, it is a seriously mistaken notion. If the dispute could be settled by votes of the unions membership, industrial action would never have been necessary.

The mandate for the dispute was an overwhelming endorsement of the unions position with

70% voting for industrial action on a high turnout. It was completely ignored by Royal Mail, hell bent on their job-slashing agenda.

A new ballot at this stage would not necessarily produce a big majority and this would increase the pressure on the CWU to compromise with management. Alan Johnson was quite correct at TUC to describe a new ballot at this stage as 'an expensive waste of time'. It is a shame that it has been left to the CWU executive to assert this position at crucial committee meetings four times during the dispute - against Johnson's advice.

The best way to ensure a victory in the dispute is to begin escalating the action.

The decision to call a strike for the weekend September 20 is a good start. Once again Royal Mail will be forced to accept the reality that CWU members support industrial action.

Trade unionists and Labour Party members should be unequivocal in their support for this dispute.

A victory in this case will be a lightning rod for other public sector workers to resist attacks on their jobs and conditions.

Some rail workers have already been successful in forcing their local companies to concede: in other areas industrial action is proceeding at the same time as postal strikes.

Trade unionists taking strike action are showing in practice their contempt for Labour's plans for anti-union legislation. Build solidarity with these struggles to give the lie to this dangerous nonsense!

**A victory in this case will be a lightning rod for other public sector workers to resist attacks on their jobs and conditions.**

**SUPPORT THE LIVERPOOL DOCKERS**

**Anniversary march**  
Saturday 28 September

Assemble 1.00 pm Myrtle Parade, March to Pier Head  
Mass picket Monday 30 September 10.00 am Seaforth Dock

**NO TO CASUALISATION**

## Defend a woman's right to choose

**THE NATIONAL** Abortion Campaign (NAC) held a strategy meeting on September 5 to discuss the needed response to attacks on women's abortion rights.

The recent series of hyped-up media stories about women, abortion, fertility etc is clearly part of an ideological offensive against a woman's right to choose. Look how quick anti-abortion organisations like LIFE were to grab the limelight.

The media's role should be noted. While the tabloids revelled in the stories, liberal broadsheets published articles suggesting a woman's right to choose has gone too far.

All this has created a climate in which anti-abortionists can confidently mount a legal attack on women's rights. It seems that up to ten known anti-abortionists are putting their names forward into the private members ballot. A new bill this session seems a strong possibility.

The NAC meeting, organised at short notice and publicised largely by word of mouth, was well-attended and lively, full of women angered and alarmed by recent events and the likelihood of legislation, and looking to discuss an organised response.

The meeting agreed that campaigns need to be set up or revived in student unions, and that the issue should be raised within the Labour Party and trade unions.

NAC needs support to continue fighting to defend and improve women's abortion rights.

Elkie Dee

# A delegate's week at the TUC

**Greg Tucker of the RMT witnesses the clash of the modernisers**



"NEW UNIONISM" – running parallel with but distinct from New Labour: that was meant to be the glittering vision for the week. Unfortunately, however much the TUC leaders tried not to rock the boat, the Labour leaders were determined to capsize it.

They had another script, a different political agenda.

Blunkett, Blair and Byers between them set out to deliberately rubbish the TUC.

Implicit in the Labour leadership's



FBU General Secretary Ken Cameron

actions was the belief that alliance with the unions has become an electoral embarrassment, impeding their courtship of donations from middle and large businesses, and the assessment that the trade union bureaucracy would in any case be

unable to control the rank and file after the general election.

The leadership's plan was simple. With controversy kept to a minimum the time was to be filled with interminable votes of thanks and vacuous addresses.

Key themes of class collaboration were to be highlighted – the importance of "stakeholding" and the need for European monetary integration to build a strong British economy.

Only a few problems remained – on the minimum wage, over renationalisation and repeal of the anti-union laws – but even here everything went to plan.

Unable to outvote the demand from UNISON for a minimum wage of £4.26 an hour, TUC chief John Monks sought to cloud the issue.

Agreeing another composite and a General Council statement, both of which sought to confuse rather than clarify, the Congress ended up facing three ways. Whilst the £4.26 figure was agreed, it will be presented as only one option to be put forward in discussion to Labour's Low Pay Commission.

A tactical retreat ensured the defeat of NUM and CWU positions of repealing all anti-trade union legislation and ensuring full rights to decide on strike action free of legal interference, in return for the adoption of demands that Labour outlaw sacking of strikers and legislate full employment rights from day one.

And while Congress supported renationalisation of the railways as a demand to be implemented early in the life of a Labour government, the demand for renationalisation of all privatised companies was easily kicked into touch.

The conference seemed to be easy going for the bureaucracy. Delegates were complaining that the week was the quietest for years.

But then things suddenly got out of control. On the Wednesday, three different attacks on the trade unions were

launched by Labour in different parts of Blackpool.

Blair's spin doctors have a simple technique: advance a wild proposal off the record, deny it vigorously the next day, then implement it the next week.

David Blunkett was due to speak at a fringe meeting and had asked for little publicity. Then, catching the meeting organisers by surprise in the few days before, his office hyped up the meeting as the vehicle for an important announcement on curtailing the right to strike.

Though Blunkett back-tracked slightly at the meeting itself, it cannot be long before his proposals for some form of binding arbitration (ie. banning strikes) resurface.

While Blunkett was speaking, Blair launched his attack. His call for fresh ballots if employers make improved offers was both a specific attack on the CWU's handling of the postal dispute and a threat to all future strikes.

And within hours Stephen Byers fired his fish-restaurant salvo. It was no idle or misplaced remark.

It is clear that his threat to break the link between the Labour Party and the unions is at the heart of the New Labour



UNISON's Rodney Bickerstaffe

strategy. Put together the attacks have only one meaning.

Determined to prove itself as a party prepared to stand up to the unions, New Labour is increasingly floating itself as a cross-class party. But they are also frightened that ordinary workers want to see real change under a Labour government: Blair's team sees the failure of

the CWU and RMT leaders to head off fights this summer as a portent for the future. They made a pre-emptive strike of their own.

Trade union leaders were furious, and their anger spilled out into the debate over the last two days of the con-



John Edmonds

ference. Going beyond the usual suspects, even GMB chief John Edmonds and Monks were provoked into questioning Blair's actions. Edmonds even suggested that shadow ministers should carry a 'black box' recorder during briefing sessions.

But do not be fooled: they share Blair's aims. Their anger was only at being slighted, and the questioning of their ability to hold the rank and file in check. They will try to contain the damage.

The left must seize hold of the space that has been opened up between the Labour and trade union bureaucracies to our advantage. Union leaders like the CWU's Alan Johnson and GMB's Edmonds have been crucial to Blair's 'modernising' offensive. Now he is kicking them in the teeth.

This new tension notched up modest policy gains at the TUC. A campaign to defend the link must be put together in the next few weeks and forced onto the floor of Labour's conference. These contests are setting the stage for the real battles to come if Blair wins the next election.

## Join fight for free education

Kathryn Marshall

AS A NEW YEAR begins in universities and colleges across the country, students face new attacks.

Since 1979 students living standards have consistently been under assault. Higher education grants have been to a ludicrously low level and students forced to take out loans.

The Tories have axed discretionary grants and taken students out of the benefit system.

They now intend to introduce a loan system for the total maintenance bill for undergraduates. This scheme, known as MICTL (Maintenance Income Contingent Loans) is supported by Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs. Several universities are also announcing plans to introduce tuition fees next year.

When the Tories want to reduce public expenditure, student grants for maintenance and tuition fees are regarded as particularly easy picking.

Many young people are now deciding they cannot afford to stay in further or higher education. Education is becoming a privilege to be sold on the market, a division between rich and poor.



Students in need a decent living grant, no lower than 70 per week. Any other options impoverish students, and exclude people from less wealthy backgrounds. The principle of free education must be adhered to!

Over the last year, the Campaign for Free Education took a significant and noisy stand against these proposals and against the leadership of the National Union of Students, who want to support the proposals of the Labour Party leadership rather than defend students' needs.

Free Education groups, events and protests are being organised. Students must make links with trade unions campaigning against cuts in services, jobs and working conditions in universities and colleges.

## Step forward for trade union lefts

Nigel De Lancy

WHILE THE TUC WAS busy passing mutually contradictory resolutions on the minimum wage, an event of potentially long term importance took place on the fringe.

This was the first public event organised by supporters of trade union left organisations since their representatives first met together in February this year on the initiative of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

These lefts vary greatly in their politics, practice, and degree of influence within their respective unions. Together they organise in unions representing a large percentage of TUC affiliated unions.

The meeting was attended by 45 delegates and visitors from various British unions and Nigerian and Irish trades unionists. It was hosted by Alan Runswick, national secretary of the PTC Broad Left.

He stressed the importance of bringing lefts from different unions together to discuss common problems and initiatives. Jimmy Nolan of the Liverpool dockers also addressed the meeting.

Bernard Roome Secretary of the Communication Workers Broad Left introduced the discussion.

He outlined the different types of lefts in the unions and the principles upon which lefts should be built. He explained the necessity to build lefts which were



The lefts must be open and democratic, not be slate machines, but campaigning organisations

not based on personality but on programme.

The lefts must be open and democratic, not the old invite-only lefts (such as currently exists in the TGWU). They must not be slate machines, but campaigning organisations which take the issues to the membership.

He envisaged a federation of lefts being built on these principles not only in unions where they currently exist, but also in unions where they currently do not yet exist.

Two TGWU General Executive Committee members present revealed

the moves by the T&G leadership to withdraw support from the dockers and the necessity to resist this. Both agreed that ditching the dockers would mean that a new open and democratic left would have to be built.

It is clear that support for the proposed federation is taking off amongst left trades unionists, impatient of the constant rightward gallop of our leaderships and that the February 1997 conference promises to be the most important left trade union event since the miners' strike.

# Drawing the battle lines

A WEEK OF CONFLICT between the Labour Party leadership and the unions finished with headlines in many papers that the link with the unions would be ended.

Despite the denials of junior Employment spokesperson Stephen Byers, what he is purported to have said is not so new: the arch modernisers around Blair have had this in their sights for some time.

Blair woos business with promises that Labour will protect their profits, that the minimum wage will not be higher than £3.50 an hour, while making pronouncements about further steps to outlaw public sector strikes. He continues Labour's tradition of promoting itself as an alternative capitalist government.

At the same time, Blair depends on working people voting Labour despite his policies because they desperately want to oust the Tories.

However, recent opinion polls show that despite 76 percent of the population recognising that a class struggle exists in Britain, only 17 percent of trade unionists identified strongly with the Labour Party.

No doubt most trade unionists will vote Labour at the election, but Blair is storing up trouble for himself.

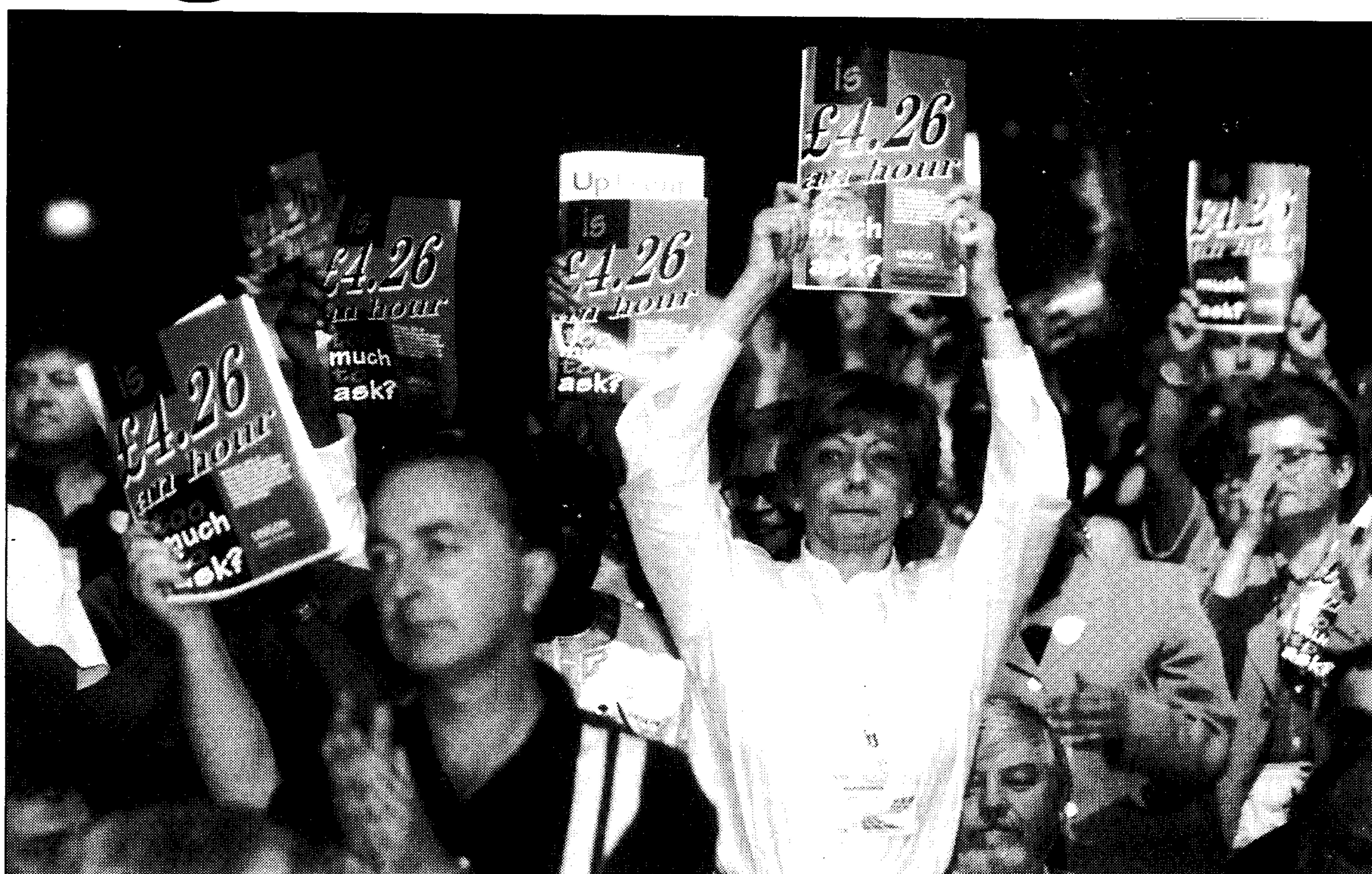
Trade unionists prepared to vote Labour but not particularly committed to its policies are more likely to take action when it fails to deliver. Blair hopes to undercut this by leaving the Tory anti-union laws in place and possibly adding some more of his own.

Thus far, there would be little to distinguish Labour from the Tories. But the involvement of trade union delegates at every level of the party allows them to influence policy and potentially fight the leadership.

Blair knows this and it is why he and his predecessors have attempted to reduce the weight of the unions within the Party. It is also why he *might* move to break the link after the election.

But that would be a double-edged sword. While it might ultimately relieve Blair of the necessity to fight the unions internally, it could also provoke a civil war in the Party which would damage him.

Severing the link might also make it harder for union leaders to hold back their members. For years they have argued that we cannot 'rock the boat'



£4.26 per hour: delegates at the TUC have a cunning plan.

Photo: Andrew Ward

## EDITORIAL

because it might lose Labour the election.

Thus they have allowed successive Labour leaders to continually reduce union (and Left) influence on Party policy, so that now they are completely out in the cold.

The biggest risk to Blair's plans is of course that this election is not yet won. If Labour does lose, it could unleash a major backlash from those who have swallowed the bitter pill of Blair's policies in exchange for a promised victory.

Party conference is planned as a pre-election rally for displaying the awe-

some oratorical powers of the leadership. What could upset this is the extent to which Blair has alienated trade unionists and some party members. Union leaders may be less willing to do his dirty work in defeating critical motions.

Blair dismisses dissent as of no consequence because he claims it is about form and not content. Of course there has been plenty of criticism of policy, whether on the about-spins on Scottish and Welsh devolution, Trade Union law, pensions or the minimum wage.

The conference agenda is full of motions unacceptable to the leadership. Blair ignores this – and the media is much keener to focus on those who have

swallowed all the policy changes but occasionally demur at the way decisions are made.

But form and content are not separable. Blair (and Kinnock before him)

### For the left the fight for policies in the interest of the working class is inseparable from the fight for Party and union democracy

would have found it harder to change policy as much or as rapidly if they had not been prepared to ride roughshod over democracy.

Those front-benchers like Clare Short (and even Prescott) who occasionally summon up the courage to make

remarks about 'dark forces' have played their part in creating the machinery they criticise. Short's witch-hunting of Liz Davies (the ousted PPC for Leeds NE) at last year's conference is a prime example.

For the left the fight for policies in the interest of the working class is inseparable from the fight for Party (and union) democracy. The gains made at the TUC must be built on.

The fight to defend the link must be stepped up. Many trade unionists are seething that the party that they created is now under a leadership that would disown them. Blair must be made to pay a price for his assaults on working people and their organisations.



Kim Howells. Wot no socialism?

**T**HERE ARE a swathe of resolutions to Labour Party Conference calling for full employment and for defence of the welfare state. But unless those who want to campaign on these questions take on board the real significance of Maastricht Treaty and European Monetary Union (EMU) these goals cannot be achieved.

There are only seven resolutions on the question. The profound impact these issues will have on British politics and on

the working class is still not fully recognised.

The resolution from Stroud CLP calls on conference to oppose an "anti-Europeanism that expresses itself as a fear of a society based on mutual obligations and justice for all" but then uncritically assumes that the present EU provides the possibility for such a development.

Brighton Pavilion CLP rejects "the xenophobic and hysterical reactions of large sections of the Conservative Party and the Tory

## Blair flies club Europe with bosses

press to recent developments in Europe." It then calls on a Labour government to forge ahead on Europe.

The future spending policy of a Labour government in the ERM will not be determined by the government, and certainly not by the peoples of Britain or Europe. An unelected European Bank will be in control, whose monetarist policy is defined in the treaty and whose decisions cannot be influenced or pressured by any government.

For European capital to effectively operate in the increasingly competitive global markets with the North American Free Trade Area and the rising Pacific rim economies dominated by Japan, it must become a lot more efficient. This means a massive assault on conditions at work and the dismantling of the post-war welfare state. Nothing less will do – Japan and the USA spend a fraction on welfare in comparison to European states, there is a larger pool of cheap labour and their leading companies are bigger.

Blair's dramatic swing to the right is intimately linked to his European strategy.

He knows, but is not telling, that the convergence criteria demanded by the Maastricht Treaty to achieve EMU will require massive reductions in public spending of between £12 and 18 billion. He knows that were it not for John Major's opt-out clauses, which have to go if monetary union is to be achieved, Britain's public borrowing would be capped at three per cent of GDP.

This would devastate health, education and welfare provision. To confront the question of how to defend the welfare state and how to achieve full employment therefore means confronting Maastricht.

The left needs to develop an alternative socialist strategy. Socialists should reject a club that reflects the desire of big business to rationalise its manufacturing base and slash public spending down to pre-war levels.

We should respond at several levels.

It must continue to fight Maastricht inspired attacks on state spending. We can take inspiration from the recent strikes and mobilisations in France, Italy and Germany, which are at root anti-

Maastricht strikes. We also have to argue for increased state spending and in favour of economic expansion and a reduction in the working week to 35 hours to combat 20 million unemployed in Europe.

We need a radical programme for the integration of European economies in the interests of the mass of the population—workers, women, youth and immigrant workers. A new leap forward in the productive forces means a deepening integration of the national economies. But this must be on a socialist basis.

It is possible to explain and popularise the idea of an alternative Europe. Tony Benn began this discussion in his Europe Bill. Europe has enormous resources and possibilities, but it means taking a very different road.

A Europe which guarantees social and democratic rights; the right to work, the right to social welfare benefits, equality for immigrants and women, defence of the ecology, economic growth, breaking from imperialist exploitation of the third world. Such a Europe is not a the Europe of Maastricht.

# No to US intervention Lift the US embargo

THE LATEST US shelling and threats against Iraq have been presented as a response to Saddam Hussein's attack - in alliance with the guerrillas of the Kurdish Democratic Party - on the Kurdish city of Irbil.

However, they have nothing to do with protection of the Kurds and everything to do with protection of US interests in the region, and with Clinton's re-election.

They are also a response to Saddam's manoeuvres, which have humiliated the USA and Bill Clinton, and partially re-established his credentials within the Arab world.

The fact that the US attacks have been in the south of Iraq, and that the southern 'no-fly zone' has been extended, show that the main US concern is to reassure its allies in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and to deter any possible Iraqi threat to these regimes and their oil fields. The attack on Irbil is a convenient pretext.

In fact, Saddam's intervention in Irbil - which even the US recognises as Iraqi territory - does not seem to have been in breach of any of the UN resolutions cited in support of the US action. This may be one reason why Clinton is finding it harder than former US President George Bush to build an alliance against Saddam.

In 1989-90, Bush was able to mobilise an unprecedented coalition in support of his war against Iraq. Not only NATO and the EU, but Russia, Japan

and even the Arab League took part in 'Operation Desert Storm', as a result of which hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed.

This time round, except for the expected slavish support from the British government, most of the allies of seven years ago have expressed reservations about the latest attacks.

In particular, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have refused to allow bases to be used for the attacks.

There are several reasons for this difference. In the first place, Kurdistan

on huge oil fields. The seizure of Kuwait by Iraq, and the threat to Saudi Arabia, led to the fear that Iraq might control a huge part of the world oil market, raising prices and destabilising economies around the world. This was against the interests of both Arab and western states.

But an independent and democratic Kurdistan might use the profits from the vast Kirkuk and Mosul oil fields for the benefit of the Kurdish people, not the western oil companies, and is therefore to be resisted.

An independent Kurdistan would also control the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Several states already dispute the use of this water, and would strenuously oppose the emergence of a potentially powerful state at the headwaters.

The true worth of US promises made in 1989 can now be seen, as well. In order to recruit the Arab regimes, Bush promised pressure on Israel to disgorge the 1967-occupied territories and to establish Palestinian self-rule. This has resulted in the obscene travesty of Palestinian 'autonomy', with Israel continuing to build settlements while PLO leader Yasser Arafat has been turned into little more than Israel's chief of police in the West Bank and Gaza. Since Clinton is far more pro-Israel than his Republican predecessor, there is little chance of him offering the Arab regimes

**Jordan, Yemen and Algeria, together with the PLO, have been forced to pay a heavy price for their refusal to endorse US war aims in the gulf**

is not Kuwait. While the imperialist states and the corrupt and repressive Arab regimes will act in support of a feudal monarchy, they will not act in support of a dispossessed people struggling to establish an independent state.

Although many states in the region have border claims against their neighbours, none of them is prepared to support the national rights of the Kurds. They will defend Kuwaiti 'sovereignty', while recognising Saddam's right to do as he wishes in Irbil.

Then there is the question of resources. Both Kuwait and Kurdistan sit



The US bombing has everything to do with Clinton's re-election.

even a face-saving formula on this issue to justify their participation in his schemes.

Yet another factor is the obvious disparity between US reluctance to act in support of Bosnia, and their immediate action against Saddam Hussein.

It is hard, even for the closest US allies in the region, to believe any hypocritical cant in support of human rights and against threats of genocide when the mass graves in Srebrenica are being excavated and the US is bank-rolling the election campaign of arch ethnic-cleanser Arkan.

Ultimately, however, little of this matters. The lesson of the 'New World

Order' is that the US can and will act as it pleases. If local allies can be found to support such action, this can be a useful fig-leaf. If not, then the US will act alone, with Britain loyally wagging its tail and trotting along behind.

Although Turkey, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia have opposed the US action, it is inconceivable that they will act in support of Iraq and against the US. A strategy for the defeat and removal of US imperialism from the Middle East must be based on opposition to all of these rotten regimes. It is only their continued existence which enables the US to pose as a defender of human rights and democracy.

## The Unknown Soldier

Abdullah Pashew is a Kurd from Irbil, living in exile in Sweden. His poem is translated from Kurdish by Sorani Kamal Mirawdeli, and appears in the Anthology of Contemporary Kurdish Poetry.

When a foreign delegation goes to a country  
They take a wreath of flowers to the tomb  
Of the unknown soldier.  
If tomorrow  
A delegate comes to Kurdistan  
And asks me:  
Where is the tomb  
Of the unknown soldier?  
I say, Sir  
On the strand of every river  
On the bench of every mosque  
Before the door of every church  
Every cave  
On every rock in the mountains  
On any tree in the gardens  
In this country  
On every span of land  
Under every metre of the sky  
Do not worry; bend a little lower  
And lay down your garland.

• The *Anthology of Contemporary Kurdish Poetry* is published by Kurdistan Solidarity Committee, 44 Ainger Road, London NW3 3AT.

## Defending Kurdistan is a cynical pretext for the US attacks on Iraq



Making his day: Clinton is finding it harder than Bush to build an alliance against Saddam despite using the same brutal methods



Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz: the US intervention does not aim to aid the peoples of Iraq and Kurdistan against Saddam.

**O**n the eve of Iraq's recommencing oil sales through Turkey, Clinton has used Iraq's military support to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) to prevent the normalisation of Iraq's economic relations.

Iraq has massive oil reserves. Its long term ability to supply oil is on a par with Saudi Arabia.

The US fears that western capitalism may be forced to pay Iraq a fair price for oil in the future. In the past decade US client regimes in the Arab East have been able to top US needs.

The US aims to ensure that developing countries with useful resources—like Somalia and Iraq—have weak leaderships which allow the peoples and natural resources of the Third World to be exploited in its interests.

The brutal military tactics of the US have alarmed every capitalist government except that of Britain.

These other capitalists fear intervention will destabilise the capitalist regimes in the region simply in order to boost the eco-

conomic interests and global authority of the US.

Many of these regimes had already shown their desire to lift the cruel embargos which harm only the civil population of Iraq.



Emir of Kuwait Rex: the US aims to ensure that developing countries with useful resources have weak leaderships so the peoples and natural resources of the Third World can be exploited in its interests.

This opposition to the isolation of Iraq is not rooted in solidarity for the humanitarian needs of Iraq's peoples. They hope simply to profit from the oil trade with Iraq and that country's pressing need for medical supplies and

foodstuffs. That is why Turkey's foreign minister, the pro-EU former Premier, Tansu Cillar, opposes the US attack.

Turkey is demanding that the UN allows the opening of the new oil pipeline from Iraq to Turkey.

The US intervention—like its capitalist western opposition—does not aim to aid the peoples of Iraq and Kurdistan. The capitalist politicians worldwide aim only to profit from the suffering of the peoples.

The west's disagreement with the US is only about how best to exploit Iraq—by unfair trade or by the military intimidation which characterised gunboat diplomacy in the 19th century.

Against this double enemy, Iraq and Kurdish workers and peasants need their own foreign policy.

Western anti-imperialists need to support their struggles—against US aggression, against the blockade, and for a free and independent Kurdistan.

# Self determination for the Kurds

Thirty million Kurds constitute the world's largest nation without a state. Kurdistan, at present divided between five states, is approximately the size of France.

If independent, it would potentially be the most powerful state of the Middle East/Caucasus region. But the Kurdish people have never been allowed to establish self-rule.

The strategically important land of Kurdistan, which controls major land routes from Russia and Europe to the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, has always been partitioned by rival neighbours.

KURDISTAN HAS been occupied by Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. Rival European states have competed for control over the area, replacing old borders by new, equally artificial divisions.

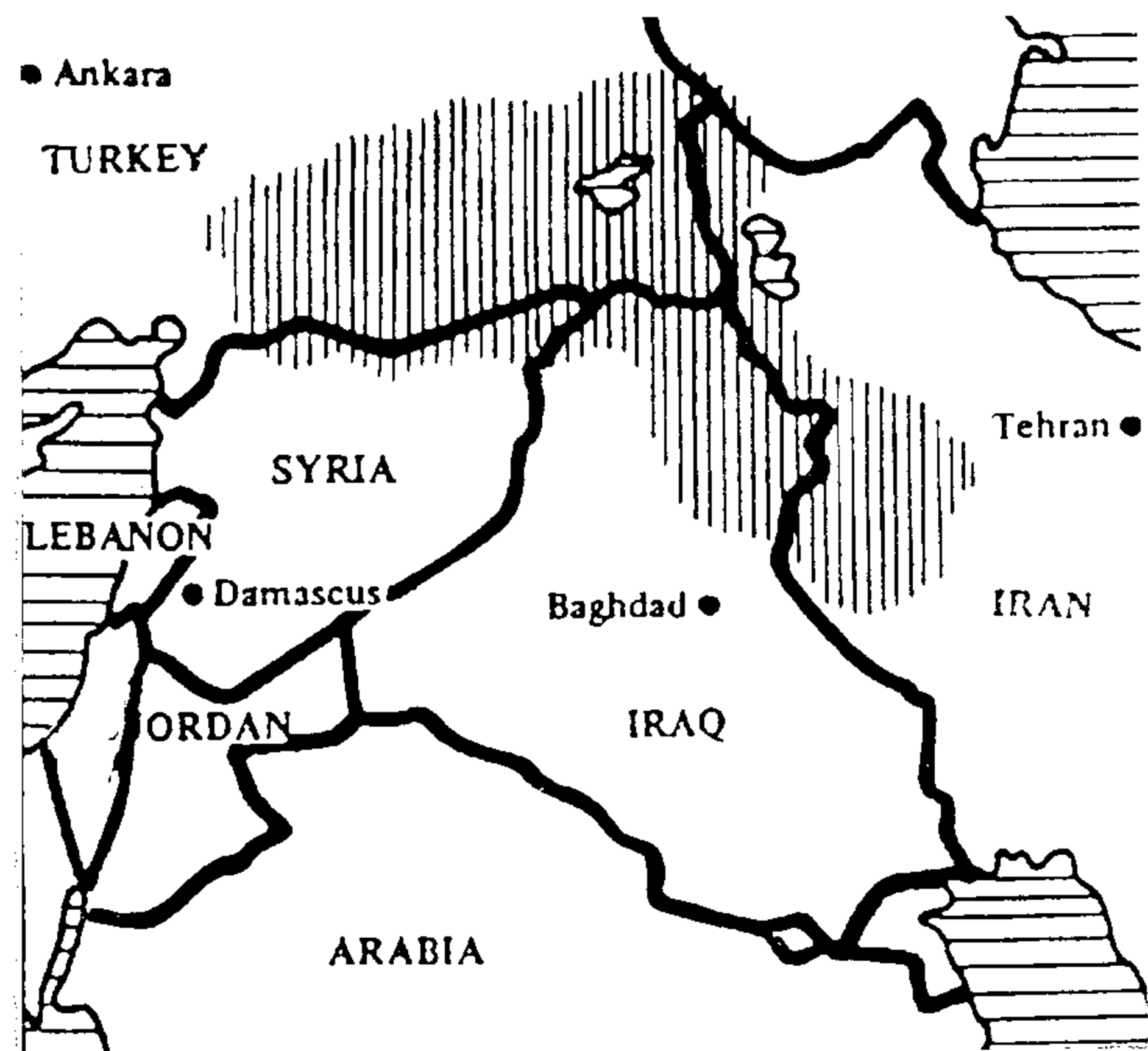
Since the Arab conquest in about 640, the majority of Kurds have been Muslims. They have, however, retained their own language, culture and traditions.

Arab nationalists rarely mention that the great warrior king Salah ed-Din (Saladin), who defeated the Crusaders and reconquered Jerusalem, was not an Arab but a Kurd. Indeed, for Saddam Hussein, born in the same town 800 years later, Salah ed-Din has become a symbol of his Arab nationalist struggle against, among others, the Kurds.

With the rise of Ottoman power from the 14th Century, Kurdistan was divided between the Ottoman and Persian empires. This border lasted 500 years, and still largely forms the border between Iran and its neighbours. Both of these empires ruled in the name of Islam rather than nation, and both recruited Kurdish tribes and traditional leaders as mercenaries. It was only with the growth of modern nationalism that any serious attempt was made to achieve Kurdish self-determination.

From the 1880s onward, in parallel with the growth of Arab nationalism, a Kurdish national movement developed, demanding Kurdish unity and independence.

The Ottoman Empire, known as 'the sick man of Europe', was in decline, and



Kurdistan: the majority of Kurds are Muslims, but retain their own language, culture and traditions.

in Asia and the Balkans its client nations were demanding freedom. However, this demand was frustrated both by Western imperialist manoeuvres and by the backward and chronically tribal nature of the Kurdish leaders.

Following the First World War Britain ended up in control of most of Kurdistan.

Many Kurds, believing in US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Principles, hoped for liberation and independence.

Indeed, Britain and France, in the notorious Sykes-Picot agreement which carved up the spoils of the Middle East, had agreed to establish a Kurdish state. This agreement was translated into the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres,

which recognised a small, but independent, Kurdish state in parts of southern Kurdistan.

However, in the new geopolitical situation caused by the Russian Revolution, and with the emergence of a Turkish nationalist republic in place of the Ottoman Empire, this Treaty was scrapped.

In the 1923 Lausanne Treaty it was agreed to partition the Kurdish people and their lands between Turkey, Persia and the British and French mandated territories in the area (subsequently to become Iraq and Syria).

The expendable Kurds thus became the first victims of the Western war against the Russian revolution.

A lengthy Kurdish revolt against this betrayal was brutally repressed by the British army and air force - which became the first outside power to use poison gas against Kurdish peasants during their freedom struggle.

Repression of the Kurds continued in all of the successor states to the Ottoman Empire.

In Turkey, in particular, any manifestation of Kurdish culture, including their language, was banned by the nationalist regime of Ataturk.

A fifteen-year popular uprising was brutally defeated by the start of the Second World War.

Although Kurds continued to struggle for their freedom in all parts of Kurdistan, this struggle was frustrated by their failure to establish a truly national and independent leadership.

The tribal leaders were exploited and manipulated by the various occupying powers, who would make promises one day and renege on them the next. This pattern continues today. Both KDP leader Massoud Barzani and PUK leader Jalal Talabani have been allied at different times with the Iranian and Iraqi governments, who have regularly betrayed them.

This system of alliances is reflected in political programmes advocating Kurdish autonomy within Iraq, Iran and Turkey, rather than Kurdish unification and independence.

Although Barzani has now, in alliance with Saddam Hussein, defeated Talabani, Saddam is unlikely for long to tolerate any genuine Kurdish autonomy.

The latest developments may satisfy the ambitions of Barzani and the machinations of Saddam, but they are not in the interests of the Kurdish people.

Only a programme calling for an end to the enforced partition of Kurdistan and the artificial separation of the Kurdish people can mobilise the Kurds in their own interests, rather than those of their oppressors.

Socialists must oppose any foreign intervention - US, Turkish, Iraqi or Iranian - in Kurdistan, and demand the right of self-determination for the people of Kurdistan.

This means opposing the artificial partition of Kurdistan, and its division among predatory neighbours. Kurdish liberation cannot be won in alliance with the oppressors and occupiers of Kurdistan.



Massoud Barzani

## Bosnian elections

### Legitimising partition, ethnic cleansing and genocide

AT THE TIME Socialist Outlook went to press, the results of the Bosnian election on 14 September were not known. But it was not too early to draw conclusions about the nature and purpose of these elections.

The commander of IFOR NATO forces in ex-Yugoslavia, essentially an army of occupation, said after the ballot boxes had closed that his 53,000 troops had "opened the door for democracy" in Bosnia.

If this and the Bosnian elections had been just a sick joke it would not be so tragic. But they were not.

The elections are being conducted on the brutal lie of a unitary country. They legitimise Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic's so-called Republica Srbska and the ethnic cleansing and genocide that created it. They are rehabilitating war criminals.

The elections were the cynical outcome of the Dayton "agreement" which the Bosnian Government was threatened and cajoled into last year. This partition, conducted under US auspices at a time when the course of the war had changed in favour of the Bosnian forces, achieved the strategic objective of western intervention through the course of the war.

The Dayton "agreement" handed 49 per cent of Bosnia over to Karadzic and Mladic and their greater Serbia project. The idea that these two war criminals no longer control political events in Republica Srbska beggars belief. The candidates in the elections were a part of the ethnic cleansing gangs created by Karadzic and Mladic.

Despite the claims of fairness of Richard Holbrooke, NATO commanders and international observers, who are desperate to give it legitimacy, the voting could hardly have been a greater travesty.

The former non-Serb population of the now Republica Srbska, those who are not refugees outside of the country (or populating the mass graves), were expected to get onto buses, cross the confrontation line, and go back to their original towns and villages, from which they had been ethnically cleansed, to vote.

Yet another sick joke. According to some reports only 20,000 of the 150,000 entitled to vote in that way were prepared to face intimidation and do so.

On the other hand, 4,000 Serbs crossed into Bosnia to vote. They

were not crossing into an area controlled by a genocidal regime but one which remains multi-ethnic despite all the problems.

In no sense can this election be called fair.

It is not surprising that the Bosnian government has said in advance that it will not recognise the results in the "Serb Zone" of the country when tens of thousands have been intimidated into not voting.

The elections may well suit Bill Clinton's election campaign but the Bosnian Government has to face not only the undemocratic nature of the election but the fact that the country will be permanently divided by it.

All the carvers-up of Bosnia stand to gain from the election. The architect of the greater Serbia project, the sponsor of ethnic cleansing, and the invader of Bosnia in the first place, Slobodan Milosevic, will get international recognition and legitimacy out of the elections. (It even seems to have legitimised the arch-ethnic cleanser and mass rapist Arkan who was disgracefully allowed a letter in the Guardian on election day to justify his actions).

Franjo Tudjman of Croatia, a junior partner in the carve up of Bosnia as well as a victim of Serb aggression in the first place, has settled his differences with Milosevic and they have mutually recognised each others countries.

The Dayton "agreement" suits him down to the ground. It not only gives him a lease of life in Croatia but he can continue to influence parts of Bosnia through the Bosnian-Croat Federation, a shaky alliance entirely to his advantage.

The outcome of the election is unlikely to be a surprise.

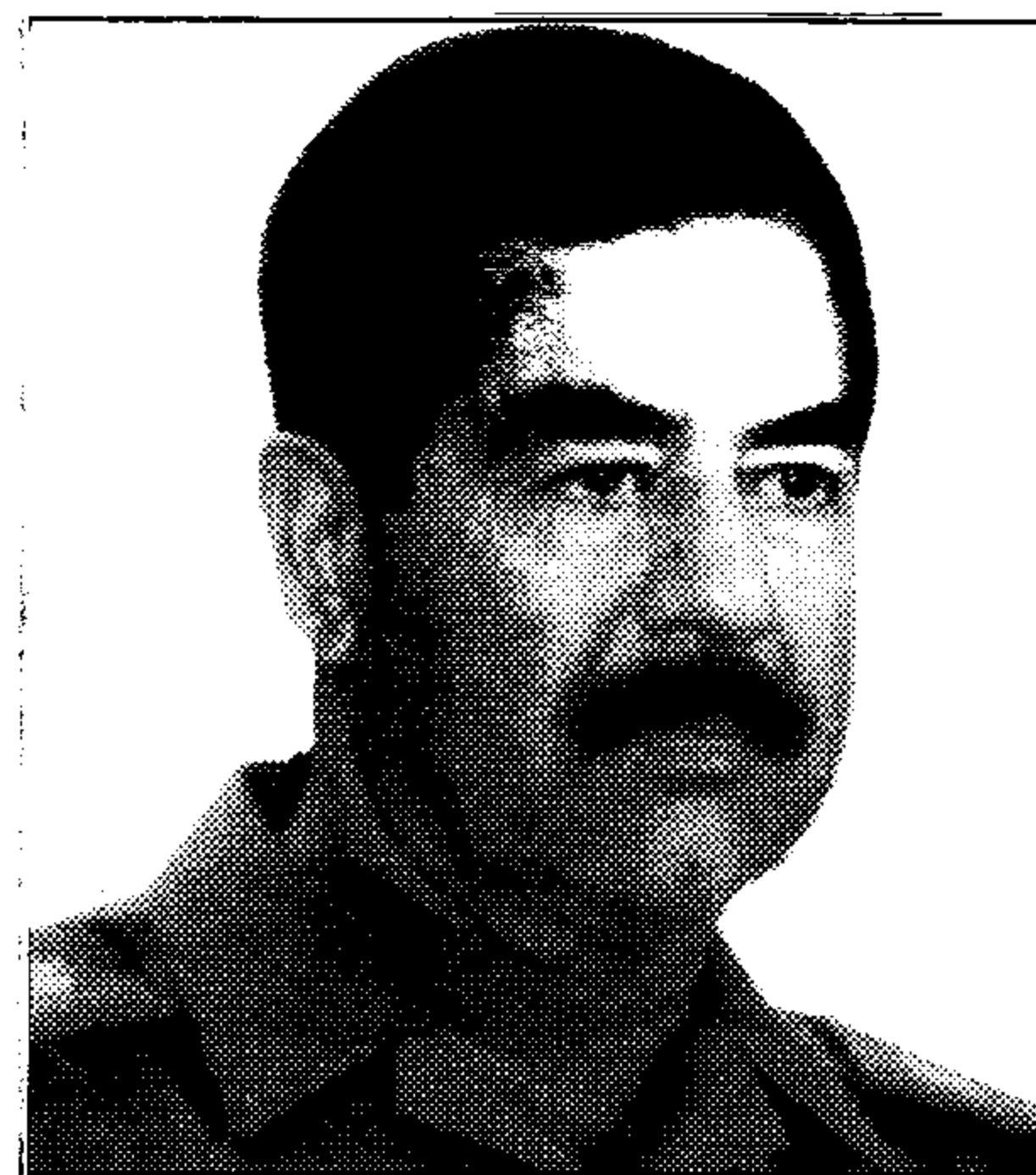
Nationalist forces are likely to be strengthened in all parts of Bosnia. Many Bosnian liberals will vote for President Alija Izetbegovic and his Muslim SDA in order to prevent a split vote from allowing a Serb or Croat nationalist to win.

This is likely to damage the prospects for former PM Haris Silajdzic and his Party for Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for the coalition of smaller non-national parties.

The multi-ethnic content of Bosnian society, defended by the war, will be put under further pressure from the nationalist forces.

It could hardly be otherwise. The multi-ethnic character of Bosnia does however remain and needs to be defended.

## NOTEBOOKS FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH



### The Gulf War and the New World Order

by Andre Gunter Frank and Salah Jaber

For this 70 page in-depth analysis of the meaning of the Gulf War and the political aftermath send a cheque or postal order for £3.50 payable to Pierre Rousset to: The Red Box, PO Box 431, Cardiff CF1 9YA, Britain. Outside Britain add 50pence for postage.

## SPECIAL OFFER

### A Programme for the Irish Revolution

We are offering a special pre-publication price of just £4.50. Send a postal order or cheque payable to Socialist Outlook Fund at: PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Two years in the writing, *Socialist Democracy's* founding document *A Programme For The Irish Revolution* is the most extensive Marxist analysis of Ireland since the forties

OFFER ENDS IN TWO WEEKS

# Free Indonesian political prisoners

Adam Hartman

AN EMERGENCY solidarity appeal has been launched, following attempts by the Suharto regime to decapitate Indonesia's emerging mass democracy movement.

At least 20 members of the People's Democracy Party (PRD) have been captured and charged with subversion, including the president and general secretary, and the president of the PPBI (Indonesian Centre for Labour Struggle). If convicted, they face the death penalty.

On July 27, supporters of the opposition party permitted by the dictatorship, the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), were forcibly ejected by the military from their offices in Jakarta. The regime



PRD General Secretary Petrus

links with "left-wing social democratic" forces overseas, Amnesty International and the Australian workers' movement, as well as the New People's Army in the Philippines.

The government's orchestrated removal of elected PDI leader Megawati Sukarnoputri and the witch hunt against the PRD express the panic of a ruling clique increasingly divided and isolated, and facing collapse as the social and ideological props of its rule crumble.

This brutal regime was responsible for the slaughter of up to a million people, mostly landless labourers who had been organised by the Communist Party and left nationalists when it took power through a military coup in 1965.

There is growing opposition to Suharto among the aspirant capitalist and professional classes, who crave stability and fear mass social unrest and wish to modernise Indonesia politically and economically.

The regime's former allies in the West also fear that Suharto can no longer guarantee stability.

The use of anti-communist rhetoric is a desperate attempt to recreate the political climate which brought the regime to

power, and to reunite the middle class behind it against a supposed threat to "order" and national identity.

The biggest threat to Suharto comes from the growing mobilisations of industrial workers, the urban poor, small farmers and landless labourers, led by a new generation of students and militant peasants and trade unionists.

Formed in 1994 as the People's Democratic Union, transforming itself into a party in April 1996, the PRD has emerged at the helm of these mobilisations, drawing together the most radical organisations and leaders - the PPBI, STN (National Peasants' Union), SMID (Student Solidarity for Indonesian Democracy) and JAKER (the People's Cultural Network).

It has developed a programme which fuses the demands of the exploited and oppressed for democracy, human rights, equality and social justice.

It is the only party calling for an end to Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. In a daring act of solidarity, 50 young PRD members joined 50 East Timorese students in climbing into the Dutch and Russian embassies on the 20th anniversary of Indonesia's invasion of East Timor.

The PPBI, the PRD's industrial wing, was formed in October 1994 on the basis of local factory committees built up since the late 1980's to fight for wage improvements, humane conditions and the right to organise. It is the youngest, most dynamic and rapidly-growing independent workers' organisation.

Its programme includes demands for a living minimum wage and an end to the government's deep labour strategy for attracting foreign investment, decent conditions, workers' rights and freedom, workplace democracy, equality between male and female workers, and



A demonstration in Sydney this summer

an end to military intervention in labour disputes and to the pro-employer bias of the courts.

The PPBI has led strikes and demonstrations in food-processing, plastics and textile factories, mobilising first hundreds, then thousands, in struggles for payment of the minimum wage, equal pay and shorter working hours, culminating in a protest in Surabaya on July 8, involving 20,000 striking workers from ten factories demanding a 33 per cent wage increase.

The state has responded by arresting and torturing PPBI activists and attacking demonstrations. On May 1 1995, police on motorcycles drove into a PPBI march, injuring 20.

The PRD fights for a future free from exploitation and oppression. It is vital that the labour movement in Britain builds the maximum solidarity. Details of a forthcoming tour by a PRD activist will be included in future issues of Socialist Outlook.

For a copy of the Emergency Appeal launched by Australian Action in Solidarity with Indonesia and East Timor (ASIET), contact:

■ **Stop the Hawk Deal**  
c/o One World Centre  
6 Mount Street  
Manchester  
M2 5NS  
Tel: 0161-834 0295  
e-mail <http://www.peg.org/~assiet/>



PRD chair Budiman Sujatniko

used the riots, which erupted spontaneously in response as a pretext to launch an anti-communist witch hunt against the PRD and other outspoken opponents of military rule.

According to security minister General Soedarman, the PRD's manifesto does not mention the official Panca Sila ideology and is based on "popular social democracy". The PRD is accused of

is upon the citizen to apply these commitments.

According to the various agreements with the Palestinians, the Israeli army was supposed to be out of Hebron a long time ago. I will not be there in complete

violation of what the government promised on behalf of our people."

Sergio Yahni has already been sentenced three times in the past for refusing to serve in the occupied territories.

In this context he explained today, in a statement to the Israeli media: "The behaviour of the Israeli army in 90 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza, the continuing arrests of Palestinian activists, land confiscations, expansion of settlements, etc. confirms that the occupation is not a matter of the past, but the crude reality of the present.

This is why the same way I refused to serve the occupation in the past, I will continue to refuse to serve the occupation today, even if occupation is masked by rhetorics of 'peace process', and until the last Israeli soldier will withdraw from the last inch of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip".

Sergio Yahni is a staff member of the AIC and editor of its Hebrew magazine "Mitsad Sheini".

#### ■ Letters of Support:

Letters, Faxes & E-mails can be sent to the Alternative Information Center and will be delivered to Sergio in prison. Tel: +972-2-241159, +972-2-740585 Fax: +972-2-253151 E-Mail:

[aicmail@trendline.co.il](mailto:aicmail@trendline.co.il) PO Box 31417, Jerusalem.

■ **Send letters of protest to your local Israeli embassy or consulate.**

Also write in protest to: Binyamin Netanyahu Prime Minister of Israel Kaplan Street 3 West Jerusalem fax: +972.2.9977326 email: [Likud1@Likud.org.il](mailto:Likud1@Likud.org.il) prime-minister@likud.org.il

## Anti-militarist jailed by Israeli regime

SERGEANT (RESERVE) Sergio Yahni, was sentenced to 18 days in military prison for refusing to perform his military duties in Hebron. Before being tried Sergio stated: "When a government is not ready to apply what it has signed, it

### Subscribe to International Viewpoint

Socialist Outlook and International Viewpoint can be yours for the next year at a special discount price. IV is the hard-hitting monthly review of the Fourth International, the world socialist organisation. Send your cheque for £30 payable to 'Outlook International', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Offer available in Britain and Ireland only.

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### Birmingham Community Conference



**Tony Benn: "I am happy to sponsor the event and hope it all goes well"**

### Unite to defend our services

Our demands on the next Labour government

Saturday 2 November 11.00-4.30  
The Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Park Birmingham. (45 and 47 buses).

● Speakers include Alan Simpson MP, John Lister (London Health Emergency), Marian Brain (Women and the Welfare State), West Midlands Anti-deportation Campaign, Ian Ward (anti-cuts councillor), Jobs not JSA Campaign, The Big Issue and Rainbow Gazette (invited).

● Registration fee: £5 per organisation, £2 individual, £1 unemployed. Details c/o Union Club at the address above.

# New Labour: just like the old liberalism



Ben Tillet, one of the founders of the Transport Workers' Federation, addresses the Dock strikers in 1911

NINETY YEARS after the Labour Party was formed as a working class and trade union alternative to the Liberals, David Blunkett and Tony Blair are spearheading calls for Labour to introduce new anti-union legislation.

What is perhaps most bizarre is that Blunkett and others seek to prove their conservative credentials by pledging repeatedly that there will be 'no return to the past'.

Yet their frenzied efforts to sever Labour's historic links with the unions and with the working class threaten precisely that: a

return to the miserable, muddled right wing politics of the Liberal Party before 1906, the period in which the working class had no independent political voice.

The 1899 TUC resolution which set up the initial Labour Representation Committee, to which unions, socialist societies and cooperatives could affiliate, arose from the consistent failure of their traditional allies, the Lib-

erals, to uphold the interests of the unions against an increasingly concerted employers' offensive in the 1890s.

A succession of hostile court judgements had begun severely to restrict the right to strike; even the dimmer sections of the emerging union bureaucracy could see that the only way to halt and reverse such legal attacks was through legislation - and that required parliamentary representation.

Membership of the LRC more than doubled during 1901-2, primarily as a response by trade unions to the Taff Vale judgement, up-

held by the Lords in 1902. This awarded hefty (£23,000) compensation to the Taff Vale Railway Company against the main rail union, which was found liable for damage to property and business losses caused by a strike. Union leaders understandably feared that this judgement could also apply to any other union involved in strike action.

By 1906 - though lacking any socialist (or other) political programme - the LRC had consolidated its position as the voice of the working class and trade unions, winning 29 seats in parliament. It changed its name to the Labour Party.

One positive result of Labour Party intervention was the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, which gave the unions the limited legal immunities which Thatcher swept away 75 years later in her war on the unions. The 1906 Act was based on drafts prepared by the Labour Party and the TUC.

Politically, this union link was all that separated Labour from the Liberals. On the constitution, on Ireland and even on issues of social welfare Labour from the outset had no coherent alternative to offer.

Indeed as early as 1913 impatient socialists were dismissing the Labour Party as no more than "a wing of the Liberal Party". Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald was happy to do political deals with the Liberals.

It was the further rapid growth of the trade unions from 1910, followed by the extension of the vote to 14 million new electors after the war which opened up the next expansion of the Labour Party, which reached 2.1 million members by 1915, and 3.5 million by 1919.

In fact these figures are deceptive: the Party did not allow individual membership until 1918, and relied exclusively on affiliated organisations - it was overwhelmingly the party of the trade unions, reflecting their strengths and their political weaknesses.

Though proclaiming itself 'socialist', and adopting the famous 'Clause Four' commitment to nationalisation, in practice Labour remained politically tied to

British imperialism and sought no more than parliamentary reforms within the framework of capitalism.

Blair is not the first Labour leader to prepare for a general election by attacking the trade unions and the working class. But the precedents are not inspiring.

Ramsay MacDonald's attacks on the unemployed split the party and paved the way for the decimation of the Labour vote in 1931. Attlee's government attacked the unions and backtracked on its own welfare state reforms, opening the door for the Tory return in 1951. Harold Wilson's attempts to bring in anti-union laws helped usher in Ted Heath in 1970.

Jim Callaghan tried to bludgeon public sector workers into line, and left the way clear for Margaret Thatcher in 1979. And Neil Kinnock's wretched attempts to sabotage the miners' strike helped guarantee defeat in 1987.

However the savagery of the Blunkett-Blair onslaught, following the trauma of New Labour's ditching of Clause Four and almost every shred of radical policy, has begun to create a debate among some on the left in the unions.

How can it make sense for unions to donate millions in members' subs to fuel a party



Ramsay Macdonald

machine which takes such delight in attacking trade unions?

In a recent *Tribune* article, UNISON activist Geoff Martin raised the call for a new Labour Representation Committee "as a pressure group within the party" to defend the unions against Blair's 'modernisers'.

"I am not for a moment suggesting that we leave the party. Indeed it is my view that if Arthur Scargill had opted for a Labour Representation

Committee of a Campaign for Socialism after last year's party conference, rather than walking out, he could have strengthened the Left rather than weakening it."

Whatever the name, the content of Geoff Martin's suggestion should receive wide support on the left of the unions.

Indeed as an Observer columnist summed up recently, if Labour's union link is severed, the rump that remains will not be 'New Labour' so much as 'New Liberalism'. Our history is still very much part of present-day politics.

## Socialist Outlook's politics

# WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

**U**P 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 the 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 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 on the revolutionary tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

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

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

## Get organised, get active!

- I want to know more about Socialist Outlook
- Please send me your introductory pamphlet: 'Socialism after Stalinism'. I enclose a PO or cheque for £1.00 payable to 'Socialist Outlook Fund'.
- Please send me details of the Socialist Outlook Fourth International Supporters Association

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post Code \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_  
 Post to: Socialist Outlook, PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU.

### Politically, the union link was all that separated Labour from the Liberals.

### The party was overwhelmingly the party of the trade unions, reflecting their strengths and their political weaknesses

## FEEDBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes letters. Post them to Feedback, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Those over 300 words in length will be edited. You can E-mail us at: outlook@gn.apc.org

## Dominant ideas

I WAS surprised to read [Brussels sprouts a Bonaparte, SO 107] that Belgium's "working class tends to absorb the ideas of the ruling class relatively easily."

That was probably the case during the years of imperialist prosperity. The post war economic boom helped integrate the workers' organisations into the state.

The long recession reversed that process. Now Belgian workers face increasing attacks and the working class organisations are starting to diverge from the policy of the ruling class.

There is a growing fracture inside the working class movement between the unions and the politician who are backing the Maastricht process.

The ruling class is campaigning against the welfarist ideas that backed up the post war arrangement in Belgium.

Belgium's working class will accept these new attacks no more easily than any other in western Europe.

Duncan Chapple, Haringay N4.

50p

Issue No. 108

\$1 • 5FF • 50BF • 2 DM • f2

What is at stake in Iraq

Centre Pages

Blair and Europe

Editorial: Page 3

Bosnia elections

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Fight for free education

Page 2

# Socialist OUTLOOK

## Stop Blunkett's bosses' charter



Blunkett sides instinctively, unerringly with the employers against the workers

Union-bashing is to be a centrepiece of New Labour's bid for the votes and donations of millionaire businessmen and reactionary layers of the middle class.

Together with Blair's talk of tax cuts to a 10p basic rate, his jamborees courting business spon-

sorship, and the party's increasingly right wing social agenda, it is the latest sign of the modernisers' determined attempt to transform the party into a cross-class neo-Liberal party.

Given the actual policies already adopted, whether or not the party also drops the charade

of calling itself socialist is of only secondary consideration.

Gone is the debate over how much of Thatcher's vicious barrage of anti-union laws a new Labour government might repeal: if David Blunkett gets his way, none of them will go.

His keynote speech to the TUC, leaked in an article to the *Tory Evening Standard*, has made it clear that the only changes will be even tighter restrictions on the right to strike.

He wants to impose more ballots – every time an employer claims to have made a new offer – to disrupt and demoralise union members.

He likes the idea of pay review bodies – which eradicate any collective bargaining process – and compulsory arbitration, which does the same.

Acting as if he believes he is already in government, administering capitalism on behalf of the ruling class, Blunkett regards strikes as the problem – no matter what the issue – and he sides instinctively, unerringly with the employers against the unions.

He dismisses the battles over pay and conditions on the rail, underground and Royal Mail as 'playing politics with our public services' – as if the strikers had no grievances, and were only out to embarrass the Labour Party.

And he sets the scene for a massive witch-hunt against union activists by denouncing those who are willing to engage in disputes as 'armchair revolutionaries'.

All this of course, like every other right wing policy of 'New Labour', is dressed up in meaningless phrases about 'partnership', 'cooperation', 'goodwill' and 'sensible and sane discussion' between employers and unions.

Blunkett knows, of course that none of this Mary Poppins fantasy has anything to do with the real world in which a continuing, increasingly vicious employers' offensive is attacking the jobs, pay and most basic working conditions.

The class war is still alive and kicking. The employers who are now pumping money into the Labour coffers are doing so as an investment, because they believe New Labour is now on their side of the barricades, against the workers.

Millions of trade unionists and Labour voters still believe otherwise: that's why they want the Tories out and a Labour government elected. But with Blair's hard-right modernisers in charge and the party up for auction to end its financial dependence on the unions, the fightback for real change to benefit working people must start now.

## End The Embargo No War For Oil

CLINTON'S ENCIRCLEMENT of Iraq has forced Saddam Hussein to recognize the extension of the southern no-fly zone and agree not to reconstruct its air defences.

The maps show that Iraq is allowed no control over the great majority of its territory. The United States have made it clear that this is in order to protect

their crucial oil interests, not the rights of the Kurdish people.

Countless Iraqi people were slaughtered during the barbaric Gulf war. Millions have suffered since as a result of the devastation wreaked then and the sanctions subsequently imposed.

The labour movement must oppose military action against Iraq. We must demand an end to the embargo. Despite the fact

that the U.S. has engaged in extensive diplomatic discussion, it has failed to recement the Gulf war alliance. In Britain however, not only the Tories but also the Labour Party have yet again shown themselves slavish followers of U.S. imperialism. We must demand an end to Labour's bipartisanship and an end to the use of British bases by the U.S.

### Socialist Outlook International Forum

- The capitalists and their governments are conducting a world-wide offensive against the past gains of the working class, whether under the guise of austerity programmes or the Maastricht treaty.
- *Socialist Outlook* is organising a weekend of discussion with international speakers aimed at a better understanding of this neo-liberal offensive and how to fight it.
- Speakers so far include from the French trade unionists, the international 'Cancel the Debt' campaign and socialists from the Ivory Coast, with more being approached.



Saturday 26 and Sunday 27 October central London.  
Future issues will carry more details on speakers and venue