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Charlie van Gelderen remembered p16

As US carpet bombing signals the start of mass slaughter

We CAN stop this war!



Andrew Wlard

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



Carry on down the escalator

Tube strike confusion

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

LUL members had voted for strike action over pay and conditions. First a settlement was reached with non-train crew members of the RMT. It was argued that there was no stomach for a fight. This, of course, was never put to the test.

Even if that were true, it was clear that tube drivers were prepared to act. ASLEF and RMT members were united. Even following a dirty little media campaign that implied the whole idea of industrial action was disloyal, traitorous in our hour of war, when clearly everyone should be working together in national unity, the desire to take on LUL bosses was strong.

So tube union members could be forgiven for their confusion when a deal was struck which union leaders say is a massive victory – and LUL bosses claim was for no more than was originally on offer.

Of course, all deals of this

nature rely on subsequent interpretation where each side will try to put their best spin on the matter. But in this case it does seem that LUL was backing away even before the ink was dry on a verbal agreement.

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

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

The current RMT General Secretary elections are about ensuring we get a different type of leadership. The RMT left is rightly united behind Bob Crow as the best hope in delivering such a change.

The other candidates want to tie the union to all the failed TUC/Blairite policies of the past. But there are no blank cheques – rather the union leadership has to have the confidence of and in its members.

Railtrack: new plan just feeds fat cats

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

Despite all the hand wringing from Railtrack shareholders the deal they are now to get in government payoffs massively inflates Railtrack's value.

Hiding behind the small shareholders – defending the Railtrack widow's mite! – major institutional shareholders threatened an investment strike if they were not properly compensated for their loss. But of course all they had lost was the ability to get fat on massive unearned dividends – fed directly from government subsidy.

Now the not-for-profit replacement for Railtrack will in effect be another rehashed Public Private Partnership. Train and freight operating companies will be brought in to take control.

Rather than running "in the interests of the travelling public" the new company will operate in the interests of Branson, Souter and the other train operators.

Instead of public money going directly into the pockets of Railtrack shareholders, the journey will just be a little bit more convoluted, with a slightly different team of fat cats getting the cream.

The interests of the travelling

public will only be served by running the railways as a public service – a socialised railway, with guaranteed public investment, run by rail workers and rail users.

Labour has always argued that this was unaffordable. What the demise of Railtrack makes clear is that if the government had adopted a forthright strategy from the first this could already have been achieved – at less cost than is currently spent propping up the profits of the private sector.

Railtrack is bankrupt, the operating companies' franchises are coming to the end of their first term and do not need to be renewed, and the maintenance contracts could



Fat cat lover: Stephen Byers

easily be brought back in house.

Instead the government's option are actually designed to help keep the private sector afloat – the result will be more

fat cats, and continued threats to rail services from the sorts of catastrophes, financial and physical, Railtrack has become infamous for.

SWT: strike ballot in fight against victimisation

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

SWT is Britain's largest train operating company. It has embarked on a policy of divide and conquer among the trades unions, trying to buy off the main drivers' union ASLEF whilst launching attacks against the all grades union, RMT.

Last year SWT victimised key RMT drivers' rep Sarah Friday. Now they have downgraded Waterloo RMT Branch secretary, Greg Tucker, from driver to ticket collector, as well as issuing threats and final warnings against a number of other RMT representatives.

In Greg's case, it is clear that one of his key crimes was to stand as a Socialist



Victimised for political stand: Greg Tucker

Alliance candidate in the general election. Indeed the decision to witch-hunt Greg appears to have been taken the day after the Evening Standard ran a three-page piece on Greg's election campaign – including his role in organising an RMT strike in SWT that day.

It is vital this dispute is properly prosecuted if RMT organisation in SWT is to remain effective.

The dispute has already

suffered delay and obfuscation as a direct result of RMT officers' prevarication – by Acting General Secretary Vernon Hince and local organiser and right wing candidate to replace Jimmy Knapp, Phil Bialyk.

The union leadership has now got to get its act together to win these ballots – and once won any strike given practical backing by the broad movement.

PPP bidders aim to sock it to commuters

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

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

What it will deliver has now become even clearer. The PPP preferred bidders have been forced to explain exactly what they plan to do. If you want to buy socks this is for you. If you want a cheap efficient, safe system, hard luck.

Metronet, bidding to run the Bakerloo and Central Lines, propose to spend £420 million on refurbishing stations – (that's more Socks Shops to you and me) whilst spending just £30 million on signalling and £40 million on escalators and lifts. That



pattern is repeated for the other bidders on the rest of the lines.

Any regular user of the tube knows three things – the stations are generally well looked after, or at least are the least worst, the escalators and lifts are always breaking down and are often out of action for

months at a time, and that track, signalling and trains are clapped out and lead to the chronic delays that plague the system.

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

This is, of course, no accident. In order to make a profit the companies need to be able to develop the full economic potential of their (that is to say currently "our") assets. Renting out modern commercial units represents a far quicker return than doing anything to actually deliver a better transport service.

Don't miss the Navigators!

Privatisation has been shown to be an abject failure – putting profit first inevitably meant compromising on safety, with dramatic results.

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

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

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

packet rather than their collective safety. Their strong sense of collective strength is reduced to a struggle to individually survive.

This may sound pessimistic, but the film's tragedy is leavened with a strong comic vein. Highlighting a political defeat, in heart-breakingly human terms, you long for the film to have been able to point to some hope for the future.

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

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

As imperialist military effort runs into problems Step up anti-war campaign

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

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

And the brutal reality is increasingly becoming obvious.

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

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

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



Not as easy as he thought: Bush

While to date he himself has not been captured by the Taliban, a number of his supporters have, but more to the point even the most slavish of Bush's media supporters are unable to claim there are any signs of forces rushing to oppose the Taliban.

On the contrary, stories have leaked out that a number of figures and forces who previously opposed the Taliban have now pledged their support in the context of the Bush-Blair war against the country.

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

So then the next plan was that they would

take Mazar-i-Sharif and thus open a corridor through to Central Asia. But so far they have made little ground.

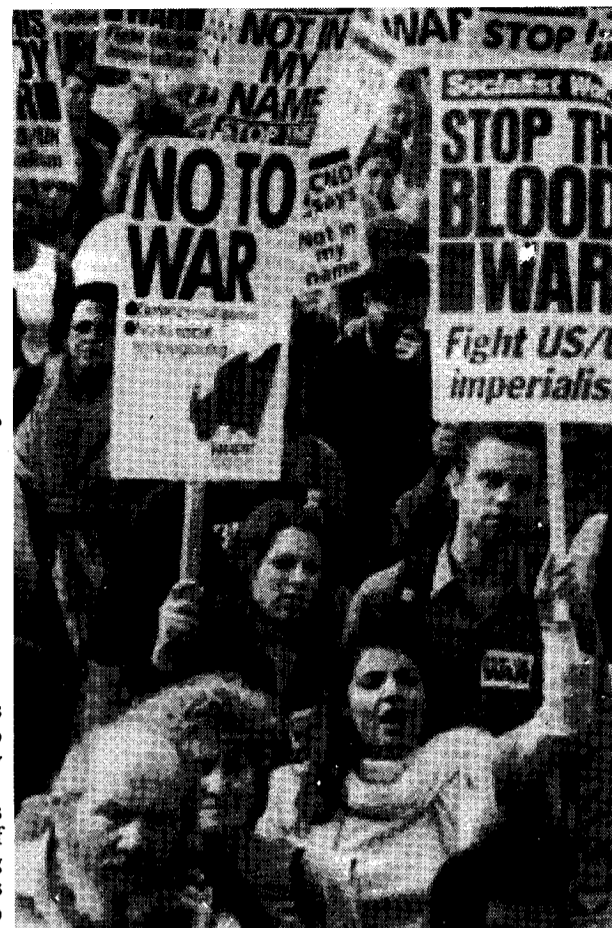
Ideally American strategists hoped taking Mazar-i-Sharif would allow them to make bring in some humanitarian supplies before the bitter winter leads to countless more deaths. Six million people are estimated to be at risk inside Afghanistan, not counting those in desperate refugee camps beyond the country's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

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

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

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

In the meantime, here in Britain at least things have become increasingly rocky for President Blair. Headlines like that of the



Stalingrad O'Neill

Daily Mirror of October 29, screaming out "This war is a fraud" across its front page and carrying a powerful article from John Pilger inside were echoed in many other parts of the press.

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

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

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

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

This has to be the key task for every socialist over the weeks and days ahead.

Oh, what a lovely war?

NEW Labour apparatchik Jo Moore may have been publicly pilloried for seeking to take advantage of the September 11 events, but New Labour Ministers have certainly been hiding behind the war as the wheels have come off a succession of their cherished policies.

- The unresolved fiasco with Railtrack
- The cash crisis of the partially privatised Air Traffic Control system (NATS)
- The announcement of a U-turn over student grants
- David Blunkett's attempts to revamp Jack Straw's disastrous system of vouchers for asylum seekers
- Blunkett's partial climb-down over the criminalisation of cannabis, signalling a retreat in the government's war on drugs
- An Audit Report showing that after four years of Labour government, queues for hospital A&E treatment are longer than they were under the Tories ...

... all have come in quick succession in the weeks since the attack on the World Trade Centre.

Each of the policies being ditched by Labour was strongly opposed by trade

unions, campaigns and pressure groups and even some Labour backbenchers – before being steam-rollered through by Blair's arrogant minions.

In each case the policies have proved unworkable for the reasons raised by the objectors.

But rather than listen, New Labour's response to their own policy failures is to lurch from one disaster to the next.

● Railtrack is not being renationalised, and the fittest cats are the most likely to get compensated for the company's collapse.

● Despite the swift failure of the "Public Private Partnership" to deliver the vital cash injection required to modernise air traffic control, and mounting evidence that PPP on the London underground will be equally ineffective at improving services, ministers are forging ahead regardless.

● The evidence that Labour's scrapping of student grants and imposition of tuition fees is deterring millions of working class students from applying to universities seems set to produce a plan for an alternative punitive tax on graduates rather than a progressive tax on top earnings.

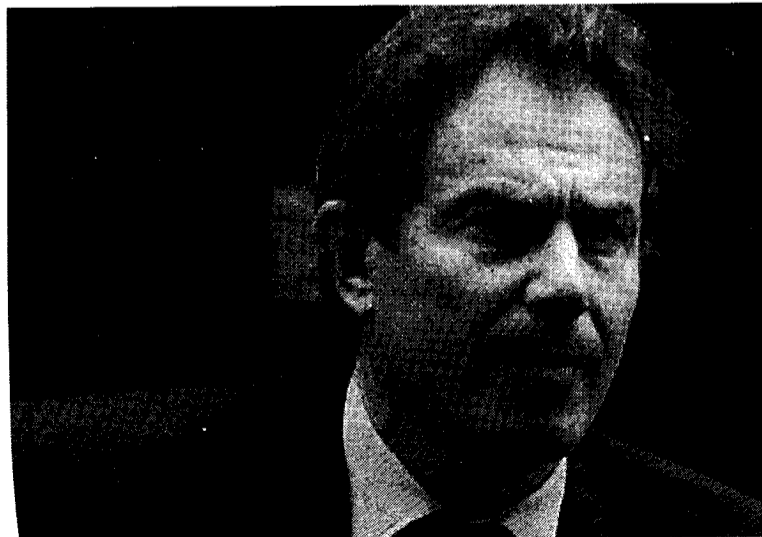
● Blunkett has tacitly admitted that

Straw's asylum policy was a complete shambles, but is still determined to impose a system that stigmatises asylum seekers and deters potential refugees from coming to Britain.

● Blunkett's mealy-mouthed downgrading of cannabis to a Class C drug admits that the law as it stands is unenforceable. But it is still illegal to possess and to sell cannabis, effectively forcing millions of cannabis users to deal on a daily basis with the criminals who import it, and the petty criminals who distribute it – often along with a variety of harder drugs. Blunkett still cannot explain how this fits in with New Labour's mantra of getting "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime".

● Health Secretary Milburn's answer to everything is to bring in the private sector – despite hostility throughout the Labour and trade union movement and evidence that this will do nothing to reduce pressure for emergency treatment, while worsening staff shortages in NHS hospitals.

Meanwhile as the economy teeters on the edge of a mounting global slowdown, manufacturing jobs continue to disappear, top bosses pocket average rises of 18%, and the bungling



Taking full advantage to hide his government's foul-ups: Blair

boss of British Telecom leaves the wreckage of the company with a massive £3m pay-off, there are growing rumours of plans to raise taxes – perhaps through an increase in National Insurance payments – to pay for the war effort.

All this just a few months after Labour romped back to office with another landslide majority.

If there wasn't a war on, Blair's team might have to consider starting one to divert attention from their failures.

The trade union and labour movement must ensure that while the anti-war campaigns are built the fight goes on against the politics of New Labour, which are continuing to run counter to the needs and wishes of working people.

Welsh Assembly debates bombing as anti-war campaign grows

Daniel Morrissey

On Tuesday, 23 October, the National Assembly for Wales became the first legislature in the British state to debate the so-called 'War Against Terrorism'.

Even here, the debate took place against the wishes of the Labour /Liberal Democrat administration, which wanted simply to make an all-party statement in support of the Blair Government's participation in the war.

Fortunately, however, Plaid Cymru has taken a position that the bombing must stop, and therefore initiated a 'minority party debate'. Knowing any overtly anti-war statement would be out-voted by the other three par-

ties, Plaid tabled a non-contentious motion: "To propose that the National Assembly considers the impact of the current international situation on Wales".

For Labour, the Lib Dems and the Tories, however, this did not allow for a sufficiently slavish demonstration of their loyalty to the 'national interest' as defined by Tony Blair. They therefore proposed the amendment, "...and supports the actions taken by the UK Government in support of the world alliance against terrorism."

Moving the motion, Plaid Cymru leader, Ieuan Wyn Jones, said that while his party supported the principle of the fight against terrorism, it could not support a relent-

less bombing campaign that would only exacerbate the developing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, as well as further destabilising the political situation in the Middle East and elsewhere.

First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, moved the Labour/Lib Dem/Tory amendment with a speech that said very little about the military campaign, and relied on vague expressions of concern for the Afghan people and trite statements that could have been (and perhaps were) taken straight out of Millbank or Whitehall press releases.

The remainder of the debate followed this pattern, with Plaid speakers appealing for the bombing to end so that the relief operation

could be undertaken in earnest, while members of the other parties queued up to pledge their 'mature, responsible' support for British government policy.

The best speech was made by the one Labour rebel, Richard Edwards, the Labour AM for Preseli Pembrokeshire.

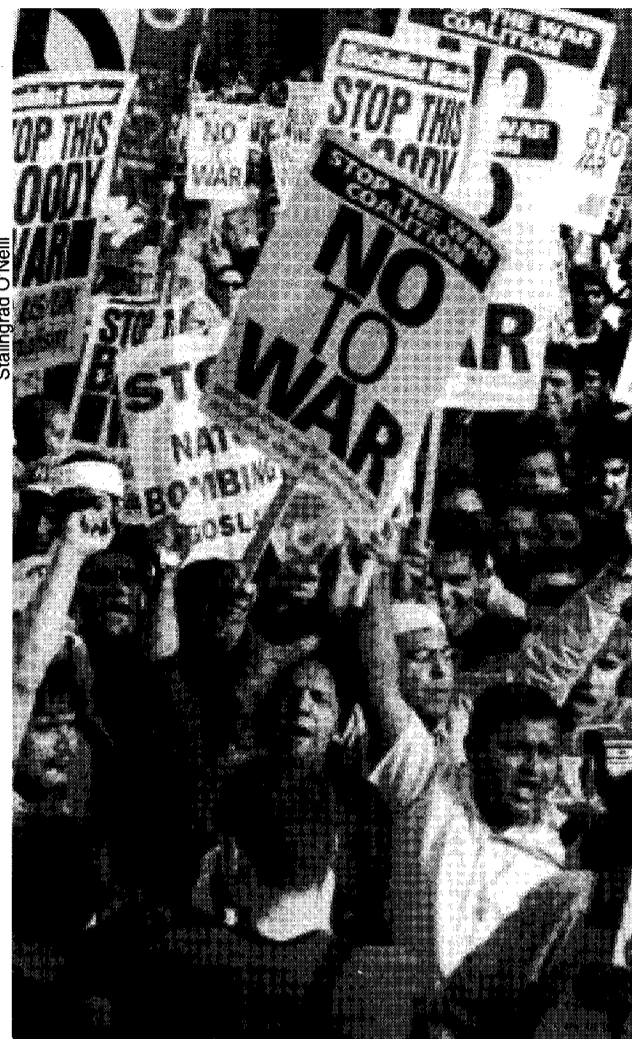
He launched an absolutely uncompromising attack on the military action and acknowledged that terrorism was an inevitable feature of a world in which the most powerful states intervene freely in the affairs of the weakest and poorest, to maintain a fundamentally unjust and exploitative economic order.

Unfortunately, few of Edwards' Labour colleagues seemed to share his principles or his insight into the world outside Cardiff Bay.

In fact, the only other Labour AM who is believed to be opposed to the war is John Marek (Wrexham). And since he is Deputy Presiding Officer (i.e., deputy speaker), he did not speak or vote in the debate.

In any case, the Labour group took the Hilary Armstrong line that "war is not a matter of conscience" and refused to allow its AMs a free vote.

The vote on the amendment, and then the amended motion, was therefore 37-15, with no abstentions. All the 15 'no' votes came from Plaid Cymru AMs, with Richard Edwards not voting at all.



50,000 marched against the war in London on October 13

1,000 back Birmingham anti-war rally

Over 1000 people attended an impressive meeting in Small Heath, Birmingham on Monday October 29 in opposition to the war against Afghanistan, one of the largest political meetings Birmingham has seen in years.

The meeting was mainly composed of the local community, of Pakistani and Bangla Deshi origin, but there was also a sizeable diverse composition from outside the immediate area. Unfortunately, the organised labour movement was poorly represented, but that is something that has to be put right in the next stage of the campaigning.

Speakers included George Monbiot, Guardian columnist and Globalise Resistance steer-

ing committee member, who gave a powerful and informative analysis of the conflict, John Rees, for the Stop the War Coalition, who gave an upbeat message about the growth of the anti-war movement.

He also reminded the audience of America's failed war against the people of Vietnam many years ago. The Vietnamese people eventually stopped America in its tracks with the help of Americans and Europeans whose opposition made it impossible for the war to continue.

Zaid Shakir, an Islamic scholar and professor of political science also spoke. He made a useful humanitarian introduction to his speech, which was then followed by a much longer religious contribution.

The event shows how local opposition to the atrocities being committed against the Afghan people in the name of British and American citizens is mounting. Such was the commitment of the audience, that the platform only began taking questions from the floor after ten o'clock.

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

However, people left the event determined to build the next national demonstration on Sunday 18th November in London.

Coalition to lead anti-war fight

Outside the Assembly, the campaign to end the bombing is in full swing, with the biggest component being the South Wales Coalition to Stop the War, based in Cardiff.

The coalition lists among its supporters CND Cymru, Amnesty, the Greens, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society), Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers, Plaid Cymru (Cardiff), Liberty, Palestine Solidarity, One World Group, Quakers, Red Choir, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, as well as the Welsh Socialist Alliance and all the significant far left organisations.

Two coaches from Cardiff (& one from Swansea) were sent on the London demo on 13 October; the centre of Cardiff has been regularly leafleted and there have been small pickets of the Assembly on the two occasions that the war has been discussed in plenary sessions. In addition, there is a weekly vigil at Nye Bevan's statue in the city centre, on Fridays at 5.00 p.m.

The coalition is also beginning to hold weekly organising meetings on Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m., and is gearing up for a demonstration in Cardiff on November 10 (jointly organised with the Muslim Council for Wales) and the

next major London demonstration on 18 November.

Although the majority of Welsh Labour MPs, like the AMs, have backed the Government, a handful of them have spoken out against the war, including Julie Morgan, Llew Smith, Martin Caton and Denzil Davies.

It is to be hoped the recent launch of Labour Against the War will galvanise the many party activists in Wales who are opposed to the military onslaught into playing a full part in the coalition.

■ The South Wales Coalition to Stop the War can be contacted by ringing 07815 775 819.

The Assembly speech by Richard Edwards AM

"We must seriously question whether a military onslaught by the richest country on the planet on almost the poorest will rid the world of terrorism. Do you end terror by unleashing it on impoverished Afghan civilians?"

Oxfam estimates that 2.5 million people may starve if the bombing does not stop. We risk creating far greater injustice and stoking up more grievances for whole battalions of would-be Bin Ladens to exploit.

If we want to make the world a safer place, then we must make it a fairer place. Why can the west not cancel all third world debt, as well as iniquitous capital investment schemes such as the construction of the Ilisu dam on the upper Tigris?

Why can we not mobilise the world's financial institutions into narrowing the gap between the richest and poorest countries, instead

of widening it ever more? That would require a revolution in relations between the west and the third world, which our leaders, for all their self-righteous rhetoric, have not begun to address.

Nor will they, as so many are in the pockets of — this is certainly true of the US President, who is practically owned by them — multinational corporations, which profit from third world exploitation.

A former US President once famously said that we are the target of terrorists because we practise freedom, democracy and human rights.

The unpalatable truth is that we are targeted by terrorists because our governments deny freedom, democracy and human rights to people in the third world, whose resources are coveted by our multinational corporations, and where poverty, injustice and repression

provide fertile ground for hatred and fanaticism.

It is time to acknowledge that, in much of the world, we stand for dictatorship, bondage and human exploitation.

US Government agents have deposed popularly elected leaders, who, not unreasonably, wanted the riches of their land to be shared by the people who worked it, and replaced them with murderous tyrants, willing to sell their own people to multinational corporations.

Classicists will tell you that ancient Athens gave the world democracy. They sometimes forget to add that it was underpinned by endemic slavery.

If we are honest, it is time that we woke up to the fact that modern western democracy is buttressed by a rotten clientele of despots and oligarchies, who fleece and brutalise their people for the benefit of west-

ern multinationals such as the oil companies.

However understandable the thirst for vengeance following the savagery of 11 September may be, retaliation will not rid us of world terrorism. If retaliation worked, the Israelis would be the world's most secure people.

A massive military retaliation causing multiple deaths will only guarantee an endless supply of fresh terrorists for decades to come. Let us not pretend that revenge will deliver security.

How can the US and UK credibly claim the moral leadership in making the world a safer place, when they are the world's two leading arms exporters?

If you want to make the world a safer place, end this obscene trade in death and destruction."

[Applause.] [At this point he was cut off by the Presiding Officer]

"All out for November 18" – Conference call

Terry Conway

Hundreds of activists from across the country attended the national conference of the Stop the War Coalition held in London on October 27 which represented an important step forward in building the movement to oppose the war drive of Blair and Bush.

Oxford: call to unite campaign

A RALLY of 500 in the Town Hall on November 1st gave a glimpse of the scope for building a mass anti-war movement in Oxford.

The main hall was packed to hear speakers including Jeremy Corbyn MP, Kate Hudson from CND and Morning Star editor John Haylett.

The size of turn-out meant that there were some unfamiliar faces in the audience, but a lack of any opportunity for discussion or questions made it difficult to assess their political standpoint.

And the meeting also displayed some of the problems that have dogged the anti-war campaign in Oxford, where there is not just one campaign ... but two!

The Stop the War Coalition organised and controlled this rally, and – despite a formal agreement that each campaign will support and advertise the activities of the other – failed to mention the other events taking place in the town, including a lobby of local MP Andrew Smith's surgery the following night, which might well have attracted more people.

The Coalition is running stalls in town on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and has called a local demonstration on December 2. The rival organisation, Oxford for Peace, runs vigils on Thursday nights.

Socialist Outlook supporters have urged the formation of a single united campaign, but it appears that each organisation has settled in to its own pattern of activity, with neither offering any democratic structure, or the possibility of more strategic debate.

Meanwhile the scope for wider support is underlined by the unanimous vote of a meeting of three Labour Party wards for an anti-war resolution forwarded to them from the Trades Council.

There has also been a flowering of anti-war groups in colleges and Universities, with a 70-strong meeting at Brookes University.

The meeting took place in the context of remarkable mobilisations across the country, which have continued since which illustrate the breadth of opposition to their murderous crusade.

In town after town, from Exeter to Abergavenny, from Newcastle to Oxford demonstrations and public rallies have shown not only the numbers demanding that the war stop but the diversity of their backgrounds and political views.

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

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

Speeches from George Galloway, Jeremy Corbyn MP and Lindsay German opened the day, underlining the barbarity of the so-called "coalition against terrorism".

Despite what we are told in most of the media, the war is not going well for the imperialists either in terms of public support or in terms of actual military action. It was no surprise to any campaigner that opinion polls subsequently published underlined what we have all been clear of from discussions in workplaces and on the streets – there is less and less enthusiasm for what Blair is doing in service of his paymaster in the White House.

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

Stop the War should be the main slogan, and we should also continue to raise demands in opposition to the racist backlash and in opposition to the erosion of civil liberties.

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

Previously, this had been opposed by the SWP, who though they expressed compassion for those who were killed in the US, felt that condemnation was not the right formula for either the left or the anti-war move-

ment to adopt.

It is welcome that they have subsequently changed their view, as in fact in order to build the broadest possible movement against the imperialist onslaught it is necessary to take this stance.

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

In fact these two resolutions, though different in detail made the same fundamental political point – that the coalition should oppose Islamic fundamentalism.

The resolution from the CPGB/AWL did so in more measured tones, while the other resolution was more dramatic as could be seen from both its headline: "Stop the atrocities of both poles of terrorism" and one of its slogans, "No to US, Nato and Islamic terrorism".

The conference rightly rejected both these positions overwhelmingly. The majority of those present understood that it is necessary to build the broadest possible movement to stop this war, and that to add these types of demands would cut across our ability to do so in the most dramatic way, especially in terms of building on the remarkable and unprecedented involvement of huge sections of the Muslim community.

Such an approach should always be the one that revolutionaries take in building united front type organisations. At the same time of course, we have an obligation to argue for our own politics within the movement.

Opposition to the reactionary ideology of fundamentalism is a vital question for us to raise. However we will do so with rather more impact in a situation where we are marching shoulder to shoulder with young Muslims who may well not have had access to arguments against it in the past than if we cut ourselves off from this audience.

Having taken the right decision on the objectives of the movement, the conference went on to elect a new national steering committee. Unfortunately this was to prove a rather messy and unedifying affair. An impressive list of nominees had been drawn up by the interim steering committee and further nominations were invited, resulting in a rather long list.

Members of the steering committee eventually agreed included Christine



Part of the November 3 demonstration in Manchester

Shawcroft from newly formed Labour against the War and a representative from the Socialist Alliance.

The movers of the CPGB/AWL resolution put themselves forward for election, despite having not supported the statement of aims as finally voted on. Martin Thomas of the AWL in particular gained few friends in motivating himself for the committee when he argued that he should be included in order to continue the debate!

Clearly the bulk of the conference felt that the role of the steering committee should be to work along the agreed lines to build the broadest possible opposition to the war.

At least the CPGB's Tina Becker made clear that if elected she would work to build the campaign, while still arguing that it had not been established on the best basis. Neither nomination was agreed by the conference.

Despite this difficulties, and the fact that supporters of the other minority position withdrew their nominations after from the steering committee, the majority of participants went away determined to increase their efforts to ensure the November 18 march is even bigger than the October 13 demonstration. We can stop this war.

Manchester on the march against war

The anti-war movement in Manchester has been very active over the past month. There have been numerous public meetings in various parts of the city. There is a regular stall in the main shopping area every Saturday and a weekly vigil.

On Sunday, 30th October there was a naked protest in St Ann's Square by an ex-tank commander in the Royal Tank Regiment, James Thorne. He was so outraged by the attacks on Afghanistan that he carried out this protest in the nude carrying a banner reading: "This is a war of rich against poor".

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

indecent exposure and bound over by the court.

He has vowed to continue campaigning against the war. On November 3, there was a large demonstration organised by Greater Manchester Coalition to Stop the War.

Over 2500 people marched from Whitworth Park to Castlefield Arena. About a quarter of the demonstration was made up of members of Manchester's Pakistani community. The march grew in size as it passed through the city centre.

Slogans shouted included: "George Bush we know you, your daddy was a killer too!" and "Bush and Blair hear us say, how many kids have you killed today!"

Primary aged Asian school children were some of the most vociferous chanters.

Labour against the War

Labour against the War was launched last month by Labour MP's, National Executive members, trade unionists and Labour Party activists opposed to the war against Afghanistan following a packed meeting in the House of Commons.

Spin in the papers suggesting that more right-wing MPs would propose that the campaign be toned down, and simply titled "Labour against the Bombing" proved wide of the mark.

This is the campaign's founding statement:

LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR unequivocally condemns the terrorist outrages in the US on September 11th as a violation of human rights and an attack on working people of many races.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR believes that military action against Afghanistan will neither eradicate the threat of terrorism nor cre-



ate a stable international framework in which the rule of law will be observed. UK support for this war is not in our name.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR calls on the British government to oppose the bombing and any war in Afghanistan, to seek other methods, including diplomatic and political, to bring the alleged perpetrators of terrorism to justice, and bring real humanitarian aid to the people of

Afghanistan.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR opposes any clamp-down on civil liberties and asylum seekers on the pretext that this is required by the current situation and will stand up for civil rights in an open, democratic society. We shall oppose racist scapegoating of the Muslim Community.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WAR will work with the Labour party and Trade Union movement to promote these aims throughout the labour movement, stating our case to the wider public and supporting the Coalition to Stop the War in a determined quest for justice, not vengeance.

Affiliate to Labour against the War – minimum affiliation fee £10 organisations, £5 individuals and send to Labour against the War, PO Box 2378, London E5 9QU tel 020 89836597 e mail latw@gn.apc.org

When the going gets tough, New Labour goes private ...

NHS Trust chiefs see stars as Milburn puts the boot in

John Lister

The succession of top-level reports slamming standards of care in hospitals should sound new alarm bells over Labour's future plans to extend privatisation in what is still the most popular of all public services.

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

Another £40m will be used to encourage Trusts to divert another 25,000 waiting list patients into the private sector – more than doubling the numbers from last year – while only £10m is to be used to speed up elective

treatment in NHS hospitals.

The logical conclusion of this approach would be that our busy general hospitals would be increasingly reduced to geriatric units with an A&E department, and carrying out the more risky and expensive operations which the private sector refuses to take on – while the booming private medical industry fills its beds and its wallets at the taxpayers' expense.

Milburn has gone further, and told the Commons health committee that he plans to "buy up" the entire capacity of some private hospitals for a few years, and "monopolise" them for NHS patients.

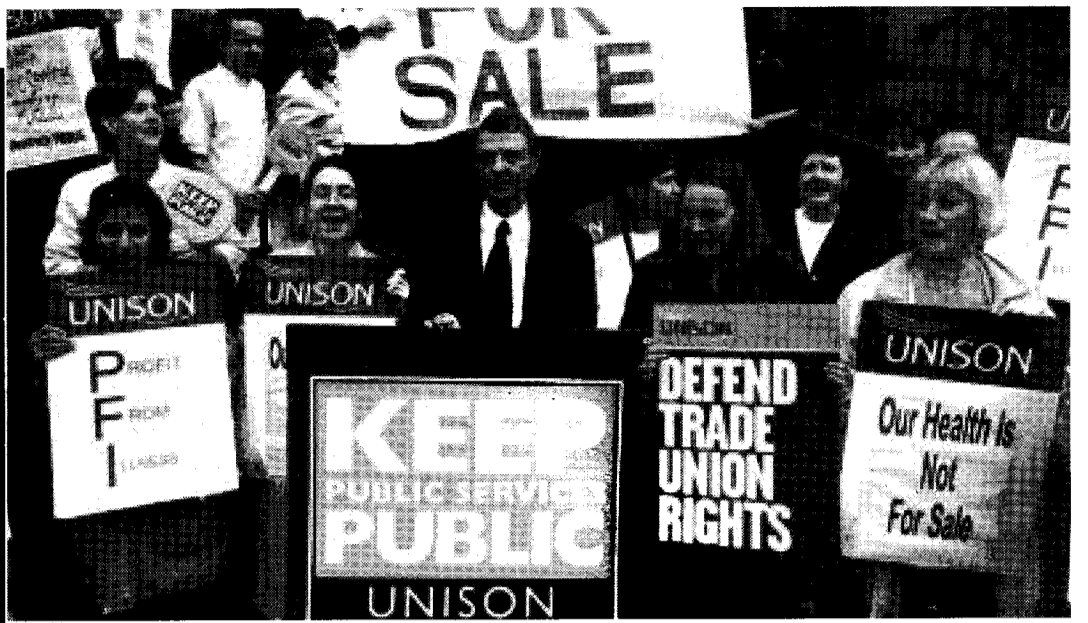
But such an expansion of private medical treatment also means poaching more staff from NHS hospitals, worsening their perfor-

mance, and allowing more reports to contrast NHS standards unfavourably with those in private hospitals.

This is far from the first sign of Milburn's growing attachment to the private sector as the solution for problems created by the chronic under-funding of the NHS by both Labour and Tory governments.

He is the architect of last autumn's Concordat with the private sector, and he has floated the idea that private firms may run a new variety of "health factory" units, delivering day surgery and elective treatment to the NHS.

And amid the growing complaints both from social services directors and from hospitals struggling to discharge frail older patients from front-line hospital beds, Milburn's response was to allocate an extra £300m over three years – to be spent



Milburn's fixation with the private sector has been challenged by UNISON and GMB campaigns

buying nursing home care from the private sector.

Yet the overwhelming evidence suggests that the private sector is baling out of the nursing home market, which yields far smaller profits than converting their properties into luxury flats.

It is estimated that as many as 50,000 nursing and residential home places have vanished across the country since Labour took office – leaving a gaping hole where there should be a service for vulnerable older patients.

Social services are increasingly running out of money: indeed several, including Oxfordshire and Richmond in London, have already exhausted their budgets for nursing home placements and can take no new referrals until next April – leaving hospitals to carry the can through the busy winter months.

The system, created by the Tory "community care" reforms of the early 1990s was a shambles waiting to become a crisis: Milburn's addiction to private sector solutions has left him and his ministers unable to do anything but blame local managers as the problems escalate.

He has claimed that the new wave of hospitals being built under the Private Finance Initiative would bring an increase of 3,000 acute beds. This follows a change of policy after the first wave of PFI hospitals, most of which led to massive reductions in acute bed numbers – and created an immediate crisis in local health services.

But so far the evidence is that PFI schemes in the pipeline at best represent a standstill on bed numbers. In several cases where increased numbers are claimed, this means replacing front-line acute beds (which handle emergencies and waiting list cases) with "intermediate" beds, which deliver a lower level of nursing care.

Milburn's recent boasts that the NHS last year expanded bed numbers – by the princely total of 700 across the country – ring hollow in the context of the mounting problems in discharging older patients – and the shortages of nursing staff, without whom the beds cannot be used. Oxford's Radcliffe Hospitals Trust alone reports up to 100 beds at a time in the busy John Radcliffe Hospital cannot be used for lack of nurses – making a nonsense of the

Largely because of the lack of beds and nursing staff, the John Radcliffe got no stars in the recently published league tables. The management are under the cosh to deliver a rapid improvement – while they grapple with an underlying £4m deficit and an exodus of nursing staff who cannot afford a place to live in Oxford's sky-high property prices.

The extension of the "blame" culture which has done such damage to morale among school teachers, and the management of the NHS by a bewildering series of "targets", "league tables", "star systems", commissions and "task forces", further helps to destabilise the public sector – while delivering the few, if any actual improvements in services.

Unveiling the star ratings for 173 acute hospital Trusts, Milburn again revealed the extent to which he is reviving the Tory call for "enterprise culture" among NHS managers.

The 12 worst performers are to be closely monitored by the NHS Modernisation Agency, with the threat that the Trusts' top managers could face the sack if they do not show improvements within 3 months. But the 35 hospitals at the top of the league table are to be given freedom to pay out bonuses – and to set up spin-off companies, listed on the stock market, to develop and sell new technology for profit!

Worse, Milburn revealed that there were "no surprises" in the list of failing Trusts: in other words ministers and NHS chiefs have known for months that some hospitals were on the slide ... and done nothing about it, other than prepare to pillory the management.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that some Trusts are being set up to fail – such as the Epsom/St Helier Trust in south west London, which not only received no stars, but was recently slammed as the "worst Trust in the country" by the government's inspectorate, the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI) The Trust is up to £5m in the red.

But as a new chief executive was wheeled in, and talk began about an 'action plan', it became obvious that there would be no extra money to sort out any of the problems identified by CHI. CHI

inspectors condemn – and then just walk away!

Epsom/St Helier has pointed out that it needs an extra 80 beds to meet the targets of the NHS Plan and cope with winter pressures. It has the space, but not the staff or funding required.

Its neighbour Trust in SW London, St George's, is in a similar situation, with waiting lists soaring, and a desperate need to open another 82 beds. But neither they, nor the local Merton Sutton and Wandsworth Health Authority has the cash required to sort things out. Demoralised managers and staff recognise that they are doomed to endure more attacks from ministers keen to show how tough they are.

As if all this wasn't bad enough, Alan Milburn, in a speech to the Fabian Society, has now dropped a heavy hint that the most hated and destructive element of the Tory market reforms – the introduction of competition between rival NHS Trusts – may be on its way back, under the guise of expanding "patient choice".

One of the very few positive elements of Labour's NHS reforms after 1997 was to scrap what it called the "internal market" – the costly and complex process of annual negotiation of contracts between health authorities and Trusts. In place of competition for patients and revenue, Trusts were obliged to cooperate with each other.

However the controversial split between "purchasers" and "providers" of health care was maintained, and it now seems that by seeking to use patient choice as another way to clobber failing Trusts, Milburn could be moving back to a revival of the bad old days of the Thatcherite reforms.

All the statistics are beginning to show that four years of Labour reforms have done little if anything to improve the NHS, while queues for treatment in A&E units are actually longer now than they were under John Major.

Instead of shouting at the staff and the managers who are trying to implement the half-baked system he put in place, Milburn should be rethinking his basic assumptions.

If the present course continues, we can expect the worst of all worlds: long waits, blocked beds and an accelerating exodus of key staff from the NHS, while private hospitals celebrate a profits bonanza.

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

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

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

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

If sufficient medical beds are not available, these patients, admitted as emergencies, wind up waiting hours on end on trolleys and often lodged inappropriately in beds in surgical



'Let me through, I'm a Labour spin doctor'

wards – with disastrous consequences for waiting list admissions.

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

It is now quite obvious that this strategy has failed: GPs are

not willing and lack the resources to provide intensive home support for frail elderly patients, and instead send them to hospital.

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

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

Calderdale counts the real cost of PFI hospital

ANOTHER PFI-funded hospital is reported to be in trouble, with the cost ballooning from £34m in 1994 to a hefty £103m today.

Although some of the changes flow from the need to upgrade and expand on the original plan, the project has plunged Calderstone

and Huddersfield Trust £4.28m into the red – after an earlier debt of £10m was written off by regional health chiefs.

Another factor driving up the cost has been "interest mark-up and financial add-ons" according to the *Health Service Journal*.

So much for PFI giving Trusts a clear, fixed price, and enabling them to transfer risk to the private sector.

The promised "efficiency savings" from moving all acute services onto one new site have also failed to materialise, while reduced numbers of beds in the new hospital have forced the Trust to spend more on

other services.

Meanwhile in Kidderminster, one of the areas hardest hit by PFI-driven bed cuts, a new plan calls for an extra 20 beds, and will increase spending on the Kidderminster Hospital site.

The case for retaining ser-



VICES locally is underlined by the chronic pressure on beds at Worcester in advance of the opening of the PFI-funded Royal Infirmary.

Campaigners have warned that Worcestershire Health Authority would not be able to close anywhere near as many beds as they intended, once the new hospital is complete.

QUEUE
↓
HERE



Green light to export NHS waiting list to Europe

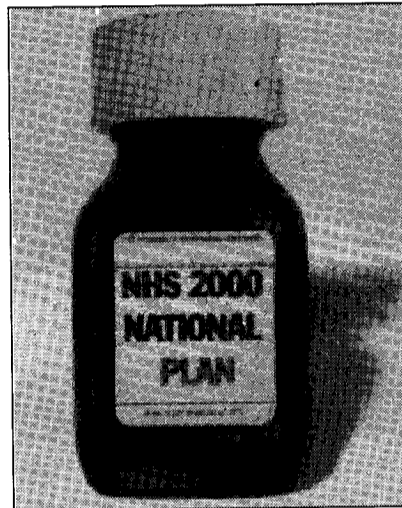
THE NHS may be frantically importing doctors and nursing staff from anywhere it can find a pool of qualified English-speaking recruits: but Health Secretary Alan Milburn has now given the nod to the export of patients for treatment in under-used hospitals in Europe.

The first patient to take advantage of this new relaxation of NHS rules and receive a knee replacement in a German hospital is a 60-year old woman from Wiltshire, who had been waiting 22 months since she was first referred by her GP.

Jackie Whatley and her husband will have to fork out for air fares and accommodation in Germany.

But the logic of Milburn's NHS paying out £6,000 to finance the operation in Rodbalen, near the French border, rather than ensuring that British hospitals have the resources to cope with waiting lists is far from clear.

PCTs have now been empowered to



One vital missing ingredient: beds

buy treatments from European hospitals, ranging from one-off operations for people waiting more than the maximum 18 months to batches of opera-

tions such as cataract and hip replacements.

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

No extra cash is being provided to pay for overseas treatment.

And the new arrangement is thought to be most attractive to patients from the south east corner of England, where they may actually be closer to a French hospital than one in the NHS.

Why Germany has beds to spare

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

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

But it is clear that not only has Germany's expensive health care system met demand within Germany, it has exceeded it! According to the latest available figures, Germany spent over 10 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on health care in 1998, the highest share of GDP in Europe. Of this almost 80% was public spending, with the remainder made up by private treatment. By contrast the UK spent less than 7 percent, lower than almost every other European country.

OECD figures also show that the UK had fewer acute hospital beds per head of population than any OECD country other than Turkey, and one of the lowest proportions of practising nurses per head, while only Mexico, Korea and Turkey had fewer practising physicians.

Scots to stay nearer home

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

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

The Scottish NHS is to simplify the process of paying for patients to be treated, in hospitals outside their area of residence.

Anger and confusion over "free" nursing care

Confusion continues over the implementation of the government's policy of providing free nursing care for people receiving continuing care in nursing homes in England.

Help the Aged has called for the "complex" plan, which should have become operational on October 1, to be "sent back to the drawing board".

Some 42,000 people living in nursing homes need to be assessed to determine which of three official "bands" of nursing care they should be entitled to - whether this be to the value of £35, £70 or £110 per week.

Up to 35,000 of these people are currently having to pay the full cost of their nursing home care, as a result of the Tory government's so-called "community care" reforms.

Ministers have expected that one in ten will receive the lowest allocation, with the bulk of their care being regarded as "social" care and still subject to means-tested charges.

Even those awarded the maximum £110 per week could still wind up facing charges in excess of £200 per week for "social" care, which can include help with such essentials as washing, eating and using the toilet.

Charities representing older people have pressed for the introduction of a fourth band, in which all care costs



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

will be met for those whose nursing needs are greater than £110 per week.

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

Age Concern has warned that many older people will be "bitterly disappointed" at the level of funding they will get. Anger will be even greater in England, because in Scotland nursing home residents with similar needs should get all their nursing and per-

sonal care paid for by the government.

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

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

profits by holding down salary costs.

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

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

A recent article in *The Scotsman* newspaper highlights the fact that anyone receiving the "free" care will lose the £55.30 a week Attendance Allowance (currently paid to 135,000 Scots pensioners). Attendance Allowance payments will continue for those receiving nursing home care in England.

To make matters worse, the actual cost of personal care is significantly higher than the £90 a week which the Scottish Executive will pay - leaving "subsidised" rather than "free" social care.

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

How should the Alliance elect its leadership?



Terry Conway

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

Firstly, there has been opposition on the Conference Arrangements Committee from both the Socialist Party and the CPGB to the idea that this conference should have elections at all.

The idea that you should put this much energy into holding a conference to sort of a constitution ... and then carry on with the same old structures until some time in the future, seemed extraordinary to the rest of us.

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

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

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

It would also have made elections much more straightforward and easier to follow – there would have been enough time between agree-

ing a system of election and implementing it to ensure that the process ran smoothly.

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

The next Executive Committee of the Socialist Alliance on November 17 will debate this question and put a recommendation to the conference as to whether the elections should take place or whether a subsequent conference should be held.

The ISG will continue to argue that it is vital that a new Executive is elected on December 1. Given the substantial development of the Alliance over the last year, it would be completely wrong to just continue with the existing leadership.

This from our point of view is the key argument – though it would take a good deal of resources that could be better used elsewhere to organise another conference.

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

The second issue that has aroused some heat is the question of the system of elections. The ISG, together with the SWP and others is proposing that this be done on the basis of a slate system.

In our view this is vital because the Executive we need coming out

of this conference must be able to be assessed as and to work as a team. Only a slate system allows the presentation and election of a politically and practically balanced team anyone can do it

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

There is an assumption running through these arguments that the SWP, as the largest organisation involved can control the outcome of an election by slates – though apparently not by other means. The further implication is that such apparent control will be used to exclude others.

There are a number of problems with this argument.

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

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

Nor are there any easy organisational ways round such a danger, were it to actually exist.

The Socialist Party, it is true, sets out a system whereby the National Executive would comprise a number of different sections elected in different ways, with the existence of "members' platforms" with the right to direct representation.

There is nothing in principle wrong with this sort of proposal, but we don't think that it represents the stage of development that the Socialist Alliance has actually reached.

The irony is that the rest of the Socialist Party's proposals, as we have argued before, actually seek to further federalise rather than centralise the organisation – but they then put forward proposals that would be more appropriate to a more developed, centralised organisation.

Worker's Liberty supports the alternative vote system put forward in the constitution we support, but then come up with proposals that members can form a caucus and get guaranteed representation. There is no way that such a proposal could work in the context of elections at this conference, which Workers Liberty supports.

More importantly the proposal seems based on the projection that a slate supported by the SWP will be guilty of some heinous crime and then tries to work its way round it. While this proposal, in many ways a simplified version of members' platforms is not wrong in principle it does not meet the needs of the Socialist Alliance at the present time.

The proposal from the CPGB (as well as a proposal from Geoff Barr of Exeter) is that the Executive should be elected on the basis of Single Transferable Vote. The problem with this proposal is that in practice STV becomes a popularity poll.

In particular, it means that independents who are from a relatively small local alliance and for whatever reason have not yet played a high profile national role are likely to receive short shrift through such a system. In Geoff Barr's version we could end up with a highly unbalanced Executive, much less representative than by any of the other mechanisms.

The CPGB have a suggestion to get round this by putting forward the possibility of an election preparation committee, which would develop a recommended list. Again, this is not a proposal that should be automatically thrown out of court in the long term.

However, in the here and now it does not get anywhere. This conference could not elect a representative committee to do this work; there is not the basis to do so. And the very idea of a list (slate) is undermined by the fact that the votes will then take place on individuals, which could well lead to a situation where balance is lost on the basis of who is best known.

As the Socialist Alliance grows and develops, many further discussions will need to take place about what sort of leadership best meets our needs at a particular stage. In the meantime, the best approach the conference can adopt is to resolve to go ahead with elections and to support a slate system to carry this through.

Why the Socialist Alliance needs a publication

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

"a) The Socialist Alliance should produce a regular, well produced external publication in the form of a bulletin/magazine. This should be a vehicle for promoting the politics of the Alliance at a local and national level – it should be something that is saleable on stalls, at demonstrations etc. It should also aim to be a resource for members and local groups of the Alliance by carrying reports of Alliance activity, current and proposed.

"Such a publication should be produced and edited by an Editorial Board elected by the National Executive, which would reflect the political diversity of the Alliance and may involve people who are not members of the Executive. The Executive together with the Editorial

Board should also discuss how to create an effective financial system and distribution network to make this project viable as soon as possible.

"b) The bulletin should be developed as the political expression of the Socialist Alliance and should be seen as a step towards developing a newspaper for the Alliance at a future date."

The Socialist Alliance has taken important steps forward over the last year, particularly through the high profile and successful general election campaign. However since that time, there has been a difficulty about maintaining a strong enough central dynamic to the project.

In a situation where new political developments occur, such as the racist backlash over the summer or the war now, the Alliance has not always responded quickly enough – even though many of its members are central to developing initiatives around

these campaigns both locally and nationally.

That the Alliance has the potential to recruit and grow seriously in these times is shown by the fact that since the war started more than 200 new members have joined the Alliance.

This has happened mainly through the distribution of the Socialist Alliance leaflet against the war at both national and local events. The Alliance bulletin, All Red and Green has not appeared for some time and anyway has outgrown its usefulness.

If we had a regular publication, we could do so much better. It would provide all members of the Socialist Alliance with information about initiatives and arguments to support our ideas.

It would enable us to recruit more people to the Socialist Alliance both locally and nationally.

There is no doubt that committing

ourselves to producing such a publication would stretch the Alliance.

We would be forced to elaborate positions and ideas about questions that we have not previously addressed. But we were able to develop and agree the Manifesto for the General Election with a degree of consensus that surprised us all.

This can only serve to develop the Socialist Alliance as a more coherent force, and one which is therefore more attractive both to its existing membership but even more importantly to potential recruits.

We also would be forced to develop our organisational mechanisms to make sure we could adequately distribute a publication, sell it and get the money back in. However, this would be of benefit in strengthening local groups, ensured that all supporters were regularly involved and heightened our profile at local and national

events.

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

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

From December 1, we need to make sure the Socialist Alliance is continuing to go forward to become in reality a serious political alternative to Blairism. In our view committing ourselves to a serious well-produced publication is a crucial next step on this road.

ISG policy statement on Alliance December 1 conference

The development of the SA has been a remarkable success since the Greater London Assembly elections and then the intervention into the general election. This has been confirmation in practice that an opportunity exists, in the present period, to rebuild and reshape the left in Britain into a more effective force which can confront the challenge of Blairism and the continued drift of the labour movement to the right.

The process of globalisation, and the neo-liberal offensive, led by US imperialism and aided by the collapse of Stalinism, pushed politics, internationally, to the right and the working class onto the defensive.

This began to change with the rise of class struggle in Europe in the mid-90's and the rise of the anti-globalisation movement.

The latter part of the 20th century saw the break up of the post-war consensus and an end to a long period of reform, which had been the political basis of Labourism.

Blairism and its march to the right is an adjustment to this new reality and has fully backed the neo-liberal offensive. This shift has important consequences in that it has opened up a political space, for the first time since the war, to the left of Labour, which makes the building a real socialist alternative possible.

This situation been re-emphasised with the current war drive and its consequences in Britain which have been that Blair has been able to push his second term plans ahead without a shot being fired at either the TUC or LP conference.

The need for a long-term development of the left out of the SA could hardly be stronger particularly given the decline of the CP and the Labour left. It is imperative, in the period ahead, that we do not squander the huge opportunity provided by the Socialist Alliance for reorganising and strengthening the left in a qualitative way.

The December 1 SA conference is set to adopt a new constitution for the Socialist Alliance which will be the framework for the next stage of its development. This is a crucial step towards the consolidation of the SA into an adequate vehicle for building a broad-based alternative to new Labour.

Important as it is, however, the future of the Alliance cannot be shaped by its Constitution alone. The constitution we are seeking to adopt will provide a democratic structure for the election of leadership, the participation of the membership, and the functioning of the Alliance.

The issue of the political role the Alliance should play, particularly between elections, however, is not yet adequately resolved – and there is little opportunity at this (unfortunately one-day) conference for an adequate discussion on it.

The purpose of this text therefore is to raise the issue of what the role of the SA should be in the next stage of its development: i.e. after the December conference and what this implies for its development longer term. During elections the role of the SA is clear: it runs its election campaign. It is between election campaigns that its role remains ambiguous.

A recent example of this problem was the way the SA was initially sidelined in the reaction to the war drive after the attack on the WTC, where the initiative came from the SWP and not the Socialist Alliance.

None of the organisations involved in the SA or the independents took the initiative in the immediate aftermath of the attack on the WTC to call for an emergency meeting of the SA EC to discuss both the events and the SA's

response to them. It was a problem of the political perception of the role of the SA.

However, the SWP took advantage of this situation to push itself forward as the primary sponsor of the coalition, while bypassing the Socialist Alliance and the other left forces of within it.

This did not stop the Anti-War Coalition getting off the ground successfully, albeit with flaws. In the immediacy of the situation that was the most important thing. It did make the process more fractious and raises the issue of the role of the SA and of democracy within the united front.

The SA is the organisation which unites the bulk of the far left including the SWP in alliance

with independent socialists, and it should have been central to launching any united front.

True, the SA would need to be more politically geared up and organised than it is to play an initiating role in this way, with its leadership functioning on a day-to-day basis. But it will need to be more geared up anyway if we are to build it as an alternative to Blairism!

If the SA is not able to take such initiatives then its role between elections is one simply of supporting and mobilising the campaigns which exist around the various issues – like Globalise Resistance and the ANL.

There is a danger that the SA is seen as one of several united fronts, initiated by the SWP, each dealing with aspects of political work – in this case electoral interventions.

But the SA is not a united front in the way the ANL and the GR seek to be. It is a political organisation with an extensive programme and with a leadership elected on a political basis seeking to establish itself as a serious political alternative.

Obviously it should support important initiatives like the ANL and GR, but it is not the same as them. If it is to develop it has a wider role to play. It has a global political view of the world and that means that there will be times when it takes initiatives, which are not elections, in its own right. It should seek, even between elections, to set the political agenda on the left.

It therefore needs to develop its own political culture, tradition and experience. It needs at every level to promote a political dialogue both in the form of practical politics and education in order to facilitate its development as a political organisation.

Different attitudes on this, at least partly, reflect different views on the longer term development and role of the SA – in particular whether it should remain an alliance or whether it should become a new party of the left.

Broadly speaking those who want to see the SA becoming a new party of the left want to promote its political development at this stage as an all-round political organisation

The future of the Socialist Alliance



Manchester Socialist Alliance at the centre of a 2,500 strong anti-war demonstration

(although the Socialist Party appear to be an anomaly in this), whilst those who don't want to see it as an alliance with a more limited brief.

Turning the SA into a party, however, is not so much about the name. The political character of an organisation is not defined simply by its name. The issue is whether it functions as a party, plays the role of a party, and is structured as a party.

In fact it is hard to see a long term future for the SA unless it establishes itself as a political force between elections as well as during them – and that means intervening and taking initiatives in its own

right when it is appropriate to do so: in other words being a party. By responding to political events the way a party would respond to them rather than an alliance which responds to the initiatives of political parties.

It is also the most effective way for the left to organise. Establishing the SA as a party would not only make it more effective in elections, but would strengthen the SA itself against its constituent parts and provide a more democratic situation for individual activists within it.

If the SA does not develop in this way it could squander its unique potential to occupy the space to the

left of Labour; local alliances could find it more difficult to establish themselves in local politics; its role will remain ambiguous; and its longer term existence put in jeopardy.

Effectively there are two possibilities further of the SA: that it continues to play the role of a mainly (in effect) electoral framework within the current configuration of the left – with an ambiguity remaining as to its wider role; or it can play the role of reshaping the left in Britain into a more effective force.

This means developing it into a party broadly on the lines of the Scottish Socialist Party, which would contain the bulk of the far left organisations as well as large numbers of individual activists and groupings which do not share the revolutionary traditions but share the aspiration of building a broad based alternative to Blairism.

As far as practical steps are concerned, it is also difficult to see how this can be achieved without the Alliance having a well resourced publication of its own.

This would not only give the SA a clear public presence and a means of organising the activities of the Alliance, but it would ensure that the leadership of the Alliance functioned in a political way. It is important that this process of developing the press of the SA is initiated on December 1st.

Our amendments to the Alliance constitution

As well as the resolution on publications (see facing page), the ISG is submitting two other constitutional amendments in its own name as well as supporting the outline constitution submitted by the SWP and others.

The first, which we understand is generally supported by the SWP is as follows:

"The aim of the Socialist Alliance is to build a broad-based comprehensive political alternative to new Labour. We seek to do this by building the SA as a campaigning organisation at both national and local level, supporting workers in struggle, initiating and supporting progressive campaigns, working in the unions to strengthen the left and build for a fight-back, and by fighting on a socialist platform in elections. We want to build local Alliances which are rooted in local campaigns and the local labour movement. Our manifesto, People

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

We have submitted this because we think that the current formulations in the draft constitution we support inadequately explain the political purpose of the Alliance and we wanted to give a clearer picture of what its day to day functioning should be.

We also think that the adoption of the manifesto, People before Profit was a major step forward for the Alliance. This is by far the most comprehensive statement of policies we have made so far and is a very useful document not only in setting out our attitude on a whole range of particular questions but in outlining our general approach. This document needs to be projected as the culmination of our policy discussions to date.

In addition we are also putting forward an amendment, which appears in the first conference bulletin on the right of the specially oppressed to caucus within the Alliance.

As we argued in Socialist Outlook

48, the Socialist Alliance needs to build on the gains of movements such as the black movement and the women's liberation movement.

We have not so far been successful in winning sufficient numbers of activists from these movements from our ranks.

Strong support for the demands of these movements is obviously a precondition for achieving this, but without also ensuring that the oppressed are given an adequate voice it is unlikely to be sufficient.

Conscious steps are necessary in any socialist organisation are required to combat the inequalities of capitalist society – a society in which we not only live today but which has shaped our consciousness too.

It is unfortunate that this question has so far been probably the least debated issue facing the December 1 conference.

We hope that others will give serious thought to what we are putting forward as we think that to build a serious political alternative to new Labour these issues also need to be taken on board.



Angry New York firefighters protest against Mayor Giuliani's decision to halt the search for bodies – including those of hundreds of missing firefighters – in the wreckage of the World Trade Centre.

US dockers refuse to join Bush's war hysteria

Report by Jack Heyman

At the ILWU Local 10 membership meeting on Sept. 20th in San Francisco, we had an extensive discussion on Bush's declared "war on terrorism", Congress' rubber stamp approval and how it will affect longshore unions. At the end of the discussion, Local 10 voted overwhelmingly to send a letter to Congresswoman Barbara Lee commending her for her courageous sole vote against the war. In a sense, it was a workers' referendum on the undefined, unlimited "war against terrorism".

It began with a report on port security and those measures being considered on Capitol Hill in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. PMA, other employer associations and anti-union politicians in Washington have been trying for years to impose restrictive rules on longshore workers, beginning with requiring sweeping background checks and review of arrest records before being allowed to work on the docks.

The union hiring hall be damned! In the past they've billed it as part of "drug war". It's been a difficult political fight for unions but to date we've been able to beat back these anti-labor bills. Now, in the bipartisan fever pitch of the "war against terrorism" there is a renewed effort to impose these totalitarian measures, like a ghoul rising from the tomb.

It couldn't happen at a worse time with the most critical contract negotiations in years just around the bend. PMA has been making noise about going after our hiring hall, the backbone of our union's strength, and eliminating jobs and jurisdiction through electronic technology.

Waterfront employers have been trying for years to shackle us

with the Rail Labor Act, which would effectively deny our right to strike.

Without that basic trade union right, labor has NO negotiating leverage, NO real collective bargaining. The employers know that. Have no doubt that they will opportunistically – given the present hysterical atmosphere of "national security and the fight against terrorism" – try to take away our fundamental trade union rights.

Instead of defending the Charleston 5, we'll be waging a struggle to defend the rights of all American longshoremen. Cooler heads must prevail.

Who is a "national security risk"? That is a question that was used unsuccessfully by employers and the government to divide the ILWU. They tried to deport ILWU President Harry Bridges four times, but to no avail because the ILWU rank and file stood solidly against that red-baiting witchhunt.

Former ILWU President Jimmy Herman, when he was a ship clerk, was banned from working on the Army dock because he was considered a "security risk". He had headed up the Committee Against Waterfront Screening during the repressive, anti-communist McCarthy period, in order to defend longshoremen's and seamen's right to employment in the maritime industry.

If you opposed the war in Vietnam or criticized the "war for oil" in Iraq, are you

a "security risk" and banned from the docks? We must not allow our union members to be victimized under the guise of fighting terrorism.

Another question raised during the discussion was what could so motivate these suicidal attacks. The answer: The U. S. government's blind support of bloody Israeli policies which have humiliatingly forced Palestinians into squalid refugee camps, while denying their right to sovereignty and resulting in the deaths of thousands.

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

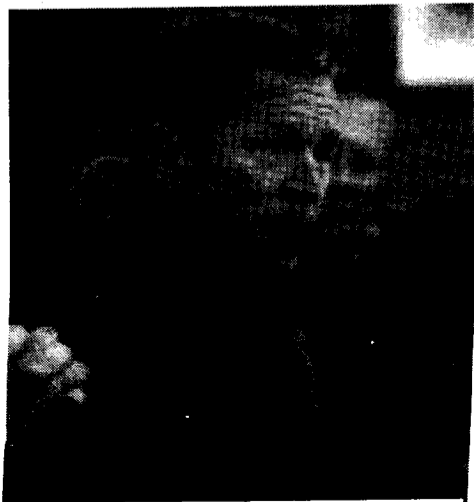
So, who will be the targets of a U. S. war against terrorism besides Osama bin Laden, the terrorist monster, whose Al Qaeda network was trained and financed by the CIA in the war against Soviet troops who were supporting a secular government in Afghanistan? Will the PLO be included in the Bush's "terrorist hit list", as is demanded by Israeli Prime Minister Sharon, the slaughterer of the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla?

That will surely unite the entire Arab and Muslim world against the U.S.

Will the IRA nationalists be on the terrorist list? That would be opposed by Irish-Americans. How about the Basque separatists in Spain? The FARC guerrillas in Colombia fighting an entrenched oligarchy?

And let's not forget the issue of who defines a "terrorist" In the 1776 War of Independence the British considered the American guerrilla fighters terrorists.

Don't let the "war against terrorism" being fanned by maritime employers and the bogus Bush administration be used to deny our civil liberties, civil rights and trade union rights.



Back: war on "terror" – and on union rights

Students lead US challenge

Michael Schreiber

In the USA, the initial outpouring of opposition to Bush's war was significant, although generally modest in size. On Sept. 29, rallies of some 10,000 took place both in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco, which were called by a front group of the neo-Stalinist Workers World Party and endorsed by a broad range of organizations.

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

The size of these events was especially significant given the fact that the trade-union officialdom (with a few notable exceptions) has lined up behind the US war

effort, and even the major antiglobalization organizations have melted away before the pro-war hysteria.

In addition, hundreds if not thousands of universities, colleges, and high schools held antiwar rallies and "teach-ins" during late September and October.

Over 150 campuses held events during a "National Day of Action." The largest single event following the commencement of bombing was a rally in New York City on Oct. 8, which most sources say drew from 10,000 to 12,000 people.

Since then, however, anti-war events have been notably smaller. On Oct. 27, for example, the Workers World "coalition" sponsored events in a few US cities. Barely 300 came to a teach-

in in San Francisco, 300 attended a rally in Chicago, and a few hundred rallied in New York.

To my knowledge, no major demonstrations are planned for the future.

In early November, regional student-organizing conferences are scheduled for Chicago (Midwest region), Berkeley (West Coast), and Connecticut (East Coast).

Nevertheless, the movement does seem to have entered a lull in activity.

We expect that the antiwar movement will not grow to any great extent until the war dramatically escalates, with the commitment of large contingents of U.S. soldiers to the ground war and high casualties and deaths among the U.S. forces.

French people begin to organise against the war

François Duval (ROUGE)

After September 11th, all the French ruling class – including the so-called left wing government led by Jospin – decided to join the US war against Afghanistan. But public opinion is rather hesitant.

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

People expect very few reactions from the Socialist Party. But the main disappointment came from the Communist Party. Robert Hue, its main leader, was one of the first politicians to affirm its solidarity towards American people, but also towards "the leaders American people has chosen" – a declaration that many communist activists don't accept.

Some weeks later, other opinions opposed to war were published in l'Humanité, the communist daily. In the governmental coalition, the Greens were the only party to condemn the bombing in Afghanistan as "an act of war against the Afghan people".

In that rather complicated background, several initiatives

were taken. An emergency appeal to public opinion was issued both against terrorism and against US bombing. It was supported by a lot of associations against racism or against globalisation (like ATTAC), some trade unions and different movements for peace.

In early October, a demonstration was organised by youth movements that had been active in Genoa – mainly anti-globalisation movements, the JCR (a youth organisation linked to the LCR) and anarchist groups. It was not a huge demonstration – several hundred – but it can be regarded as a first and emergency riposte.

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

Another difficulty in getting people involved is the feeling that the French government, unlike the British one, is not directly participating in the US manoeuvres. In addition to that is the fact that people have been shocked by the terrorist attack in New York, and that many people are very sensitive about the fate of the Afghan people, especially women, under the rule of the Taliban regime.

That implies that revolution-

aries must make it clear that they have nothing to do with Islamic fanatics. Most of the organisations of the Left insist upon the fact that Bin Laden is a millionaire and a former agent of the CIA and that his attempt to present himself as the spokesman of the starving masses of the Third World is just a cheat.

Another appeal entitled "No to the imperial crusade" is now being signed by a great number of artists, writers, teachers and scientific research workers. Its main purpose is to counter the logic of war.

Another consequence of the "war against terrorism" is that new laws have been passed, giving more uncontrolled powers to the police and allowing the opening of cars, checking of personal identity and the searching of "suspects".

One trade union of judges and several associations for Human Rights have protested against these measures because they consider them as a dramatic restriction to individual freedom.

You don't need to be very clever to understand that immigrants will be the main victims of such controls.

Now, the next "rendezvous" on the agenda will be on November 17th, where several demonstrations will take place throughout the country.

Resolution of the International Executive of the Fourth International on the September 11 attacks and the aggression against Afghanistan

1 The imperialist aggression launched by the United States as a supposed retaliation for the attacks of 11 September 2001 – which struck the very heart of their territory for the first time – is not an act of legitimate self-defence. It is an act of military vengeance against a whole people, that is being subjected to bombardment on the pretext of punishing their rulers – like the Serb people yesterday and the Iraqi people from 1991 up to the present.

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

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

For the third time in eleven years, the US has thrown itself into a new, large-scale imperialist aggression, thus confirming its choice of a hegemonic and interventionist course in the post-Cold War period.

A major new step has been taken, after the step taken with the Kosovo war, in transforming NATO into an interventionist military alliance without any geographical limitation.

2 However vile and abominable the dealings of the oppressor powers may be, they in no way justify massacring non-combatant civilians, and still less a mass murder as horrible as the one that took place on 11 September 2001.

What is in question here is not only revolutionary humanism, the basis of the moral superiority of the socialist and internationalist struggle against all oppressions. It is also an awareness of the nature of the struggle and its strategic preconditions.

Imperialist domination can only be defeated on two preconditions: mass mobilization of oppressed people in the dominated countries, and the pressure of a mass movement within the dominant countries themselves against the imperialist war their governments are waging.

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

* Carried out by conspiratorial networks, they reduce the people they claim to champion to the status of powerless observers of the confrontation between two logics of terror.

* Indiscriminately killing people of the countries against which they are fighting, they rally these people to their governments, and thus allow these governments to accentuate their warlike and repressive course.

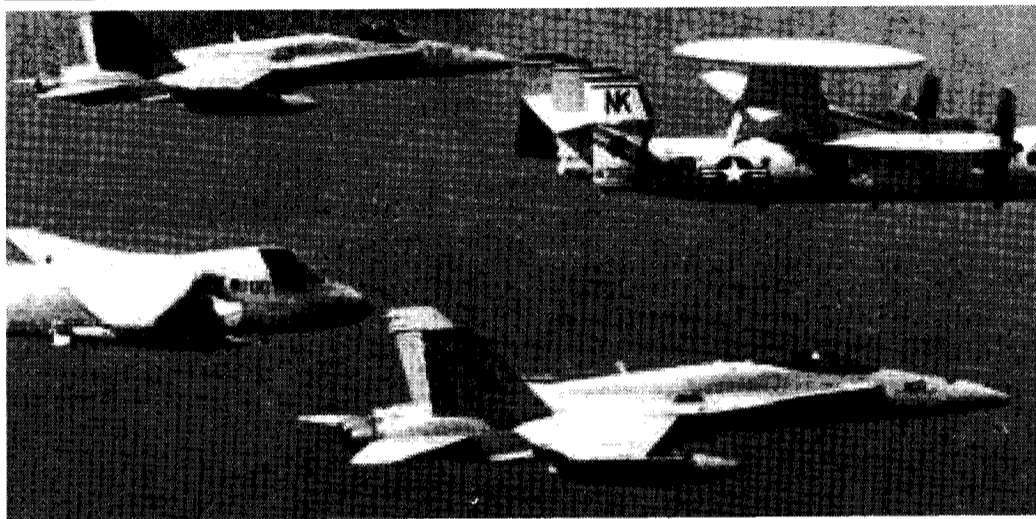
These attacks have nothing to do with anti-imperialism, not even a twisted anti-imperialism. The use of mass terror is an expression of reactionary politics and movements that oppose the fundamental rights of peoples.

Fundamentalists of the Bin Laden type support capitalism and defend it. They are or have been linked to bourgeois fractions and to sectors of several reactionary state apparatuses, like the Saudi monarchy and the Pakistani and Sudanese dictatorships.

These groups want to impose a discourse on Muslim populations that is fanatically religious, anti-Western rather than anti-imperialist, and anti-Semitic rather than anti-Zionist. They want to impose ultra-reactionary theocratic political regimes like the Taliban regime, and they use the Palestinian cause to disguise these reactionary objectives.

3 Symmetrically, the terrorist practices of imperialist governments and of the bourgeois dictatorships in dependent countries, in the name of 'eradicating terrorism' and defending the

Fourth International statement "This war is an act of military vengeance against a whole people"



civilian population in their own countries, only expose civilians to more and more serious risks.

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

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

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

Respect for human life cannot be selective:

- The embargo against Iraq, which has caused the death of almost a million civilians in the last ten years, and continues to kill almost 100,000 people each year according to UN figures, half of them young children, must be lifted.

- The debt imposed by the banks and rich countries' governments on the dominated countries, which perpetuates famine and poverty and block development, must be cancelled.

- We must impose the massive production and distribution of medicine that can wipe out epidemics like AIDS, which are devastating entire populations in the world's poorest regions, particularly in Africa.

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

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

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

5 Oil – central sinew of the capitalist system and major cause of ecological disequilibria – has always been an essential moving force of imperialist policy in this part of the world. This fact is all the more prominent when administrations take office that are as directly representative of oil interests as the administrations of George Bush senior and junior.

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

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

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

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

At first its main goal was to destabilize the USSR. After the USSR's collapse, the objective of US oil companies and their government is to secure the fossil fuel resources of Central Asia in their own hands.

Only these economic and political designs explain why not only the bases of the Al-Qaida network are being bombed. In order to take control of Afghanistan, cities and other civilian concentrations are being bombed by the US and British air forces, under the pretext of an 'anti-terrorist struggle'.

Besides the many deaths already resulting directly from the bombing, it is creating the conditions for a true humanitarian disaster, which is likely to cause hundreds of thousands of victims. Besides, the nebulous character of imperialist objectives in the current 'war on terrorism' is such that it can lead to escalations of violence with incalculable consequences, notably through the use of nuclear weapons, which has already been discussed in US ruling circles.

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

6 The international radical left is facing today the urgent task of struggling on several fronts:

- to put an immediate stop to the barbarous bombardment of Afghanistan; to defend the rights of Afghan women and the Afghan people's right to self-determination;

- to urgently put an end to the murderous escalation of the permanent aggression and state terrorism carried out by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people; to defend the Palestinian people's legitimate rights;

- to lift the deadly embargo of Iraq; to impose on Putin's government in Russia the end of its murderous aggression against the Chechen people;

- to denounce the pressure exerted by the imperialist powers on the negotiations now under way over Palestine, Colombia and Ireland, by threatening to consider these countries as military objectives of the worldwide 'antiterrorist struggle';

- to fight against racism and defend the right of asylum, while condemning fundamentalist terror and struggling without concessions against all forms of fanaticism; to denounce discourses about so-called 'Western superiority' and the upsurge of racism that immigrant communities are bearing the brunt of in Western countries;

- to organize a fightback against the frontal attack on civil liberties and democratic rights in Western countries. It is no longer just immigrant communities that are targeted by the extension of police surveillance, but rather all social movements. The repressive escalation aimed at breaking the powerful upsurge of the movement against neoliberal capitalist globalization, from Seattle to Genoa by way of Prague and Göteborg, is thus being confirmed and reinforced;

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

- to fight for nuclear disarmament and a radical reduction of military spending, replacing it with social spending and massive development aid;

- to fight against plans to open a new round of negotiations in the framework of the WTO, which are aimed at expanding the neoliberal offensive to agriculture and services, at great cost to the poorest inhabitants of the planet; and

- to demand the elimination of tax havens and money-laundering networks, along with control and taxation of capital flows.

While respecting the diversity of the mobilizations and motivations of those in struggle, the international radical left has a duty to push forward all the mass struggles against these different aspects of capital's global offensive.

Support Samar and Jawad Appeal gives rubber stamp to frame-up of Palestinians



Another Palestinian funeral as Zionists step up repression

At the same time as Tony Blair was in Gaza, laying down the law to Palestinian President Yassir Arafat like a colonial governor reprimanding a minor official, relations between Britain and Palestine were further soured with the rejection by three judges of the appeal by Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh against their conviction and sentence in relation to the bombing of the Israeli Embassy and Zionist HQ in London in 1994. ROLAND RANCE reports.

As readers of Socialist Outlook will know, Samar and Jawad are two Palestinian left activists framed for responsibility for the bombings, and sentenced to 20-year prison terms, in a trial marked by withholding of evidence, official lies, attempts by Israel to interfere with witnesses and other serious misconduct.

In the words of Samar and Jawad's solicitor, Gareth Peirce, "until they are acquitted, they will be a serious, worrying, terrible miscarriage of justice".

One of the most serious issues is the withholding of evidence from the defence, and even from the judge. Following the trial, it emerged that the prosecution had significant evidence, the existence of which they had not revealed.

Much of this evidence is now covered by a Public Interest Immunity (PII) certificate issued by former Home Secretary Jack Straw, issued AFTER the trial. We do not know what this evidence is, but some of it can be inferred from the statements of former MI5 agent David Shayler.

Shayler, who attended the appeal, has stated that, long before the bombings, MI5 had specific evidence of the existence of a terrorist group, linked to a foreign state, which was planning such attacks. This directly contradicts the prosecution argument that British intelligence was operating in "an intelligence vacuum".

In itself, it completely exonerates Samar and Jawad, who, it was agreed, had absolutely no connection with any terrorist organisation or state. Indeed, in rejecting the appeal, one of the judges commented "both appellants are young,



Israeli troops in action: is there anywhere Palestinians can get justice?

educated, idealistic and of exemplary character prior to these convictions, with many years of dedicated, constructive work behind them in support of the Palestinian people".

Shayler further states that, after the bombings, an MI5 agent wrote a report suggesting that Israel had carried them out itself. This document, too, was not disclosed to the defence, jury or judge in the trial.

Other evidence not disclosed to the defence, and only discovered by chance, included the investigation by the police of a mysterious "Mohammed", who posed as a press photographer with links to Islamic groups, and whose flat contained detailed maps of the targets, as well as firearms. According to the prosecution, six separate, unconnected, instances of "human error" led to this withholding of evidence.

There were many other irregular aspects of the case. Although Israeli forensic experts removed all of the rubble from the embassy explosion, they did not share any findings with the British investigators, and no evidence was presented at the trial regarding the type of explosion used.

It seems, however, that this was a high performance explosive, the type used by states and other sophisticated groups; yet another indication of Samar and Jawad's innocence.

It is also surprising, to say the least, that the security cameras at the Israeli embassy were mysteriously "not working" at the time of the explosion, and the security chief was withdrawn to Israel before the trial and thus not available for cross-examination.

This is particularly surprising since it appears that Israel, like MI5, had advance warning of a possible attack, and had requested

increased police protection.

The defence is still seeking information about the shadowy Rida Mughrabi, who seems to have incriminated Samar and Jawad, carried out the bombing, and then disappeared. The police are not seeking him, nor any other suspect, though nobody has been convicted of the bombings themselves.

Indeed, the charges against the only person accused of the actual bombings were thrown out before the defence presented any evidence, since the case against her was so obviously flawed. So the bombers, whoever they are, are still free.

The Samar and Jawad case has clear similarities to other miscarriages of justice. Paddy Hill, one of the Birmingham Six who spent many years in prison after a similar frame-up, has been active in their support. Amnesty has expressed its concern at the use of PIIs, saying this "violates the appellants' right to a fair trial".

It is unfortunate that, after months of delay, the appeal took place following the attacks on New York and Washington, since this increased the possibility of "guilt by association".

It must be remembered that Samar and Jawad are secularists and leftists, with several Jewish friends and a history of open political activity. This is not the background for bombers.

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

The defence campaign must now assess where to go next. While it is necessary to pursue all legal chan-

nels, it is now vital to raise the political profile of this injustice. Socialists should be raising the issue in their unions, inviting speakers from the campaign and pressing MPs and other union bodies to support the release of Samar and Jawad. The campaign should also be taken into the heart of the anti-war movement, which is raising concerns over the threat to civil liberties.

Samar and Jawad are innocent. Six years in prison for something they didn't do is six years too long. Without our support, they face a further 14 years, and then deportation. Join the campaign for Freedom and Justice for Samar and Jawad.

Further information is available at the campaign's website, www.freesaj.org.uk

Statement by Jawad - November 1, 2001

"We have had an unfair trial that was followed, after a long wait, by an unfair appeal. This was a political trial from day one and we are totally innocent. The real perpetrators still remain free. We were only convenient scapegoats.

A huge amount of evidence is still hidden, all of which points away from us. We will carry on the struggle for our freedom and justice as part of the larger struggle for our people's freedom and justice.

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

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

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

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

of two Palestinians living in the UK.

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

These attitudes extend themselves into the assumption that keeping Palestinian prisoners in prison can coincide with their families and people falling in line behind a peace process. The case of Northern Ireland should teach us otherwise. Nobody could have dreamt of a peace process for NI as long as their prisoners remained in jail: why does it then seem so natural for the Palestinian case.

We are innocent, political prisoners of a highly political conflict, no peace can exist without the resolution of this as well as of the wider injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people."

Statement by Samar - November 1, 2001

"Today, justice has lost, injustice won, again. The judgement further aborts justice, shamefully. The judges seem to have blindness in their hearts and minds. The grave injustice, started in 1995 has today been perpetuated, and the wound deepened. Jawad and I have now to languish onto a 7th or 8th year in prison despite being part of no crime or conspiracy whatsoever.

Despite all the irregularities, inconsistencies, prejudices, errors, injustices, etc that we were subjected to since our first arrest in 1995, we thought the broader picture would be clear for all to see: we are innocent. However, the biased and blinkered approach of the varied investigating and prosecuting authorities meant that once we were viewed as suspects, they refused to see, deliberately ignored, or manipulated evidence that points in a different and more logical direction.

Furthermore, the different branches of the British government have made a mockery of the British legal system by their repeated cover-ups and interference, and left any semblance of "due legal process" in tatters.

Our basic right to a fair and public hearing has been flagrantly and repeatedly violated by practices that fly in the face of basic principles of fairness, especially those expressed in the European

"I AM INNOCENT and nothing and nobody will make me a terrorist. As a Palestinian and a human being, it seems seeking justice is like asking for the moon!"

Convention of Human Rights and the Human Rights Act. Particularly so as a result of repeated secretive one-sided hearings before, during, and after trial (1995, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001).

The catalogue of "human errors" by all the concerned – police, prosecution, security agencies – about the same highly specific and serious warning about bombings epitomises the travesty of justice. Worst is the judges' acceptance of such ridiculous excuses!

How can fairness be claimed when mountains of evidence or information is hidden or withheld, even from the trial judge (if only those in the boxes seen in court in October 2001)?

Politicians, prosecution, and judges conspired against justice through PII. Today justice has been further denied by maintaining our wrongful conviction.

I AM INNOCENT and nothing and nobody will make me a terrorist. As a Palestinian and a human being, it seems seeking justice is like asking for the moon!

But I refuse to be buried alive with the hidden evidence, and do not accept the ruling of a system lacking basic transparency and fairness, and seeming to be able to justify anything it likes!

I have to continue to be deprived of precious liberty for no crime, yet I have yet to see one Israeli responsible for one crime against one Palestinian or Lebanese in the past 5 months or 5 or 50 years brought to account. Israeli terror and might will never be right.

I will never regret being part of the Palestinian people's struggle for justice and basic rights, for life with a minimum of dignity, humanity, and freedom.

Everyone's life and freedom are most precious. If my life and freedom have to be compromised in the course of seeking greater justice and freedom so be it! I can never give up or give in to injustice. For that would probably be worse than death and is the greatest threat to my humanity.

I will continue to hope that truth and justice will eventually prevail, that the nightmares will be over before it is too late, and that the efforts and sacrifices of so many will not be in vain.

I remain hungry and angry for justice and freedom. I vow to somehow fight on as best as I can and as long as it takes, despite the pains of the continued injustice.

I reject today's wrongful judgement and reserve the right to a fuller response in the near future.

I wholeheartedly express my sincerest thanks and appreciation to all my family, friends, wonderful legal team, and all those who supported our case.

Down with oppression and



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

Bigot's death triggers new Ariel attack

Zionists cash in on "war against terror"

Over the past month, the Palestine conflict has spiralled even deeper into vicious bloodshed, as Israeli PM Ariel Sharon attempted to exploit the west's "war against terror" to further his own expansionism and terror. This threatened to undermine Bush and Blair's coalition against Afghanistan to such an extent that both were forced to issue statements in support of the establishment of a Palestinian state; even, in Blair's case, using the unprecedented term "a viable Palestinian state".

The excuse for Israel's latest brutality, which saw over 40 Palestinian deaths in the course of a week, was the assassination of Israel's ultra-nationalist Tourism minister, Rehavam Ze'evi. Ze'evi was a racist thug, whose political "philosophy" rested on one simple line – the expulsion ("transfer") of all Palestinians from Palestine (or, as Ze'evi called it, "the western part of the Land of Israel"), and their resettlement across the river Jordan.

Ze'evi has been regularly re-elected to the Knesset on this platform, and his small party was implacably opposed to any negotiations with Palestinians. Indeed, just two days before his murder, Ze'evi, together with the (if possible) even more racist Infrastructure minister Avigdor Lieberman, of the Russian immigrants "Our Home Israel" party, had resigned from the government in protest at what they saw as Sharon's lenience and compromises with the Palestinians. Ironically, as some commentators noted, Ze'evi achieved more through his death than he had ever managed alive.

Ze'evi's death unleashed an orgy of national consensus, as "left" and "right" Zionists united in singing his praises as a great patriot and lover of "the Land of Israel". Indeed, Ze'evi was from the heart, rather than the fringes, of the Israeli establishment.

Like Sharon himself, like the sainted Yitzhak Rabin, and like former cabinet minister and Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan – the sponsor and mentor of Foreign minister Shimon Peres' political career – Ze'evi was a member of the Palmach, the pre-state Labour Zionist underground which took a leading part in the war of 1948 and the expulsion of the Palestinians.

Ze'evi, who was a member of the unit commanded by Rabin, which expelled Palestinians from the towns of Lydda and Ramleh, noted that he had learned the concept of transfer from the Labour Zionists. He once stated that "We came to conquer the land and settle. If transfer is not ethical, then everything we have done here for 100 years is wrong".

It is worth noting that, in this display of Zionist unity, nobody mentioned Ze'evi's longstanding links with organised crime and the Tel Aviv mafia. The critics seem to have forgotten that it was these links, rather than his racist views, which led many to oppose his appointment as director of the Tel-Aviv museum.

Ze'evi was assassinated by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), in retaliation for the recent murder by Israel of their leader Abu Ali Mustafa. It is worth noting that, unlike Hamas suicide bombs, and unlike Israeli long-distance shelling and remote control

bombs, this was a classic assassination, with two gunmen entering Ze'evi's Jerusalem hotel, shooting him, and escaping – a severe embarrassment to Israeli security.

Many Palestinians, while welcoming the death of the despised Ze'evi, were critical of the PFLP for providing the Israelis with an excuse to unleash their murderous reoccupation of Palestinian towns. But, as PFLP General Secretary Ahmad Sa'adat notes, "Israeli aggression does not need an excuse to broaden its aggressive operations against our people. The Israeli occupation has never stopped its aggression nor its increasing forceful confiscation and occupation of our lands."

"The erroneous Israeli claim that the killing of Ze'evi has accelerated the violence serves only to reveal Israel's plan to subdue the Intifada and the resistance movement and ultimately to force the Palestinian people and the Palestinian authority to surrender and to relinquish their national rights and their aspiration to live in peace, freedom, and independence. In other words, the Israelis expect the Palestinian people to mourn Ze'evi as his colleagues and people mourn him".

With this attack, the PFLP has re-established itself as a significant, secular, opposition to the collaborationist policies of Yassir Arafat and the Palestine Authority (PA), and has built on its growing support among the struggling Palestinians in the occupied territories. It has yet to demonstrate, however, that it has a viable strategy for liberation.

The PFLP describes itself as "a political party founded on a progressive vision of the common

good, guided by a Marxist interpretation and progressive and democratic values". It calls for "a democratic, pluralist, non-sexist society that guarantees the full protection of the rights of all people".

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

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

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

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

This stageist approach towards liberation is a complete reversal from the PFLP's famous slogan of the 1960s and 70s, "From Damascus through Amman to Jerusalem" – a call for revolution through the Arab world as the key to the liberation of Palestine.

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

This strategy will not achieve its aims. The only Palestinian "state" on offer – even Blair's "viable state" – will be demilitarised, authoritarian, and with strong cooperation with the Mossad and CIA to prevent the emergence of any revolutionary challenge.

It will not be established as a result of any real threat to Israel's continued existence as a "Jewish state", but in order to relieve the political, military and financial burden on Israel (and its US backers) of continually fighting a low-level war.

It is time for the PFLP to return to its understanding that the liberation of Palestine is an integral part of the liberation of the Arab world as a whole from the repressive feudal monarchies and dynastic republics which govern it in collusion with US interests. The establishment of another such regime would not be in the interests of the Palestinian people; nor, ultimately, of the Israeli Jews.

The PFLP is not an Islamist organisation, like Hamas; it has a vision which we could share of a future society. It is not corrupt and repressive, like the PA. Its members and supporters include many serious activists, it has widespread respect among a broader section of Palestinian society, and it has developed links with parts of the Israeli left.

As such, it deserves our critical support. But such support must be very critical when we see it tail-ending the PA's rush towards integration in the new imperialist reordering of the world.

October's mid-term elections in Argentina marked a significant turn in one of the deepest crises the country has ever faced. After more than three years of recession, savage cuts in wages and public services, a growing wave of increasingly militant social struggles, and with the prospect of total financial meltdown lurking just around the corner, everyone expected the ruling Alliance parties to take a beating at the polls.

What wasn't expected – in a country where voting is compulsory – was the huge number of people who refused to cast a positive vote at all. Many risked the penalties and stayed at home; many others destroyed their ballot papers, or scribbled made-up candidates over the names on offer – among the favourites appear to have been a number of cartoon characters, TV personalities, and Osama bin Laden.

But even more surprising, alongside this 'angry vote' ('voto bronca'), was the spectacular increase in the scores of several currents on the socialist and marxist left.

Socialist Outlook asked Ernesto Herrera, leader of the Fourth International's work in Latin America and a member of the International Commission of the Frente Amplio (Broad Front) in Uruguay, for his interpretation of these two aspects of the elections in Argentina.

Argentina's elections

Thousands vote for Bin Laden – and divided left makes record gains



Argentina's economy is cracking under US and global pressures

"THE SO-CALLED 'voto bronca' or spoiled votes, which reached about 30%, show that a large part of the population is fed up with and no longer believes in the whole political system.

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

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

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

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

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

At a national level that represents almost 12% of the vote. Within that, Autonomy and Freedom, led by the former Trotskyist MP Luis Zamora, with positions opposed to corruption and to payment of the foreign debt, but with no very clear programme, capitalised on much of the discontent.

The United Left (IU), which is an alliance between the Communist party and the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Movement (MST), also made gains, as did the PO

and the MAS, two other Trotskyist currents, and the Humanist Party, which got more than 300,000 votes.

In Buenos Aires these parties of the left won 4 or 5 members of parliament. In some other provinces they did the same. So this is a real change in Argentina, because previously the left has not done well in elections, even though the country has seen one of the most intense levels of popular struggle and radicalisation anywhere.

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

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

On the basis of these electoral gains, do you

see any chance of overcoming the divisions which have characterised the left in Argentina for so long?

"NOT IN THE short term. At the moment there's no sign of a political agreement between the different currents to work together, either inside or outside parliament. What's more the biggest left vote went to Zamora's Autonomy and Freedom, which expresses somewhat 'anti-party' positions, not only against the parties of the right, but against the forms of organisation and engaging in politics adopted by the radical, marxist left.

So for the time being there doesn't seem to be any possibility of bringing people together in a political front, like the Broad Front in Uruguay or even the Workers Party (PT) in Brazil. This is one of the most dramatic problems now in the Argentinian situation.

In the various mobilisations of Argentinian society all the left currents do play a part. But this fragmentation of the left does aggravate the divisions that already exist in the trade unions. And it has some negative effects in the different social movements, especially when some of the left use these very impressive mobilisations principally as recruiting grounds

for their own organisation, rather than concentrating on building united movements.

This has implications for important sectors like the 'picket movement', which brings together the unemployed, trade unionists, neighbourhood committees, human rights activists, regional movements of different ethnic groups, and which has been at the forefront of many of the recent struggles in Argentina.

They are putting forward the idea of a united social movement, with political demands and even a political programme, but not a party-type organisation. It's a bit like what has happened in other parts of Latin America with the Landless Movement in Brazil, with the indigenous movement CONAIE in Ecuador, with the Zapatistas in Mexico, which are social-political movements, but which deeply distrust the political parties.

It's probable that many of the members and supporters of the 'Piqueteros' voted for the left organisations. But they don't feel a part of those political movements, and they don't join the organisations, because they see the fragmentation of the left, with no proposals for unity.

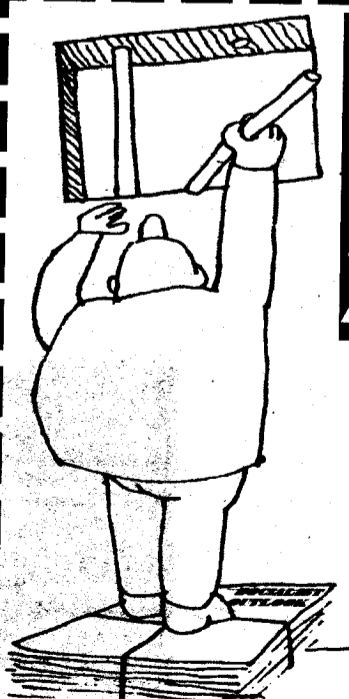
The most hopeful development was that of the United Left (IU), but the idea was rejected by the other organisations."

Do you see any way out of this impasse?

"NO, I THINK the crisis is likely to continue for some time. The neoliberal project has lost any legitimacy. The ruling classes are not in a position to reassert their hegemony through a coup d'état or anything like that.

But there's simply no credible left alternative like that represented by the PT in Brazil, maybe the Broad Front in Uruguay, or similar alternatives elsewhere.

That's the main problem in Argentina today."



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“Not a bullet, not an ounce”?

When even surrender is not enough

largely driven – around the need to make electoral gains and seek membership of a coalition government in the Southern state.

The belief of their more gullible members is that if they get into government in both the Northern and Southern states this will convince imperialism that it should support a united Ireland.

Usually the incorporation project fails and the former republicans are eventually absorbed into one of the bourgeois parties. It's unclear if this will happen in the North. Sinn Fein have adopted so readily to their new role as a right-wing party of Catholic rights that they are likely to displace the old SDLP.

In the South their strategy is to garner votes by posing as a party of the left in order to enter coalition government. The landscape is littered with parties applying this strategy and achieving a brief period in government overseeing reactionary policies – followed by a return to electoral oblivion.

The precise form of Sinn Fein's final journey into bourgeois politics is of largely academic interest. It is quite clear that the future of Sinn Fein will have nothing to do with revolution or representing the interests of Irish workers. It should also be crystal clear that traditional republicans will make a strenuous effort to garner recruits and relaunch the old militarist strategy: and that they will fail, unable to explain how a policy that failed so totally will succeed with their small, isolated and politically incompetent movements.

What became evident almost right away was that the republicans surrender, no matter how unprecedented and historic, was simply not enough, and that the problem for the British was that the unionist right had decisively rejected the whole peace process.

Up until the act of decommissioning the sectarians had posed this as the major problem. This turned out not to be the case. Pauline Armitage who, along with fellow official unionist Peter Weir, voted down Trimble's re-election as first minister and thus posed the collapse

of the Stormont institutions, said that she was doing so because she felt her Britishness threatened.

She then listed some of the elements of this; the untrammelled right to sectarian Orange marches through Catholic areas, and the right to the RUC as a private unionist police force. Armitage and Weir, and behind them a majority of unionism, fear that any sharing out of sectarian privilege will eventually spell the end of their privilege.

They want a 'democratic' government – that is, an Orange government without a Catholic, let alone a Sinn Feiner, about the place.

The technical aspects of the situation are this. The Stormont assembly, at the heart of the Good Friday Agreement, enshrines sectarianism. MLA's designate themselves as Unionist, Nationalist or Other.

At crucial votes only the Unionist and Nationalist votes count. Trimble is elected first minister in tandem with deputy first minister Durkin of the SDLP. In order to succeed they must win a majority of the votes and also a majority in each of the unionist and nationalist camps. Trimble cannot muster this unionist majority and so the procedure fails.

The technical aspects are likely to be overcome.

Already the pro-agreement Women's Coalition has redesignated one of its members as unionist and just failed to save Trimble. Then the Alliance Party agreed to declare itself 'unionist' for the period of the vote, in the hope that this would save the day. With a great deal more difficulty the rules could be re-jigged to give the 'correct' result.

Yet behind all the procedural wrangling lies an outcome on the same level of significance as the republican surrender. Instability is piled on instability.

Trimble fails to get a majority, even returning in triumph with the republican weapons under his belt.

The result has to be fixed – more instability and a major weakening of the credibility of the Stormont regime.

If it is not done very quickly the British will suspend the institutions again – showing yet again that the setup is not some independent democratic settlement but rather a colonial structure wholly controlled by themselves.

Even if successful, the new regime, for all the cooked figures, will have a minority unionist party support.

The British built the whole scheme around guaranteeing a unionist majority in support – and so the Good Friday agreement will drift to the right again as they attempt to reassure and con-

ciliate their base.

Finally, and most significantly, the British, having crushed the republicans and forced their surrender, with the RUC renamed and supported as the state force by Dublin, the Catholic Church and the SDLP, are still unable to produce a stable solution.

Their solution enshrines sectarianism and thus guarantees continued crisis. Even in their triumph the whole scheme founders on the reality that the northern state is irreformable. If it did not hold a sectarian headcount or guarantee sectarian privilege there would be no need for its existence.

The smell of decay surrounding the Good Friday agreement extends to the streets. Holy Cross – sectarian intimidation of school children, dressed up by the British as a community dispute – is but the tip of the iceberg.

Low level ethnic cleansing is a constant feature of life as Catholic families, under the illusion that the state has been reformed, move out of the ghettos, only to find the loyalist gangs of the UDA and UVF waiting for them.

The level of state collusion can be seen by the fact that after weeks of rioting the British were able to move in immediately and arrest a leading loyalist when one of their own soldiers was injured – and this led to an immediate reduction in the violence.

Just before the Trimble vote a local newspaper poll accurately recorded the fall of unionist support for the deal. It also recorded, for the first time, a fall off in nationalist support.

The decommissioning of arms unsettled many of the republican base. The fact that it did not bring the reward that was supposed to justify the act – Sinn Fein bums on ministerial seats – will unsettle more and continued loyalist attacks with state collusion will unsettle still more.

The day when the Sinn Fein project falls and nationalist workers again take up the issue of resisting the sectarian state has come a great deal closer.



Adams: the surrender took place long before decommissioning.

John McAnulty

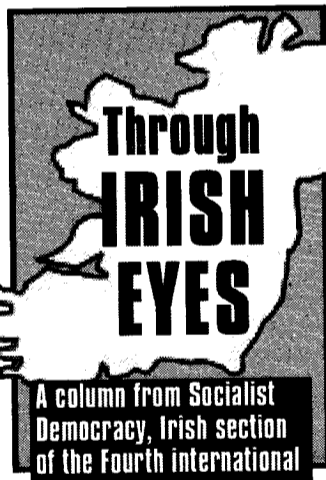
We should be clear about the significance of the October announcement by the IRA that they had undertaken the decommissioning of part of their arsenal in line with the procedures agreed with the international decommissioning body.

The significance was not that the republicans had sold out, as street graffiti by their republican critics immediately suggested. After all, how can a movement that supports the Good Friday agreement, has ministers in the Stormont executive and is in bed with Irish, British and American capital be said to have sold out? The political capitulation of republicanism happened long ago.

No, the historic significance of the decommissioning step is that it is sold out in the republicans' own terms ... on the one thing that they swore to their members would never happen – 'Not a bullet, not an ounce (of semtex)'.

Even more historically significant is the scale of the capitulation. After all, Irish history is littered with the defeat of republican organisations and their eventual accommodation into the state structures that they once opposed.

However never in that history as the movement had to publicly sanctify the politics of its opponents and denounce its own struggle, which is the actual political significance of the decommissioning step – we should remember the huge disparity between the British and the



IRA arsenals and keep in mind at all times that it is a political event that we are witnessing.

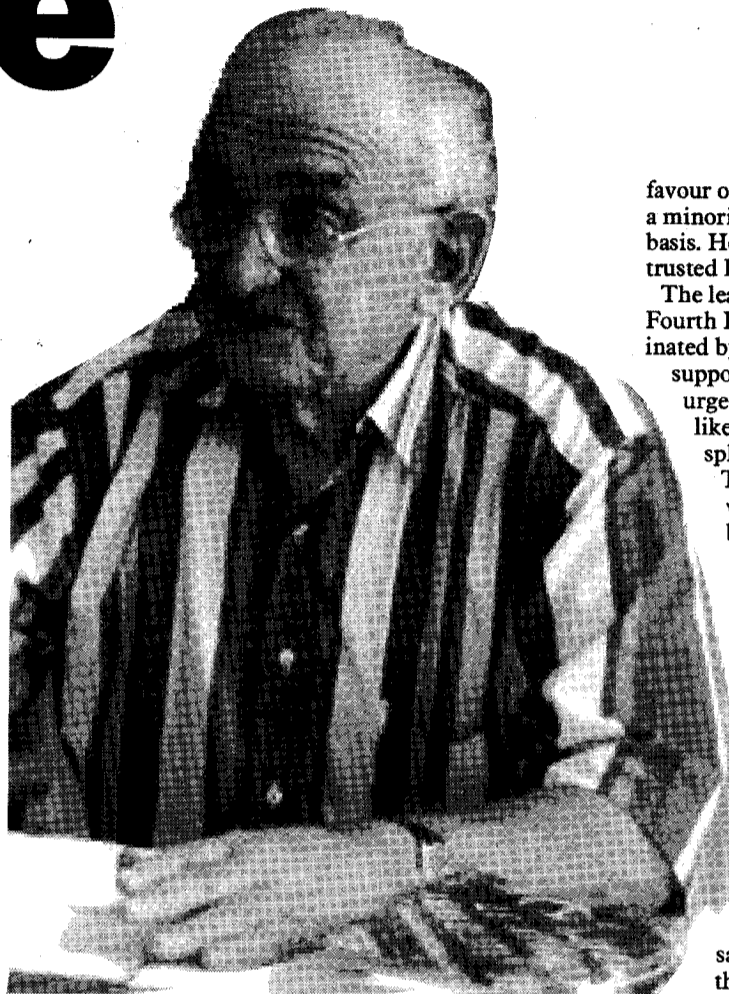
We should also remember that this is not the end. The IRA will have to do more and humiliate themselves further on the arms issue. In addition, as a number of their bourgeois friends have been quick to point out, they are left with no real political alternative to supporting the 'new' RUC as the state defence for nationalist areas in the north in a situation where that force has already, in the Holy Cross intimidation, proved its unwillingness and inability to carry out such a role.

We know the journey that Sinn Fein will make now. Again it is a path trod in the past by other republican movements. They will continue to seek incorporation as a capitalist party and claim victory the more successfully they achieve incorporation.

The precise form of the project hinges today – in fact decommissioning was

Seven decades of struggle for marxism

Memories of Charlie



“His humanity was inseparable from his socialism”

Message from Tony Southall to the funeral on November 7.

I am deeply sad that I can't be with you all today for what I am sure will be a celebration of the life of a wonderful man who made a contribution which all of us would love to emulate, but few will, to winning a better world and to the happiness of those around him.

Others will be far better qualified to make a rounded appreciation of a lifetime of political activism stretching from authorship and distribution in Cape Town of the 1932 May Day manifesto of the Workers' Party of South Africa through his attendance at the founding Congress of the Fourth International in 1938 to his activity in the June 2001 election campaign of the Socialist Alliance; political activity that was always firmly grounded in a deep knowledge and understanding of Marxism and Trotskyism.

But for me Charlie was more than a comrade for 38 years: he became a friend whose humanity I believe was an inseparable part of his socialism.

I'd like to share just three examples.

In 1981 I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Charlie travelled spontaneously from London to York to comfort me, to discuss our continued collaboration around work on Africa – and to advise me coincidentally that continued political activity was a key to combating the effects of MS, something I have tried to maintain however inadequately since then.

That I am still around and doing what I can is something I often put down to that day in York.

In 1987 our old comrade Pat Jordan, a founder of *The Week* magazine and first full-time secretary of the International Marxist Group, as well as a one-time full timer for the Fourth International was confined to a nursing home near Newark after a chronically disabling stroke.

Charlie was one of the few comrades who maintained contact and visited him at 100 miles distance.

In the late 1980s, Louis Sinclair, bibliographer of Trotsky, who Charlie first met in Italy during the war fell gravely ill in Glasgow. Charlie travelled several times 400 miles from Cambridge to visit him before he died sadly in 1990.

I am certain that other folk who were fortunate enough to know Charlie will have similar things in their minds and will like me to be just a little bit jealous of Tessa and Leonora who had such a wonderful father.

Sorry again not to be with you except in spirit, as we all celebrate a life well lived and a friend who gave so much to all of us.

Terry Conway

International Socialist Group member and stalwart of the Fourth International, Charlie van Gelderen died peacefully at home in Cambridge on October 26 after a short illness at the age of 88. Charlie was the last survivor of those who attended the 1938 Founding Conference of the Fourth International in Paris. He attended as an observer on behalf of South African Trotskyists, though he was already living in Britain by that time.

Charlie was born in August 1913 in the small town of Wellington, 40 miles from Cape Town. He lived in various parts of the Cape until December 1935, when he came to London.

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

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

The South African Trotskyist movement split in 1932 in response to the “French turn”, the position put forward by Trotsky at the time urging his French supporters to enter the French Socialist Party. Charlie supported Trotsky in this, but others disagreed, and the organisation split.

This was Charlie's first split, and all his life he argued that many in the movement were far too quick to divide organisations on tactical questions. Charlie was instrumental in founding a new organisation, the Communist

League, and edited its paper “Worker's Voice”

In 1935 Charlie followed his comrade and girlfriend, Millie Mathews, who was to become his first wife and mother of his daughters, to London. Though Charlie left South Africa as a young man he remained deeply committed to the political struggle there. He stayed in contact with comrades on the ground, and followed events closely. The recent strikes against privatisation in South Africa, and militant trade union action elsewhere in the continent were examples he was holding up to others in the last years of his life.

Once he arrived in Britain, Charlie linked up with the Marxist Group whose best-known member was CLR James. The Marxist Group had been active in the Independent Labour Party, but was discussing going into the Labour Party – the cause of bitter arguments between the leader of the Group, Bert Matlow and James, who was opposed to this move.

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

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

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

Charlie was convinced of the need for the new International, under these conditions, as an alternative to the betrayals of Stalinism, and remained so for the rest of his life.

Writing at the time of the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International he said: “The historic conditions of the day were crying out for a new International, a new revolutionary general command of the workers and the oppressed peoples of the world. It was in these conditions that, urged on by Trotsky, we launched the Fourth International.”

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

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

Togliatti, leader of the Italian Communist Party had been in exile in

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

The importance of Charlie's role in Italy was underlined by the fact that after the war, the leadership of the Fourth International tried to persuade him to return there and carry on that work. Charlie did not feel able to do this because he had a wife and child and England.

By the time Charlie returned to Britain, the RSL had come together with the Workers International League to form the Revolutionary Communist Party. Ted Grant was the Political Secretary and Jock Haston was the General Secretary. Charlie became a prominent member of the leadership of this organisation almost straight away.

The majority of the RCP was against entry into the Labour Party, including Ted Grant at that time, but Gerry Healy had already formed a minority tendency fighting for entry. Charlie was himself in

favour of entry but against a minority split on this basis. He also deeply distrusted Healy.

The leadership of the Fourth International, dominated by Michel Pablo, supported Healy and urged Charlie to do likewise. Soon Healy split and founded The Club which would later become the Socialist Labour League. Charlie stayed in the RCP for a time, but then Jock Haston proposed that the RCP dissolve and go in with Healy, which is what happened.

Charlie remained a member of Healy's organisation throughout the period when the Fourth International split in 1953 in a confused debate over Stalinism and the role of mass Communist Parties: but he broke with Healy when he refused to re-join the reunified organisation in 1963.

Charlie always felt that the original split itself was contrived, and that it was more about jostling for control between groups around Ernest Mandel and Pablo on the one hand and the Americans around James P. Cannon than irreconcilable political differences.

He met up with Ken Coates and Pat Jordan, who by this time had launched *The Week*, and decided to join with them.

Charlie was therefore a founder member of the International Marxist Group (IMG), for whom he worked for some time as a full-timer. His main political activity was around solidarity with South Africa.

He was a long time member of the Anti-Apartheid movement and served on its National Committee for some time.

The IMG changed its name to the Socialist League in the early 1980s: and it then went through some serious political convulsions and divisions which finally led to its break up over undemocratic functioning.

The International Group was formed, which later fused with the WSL to form the International Socialist Group in 1987.

Charlie was deeply involved in various events that took place to commemorate the 50th and particularly the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International. Charlie used every platform he could to argue for the left to fight sectarianism.

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

For various reasons we had an extremely tortuous journey, taking more than a day to get there and spending hours on freezing railway stations in remote places in the middle of the night.

However, Charlie, already in his mid-80s remained cheerful throughout, regaling me with stories from his political and personal past.

When we finally arrived at the camp,

Charlie lapped up every minute of it. He thoroughly enjoyed meeting young comrades from across the world and was subsequently invited to speak in both Italy and Germany – engagements he was again more than happy to keep. He told me that he was very glad these young comrades were on the same side as him as they would have terrified him as opponents.

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

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

Tony Cliff and Chanie Rosenberg lived with Charlie when they first came to England, in a tiny flat that Charlie was not sure was big enough for them all, but they felt was luxury. Again while they parted political company when Cliff developed the theory of State Capitalism, Charlie always respected Cliff's incisiveness and integrity.

Charlie was a member of the Labour Party from September 1936 until March 2001. In many bitter debates



The international summer camp where Charlie van Gelderen (below) spoke on the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International



in the Trotskyist movement, he argued that this was

where revolutionaries should be active in order to

win others to their political ideas.

himself with such energy.

PAT JORDAN

By Charlie van Gelderen

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

I first met Pat through Ken Coates. The two of them were trying to restore the viability of Trotskyism and the Fourth International after a short and unhappy experience with the Healy group after they broke with Stalinism

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

This was produced on an old-fashioned duplicator. Pat typed every stencil and roped in everyone he could, including myself, to turn the handle and collate the pages.

Once he joined the Fourth International, Pat was indefatigable. No task was too big or too small for him – helping to produce the paper, sending them off, selling them in the street, guiding young comrades. He was always ready to go anywhere to serve our movement – Paris, Nigeria or wherever.

His enthusiasm in demonstrations was infectious. I can still see and hear him sing the last lines of the *Internationale* with four fingers in the air.

The unfortunate lapse which led to his exclusion from the IMG did not extinguish his enthusiasm, and he was working his way back when he was struck down with that brain haemorrhage – typically at a meeting.

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

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

However the transformation of the party by Tony Blair led Charlie – along with many others – to feel that those days were now over. Thus he welcomed the formation of the Socialist Alliance, became a member of its Cambridge branch and looked forward to becoming a “born again activist”.

Charlie often said that when we call on the workers of the world to unite we must look at ourselves at the same time. This is also why he was so inspired by the development of the Socialist Alliance: it was not just an alternative to new Labour but the most important united initiative by the left for many years.

Charlie is deeply missed by his wife Christine who he married in 1989, his daughters Leonora and Tessa (both revolutionary socialists), and the rest of his family, and by the many comrades in Britain and across the world that knew him.

Charlie never lost his deep hatred of the capitalist system and the brutal misery it brings in its wake.

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

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

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

Turning a page of history

Livio Maltan

With the disappearance of our friend and comrade Charlie Gelderen a page of history is symbolically turned.

None of the comrades who participated in the founding Congress of the Fourth International is with us any more.

No one could deny that throughout his long life Charlie respected the commitment that he made in September 1938: he has made a valuable contribution to the construction of our movement, not only in South Africa but

in Britain and elsewhere – and always with a lucid enthusiasm.

In this respect the category of professional revolutionary – which so many bureaucrats have discredited – is not absolutely obsolete.

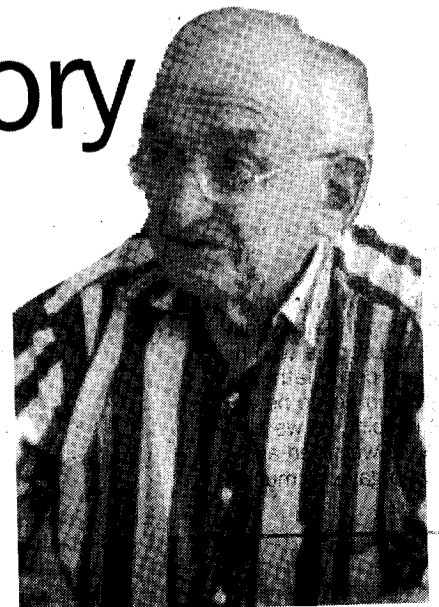
Half century

For my part I still remember the meeting in London a number of years ago to mark Charlie's half century of militant involvement in our movement. Compared with him I felt young, having at that time a mere 37 years of membership.

Finally on behalf of all the Italian comrades I can promise that we will not forget the example that he gave in helping the formation of our movement in Italy during the Second world war.

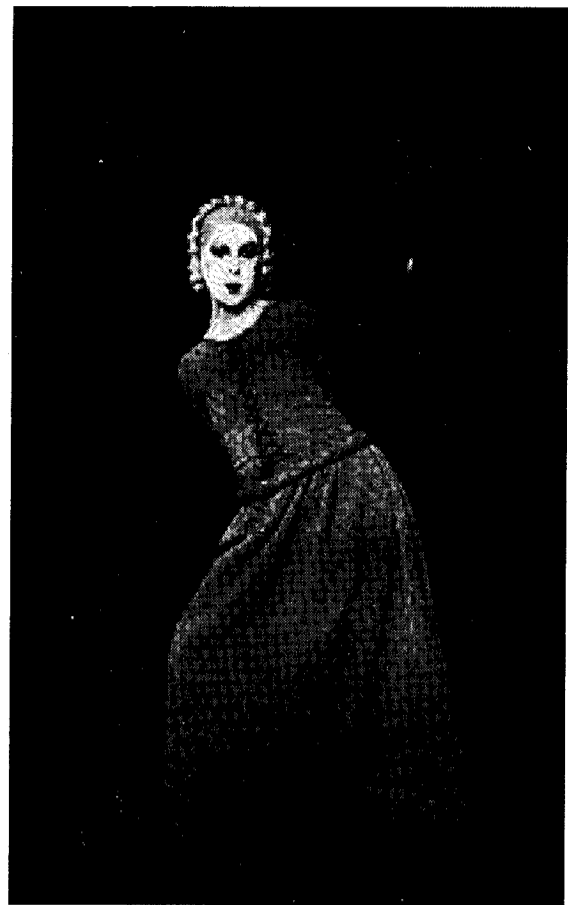
Here is proof that one can still do something for the revolutionary movement while being obliged to be a soldier of an imperialist army.

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





Revolution by Night



Claude Cahun, 'Self portrait'

Surrealism: Desire Unbound exhibition at Tate Modern, Bankside, until 1 January 2002. Entrance £8.50, £6.50 concessions. Reviewed by Andrew Kennedy.

The Surrealism show at Tate Modern should be of interest to socialists and especially to marxists. After all, the leader of the Surrealist group, Andre Breton, was co-author with Trotsky of the statement "Towards a Free Revolutionary Art" that appeared in 1938 at the height of Nazi and Stalinist reaction.

The Surrealist group from their inception in Paris in the early twenties had oriented themselves towards the revolutionary left and in particular the Communist Party. Yet many Surrealists, while retaining at least some marxist beliefs, became unhappy with the increasingly puritanical and repressive attitude of the Communist Party towards their art from the late twenties onward.

The relationship between Surrealism and communism as these artists conceived it is summed up by Salvador Dali, writing in 1931 in his pre-Francoist incarnation:

"there is a dialectical potentiality in the fancy whereby the title of Max Ernst's picture, *Revolution by Night*, is converted into *Revolution by Day*, it being understood and emphasised that the day meant must be the exclusive day of dialectical materialism".

What was this revolution by night? Essentially, it meant the liberation of sexual desire through the unleashing of the forces which Freud had identified in the unconscious.

The eruption of the "night" into daily consciousness would subvert the psychological mechanisms which regulate everyday life under capitalism.

For Freud, the majority of these manifestations of desire were socially unacceptable, to be labelled as neuroses and perversions and neutralised through psychoanalysis. For the Surrealists, they were to be celebrated and made flesh, whether through attempts to depict the world of dreams illusionistically, as in the case of Dali, or through "automatic" drawing or painting, as in the work of Miro or Masson (where conscious control is supposedly abandoned in order to allow images from the unconscious to manifest themselves), or literally, through choosing to live sexually open lifestyles.

One positive feature of the exhibition is its cultivation of "impurity". Traditionally in Western aesthetics our encounter with the artwork is supposed to be pure and disinterested, elevated above normal experience, sacred rather than profane. In the twentieth century this approach has resulted in the viewing of paintings in antiseptic isolation, decontextualised on white walls.

By contrast, the experience offered by this exhibition is deliberately "impure" - the viewer is made aware that their viewing is inevitably compromised by desire. The first

room, dimly lit, is painted deep pink.

On one side Max Ernst's representation of the (hetero)sexual act, *Men shall know nothing of this* (1923), hangs brightly lit in the middle of a dark space behind glass, while a recording of a human heartbeat plays. This sets the tone for the presentation throughout.

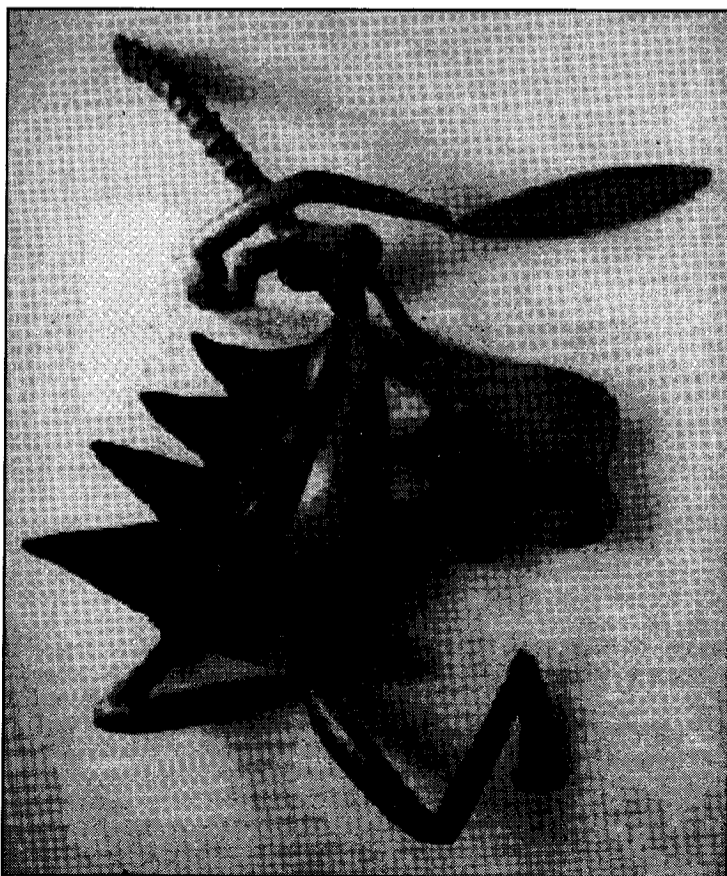
The organisers have tried to give some sense of how these works might originally have been viewed in Surrealist installations (which often incorporated womb-like or vagina-like spaces).

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

To take another example: the repressive and reactionary role of the Catholic Church at the time is frequently alluded to in the works on show and in the labels, yet the obvious idea (to this reviewer) of having a room dedicated to the theme of religion and desire has not been taken up. It is not hard to guess why.

On the other hand, the exhibition seriously addresses both the depiction of women in Surrealism and the contribution of women Surrealists. It acknowledges the feminist critiques of the seventies and eighties which pointed out that male Surrealists adopted the time-honoured strategy of placing 'woman' on a pedestal as a muse, an apparently superior being, which, however, had the effect of casting her as the passive material for art, the object of the gaze, while the male played the active, creative role.

Nonetheless, the exhibition makes it clear that Surrealism was far from being monolithically patriarchal. This is a welcome change of emphasis: in recent years the charge of sexism, while often correct in itself, has often been levelled against avant-garde movements in order to smear their leftist politics.



Giacometti: 'Woman with her throat cut'

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

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

Fini's painting *The Ends of the Earth* (1949) shows her naked, semi-immersed in dark waters while around her float animal skulls representing the extinct male race, which she characterised as "too brutal and cruel to survive". Nearby in the exhibition is Carrington's wooden idol, *Cat Woman* (1951) which likewise represents a positive take on "essential" femininity.

On occasion issues of sexual inequality are skated over. The catalogue commentary on Alberto Giacometti's sculpture *Woman with her throat cut* (1932) evinces that irritating post-Madonna tendency to find the most degrading representations of women to be in some way empowering. Here, the woman who has had her throat cut takes the form of a praying mantis writhing on its back.

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

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

Man Ray, for instance, photographed Marcel Duchamp as his female alter ego Rose Selavy ("Eros, c'est la vie", or "Eros, that's life").

In this context it is good to see photographs and photomontages by the recently rediscovered lesbian artist and writer Claude Cahun, which explore the idea of gender as a kind of masquerade. In one mischievous image of herself (*Self-portrait*, 1929), she dons a blond wig and heavy make-up in an elaborate charade of doll-like femininity.

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

This is taken to mean that there is no "true" self underneath the shell of conventional identity - all one can do is replace it with another shell. This rather fits with current ideas of the self as just one more replaceable consumer item, like the

clip-on face of a mobile phone.

Arguably, this approach presents a problem for marxists who subscribe to the notion of alienation, which after all involves the idea that the individual is alienated from his or her (true?) self under capitalism, and we should look towards the resolution of this fragmented condition in a socialist future.

Much Surrealist work seems to take this latter, more positive approach, in that the acknowledgement of unconscious desire in everyday life may at least imply the possibility of reconciliation with a repressed part of the self.

Yet some writing associated with Surrealism, such as that of the psychologist (now postmodernist founding-father) Jacques Lacan, suggests that desire itself is formed through the experience of "lack", through the self's illusory search for authentication via the desired other. In the view of Lacan, particularly, the self is a fiction, which means that its desires will never be satisfied and it will never achieve coherence or authenticity.

Desire, then, is the single most important theme of Surrealism, and one which the exhibition has, up to a point, covered very thoroughly, incorporating works of film, photography, poetry and prose. Yet it could also be accused of failing to highlight adequately the political context for the theme of desire in Surrealist art.

For example, Surrealism's links with marxism may be touched on occasionally in the exhibition and in the catalogue, but Dawn Ades writes of the Communist Party as though it were one monolithic entity throughout the interwar period which experienced no dissension or splits. The words "Stalin" or "Stalinism" do not even appear in the catalogue index.

Ades' refusal to register the crucial shifts in CP policy and ideology in this period makes it possible for her to come out with blanket statements such as "the surrealists agreed with marxism that female emancipation was a bourgeois issue", as though there was no debate among marxists on this point, especially in the Soviet Union and Germany in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Fortunately, Jennifer Mundy offers a partial corrective to this view in her contribution.

I would certainly recommend this exhibition to anyone who can afford the high entrance charge (the concessionary rate is a generous £6.50!). Yet it leaves many questions about the relationship between desire and politics in Surrealism unanswered, perhaps in an attempt to accommodate to the trendy, apolitical hedonism which is such a factor in contemporary culture.

As an antidote, I offer Michael Lowy's story about a conference in Cuba in the early sixties at which one of Trotsky's murderers, the Mexican painter David Siqueiros, was punched on the nose by a woman Surrealist, who informed him, "that's for Trotsky".

The SWP and the Stormont Agreement: The bread and butter of revolutionary politics?

David Coen

The process of creating stable bourgeois rule on the island of Ireland is in crisis once again. Even after the Republicans destroyed some of their weapons, elements of the Unionist Party demanded evidence that this would quickly lead to total disarmament.

So the Alliance Party, which claims to be neither "Unionist" or "Nationalist", was forced to declare itself as Unionist in order to save David Trimble from his less sophisticated Assembly members who threatened to blow the deal by demanding a more complete and public surrender on the part of the Republicans.

As in 1974, the current British attempts to stabilise Northern Ireland (what Republicans, until recently, called "a failed political entity") are in constant danger of foundering on the rocks of die hard Unionism.

Their slogans from the founding of the original Ulster Volunteer Force in 1912 have been "No Surrender", and latterly, "Ulster says No", for the very good reason that any compromise with Nationalists would undermine the whole 6-county statelet.

Increasingly the left in Britain seems to be rowing in behind the efforts of Blair to keep the whole unsteady edifice standing. In a recent issue of Socialist Worker, Kevin Ovenden explained the process thus: "[The] process is about reaching an accommodation between politicians representing Catholic and Protestant communities. It can reproduce the sectarian division that is built into the Northern Ireland state. But it does provide a space for working class people, Catholic and Protestant, to fight for their interests against sectarianism"

There was a debate in the 1970s about whether or not there were two nations in Northern Ireland. Official Sinn Fein - now disappeared into the southern Irish Labour Party - agreed with the Communist Party in Britain and one of their offshoots in Ireland, the British and Irish Communist Organisation, that the main problem in Ireland was not the British presence (the national question) but the division between Unionists and Nationalists.

The solution to this problem was to focus on "bread and butter" issues, in the belief that once working class people from both sides worked together to defend their material interests (jobs, housing, wages and conditions of work) they would in time be able to resolve their political differences over the national question.



Not so hidden agenda? Blair and Ahern both want to stabilise capitalist rule

Variants of this "solution" can be seen in Sinn Fein's previous (and now Republican Sinn Fein's) concept of a federal Ireland, whereby the Unionists would be entitled to a their own state within a united Ireland.

Most recently it reappeared in John Hume's description of the problem in Northern Ireland as being not a geographical division but a division among the people.

The British of course have always been keen to portray the problem in their last colony as really a religious divide, a problem of backwardness whereby religious conflicts, which have died out elsewhere, persist in Ireland because of a kind of irrational throwback into pre-modern times.

The parallel with their view of the Arabic world is very interesting in this respect. It enables them to maintain their rule by posing as peacekeepers between the two "divided communities".

The solution is the "peace process" whereby the warring "communities" will be tutelage in working together by the British until such time as they mature enough to decide how they will be governed.

The problem with this view is that it locates division, not in class or even politics, but in the "irrational" attitudes of people in the North of Ireland: in other words, it is idealist.

We might say with Marx that it is not consciousness which determines social being; rather it is social being that determines consciousness.

This is not to say that the attachment of people in Northern Ireland to ideas about religion or nation are unimportant and can be ignored. Plainly they cannot, nor should they be. But the fundamen-

tal division in the North is one of class and if socialists lose sight of that we will be lost.

This can be seen most clearly if we look at Loyalism - working class Unionism. These have been among the fiercest and sometimes the most sectarian opponents of any concessions to Nationalists. Culturally they are the most attached to the British Crown, often to the embarrassment of the more "refined" opinion here.

At the same time, while they provide the foot-soldiers for Trimble and his ilk, they feel continuously betrayed by his "sell-outs". Their violence has always been claimed to be a reaction to that of the IRA, though they were effectively used by the British as death squads against them in the early 1970s and again in the period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

There is nothing in the current settlement for them. In the past they had sectarian privileges from their Unionist masters. Now the pacification funds from the EU, Britain and the US go mostly to better-off Nationalists.

They fear a united Ireland because what they are being offered politically is a watered down Fianna Fail-ism - worse than Unionist clientist politics because of its reactionary Catholic and fake green politics. In other words, they have nowhere to go, other than increasingly into gangsterism and trading in illegal drugs.

To pretend that these people are going to be won over to socialism by working with their Nationalist neighbours around "bread and butter" issues is the worst kind of economism. It's insulting to their culture and their traditions.

Solving the national question is not something that can be postponed or avoided: it is a class ques-

capitalist government.

There isn't a "contrast", as Kevin Ovenden claims, between what Blair and Bush are doing in Afghanistan, the Middle East or anywhere else.

This is the war against "terrorism" in exactly the same way, except in a different phase. War is politics by other means, to misquote Von Clausewitz. Blair, a much more Christian, caring, cultured and generally nicer imperialist than say, George Bush II, is consistent in his politics in Ireland, Britain and in the World Trade Organisation. He only bombs people when he has to.

He'd prefer if they just sat down and talked about their differences. He wants peace ... as long as it's on his (or rather, US) terms.

It used to be said that Ireland was the acid test for British revolutionaries. It's easy to be militant on behalf of struggles going on elsewhere, much harder to confront your own ruling class, not just on the "bread and butter" issues but on the question of who owns the bakery and creamery.

In Ireland, it was not the hand-over of weapons that signalled the end of Sinn Fein as a revolutionary nationalist force but they fact that they did so in order to continue their coalition with the Unionists (and the British) to run the rotten sectarian statelet they spent 30 years trying to destroy.

The working class, nationalist and loyalist, have not yet contemplated this betrayal.



Next stop Brussels!

The next European Summit is taking place in Brussels in December and The European Trade Union Confederation have called a demonstration for the 13th December which even the TUC is supporting. This could be as big as Nice last year. The Following day there will be a mass protest for Global Peace and Justice - possibly Europe biggest collective expression of anti-war sentiment this year.

Globalise Resistance is organising coaches will leave Central London on the night of Wednesday 12th December and return to London late on Friday 14th December. Seats cost £45 a seat, and include luxurious accommodation in a warehouse, sports hall or similar (bring a sleeping bag).

To reserve your place, send a cheque for £45 payable to Globalise Resistance (or more if you feel generous!) to GR, PO Box 29689, London E8 2XR.

Cheap flights may also still be available. GR also has a model motion for trade union support on its website.

Socialism on the web

Socialist Outlook web site: www.labournet.org.uk/so
International Socialist Group: www.3bh.org.uk/ISG

Socialist

A monthly marxist review. No 50. November 2001. 50p

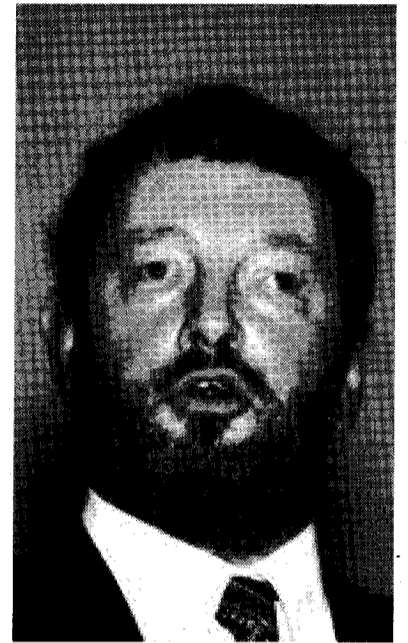
OUTLOOK

Blunkett's variations on a racist theme

Stop Labour

jailing more

asylum seekers!



Andrew Ward

Home Secretary Blunkett

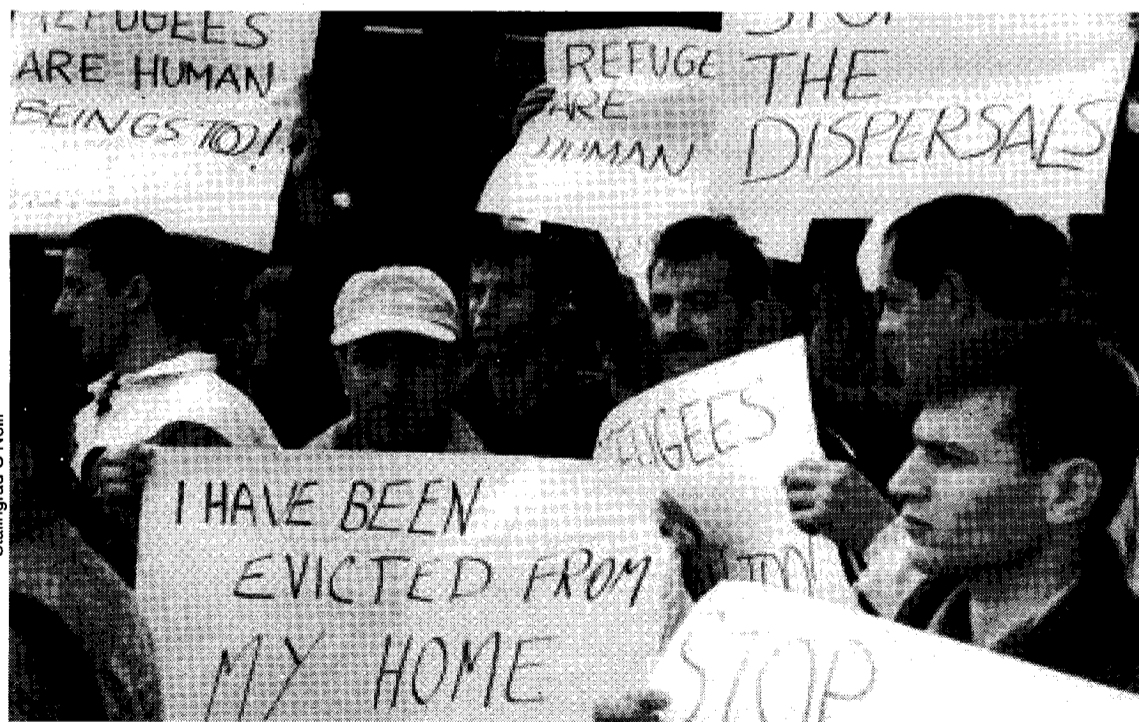
Campaigners in defence of asylum rights took to the streets in towns across Britain with even greater determination on November 3 for a day of action in defence of refugees.

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

More than a year after the new Labour government stated its intention to review the voucher scheme, which forces people fleeing terror and torture at home to live on vouchers of £26.54 a week plus £10 cash, Blunkett announced his changes.

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

At the same time spaces in actual detention centres will be increased to 4,000. Already the government detains without trial some 1,700 asylum applicants in any given week. Now,



Asylum seekers in Birmingham protest at the chaos of Labour's system of dispersal, October 24

as the Campaign to Defend Asylum Seekers (CDAS) say "the Home Secretary is siezing on the tragic events of September 11 in the USA to justify increasing the use of detention".

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

cards for everyone.

In the short term there will be an increase in the value of vouchers - in line with the increase in social security payments. This will do nothing to address the fact that inexplicably the government believe that it is possible to live more cheaply if you are an asylum seeker than if you are a refugee. The recent report published by the British Medical Association and the Medical Foundation for

the Care of Victims of Torture is packed full of horror stories of the lengths people are forced to go to survive on this ridiculously low amount, including mothers watering down formula milk for their babies.

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

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

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

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

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

"Nor would we wish to see the new approach be just a quick fix to use the system to trampolined asylum seekers around a series of centres before bouncing them out of the country."

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

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