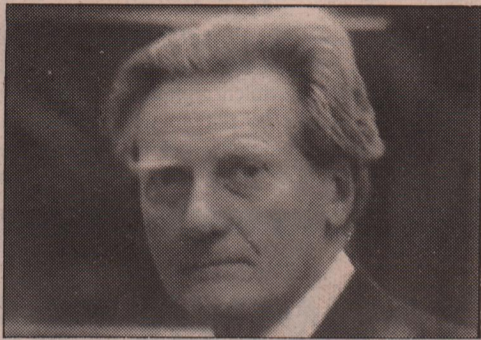


Socialist OUTLOOK

OUT



BATTERED! That's the state of the Tory government after last week's disastrous local elections.

50 councils in England—one in nine—are now "Tory free" zones, with not a single Conservative councillor after the thumbs down result in the local elections.

But Major still clings to office, determined as ever to push through the package of racist and reactionary legislation.

And at the back of the minds of Labour supporters and activists the nagging question remains unanswered—could Tony's team blow it again for Labour, and lose the election that really counts?

The anti-Tory mood is strong. Labour did its best where it was the front-line challenger to the Tories. Sitting Tories fared worse than Tory challengers.

But is the anti-Tory mood enough to win the next election? Labour's share of the vote has actually declined since last year by three to four per cent.

There is little evidence of support for the vacuous policies of Blair.

Indeed while so many are showing their rejection of Tory policies, Blair's team has been busy adopting Get the Tories out them.

Labour has allowed its policies to be shaped by the market values which people are rejecting in droves.

In the very week of polling Gordon Brown boasted that a Labour government would mount its own new squeeze on public spending, keeping to Kenneth Clarke's targets for at least the first two years of office.

This is a kick in the teeth for public sector workers and those campaigning against the Tory cuts in schools, the NHS, pension and welfare benefits.

It deals a death-blow to hopes of job creating schemes to tackle the housing crisis.

It would cause a new outcry in local government. It sets the scene for a rapid repeat of the conflicts with the unions that led to the winter of discontent.

OUT



Coupled with Labour's obsessive opposition to taxing the rich, it means the Party can offer no real change for those who need it most—the poor, the unemployed and pensioners.

How long can a party maintain its electoral support on the strengths of anti-Tory sentiment alone?

Conservative policies on education and the NHS are hugely unpopular. But Blair's party is in disarray on all these issues.

There is some good news however.

At the base of the public sector unions there are signs of impatience and distrust of Labour's leaders. UNISON's health conference last week marked out a set of radical demands on a Labour government to improve the NHS.

Postal workers have given a rude response to Royal Mail's attempt to turn them into management controlled "stakeholders".

The message coming loud and clear from the labour movement is that workers want a Labour government. But not if it behaves like the last one.

Strengthening the campaigns of the left in the unions, building initiatives like the Welfare State Network at this summer's union conferences; and redoubling the political resistance to Blair's modernisers, offers the best hope of turning gut anti-Toryism into a fight for genuine socialist policies.

OUT



Tory government in crisis

Post strike: vote yes

The Union of Communication Workers is to ballot all postal workers on a demand for a 35-hour working week.

The move follows an almost complete breakdown in negotiations with Royal Mail bosses on their "Employee Agenda".

It aims to abolish higher grades and bring in so-called *teamworking*—forc-

ing workers to provide cover for absences with no extra pay.

The union's joint general secretary Alan Johnson has spent the last few weeks scurrying back and forth between management and his own executive desperately trying, at the eleventh hour, to come up with a deal.

So far he has not succeeded.

Most union activists believe that a yes vote is 99 per cent certain.

They reckon that workers are totally browned off with management's intimidatory tactics and point to the wave of unofficial strike action that has been taking place since last year. All of which Johnson has disowned.

Labour movement activists need to start making links with the postal workers in order to provide maximum solidarity in what could be a long and bitter struggle.

Taking anti-racist movement forward

Jonathan Joseph

THE Campaign Against the Asylum and Immigration Bill's first demonstration in February was a lively affair of around 12,000 people. But the latest event attracted less than 5,000.

CAIAB has deliberately been built as a broad-based campaign which draws in as many people as possible. But the recent demo was almost exclusively the preserve of the far left and black organisations.

CAIAB's campaign has been directed at making sure that the Bill does not get through Parliament. This now looks like a forlorn hope.

The blame for this certainly lies at Labour's door. Labour's formal oppo-

sition never mobilised anyone.

At the demo Jack Straw refused to say Labour would repeal the Bill if it becomes law. He said Labour would look very closely at the legislation—implying that Labour would be implementing rather than repealing.

When he was heckled by the crowd, Diane Abbott stepped into to defuse the situation claiming that we were all opposed to this Bill.

The Asylum Bill is itself in line with the Maastricht agenda. Labour's slavish devotion to a bosses' Europe means that it has to implement this sort of legislation.

It would therefore come as no surprise if Labour tried to abstain on the Commons vote, or fudge the issue, pro-



Demonstration to protest police murder of Ibrahima Sey

posing amendments. Already the Lords has passed an amendment covering victims of torture from violent regimes.

But these changes do not go far enough. Socialists should now seek to strengthen opposition in the labour

movement.

We should fight to commit unions to refuse to implement the policy, as well as forcing Labour to make a commitment to repeal the whole bill once it comes to power.

• Conference to fight the Immigration and Asylum Bill. Organised by UNISON CFDU. Saturday 11 May. Natfhe Conference Centre, 27 Britannia St, Kings Cross. WCI.

Hattersley to slate Blair's cut-backs

Bob Whitehead

ROY Hattersley will strongly oppose Blair's capitulation to Tory education policy at a Birmingham public meeting next month. The meeting is hosted by the Birmingham Community Conference campaign. It will respond to growing attacks on social provision.

Anti-cuts councillors at the meeting will plan campaigns against Autumn budget cuts. It will develop a policy alternative to the Tories and their Labour tail-enders on the front bench. It will call for full comprehensive education, no selection, prop-

erly funded special education and full nursery education.

The Labour Council's campaign flopped last year, leading to substantial £50 million cuts in 1996. The Community Conference aims to oppose each cut as it happens.

The campaign's four local bulletins focuses on different aspects of the welfare state. The next one will highlight UNISON's actions on jobs, sick pay and re-deployment. A 2,000-strong members' meeting voted for a series of one day strikes. Only two members voted against.

• The meeting is on Friday 14 June. Come to the Union Club on Pershore Road by 7.30pm.

Derecognition fails

Pete Firmin

THE attempt by the Tory council in Brent to de-recognise UNISON collapsed together with their control of the Council when a Tory Councillor died.

There was a lobby outside of several hundred UNISON members and supporters from around the country. The Tories tried to cancel the meeting as a mark of respect.

After they had walked out, the meet-

ing replaced the Tory chairs of all committees, and reversed the moves to de-recognise UNISON and several cuts which were in the pipeline.

There is visible relief among council employees at their departure. But the borough at large has not forgotten the last Labour council which made devastating cuts.

The Left needs now to develop a strategy to fight for the reversal of Tory cuts and the expansion of services without falling into calling for a massive hike in the council tax.

Network reaches wider



Neil Gerrard MP addresses WSN conference

Photo: Mark Woodyatt

John Lister

"IT'S GOT to be local or it is nothing. But it has also got to be national—and increasingly carried through at the European level."

Euro MP Ken Coates summed up the kind of campaign that needs to be fought in defence of the welfare state.

Calling for support for a European Charter against unemployment, which

already has the backing of several left parties in Europe, Coates was speaking at the first annual conference of the Welfare State Network.

Neil Gerrard, Audrey Wise and Jeremy Corbyn led a number of workshops. Internationalism was a constant theme. Speakers referred to the parallel struggles for welfare and pension rights in Italy and France.

The Network has established a strong track record of organising and

supporting activity on the ground, with two successful lobbies of parliament, several conferences and mobilisations to its credit.

Of the 200 there, a higher proportion came from the labour movement, pensioners' groups and student unions. Alec McFadden pointed to the possibility of the Network becoming "a genuine mass campaign".

There was a determination to organise an ongoing challenge to the defeatist politics of Blair. "New Labour means having no confidence to make demands, no confidence in your history" said Audrey Wise.

The importance the Network attaches to the fight for welfare rights under a labour government was underlined by the plans to organise a fringe meeting to lobby the Labour Party Forum in Manchester on May 18-19.

A constitution was adopted to facilitate a drive for trade union affiliations, and a strengthened steering committee was elected that reflected the broadening base of support.

The Network continues to move forward. It can become a focal point for the fight for socialist values. Labour movement bodies should affiliate now and subscribe to *Action*.

• Contact the WSN c/o STUSU, 17 Braganza Street, London SE17. 0171 639 5068

CPSA: time to organise

Nigel Danby,
CPSA Branch Secretary
North Humberside ES
(personal capacity)

THE three left groupings in CPSA are to merge at this week's conference in Brighton to create a single organisation for socialists inside CPSA called Left Unity.

The key task is to organise against the management, against CPSA's right wing leadership and against the Tories—not only to defend the interests of CPSA members, but to oppose the Tories' use of DSS workers as weapons in their offensive against the working class.

The planned introduction of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in October

will be a frontal attack. As well as benefit cuts of up to 60 per cent, JSA will force down the wages of all workers by forcing the unemployed into low-paid work.

JSA needs the consent of CPSA members in the Employment Service and Benefits Agency to succeed. Management's preparatory work for JSA has already caused a wave of local official and unofficial strikes. Benefits Agency staff in Leeds and Sheffield recently staged an unofficial walk-out after being told they would be forced to work on JSA.

CPSA's paper position on JSA looks fine on paper, calling on members to boycott all preparatory work for JSA. So far the union has failed to organise and the left has failed to build for national strike action against JSA.

Issues like JSA will make or break Left Unity. For some years, the Broad Left has been in danger of collapsing into a 70s-style Communist Party-dominated left. The members joke that—like an MP—you only see it at election time.

In the coming year, CPSA members will be expected to run JSA and enforce the Asylum Bill. After the right's sell-out of the Employment Service pay strike, we can expect pay offers to be worse than ever.

To top things off the Moderates are tabling a set of McAvoy-style proposals which would allow them to run the union by referendum.

The need for a fighting single left organisation in CPSA has never been clearer or more urgent. Left Unity must become that organisation.

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Building the opposition

LIKE A drunkard seeking the elixir but finding every bottle empty, the Tories stagger on.

Whether Major lasts long enough to choose the date of the general election is anyone's guess.

There could be no better time for the labour movement to go on the offensive.

But there is precious little indication that Blair and his cohorts will be forced from the course they have charted.

Meanwhile the relentless attack on the welfare state, cuts in jobs, conditions and benefits grinds on.

There are magnificent exceptions—the dockers, the Hillingdon strikers taking on the get-rich-quick parvenus of Pall Mall—but the class struggle continues to tread water.

Blair will not launch a campaign to force the Tories out. He wants keep politics safely within the confines of parliamentary manoeuvres. His concern is for the health of British capitalism, not the conditions of its workers.

And the vast majority of union leaders will not rock the good ship future Labour government.

The working class wants rid of the Tories. In the absence of a lead from the movement, the only way they see of doing it is by voting Labour, albeit with a healthy cynicism.

This seems unpalatable to much of the left.

It is clear that a Blair-led government will be little improvement on the Tories. But from this eminently reasonable observation a false conclusion is drawn—that the Labour Party is dead.

Political tactics are being founded on frustration. Rather than knuckle down to the task of building an opposition within the unions and Labour Party some want to take short cuts to



If Blair wins the election he will have to contend with the fact that the unions wield large votes within the Party

EDITORIAL

building a new left.

Three hundred people launched the Socialist Labour Party on May Day weekend. Its prospects are not good.

There may be sympathy with the message, but the working class will flock to the polls to vote Labour come election time.

Many of those joining the SLP either never thought it was possible to support Labour, however critically, or—in Scargill's case—had illusions that it was some kind of socialist party.

In its programme and in government the Labour Party has never challenged capitalism.

What makes it different to the Tories and Liberals is its links to the organised working class.

If Blair wins the election he will have to contend with the fact that the unions wield large votes within the Party.

Resistance to his government by union and social struggles will find reflection in the Party, with or without the reluctant support of the union bureaucrats.

The left therefore has to build struggles now, taking them into the heart of the labour movement, and prepare for the battles ahead.

During the course of a Blair government mass disgust with Labour may well lead to a break and the setting up of a new party. It is a course of events not ruled out.

But the SLP has excluded itself from that process in advance by its impatience.

Better news for the Left is

the progress being made by the co-ordination of trade union left organisations.

For too long militants have had to build organisations within unions without coming together to support each others struggles and to co-ordinate the fight.

The cross union alliance of the left initiated by socialists in the NUT has the opportunity to play a major role in the next few years in mobilising union members to fight back against the bosses and their backers in government, be they Tory or Labour.

It is important that union activists in every union open this process out so as to learn from each others experiences and organise against the common enemy more effectively.

Union lefts unite

Duncan Chapple

LEFTWING alliances in 15 of Britain's strongest unions are linking together. Their conference in November will be a major development in working class politics.

The co-ordination is led by the Socialist Teachers Alliance, which is close to taking the leadership of the National Union of Teachers in two years time. The planned network will allow co-ordinated campaigning and solidarity between workers in the public services, print and media, manufacturing, civil service, education and other industries.

The left in the unions was well represented at a recent meeting of sponsoring organisations. National Executive members of some unions attended.

The trades unionists are planning a important conference to co-ordinate their activities. The Saturday November 16 assembly will plan the defence of pay and conditions and the need for unions to fight for renationalisation, against privatisation, for the repeal of the anti-union laws and to continue the fight against a Labour government.

Fred Leplat, a leader of the Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic UNISON, said: "It brings together people from varied political traditions on the left. The leaderships of the different Broad Lefts are breaking down their parochialism so they can fight the Tories and the rightwing in the labour movement. It builds united action despite our different traditions. That's the most important result."

The Broad Lefts are currently discussing a programme. It will be a political framework for discussions over the next six months. The programme's proposals on the minimum wage, work for all and the repeal of anti-union laws will help politically focus struggles against different employers.

• Write to STA, 116, Rosslyn Avenue, Coventry, CV6 1GN.

Scottish Socialist Alliance launch success

Thomas Williams

FOUR hundred people founded the Scottish Socialist Alliance (SSA) last month.

The SSA's founding conference on April 20 committed it to clear socialist objectives. It aims to replace capitalism with democratic ownership. It stands for solidarity with all those fighting injustice. The SSA opposes government Quangos, all discrimination and British nuclear weapons. It will promote international solidarity amongst workers and oppressed peoples and stands for worldwide socialism.

The SSA emerged from the Scottish Socialist Movement. The Movement drew together leftwing activists in the Labour party and Scottish Nationalist party. The Communist Party of Scotland and Scottish Militant Labour also took part.

The SSA developed after Arthur Scargill made it clear that his Socialist Labour Party would have no Scottish section. SSM supporters decided

against joining the SLP. Instead they formed an alliance suited to the politics of Scotland.

The SSA stands for Scottish self-determination. They fight for a sovereign Scottish parliament able to decide which powers to retain in Scotland. The parliament would determine its relationship with the rest of Britain and Europe.

The 200-strong Glasgow conference

opened discussions around draft Charters for women and young people. The SSA will be campaigning around a 'Charter for Socialist Change'. It is a programme of economic, social, and environmental policies relevant to Scottish people. The Charters start six months' debate aimed at making socialism relevant to Scotland's working class.

The most lively discussion was around electoral tactics. Although no one at the conference disputed that the

SSA should stand candidates for the Scottish parliament, the discussion remains unfinished. The SSA will win six of the 127 seats if Labour and Liberal party plans for proportional representation go ahead.

All agreed that the SSA will not stand where this might allow a Tory to win. Nor will it oppose socialist candidates of the SNP or Labour Party. The SSA will stand only in constituencies

The SSA sees itself as an organisation which campaigns against cuts and redundancies made by Labour- or SNP-controlled councils

where it will get a good vote. This will allow it to retain the financial deposits paid by candidates.

Local SSA groups will take the final decisions. A National Council may decide against standing candidates, but may not force local groups to run candidates.

The SSA sees itself as a campaigning organisation. It is committed to

electoral activity. It campaigns against cuts and redundancies made by Labour- or SNP-controlled councils. It supports occupations of schools and council offices, and backs demonstrations. The SSA is campaigning for a shorter working week with a minimum wage. The campaign was started by the Scottish Socialist Movement. The Scottish TUC has added to widespread support within the Scottish labour movement.

The SSA's support reflects special Scottish political features. It is linked into the Labour Party and the SNP. It includes former

Labour leftwingers, the best of the far left, the left in the SNP and environmental activists and feminists. It aims for both socialist economic and social policies, and for the socialist stance on the national question.

This is vitally important. Labour's commitment to 'British' unity prevents it from supporting self-rule for Ireland.

Scotland and Wales. Labour proposes a toothless assembly for Wales. It favours a restricted parliament for Scotland. Labour has capitulated to Ulster Unionism. Tony Blair is committed to British capitalism.

The SNP has a new slogan: 'Independence in Europe'. It supports European Monetary Union and the imperialist military alliance of the Western Europe Union. There is some resistance in the SNP.

Socialist Outlook welcomes the formation of the SSA. *Socialist Outlook* supporters active in Welsh Labour Action welcome discussions with those who politics are similar to the SSA. WLA campaigns in the Wales Labour Party for a Welsh Assembly similar to the Scottish parliament.

• Contact the Scottish Socialist Alliance, C/o 39 Regent Park Square, Glasgow, G41 2AF.

Israel's Proxy War in Lebanon

Roland Rance

ONE OF the most obscene sights of recent politics was the grin with which PLO leader Yasser Arafat greeted Israeli PM Shimon Peres on the day when Israeli 'precision bombing' slaughtered over 100 Lebanese civilian refugees sheltering at a UN base in southern Lebanon.

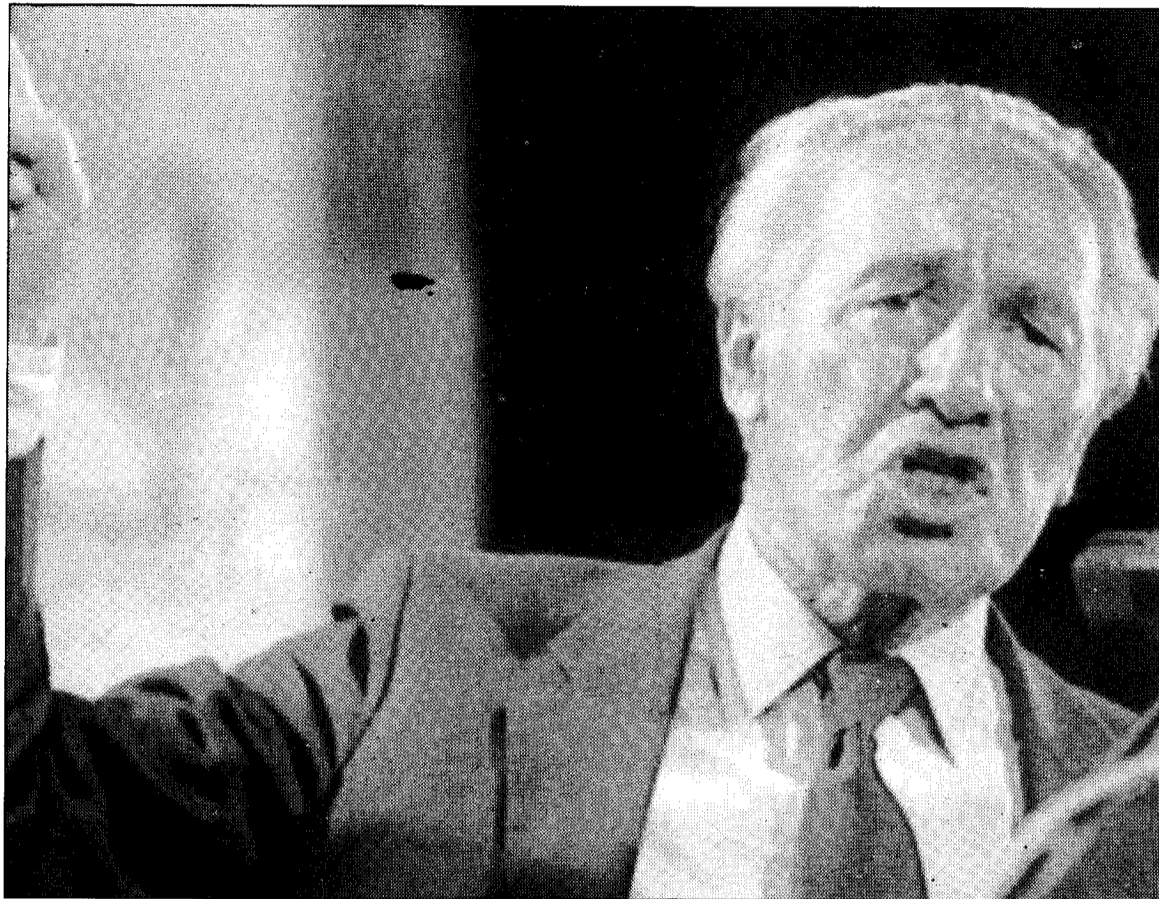
Within a week, Arafat had persuaded the Palestine National Council—the PLO's 'parliament in exile'—to drop the central points of the 1964 Palestine Charter. Arafat's role as Israel's lackey has never been so publicly and humiliatingly flaunted.

Israel's response to the massacre was characteristic.

Officials blamed the victims for their effrontery in sacrificing themselves by not accepting Israel's dictat to leave their homes and villages. Israel is presented as the true victim of this 'unfortunate mistake'.

The response recalls the appalling comment of former PM Golda Meir that "We may eventually be able to forgive the Arabs for killing our children. But we will never be able to forgive them for forcing us to kill their children".

At one level Israel's attack failed. The final agreement with Hizbollah, under which both sides agreed to refrain from targeting civilians, merely restated the situation which has existed since the previous ceasefire in 1993.



Shimon Peres: Israeli 'precision bombing' slaughtered over 100 Lebanese civilian refugees sheltering at a UN base in south Lebanon.

Despite Israeli propaganda claims, Hizbollah has not been shelling Israeli civilians or territory since then.

Indeed, in implicitly recognising Hizbollah's right to attack Israeli troops occupying, southern Lebanon

since 1978, the agreement actually was a setback for Israel.

But this is only the superficial aspect of the attack. Not for the first time, Lebanon has been the stage for a proxy war between other powers.

In 1982 Israel devastated Lebanon in an attempt to destroy the PLO. This war created the conditions leading to the present attack.

The power vacuum left in Lebanon, and the resentment at Israeli militarist arrogance, immeasurably strengthened Hizbollah, which has since acquired a national legitimacy as the only Lebanese force effectively combatting occupation.

Meanwhile, by effectively disabling the exile leadership of the PLO, Israel enabled the rise of a new, Palestine-based, leadership of the national struggle. This leadership, through the Intifada, posed a more serious challenge to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip than decades of the PLO's diplomacy and guerrillaism. The children at Ma'alot were in fact

killed 'accidentally' by the Israeli army rescue

And this success, which meant the new leadership was as much of a threat to Arafat and his team as it was to Israel, created the community of interest between Israel and Arafat. This is behind the Israel-PLO 'peace agreement'.

The agreement reached its conclusion at the meeting of the Palestine

This attack is also a warning to Syria, which has been reluctant to enter the 'peace process'

National Council, when an overwhelming majority of the delegates (many hand-picked by Arafat) voted to repeal all sections of their charter which denied the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

The session was boycotted by sup-

porters of the PFLP and DFLP oppositions within the PLO. Prominent Palestine-based leaders such as Hanan Ashrawi and Dr Haidar Abd al-Shafi voted against the changes.

As most commentators have noted, the latest attack was designed to bolster Peres in the Israeli elections due later this month. A series of suicide bomb attacks on Israeli civilians—most carried out by desperate Palestinians from the miserable refugee camps of Gaza, not by Hizbollah guerrillas from south Lebanon—has eroded the massive opinion poll lead which Peres held when he took over from his assassinated predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin.

By making the Lebanese pay, and by humiliating Arafat, Peres hopes to claw back some support.

But the PLO leadership and the Israeli public are not the only audience which Peres is addressing.

This attack is also a warning to Syria, which has been reluctant to enter the 'peace process' without guarantees of the full return of the occupied Golan Heights, and of greater autonomy for Palestine.

Syria is concerned by the recent military cooperation agreement between Israel and Turkey under which Israeli pilots are allowed to carry out 'training flights' in Turkish airspace.

The agreement is Israel's greatest success in its search for allies in the periphery of the Arab world since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979.

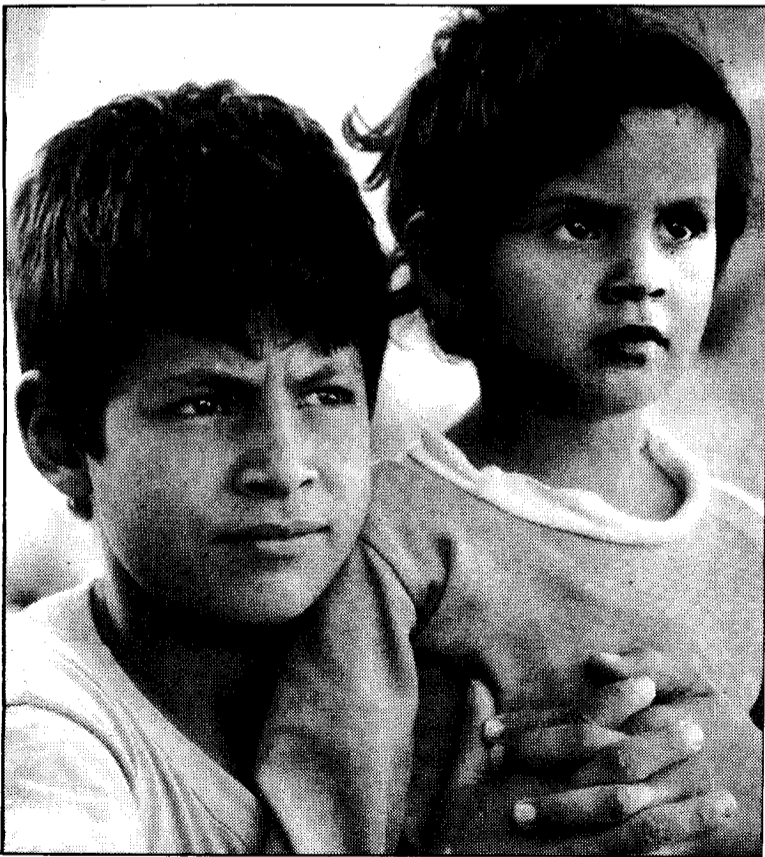
It threatens a two-pronged attack on Syria, and is also seen as a threat by Iran.

While undoubtedly putting pressure on Syria, the agreement will also reinforce the Islamic opposition in Turkey.

The recent expulsion of four Iranian diplomats for contact with fundamentalists in Turkey suggests a developing alliance between Israel and Turkey together with the USA and European states, against popular dissent across the Arab and Muslim world.

The Lebanese people have been the latest victims of this alliance. Continuing Palestinian unrest, and growing dissent in Bahrain, Qatar, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia, means that they will not be the last.

And the continuing failure of the secular left in the region leaves the political terrain open for fundamentalist populism.



Refugees in the Shufat refugee camp

A Town in Fear?

Ariel ben Ze'ev

ISRAEL'S northernmost town, Kiryat Shmona, has often provided the excuse for Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

According to the Israeli embassy in London, "at least 83 civilians have been killed and 336 injured in attacks across the Lebanon border on northern Israeli towns, including Kiryat Shmona, since 1968. These included the slaughter of 21 child hostages at a school in Ma'alot" (Guardian, 20 April 1966).

Those of us with long memories will remember that the children at Ma'alot were in fact killed 'accidentally' by the Israeli army rescue, and not by their Palestinian captors. The number of Israelis actually killed over the same pe-

riod in Katyusha attacks from southern Lebanon is extremely small—far fewer than those killed in one year's road accidents in this country of notoriously aggressive drivers.

Although Kiryat Shmona has become almost a byword for the threat to Israeli civilians, the reality is far different.

Socialist Outlook supporter Inbar Tamari, who grew up in the town, recalls a quiet town subject to occasional security scares.

However, her parents would not take her and her sisters to the air-raid shelters since they did not take the threats seriously. Children were not prevented from playing in the streets or hiking in the countryside, and the town did not live in fear.

The year preceding Israel's 1982 in-

vasion of Lebanon was one of the quietest the town had known.

When rocket attacks resumed with Israel's attack on Palestinian and Lebanese civilians, many people in Kiryat Shmona blamed the government for upsetting the previous accord.

"It is true that most people in Kiryat Shmona vote for parties of the right" says Inbar. "However, this is more for class than for nationalist reasons."

"The right parties are populist, and appeal to the poor population of towns like Kiryat Shmona, and other small towns far from the border. Unfortunately, Labour and most of the other 'left' parties appeal to the middle-class voters of the main towns of central Israel. The Israeli left has not yet managed to build a mass, class-based, opposition to populist nationalism".

New book: pre-publication discount offer

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Italy: new government, same politics

Simon Kennedy

THE OLIVE Tree Alliance led by Romano Prodi, backed by the former communist PDS, has defeated the right in Italy's recent election.

This has been hailed as a victory for the left by the media—the first left wing government since the war. The truth is slightly different.

While it is true that Berlusconi and Gianfranco's Fini National Alliance would have made one of the most reactionary and authoritarian governments in Europe, it is not the case that the Olive Tree Alliance represents a break from the conservative politics of the last few years.

Although it presented itself as the upholder of welfare against the right, it has no intention of breaking out of the Maastricht convergence criteria that necessitate big cuts in expenditure.

The PDS has become one of the loudest advocates of neoliberalism.



The leadership of the 'Olive Tree' bloc celebrates victory in Rome

Fini's party attempted to portray itself as the defender of social provision. But this was cut across by the AN's alliance with Berlusconi's free marketeers.

Umberto Bossi's Northern League—written off by many commentators—was able to win ten per cent of the vote, consolidating its base among the small

and middle northern bourgeoisie.

It was primarily the split of the Leagues from the Berlusconi-Fini alliance that meant the centre could come through the middle.

Crucial too was the PRC's [Party of Communist Refoundation] policy of "desistance". While not joining the Olive Tree alliance, they did not oppose their candidates in first-past-the-post seats.

The victory is therefore very partial. They will not bring an end to the social and economic crisis that has gripped the country for the last few years.

The *Confindustria* (Italian CBI) are mounting a campaign to persuade the PRC to be more reasonable and looking to give the Northern Leagues more of a role in government.

The PRC vote increased from six per cent to nearly nine per cent. Its opposition to neoliberalism and Maastricht has been very successful. It made significant inroads into the voting base of the PDS.

What role for Rifondazione?

PAULO FERRERO, a leader of the Party of Communist Refoundation and Turin councillor spoke to our French sister paper *Rouge*.

What is the PRC's response to the results?

PF: The right-wing parties won a majority of the votes cast, from 45 per cent in 1994 to 55 per cent today. But because they are divided the left could gain a majority of seats. As for the PRC, our vote is rising—it increased by 800,000 votes (30 per cent).

Rouge: What role are you going to play in forming a government.

PF: We are going to allow the formation of a government, and vote for it, but we will not participate, and we do not support their programme.

We made a pact to beat the right, to overthrow the last government. Now, we will see with each question, each piece of proposed legislation.

Most of all we want to construct a movement and win public opinion to the demands which we developed during the campaign, for the 35-hour working week, for the sliding-scale of salaries, for the defence of the welfare state, for social security.

I think the problem is to maintain the party's autonomy and its capacity to build a movement on our politics, to benefit from our position of relative strength. The Budget will be the big test.

South Africa's deflected revolution



Walled palaces for the rich...

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN, recently returned from a visit to South Africa, reviews *The transition in South Africa* by Carl Brecker

THIS BOOKLET is a marxist analysis of the current situation in post-apartheid South Africa—just over a year after the historic election which gave the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies 82 per cent of the vote, and made the former Robben Island prisoner Nelson Mandela President.

What has happened since? One thing that has not changed is the capitalist system which was underpinned by apartheid. Mandela and the Government of National Unity that he leads are firmly committed to the economics of the so-called free market, the sanctity of private property and the profit motive.

Of the course the ANC never gave socialism as their goal—although their government allies the South African

members of the Communist Party and former COSATU leaders are not able to satisfy even the most elementary of the masses' needs?

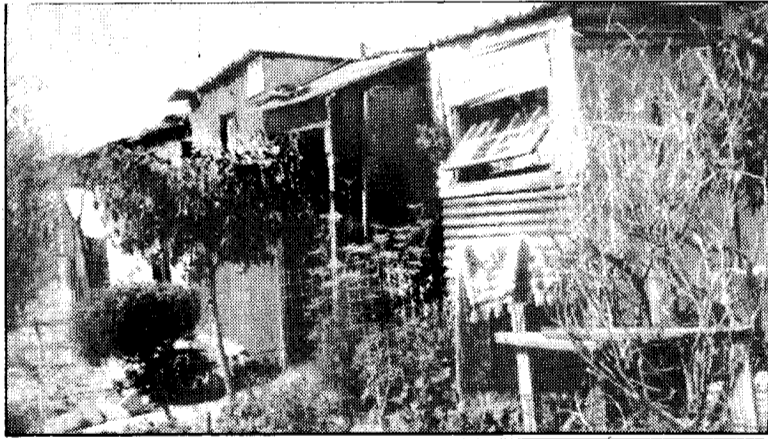
Since the end of apartheid it has become respectable once again to buy South African wine and food. The profits of wealthy farms of Paarl, Wellington and Stellenbosch are rocketing.

Tourists are taken of tours showing them the opulent living styles of the farm owners. But they do not get to see the conditions of the workers.

One Paarl farmer allegedly paid his workers as little as R.1.90 (£0.32) after deductions, along with a bottle of wine. Workers are punished with deductions for backchatting the farmer and failing to call him *baass*.

Brecker blames the failure of the ANC-led revolution to deliver on the compromise with the former whites-only government and the other bourgeois parties—including Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party. The deal was principally brokered by the late SACP leader Joe Slovo.

**The ANC promised:
'All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside. People shall share in the country's wealth'
'All shall have the right to occupy land where ever they choose.'
'There shall be work and security'
'There shall be houses, security and comfort.'**



... Cape Town shacks for the poor

The SACP's strategy flowed naturally from its subservience to the Stalinist/Menshevik theory of the revolution in stages—the national democratic revolution was a necessary first stage. The state established was not *bourgeois*, but a revolution democracy some here between capitalism and socialism. The reality is somewhat different—unbridled capitalism.

Against the theory of stages the revolutionary left argued that although the struggle would begin on the terrain of democratic revolution it would, of necessity, in order to achieve its democratic goals against an intransigent bourgeoisie, transform into socialist revolution.

Given the under-development character of apartheid capitalism and the urgent social needs of the black majority, the mass demand for immediate solutions to their pressing problems

(land, housing, health, jobs, and so on) could not be met without dispossessing the bourgeoisie.

It would be a combined and uninterrupted revolution. The struggle for socialism was, in this sense, on today's agenda.

To feed the hungry, to cloth the naked, to cure the sick, to house the homeless, to protect the children, to educate the illiterate, requires seizing the commanding height of the economy and abolition of market-orientated delivery systems in order to create a society going beyond capitalism.

This is necessary because implementation of these burning demands implies a redistribution of at least 70 per cent of national resources. And that means taking them away from private national and foreign owners. This would be permanent revolution in practice.

The Transition in South Africa is available for £2 plus 50p P&P from: Charlie van Gelderen, 40 St. Vincent's Close, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PE. All money goes to the Alternative Information and Development Centre, Cape Town so please give as much as you can afford. A limited supply is immediately available so some orders may have to wait until further supplies arrive from South Africa.

In Europe's back garden

BRIAN GARDNER spoke to MOHAMMED SEKKOUM, Chair of the Algerian Refugee Council, about the political situation in Algeria and the Asylum Bill.

TEN YEARS ago Mohammed Sekkoum earned a good living in Algeria as a vet. That was before he uncovered a massive BSE-type scandal, involving cattle imported from Germany and wrote about it in a national newspaper.

He was imprisoned and then sent to a psychiatric hospital. The government told people not to listen to him as he was mad. Eventually he managed to escape.

He believes the Algerian government are threatened by the work he is doing on behalf of other refugees. "For them it is a shame", that so many are fleeing, and it clashes with the image of stability that they wish to portray.

He refers to the Algerian em-

bassy as having a "first list" of people they wish to eliminate.

Two years ago, he was attacked in his home.

The political situation in Algeria is complex. In the first round of elections in December 1991 the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), won a massive majority. The military stepped in, outlawed the FIS and imprisoned its leaders.

Since then the country has been extremely volatile. Islamic fundamentalist groups have carried out executions of people who fail to obey the law of the Koran. The GIA is usually singled out as responsible.

Mohammed Sekkoum believes that many of the killings were carried out, not by the GIA, but by government agents posing as GIA. The military regime uses the campaign of violence to justify its own existence.

Asked about the current rela-

tionship of France and Algeria Mohammed commented ironically "Algeria is France! After the independence, they used to tell us that *Huriya*—freedom—will come one day, but it never did."

Even Algerians of the third generation are not accepted in France he said. There is therefore little chance for new arrivals, and many Algerian refugees prefer to live in Britain.

"When Jacques Chirac visited John Major he gave him a present of a two-billion dollar oil

"In London, Chirac gave Major a two billion dollar oil contract in Algeria for BP. Two days later, they started arresting Algerians here, linking them to the bombings in France."

contract in Algeria for British Petroleum. Two days later, they started arresting Algerians here, linking them to the bombings in France."

People leave Algeria for different reasons. Some Islamicists flee from government persecu-



Mohammed Sekkoum, Chair of the Algerian Refugee Council, standing

tion, while others were are trying to escape from persecution by Islamicists.

I suggested that it is difficult to represent all of these people at the same time?

"We don't take into account that you are from that side or the other side or

which party you are from. There are however some people working closely with the embassy. Infiltration is a possibility."

The British government's Asylum Bill redefines refugee status. Although those fleeing

from the violence of the state may be given a hearing, those fleeing from persecution by Islamic fundamentalists or opposition groups will not be considered. Algeria is included in a "white list" of countries deemed to be safe.

For Mohammed Sekkoum, the latest asylum legislation is part of a Europe-wide initiative on refugees. "They are trying to close the borders, to close Europe, and leave us in the back garden."

Being a vet Mohammed uses the metaphor of his country as a "zoo", where Europeans can go to look at the inhabitants, but the occupants are not allowed out of their cages.

Proud PSR rebels host youth camp

George Thompson

IN PORTUGAL the press call them the "Fags and Drugs Party" because they promote lesbian and gay rights and drugs legalisation.

The PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party) are hosts this year to the thirteenth International Socialist Youth camp.

The new Europe will be its central theme.

Jorge Costa of the PSR says: "our goal is to make the camp a place for education so that young activists are better prepared. In the next period of struggles in Europe we have to develop political alternatives to neo-liberal regression".

You can join the PSR and 1000 young socialists from 16 countries in sunny Portugal from 20-27th July.

The PSR was central in organising the first Pride march and the first open public party for lesbians and gays.

They have fought age of consent laws, and for provisions enabling young people to live independently of their families.

They successfully campaigned to change the appalling definition of lesbians and gays in dictionaries.

This activity has earned the PSR great respect among lesbian and gays and given them a national profile.

These issues were central to their recent electoral campaign where they almost won a seat in Lisbon. They gained three to five per cent of the youth vote in urban areas.

The PSR is the only Portuguese party calling for legalisation of drugs.

The party has opposed criminalisation, beginning a debate on the capitalist drugs trade the government does not want to address—especially over alcohol and tobacco.

Portugal's President recently has spoken in favour of legalisation and the Socialist Party has begun to question its policy.

Surveys show all youth in Portugal support the legalisation of soft drugs.

The PSR have also built a base amongst students through fighting for free education and against the government's attempt to tax those in higher education.



Portugal's Revolutionary Socialist Party hosted the enjoyable 1992 International Socialist Youth camp

Photo: Lynn Hjort

International Youth Camp: Portugal 20 - 27 July

Meet 1000 young socialists from 16 European countries at this year's International Youth Summer Camp in Amarante, northern Portugal.

Discuss ideas, exchange experiences, and develop an alternative future on a world scale. Also bake in the sun, swim in the rivers and party until dawn!!

Discussions on state and police repression, women's liberation, school and student struggles, internationalism, socialism and much more.

£200 for travel, food, camping, debates and fun!

For more details write to: 'Liberation Publishing Association', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Pay a pound for your Outlook

OUR last issue celebrated the first hundred issues of the twice-monthly paper. Now we want another hundred. *Socialist Outlook's* sales have modestly increased over the last year. However price rises mean that the 50 pence price now covers only half the costs of printing the paper. This reduced-size issue is the paper cut in newsprint prices

doubled in 1995. Donations and increased sales are the only ways *Socialist Outlook* can survive. In 1995 *Socialist Outlook* readers donated thousands of pounds towards the work of the Fourth International and the setting up of the Ernest Mandel Study Centre in Amsterdam. We need the same effort again. £3,000 can secure the 12-page, twice monthly, *Socialist Outlook* for the rest of the year. Please work with other *Socialist*

Outlook readers to raise the funds we need. *Socialist Outlook* is your paper. With this issue, we are introducing a one pound solidarity price. Pay it if you can. The next issue of *Socialist Outlook* will be out in two weeks. Rush cheques made payable to "Socialist Outlook Supporters Fund" to: PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

'Militant' scares New Labour?

HULL city council Labour Group voted against cooperating with the Tories' workfare scheme, as reported by Nigel Danby (*SO* 100). However, the vote was taken in the middle of a local election by-election campaign, in which Militant Labour was standing.

Workfare had become the predominant issue in the by-election. Almost 1000 people signed our petition. Six thousand leaflets were distributed.

Militant Labour exposed Tony Blair's own workfare proposals. Not surprisingly the local Labour Party were running scared. To have endorsed workfare would have meant political suicide.

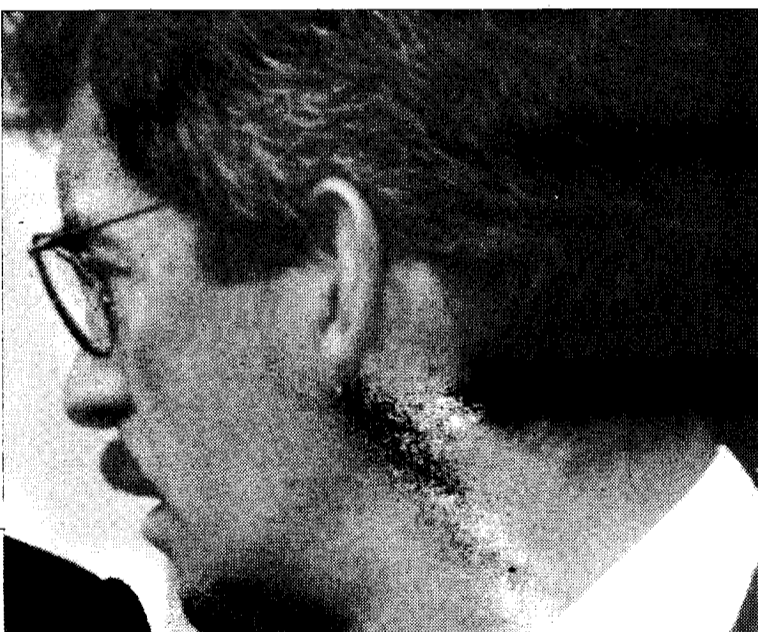
This explains the right-wing council's sudden conversion—fear of election defeat.

By standing against Labour we forced them to take up the issue, therefore aiding the work of the isolated Labour Left.

**Ray Duffill,
Hull Militant Labour**

FEEDBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters. Post them to 'Feedback', PO Box 1109, London, N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words are edited for brevity and concision.



Dick Spring's Labour Party has ditched a commitment to full employment

Unemployment in Ireland is officially 281,800—about 16 per cent of the workforce.

But Dick Spring's Labour Party is moving significantly to the right. It has ditched significant principles, such as a commitment to full employment and neutrality—they regard all talk of socialism as "politically incorrect".

The trade union leadership, particularly the 180,000 strong SIPTU, are walking hand in glove with them.

This is why Joe Higgins was able to receive such a high vote in the re-

cent Dublin West by election on a *Militant Labour/Water charges* (local water tax) ticket, and why the Labour Party was completely hammered.

So-called radical politics like the Irish Labour Party, Sein Féin or Democratic left are not really that radical at all, and are in the end in coalition with Irish capitalism.

But 1996 could yet prove to be the year of the fightback by the Irish working class against capitalism, imperialism and reaction.

**Kieran McNulty,
Tralee, Co. Kerry**

Irish jobs and neutrality

WHILE I agree with the general line of the recent coverage of Irish politics in *Socialist Outlook*, particularly since the breakdown of the cease-fire, more should be said about two issues which could force a general election in the twenty six counties: unemployment and Irish neutrality.

What's Happening

May

Friday 10 to Sunday 12 National Conference of Trades Councils, Kettering, Town Hall, Friday 2pm.

Saturday 11 Conference against the Asylum and Immigration Bill, 11am - 4pm, Natfhe Conference Centre, Britannia Street, London, near Kings Cross. Organised by Campaign for a Fighting Democratic UNISON.

Monday 13 to Friday 17 CPSA conference, Brighton.

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

June

Friday 21 to Sunday 23 Counter-Summit to the G7 meeting, Lyon, France. Details: Cedetim, 21 ter, rue Voltaire, 75011 Paris. Tel (00 33 1) 4371 0911.

July

Friday 19 to Saturday 27 International Youth Summercamp, Portugal.

August

23-26 *Socialist Outlook* Summer School, Aberystwyth.

WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

Get Organised! Contact us now!

I want to know more about *Socialist Outlook*.

I would like to sell *Socialist Outlook*.

Please send me your introductory pamphlet:—'Socialist After Stalinism'. I enclose a postal order or cheque payable to *Socialist Outlook* Fund.

Please send me details of the *Socialist Outlook* Fourth International Supporters Association.

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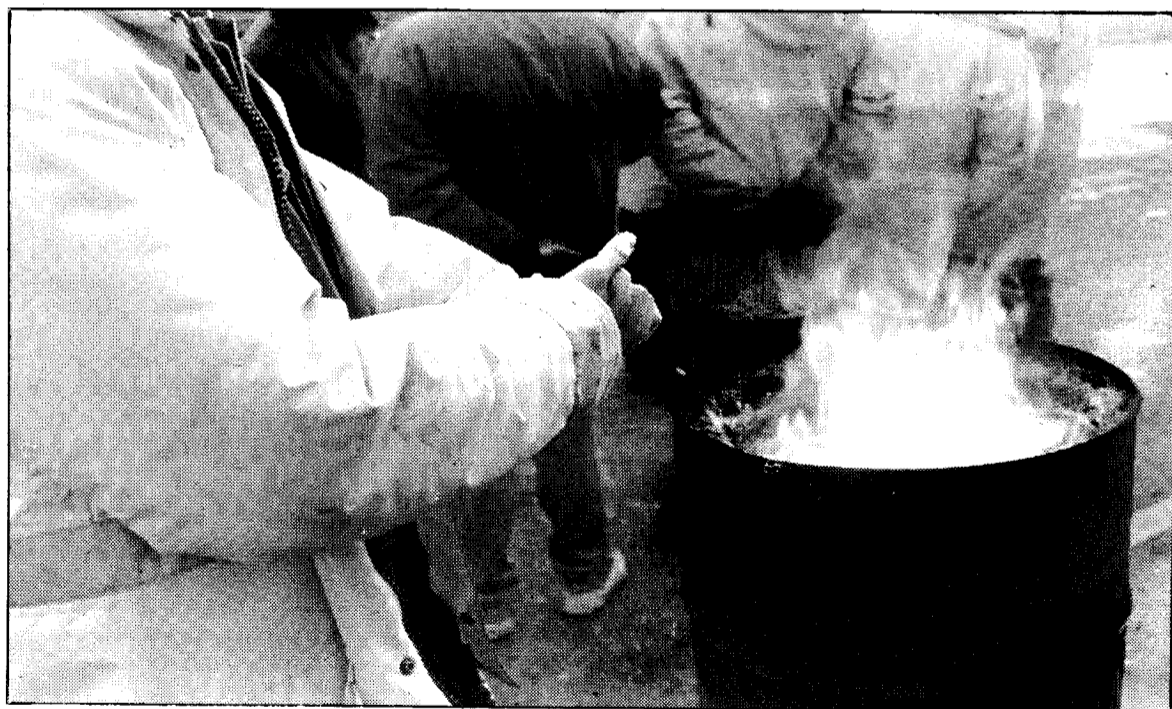
Union/College _____

Tel _____

Post to: *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Socialist OUTLOOK

Dockers demand solidarity



A recent picket of the Seaforth terminal drew 800 people

Photo: Peter Lindgren

LIVERPOOL dockers are in their seventh month on strike. 500 were sacked by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

Liverpool is the last unionised port in Britain. The strike was manufactured by managers to attack unions and casualise the workforce.

The TGWU leadership has only given minimum support. It refuses to make the strike official.

Strikers themselves are more determined. They organise at local, national and international levels.

Strikers organise regular pickets of the port. A recent picket of the Seaforth terminal drew 800 people.

Over 7,000 joined a May Day march. Speakers at the rally included journalist Paul Foot, dockers' leader Jimmy Nolan, actress Margi Clarke

and a miner from Tuzla in Bosnia.

Dockers were joined by city council workers in UNISON who took a day off work. They are threatened with 800 job losses and are balloting for action.

Sefton UNISON also supported the May Day protest. Unfortunately Merseyside firefighters did not strike on May Day. They are currently considering management's latest offer.

Many workers have shown financial solidarity. Ford workers in Liverpool recently donated £5,000.

Strikers have also been facing intimidation. Scabs brought in to break the strike have wielded hammers and crowbars. Gun shots have been reported.

Internationally the strike has been very successful. Go-slows are now a regular fixture in Italy and Greece. Dockers around the world have

refused to handle goods bound for Liverpool.

Dockers from Turkey and Portugal are the latest to join these blockades. Strikers have spoken to the Swedish transport union.

A big breakthrough was made when the dockers spoke at the Scottish TUC. They received STUC backing even though it is an unofficial dispute. This makes it easier for dockers to speak at other union conferences.

The next big event is the National Conference of support groups being held on May 25. For speakers phone 0151 207 3388.

Send messages of support and contributions to: J Davies, Secretary/Treasurer, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool, L6 4AS. Make cheques and POs out to 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Committee'.

Police attack Sri Lanka May Day march

K.Govindan

MAY DAY marchers in Colombo, Sri Lanka, were attacked and teargassed by police. Police officers dispersed demonstrators and seriously injured several.

The police had banned all demonstration two days earlier for "security considerations". Rallies were not banned.

This was a response to the renewed military offensive in the north of the island. It anticipated possible reprisals in Colombo by Tamil-separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

The Nava Sama Samaja Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International, defied the ban. It organised a procession of over 1,000.

Marchers followed a coffin symbolising the death of democracy less than two years into the People's Alliance government of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

The NSSP is drawing attention to the steady erosion of the promises to respect human rights and democratic liberties that had won the ruling coalition popular support against the previous regime.

The marchers now realise they are the latest casualties of the government's increasing authoritarianism and use of emergency powers.

Eyewitnesses report that hundreds of police baton charged and teargassed workers without any provocation or prior notice. Officers broke up the coffin and assaulted those in the contingent around it.

About 30 comrades were injured. Some have serious injuries including broken limbs. One needed 15 stitches in his head.

Meanwhile hundreds more awaiting marchers at De Mel Park, the rally point, were teargassed by police. Women and children having their lunch were gassed.

At the same time as this vicious attack, other "illegal" demonstrations were allowed. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party and a section of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, both represented in the government, were not harassed in any way.

The NSSP is targeted by state authorities for embarrassing the Government. The NSSP's demands include "Stop The War Against Tamils" and "No To Privatisation". It is a militant pole of attraction for workers and youth disenchanted by the current government.

One hundred and ten years after the Chicago working class was massacred in the Haymarket, the NSSP celebrated the international day of working class struggle and solidarity.

Those in the present government who have fought alongside us in defence of freedom and life must speak and act out against this shocking incident.

The NSSP appeals to socialists and trade unionists around the world to write or fax the President of Sri Lanka:

- Protest and condemn this May Day outrage;
- Demand an independent and accountable inquiry into the events;
- Compensation to injured workers.

Please write or fax:
The President of Sri Lanka,
H.E. Chandrika
Kumaratunga, Presidential
Secretariat, Colombo 01,
Sri Lanka.

Fax no: 00941 333 703.