

Socialist Worker

(01) 8722682 <http://www.swp.ie> info@swp.ie

PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY €1.00 / £0.70p

inside:

IS IRAQ BUSH'S VIETNAM?

Pages 6 & 7

Sweat shops for the West Bank:

Page 2

Election analysis:

Pages 3, 4, 10



As Bush hands 'sovereignty' to another US puppet government the killing continues

END THE OCCUPATION

US troops out of Shannon

Israel's sweatshops along the West Bank

AS Israel continues to build a 700km wall in the West Bank, plans are being drawn up to extend a string of sweatshop factories along its length.

The idea is modelled on the *maquiladores* which have sprung up along the US-Mexican border.

Factories there employ workers on low pay, without union organisation or welfare benefits and other safeguards. Pollution controls are practically non-existent. In this way US companies benefit from production at a fraction of the cost it would be in the US.

Israel's "security barrier" wall has worsened the already chronic problem of Palestinian unemployment (45% in the West Bank and 60% in Gaza);

120,000 Palestinians who worked—legally or illegally—in Israel before 2000 can no longer go there.

And tens of thousands of peasants are now separated from their own lands by the wall.

Israeli businessmen (and their Palestinian collaborators) are banking on the pressure of poverty to force workers into their sweatshops.

According to a report in March by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, around 40% of Palestinians suffer from "dietary insecurity" - they go hungry - while 60% live below a poverty line that international organisations put at \$2.10 a day.

After the 1993 Oslo accords Israeli and Palestinian officials agreed a plan to create nine industrial estates along the Green Line marking the 1967 border in the West Bank and Gaza.

With the start of the intifada, the plans had to be shelved.

Now Israeli businesses feel confident about estates near the wall because of the enormous presence of Israeli troops and security.

Israel's minister for industry, trade and employment, Ehud Olmert Olmert said as much: "The industrial estates resolve both the problem of Palestinian unemployment and that of the high cost of labour for Israeli businesses, which are currently relocating to the Far East, and they do it without risk, since the Palestinians won't be crossing the Green Line".

One observer noted, "The most important motive is the low wages paid to the workers: around 1,500 shekels as against 4,500 shekels, which is the minimum wage in Israel.

"What is more, the employers don't have to abide by Israeli labour laws."

Pesticides

The largest factory on the Tulkarem industrial estate, Geshuri, specialises in pesticides and other chemical products.

Until 1985 it was located near the Israeli coastal city of Netanya, but local residents complained of its horrible smells and it was moved to the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority demanded unsuccessfully that Geshuri be moved away from Tulkarem.

As the Wall is built and Palestinian farmers cut off from their fields, vast quantities of land is being grabbed by Israel, some for the sweatshops.

The Israeli interior minister used an Arab newspaper to tell farmers in villages to the northeast of Jenin on 29 January that hundreds of hectares of their land were to be confiscated within a fortnight, "to tidy



■ Israel's security wall on stolen Palestinian land

up the regional organisation of the Shahak industrial estate".

This means that further Palestinian land was being taken from its owners to enlarge this estate, located on the Israeli side of the wall but part of the territory occupied in 1967.

Dr Mustafa Barghouthi of the leftwing Palestinian National Initiative commented, "These projects didn't work after the Oslo accords and they won't work now. It's just an exercise in hiding the horrible truth.

"These Palestinian businessmen aren't concerned about the unemployment prob-

lems of their countrymen; they're just looking after their own interests. This plan only makes sense from an Israeli point of view.

"It's a reinforcement of the apartheid in which Palestinians can be no more than a nation of slaves. But it won't work."

New EU constitution means privatisation

THE NEW EU Constitution, negotiated and presented by the Irish presidency, puts further privatisation of health services firmly on the agenda.

As it stands, the Article in the Constitution on "Services of General Interest" says that States must ensure that their public services operate on the basis of certain principles and conditions. But the conditions don't include universal or equal access to health provision. On the contrary, all the conditions listed are economic and financial.

There is not a word in the Constitution to prevent health services North and South of the border being brought within EU rules of "competition and procurement". In other words, being put onto the market so that private firms can make bids.

This chapter of the EU Constitution was 'closed' for discussion before the European election and the Socialist Environmental Alliance in the North tried repeatedly to raise it.

But the Orange-Green basis of politics meant it was unable to provoke any debate on this aspect of the Constitution during the election campaign.

The other reason the issue was ducked is that none of the Unionist or Nationalist parties has clean hands on the issue.

All of them either enforced or colluded with privatisation when the Assembly was up and running. The result has been cut-backs, closures and workers thrown out of the public sector and into the hands of profit-driven private firms.

Now that the Constitution is agreed, the work must begin to explain its implications to working people who have been turned off any discussion of Europe by politicians who purposely pretend that the only controversy should be about voting rights and who gets a permanent Commissioner.

RIP OFF DUBLIN

DUBLIN is the 14th most expensive city in the world in which to live a new global survey of 144 cities has revealed. The capital is more expensive to live than Paris.

No to peace picnic

CAMPAIGNERS against the war in Iraq have been refused permission to hold a "peace picnic" in the Phoenix Park, Dublin, during the visit by President Bush.

The Office of Public Works has told the organisers that such "protests" are prohibited in the park because of the risk of public disorder. Green Party TD Mr John Gormley described the OPW's decision as "indefensible".

Berg speaks at anti-war rally

MICHAEL BERG the father of Nick Berg, the US hostage executed in Iraq will speak at a Stop the War Coalition meeting in Britain later this month. Mr Berg has written an open letter to the coalition.

"We all know now that the controls for the weapons of mass destruction are in the White House.

"And George Bush has used a few of those weapons on the world," writes Mr Berg.

"His ineffective leadership is a weapon of mass destruction and it has allowed a chain reaction of events that lead to the unlawful detention of my son. Yes it was the US government under whose authority my son was held. No one believes the Iraqi Police control the American FBI and Military, Mr. Bush.

"That detention immersed my son in a world of escalated violence which were it not for his detention would have had him in my arms again.

"That detention held him in Iraq not only until the atrocities that lead to the siege of Fallusah, but to the revelation of the atrocities committed in the jails in Iraq in retaliation for which my son's wonderful life was put to an end."

Homophobes have no love for life

EDUCATION authorities in the North are under pressure from the mainstream parties to fund an organisation which says it provides the best "sex education" for schools but is, in fact, homophobic, anti-abortion and preaches chastity until marriage.

"Love for Life" used the European elections to try to push for funding.

In the last few years, it has had access to over 140 schools across the North, while the Family Planning Association struggles to get into a handful of schools.

Unsurprisingly, the only party to come out strongly against Love for Life's agenda was the Socialist Environmental Alliance. SEA candidate, Eamonn McCann issued a strongly worded statement in support of gay organisations who are working to ensure the bigots are not funded to continue poisoning the minds of young people

"The website contains an entire section giving

advice to young people who are or think they may be gay," said McCann. "Its main point is to urge them to 'change'.

"The section is shot through with distaste for gay sexuality.

"It presents homosexuality as a phase or aberration, or a condition brought about by trauma.

"It is designed to make any young gay person feel anxious and isolated.

"The website directs young people with queries about their sexuality towards a number of Jewish and Christian Church-based groups.

"It does not refer to a single one of the many gay and lesbian organisations which provide support, information and advice to young people.

"It would be wrong that a group with such an irresponsible attitude to gay and lesbian young people should be given access to school students.

"It would be doubly wrong if this were to be

funded by the State.

"Gay young people already have to put up with a great deal of ignorance, hostility and bullying.

"Love for Life could only aggravate the situation".

Research from the US shows that Love for Life's sex-only-within-marriage approach does not work.

Anyone who grew up in Ireland in the 50s or 60s could have told them as much.

People who think sex outside marriage is wrong, as Love for Life preaches, still end up having sex outside marriage.

But they are far less likely to use contraception and therefore, the US research confirms, more likely to have a teenage pregnancy than young people who receive proper sex education.

Love for Life belongs in the era of the Magdalene Laundries and it is back to that kind of society their movement wants to take society.

They must be stopped.

Brazilian socialists get organised

ON THE weekend of June 5-6, a new anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist force was born in Brazil, the Party of Socialism and Freedom (P-SOL).

Around 800 militants from around the country gathered in Brasilia to debate and approve a political programme and elect a national directorate.

The formation of the new party is the response of the most militant and combative sectors of the Brazilian working class and social movements to the growing attacks from the Workers Party (PT) government headed by Lula that until now has only favoured big business and the IMF politics of structural adjustment.

Elected by tens of millions of Brazilians on a platform of hope and change, the Lula government has not only failed to offer an alternative to neoliberalism; it has faithfully followed in the steps of previous Brazilian governments by cutting social services, attacking public sector workers and diverting much-needed funds for social and economic development to pay off the external debt.

Party militants who have resisted these politics have been undemocratically repressed and expelled.

This year many strikes and struggles have occurred, mainly in the public sector, demonstrating that workers are not willing to accept these attacks.

Later this year, bank workers, autoworkers and other sectors are set to take action.

The Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) has also

advanced its struggles. In the so-called Red April of this year, it organized over 109 militant land occupations.

These struggles show that enormous possibilities exist for the new party.

There are tens of thousands of activists in the unions and social movements ready to fight and we have no doubt that the Party of Socialism and Freedom is capable of attracting this vast militancy.

The new party is not yet formally legalized but it is already a political force with the potential to intervene decisively in social struggles and put forward an alternative left politics in the workers movement.

Now our main task is to build grass-roots committees to organize these militants who are searching for a left alternative to fight the ruling class and the neoliberal politics of the Lula government.

—RUI POLLY, SCO PAULO, BRAZIL



■ Lula: attacks

editorial



Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

The knives are out between PDs and FF

THE local election results have shocked Fianna Fail backbenchers.

The contest was fought like a general election and they took a 'kicking'.

In the past FF won nearly half of all votes – including working class votes – but now they have declined to one third.

The main group which deserted them in big numbers was the manual working class.

One response has been to talk about Fianna Fail shifting to the left.

Minister for Communications, Dermot Ahern has even denounced the 'neo-liberal stance on inequality'

He claims that 'at their worse these policies are active drivers of alienation, higher crime rates and educational drop out.

'At their worse these policies corrode social cohesion'.

By contrast, the PDs want to speed up the process of Thatcherite reform.

Their leader Mary Harney even threatened to walk out of the government if there was a slowing down of the break-up of Aer Lingus.

There are minor differences between FF and the PDs – but they are not about their shared enthusiasm to serve the needs to big business.

The PDs are a wholly owned subsidiary of IBEC – the employers organisation.

They operate as a small ginger group who get votes from the upper middle class and then use their position to toughen up the neo-liberal agenda.

Fianna Fail share the exact same policies – but have a mass

working class voting base.

Originally, they won that base by identifying republican policies with the improvement of the living standards of workers.

But they always denied the relevance of class politics to Ireland and instead manipulated their control of the state to pretend that they gave out social welfare benefits or solved individual problems.

Today Fianna Fail's main link with the workers movement is through social partnership deals.

They try to co-opt the leaders of organised labour into backing their overall economic agenda.

Brian Cowen, the deputy leader of FF said that 'we have achieved far more reforms through social partnership deals in the past fifteen years than we could have otherwise'.

By 'reforms' he meant the unions giving implicit support to schemes such as Public Private partnerships, 'flexible' working arrangements and the low tax regime for business.

No one should be fooled by the FF talk of 'shifting to the left'. They have always been a corrupt right wing pro-business party.

Instead of giving them any political cover, the trade unions and the left parties should try to force them into coalition with Fine Gael to help mark their final demise.

Specifically that means the unions breaking from social partnership and Labour and Sinn Fein giving a commitment not to enter coalition with them.



■ Sinn Fein's Nicky Kehoe with Adams and De Brun

Why don't Labour and Sinn Fein take control of City Councils?

LABOUR and Sinn Fein should stop looking on Fine Gael and Fianna Fail as prospective coalition partners respectively and take control of a number of city councils.

Dublin, Tralee and Waterford now have left majorities on their councils.

They won the votes of workers because they opposed right wing policies on privatisation, bin charges, and support for the war.

On Dublin City Council, Labour and Sinn Fein have an absolute majority.

If they had gotten togeth-

er, they could abolish and increase the rates on big commercial premises.

They could have offered concrete support to the Irish Anti-War Movement by removing the undemocratic ban on posterage which has been imposed under spurious bye-laws.

Alliance

Such an alliance could prevent 'development plans' which hand over growing areas of public space to private speculators.

But within a week of the results, Labour were already

forging coalitions at local level with Fine Gael.

Yet Fine Gael are pro-Bush, support bin charges and receive large sums of money from the same business interests who back Fianna Fail.

In the past Fine Gael and Fianna Fail councillors have formed informal alliances to drive through corrupt planning decisions.

Parties that win votes from workers should stop playing games.

They should live up to their radical rhetoric and take measures which will bring change for the majority.

EU CONSTITUTION

AMIDST all the gloom over election results, Bertie Ahern won praise from the media for acting as a world class statesman in delivering an EU constitution.

But there has been little explanation of what is in this constitution. In reality, the new constitution opens the way for more privatisation and militarisation.

It removes the veto on the commercialisation of health, education and cultural services that members states have. It shifts the decisions to a Council of Ministers – but Irish citizens will not know how their representatives voted there.

It gives the unelected EU Commission the right to take part in GATT negotiations. These are negotiation which are designed to open up all public services to 'de-regulation'.

It recognises the role of NATO and confirms the establishment of an Euro Rapid Reaction Force. Despite their verbal opposition to Bush, EU member states such as Germany are already supplying troops for the occupation of Afghanistan.

It retains the Euratom agreement which allows governments to fund wasteful and dangerous nuclear plants such as Sellafield.

At home and abroad, Bertie Ahern has one central aim – to serve the need of big business and to give support for militarisation of our planet.

Join the Socialists

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information: Fill in the form and **Send to:**

ROI: SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Phone (01) 872 2682

NI: SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone 0774 2531617

Email membership@swp.ie **Web:** www.swp.ie

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

Union/College (If applicable).....

Eamonn McCann

Tap Tax: Can't pay Won't pay

IF EVENTS of recent weeks confirmed anything, it's that we live in a sharply divided society.

The day after polling in the European election it was revealed that, from 2006 onwards, people in the North living in poverty will be forced to fork out around six pounds a week for water.

A "confidential memo" from the office of Minister John Spellar declares that water charges here—if we allow their introduction—will likely be among the highest in the UK. And people on benefits or living on poverty wages will be expected to pay 75 percent of the bills. It is generally expected that the charges will initially be set at around £400 a year.

Six pounds a week may seem next to nothing if you're living on the equivalent of a Ministerial salary. But if you are already on the breadline, it could push you over the brink. One Anti-Poverty Network activist remarked yesterday, "I mean it. There'll be suicides out of this."

Nine months ago, Spellar promised that that the charges would be introduced in a way which would provide "clear and firm protection" for people on low incomes. Now we know what he meant. Twenty-five percent off, while the offer lasts.

The memo continues: "The arrangements for the protection of low income households and vulnerable groups should be provided for a minimum period of three years with a thorough review to consider whether the period for the provision of these arrangements should be extended, or the level of discount should be phased out or reduced."

Get rid of the guff and what this means is that once the charges are bedded in, the poor will be told they're to pay the full whack from now on.

The chief executive of the General Consumer Council, Eleanor Gill, was moved to remark that, "If these proposals were implemented...NI consumers would pay some 47 per cent above the current average water bill of our nearest comparable neighbour, Scotland...It is imperative that costs are driven down for the most vulnerable...One in every four homes here earns less than £200 a week. These households would be at risk of falling into water poverty."

Water poverty. Now there's a new concept New Labour has introduced us to.

In the same week, an Audit Office report revealed that housing developers in the North owe the State more than £9 million which isn't being paid.

Debt

The debt refers to tax-payers' money used to provide drainage for privately-developed housing. In 1990, Westminster's Public Accounts Committee told the NIO—in line with standard practice across the rest of the UK—to set about collection of this money. But 14 years later, the NIO is still scratching its head wondering how to arrange this transaction.

The money not been repaid and there is no mechanism for repayment in place.

Some of the developers are among the new millionaires who have prospered so mightily in recent years. They could easily afford to pay. But they are entitled to argue that it's not their fault, that the NIO simply refuses to call round for the readies.

We oughtn't contemplate this matter too closely, lest the mind boggle 'til it turns to jelly.

Meanwhile, the average-paid worker struggling with a mortgage, or the below-average worker scrimping to put food on the table, won't be able to avoid water charges.

Once again, it's one law for the rich and another for the rest of us.

Is there anything can be done? Well, there's this. We could begin now to build a serious non-payment of water-charges campaign. If all those in politics and union and community organisations who say they want to and are willing to fight the "tap tax" put their weight behind Communities Against the Water Charges, we will have a network across the North by 2006 able to tell Spellar (or whomever), "Can't pay, Won't pay."

We don't have to just lie down and take it, you know.

N.I. European Elections:

Socialists were right to stand

THE RESULTS of the European election in the North confirmed what socialists had feared — that it would be seen as another "dual referendum" to determine who will champion each community vis-à-vis the other.

So, the DUP ran a campaign whose main message was "stop Bairbre de Brun from topping the poll".

In response, Sinn Fein's main campaign message was "don't let the DUP embarrass us, make sure Bairbre gets elected on the first count".

They were both successful and, as usual, the issues

that should have dominated the election — like Iraq and the privatisation agenda of the EU — were all but totally sidelined.

The only times these issues were mentioned at all was by the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) candidate, Eamonn McCann.

The SEA was really up against it. After struggling to find the £5,000 deposit, printing costs for posters and leaflets had to be kept to a minimum.

Even things like transport became a real issue.

Campaigners

The public transport system in the North is a disaster and few SEA members have cars, so getting around to the groups of activists who worked on



■ Paisley and Allister of the DUP and below De Brun and Adams of Sinn Fein. Eamonn McCann and the SEA stood against the communalist politics of the mainstream parties

the campaign was not easy.

Just try getting from Armagh to Enniskillen by public transport — it can take all day!

However, just standing brought an amazing response from working people across the North.

The SEA office was contacted on a daily basis by groups of workers facing privatisation, paycuts or redundancies, by campaigners facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation or disability, fighting mobile phone masts, lignite mining, rail closures, planning disasters.

Analysing the result, Eamonn McCann had this to say: "The SEA won a small vote when compared with the mainstream parties. But we always knew that would be the case. Our 9,172 total was in line with most expectations."

"In a sense, the SEA (and the Green Party) was involved in a different election from the other five candidates, all of whom believed that they had a realistic chance of taking a seat. We didn't set out to mobilise a communal vote, like the Unionist and Nationalist parties. Nor did we offer a

mulch of banalities as an alternative. We offered a different way ahead to the people in both communities who are being left behind.

"The issues which we highlighted—the occupation of Iraq, defence of our public services, the fight against poverty, anti-racism, protection of the environment, etc—remain to be confronted.

"As we go about this task, we should keep in mind that the SEA won more votes on June 10 than had been won in last November's Assembly election by the SEA, the Women's Coalition, the Workers' Party and the Socialist Party combined.

"We did not, of course, make significant inroads into the support bases of the dominant communal parties.

Campaigners

"But we made significant connections with groups of campaigners across the North. Our task now is to construct a network which will carry forward and help coordinate these campaigns.

"We were hampered by the fact that family reasons kept me out of the campaign effectively for the final week before the poll.

"The plan had been to

spend most of this time in Belfast. In the event, I didn't make a single speech or knock on a door in Belfast.

"We might have won at least a few extra votes had this not been the case.

"We were hampered to an extent, too, by the self-destructive in-fighting which has become characteristic of some on the Left.

"We must break with this tradition. It is rooted in isolation and demoralisation and operates only to ensure more of the same.

"I thank my own party, the Socialist Workers' Party, and members of the Communist Party of Ireland and the Newtownabbey Labour Party for the mighty effort put in. I also thank the groups of campaigners in various areas who are members of no party but who weighed in enthusiastically.

"Had we not been in the field there would have been no socialist voice heard. We were entirely right to run.

"We have now to consider all that went well and went badly, to draw the lessons and ensure that we are better equipped in future—not just to fight elections but to relate more closely to the day-to-day struggles of all sections of the working-class of the North."



CIVIL SERVICE PRIVATISATION

Direct Rule Ministers are "plundering" the Northern Ireland Civil Service and undoing years of work by local politicians.

Workers in the NICS Recruitment Service, which is one of the Departments brought to Derry as part of the much-trumpeted decentralisation policy, say hundreds of jobs are about to be privatised.

These workers have been informed that the tendering process has already begun to contract out 980 jobs across all departments in the NICS.

They have told that all of their jobs, all Human Resources functions within the NI Civil Service, are up for grabs by the private sector.

This process is so far along that the workers could be told there are three bidders interested in their jobs and these three bidders have already been in touch with InvestNI.

It is particularly disgraceful that InvestNI should be involved. It announced a strategy for bringing jobs to the North West in recent weeks and now it seems to be helping to destroy jobs there.

To make matters worse, Nigel Hamilton, head of the NI Civil Service was in Derry a few weeks ago and described the city as a 'jobs wasteland'. So it is. And by privatising the Human Resources functions of

the civil service, many of which are carried out in Derry, some of the few decent jobs there are in that city will certainly be lost.

If New Labour get away with this, civil servants across all departments in the North will find that not only recruitment but disciplinary procedures, sick pay, annual leave, grievance procedures will all be in the hands of a private firm.

NIPSA should not have allowed the privatisation process get as far as it has. It should have started the fight against it months ago. It may be up to rank and file NIPSA members to start the fight now.

Police cover up for racism

The PSNI have refused to admit that a vicious attack on four Portuguese workers in Dunganon on June 15th was racist.

A local rumour against the men was the reason, not racism, said the police.

But in fact, the rumour—totally unfounded—would never have arisen if the men weren't foreign.

"It's like saying black people eat babies and that that—not racism—is why they're being attacked," commented one local anti-racism campaigner.

The attackers were organised, wearing balaclavas and wielding baseball bats when they attacked the house where the workers were staying in the dead of night.

"Both this incident and one the previous week in which windows were broken and curtains set on fire appear to be racist," said Davy Carlin of the Anti-Racism Network.

A meeting to discuss a response to the attack was being organised as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

A catastrophe is unfolding in western Sudan, Socialist Worker explains why

Disaster in Darfur

THOUSANDS OF children are starving to death in Darfur, western Sudan. Their suffering is another terrible stage in Sudan's agony.

Tens of thousands of people in Darfur have died from famine, disease and war in the last year.

Around a million have been made homeless. By the end of the year some 250,000 may have died.

Newspapers and television, while documenting the suffering, have reached for easy clichés about “age old rivalries between Arab and African” and accusations of “genocide”.

But Darfur is not an ethnic clash. Mercedes Taty, the Deputy Emergency Director for the Médecins Sans Frontières organisation returned recently from Sudan.

She movingly described the horror there. But she added, “I don't think that we should be using the word ‘genocide’ to describe this conflict.

“There is no systematic target—targeting one ethnic group or another one. This doesn't mean the situation in Sudan isn't extremely serious by itself.”

Dar is the Arabic word for house or home. Darfur means the home of the Fur people.

They make up four million of the six million who live in the region, which is the size of France.

But there are also many other groups in Darfur. People of black African and Arab ethnic origin have lived together there for centuries.

All of them are Muslims. Africans and Arabs have mixed in Darfur. “Centuries of intermarriage have rendered the two groups physically indistinguishable,” said a recent report in the Observer.

There have been occasional clashes throughout Darfur's history over land, water and grazing rights.

But typically people have cooperated with each other against the inhospitable semi-desert climate and against Sudan's central government in Khartoum.

In normal times people can get on well enough with one another. But competition and tension grow whenever poverty worsens.

When people see their children starving, they can be persuaded that their neighbour is getting a better deal and is to blame for the horror around them.

So, in the absence of sufficient international aid, a devastating Sudanese drought in the mid-1980s led to fighting. Groups raided one another's herds to survive.

Wealth

In 1986 the government ratcheted up the killing. It armed several Darfur groups to use against the rebels in the south of the country.

The government's aim was to maintain “Sudanese unity”—and to tighten its grip on Darfur's valuable oil and mineral wealth.

By 1989 there was regular conflict in Darfur itself. And in the last 18 months the killing has reached a new level.

Government-backed militias and regular troops are looting, raping and murdering across the region.

Sudan's divisions were engineered and boosted during colonialism. Successive Sudanese governments and their corporate backers have bolstered the disunity.

A mere 1 percent of the money spent on war in Iraq could save all the lives in Darfur—and millions of others throughout Africa. Why can't there be a rain of food and medicine in Sudan rather than bombs on Iraq?



■ Angry locals confront Sudanese government police

A conflict rooted in oil and greed

DARFUR'S AGONY is rooted in British colonialism, oil and the US's murderous interventions.

It is, for the world's powers, a sideshow to a much bigger prize. Whatever goes on in Darfur, Bush wants to see an end to a different Sudanese conflict.

This is the war between the Sudanese government, based in the north, and rebel movements in the south.

The north-south conflict has been going on for decades. Two million have died during the past 15 years, and four million have been displaced.

If a peace deal goes through (as it is supposed to do soon), the US hopes to secure three main gains.

It will clear the way for US and European oil firms to grasp more of Sudan's oil. Sudan has two billion barrels of recoverable oil and currently produces 250,000 barrels a day.

It will also put in place a pro-US government on the shores of the Red Sea, opposite Saudi Arabia. This will fuse together a bloc of pro-US regimes—Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda all border on Sudan.

Last but not least, it will demonstrate that the US can manipulate governments in strategically important parts

of the world. Sudan will not begin to wipe away the disaster in Iraq.

But Bush's gang hope it could be some compensation. The US has kept quiet about the emergency in Darfur, in case it destabilises the wider north-south deal.

Bush is currently aiming for friendly relations with Sudan's government. This sits uneasily with the fact that Sudan is still on the US list of “states that sponsor terrorism”.

Bush is walking a tightrope over Sudan. But he is following in the footsteps of former US president Bill Clinton. Clinton also veered between demonising Sudan as a “terrorist” state and greedily seeking opportunities to exploit its oil. In April 1996 Clinton

signed the Anti-Terrorism Act. This banned all financial transactions between US corporations and countries accused of supporting terrorism. Sudan was placed on that list.

Removed

Four months later Clinton's administration quietly removed Sudan from the register. This was to allow a US oil company to negotiate a big exploration deal in Sudan.

In 1998 the US lurched back to denouncing Sudan as a terrorist state. On 7 August that year US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were attacked with large bombs.

Clinton had to find a culprit for the embassy bombings.

He launched 79 cruise mis-

siles against Afghanistan and Sudan. The El-Shifa pharmaceuticals factory in Khartoum was one of the Sudanese targets. Madeleine Albright, then US Secretary of State, claimed the factory could produce VX nerve gas.

Her arguments proceeded to get even more bizarre—eerily prefiguring the lies that would be used over Iraq.

It became apparent that the El-Shifa plant had no sealed doors, no proper security, nor even locks on the windows.

US officials replied that this was evidence of devilish deception designed to hide the plant's true purpose. Despite an intense US propaganda offensive, the truth was out within hours.

El-Shifa was Sudan's key producer of life-saving medicines and important vaccines for animals. It produced 50 percent of Sudan's entire medicine production.

The plant was crucial because US sanctions prevented Sudan from importing medicines from abroad.

The loss of the plant led to thousands of children dying from malaria, tuberculosis and other treatable diseases.

A year after the bombing the US finally admitted that the plant had no connection with terrorism.

Ruined by imperialism

1820 Egypt invades Sudan. By 1876 Egyptian forces control the entire country.

1879 Britain and France jointly take control of Egypt. They also assume control of Sudan's laws and taxes.

1881 Uprising under Muhammad Ahmed against foreign forces in Sudan. British armed forces try to smash him. But they are beaten back.

1885 Muhammad Ahmed's force occupy Khartoum. They kill General Gordon and establish the first national government.

1898 Battle of Omdurman. Sudanese forces massacred by the British under General Kitchener. British and French forces clash at Fashoda 500 miles south of Khartoum, bringing Europe to the brink of war. France eventually backs off, granting Britain control of Egypt and Sudan in exchange for other African colonies.

1914 Britain takes direct control of Egypt and Sudan. The administration separates north and south Sudan. “The southern provinces are not ready for exposure to the modern world,” says one governor.

1920s A “closed door” policy bans northern Sudanese from entering or working in the south.

1930 Southern Sudanese declared to be a people distinct from northern Muslims. Region prepared for integration into British East Africa.

1946-7 Britain hands south Sudan to north Sudanese elite of local plantation owners without any consultation with the south. South Sudan's representatives in the new legislative assembly are chosen by Britain.

1956 Sudan gains independence. But British-sown divisions lay the basis for a war that breaks out shortly afterwards.

1980-3 Wave of struggle against repression by the government of Ja'far Nimeiry. He had declared sharia law to drum up a support base.

1986 The IMF declares Sudan “bankrupt” and withdraws all loans. Half a million people die from famine in Sudan. Military seize power three years later.

1991 The US halts grain shipments to Port Sudan during a time of famine in retaliation for the Sudanese government opposing the first US war against Iraq.

1992 Further strikes and riots in the towns against IMF-inspired cuts and the Sudanese government.

1993 Umar al-Bashir declared president. He is still president of the country.

BARRELS AND GUNS

OIL COMPANY money has been central to fuelling the killing in Sudan. These companies have worked closely with the country's repressive government.

During the north-south war, oil multinationals provided direct assistance to the government, allowing planes and troops to use privately built commercial airstrips.

Oil money has also allowed the government to import the most modern technologies of death. The crucial company in this operation during the last five years is the Greater Nile Oil Consortium. The largest share in the project is held by BP Amoco. In August 1999, a 1,600-mile pipeline opened linking southern oilfields to Port Sudan—the country's only port.

As soon as the oil started flowing, the US dropped its support for southern rebels. Now Bush is trying to ram through a peace deal and cash in on the bonanza.

GLOBALISED SUFFERING

Zambia: where capitalism cuts lives ten years short

“WE WILL not force countries onto our programmes.”—*Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)*
“IF ZAMBIA doesn't sell the ZNCB bank then they will not get the money.”—*Mark Ellyne, IMF resident representative in Zambia*

CAPITALIST GLOBALISATION is driving the poorest countries deeper into poverty, according to a new report for the United Nations' development agency.

Other imposed measures include: phasing out food maize subsidies; sacking 10,000 public sector workers; introducing VAT; ending intervention in the currency's exchange rate; trade "liberalisation"; investment deregulation; public sector wage cuts; and deregulation in the agricultural sector.

The fate of the African country of Zambia shows how a real weapon of mass destruction has torn apart people's lives.

The weapon is debt, and the people launching it are the same ones who ordered the assault on Iraq.

A second devastating new report, from the World Development Movement (WDM), shows how Zambia's 10.5 million people are seeing their children die as a result of the economic stranglehold of the IMF and the World Bank.

The US dominates these bodies and has enough votes to veto all decisions.

They continue to demand policies which spell death for Africans. Money that should go to health and education is sucked out to repay debts.

In order to attract continued "support" from banks and donations from government agencies, successive Zambian governments have been pressured to strip away any pretence of social protection.

As in so many other parts of the Third World, Zambia's economy has been kidnapped.

Slumped

In 1960 average Zambian life expectancy was 41.6 years. Today it has slumped to 33.4.

One in five Zambian children dies before they are a year old. Zambia began borrowing from the IMF and the World Bank because its economy suffered two shattering shocks in the 1970s.

First the price of the oil and manufactured goods it imported rose steeply. At the same time the money it received from exporting copper and agricultural goods slumped.

As the WDM report says, "In return for loans, Zambia was required to implement World Bank and IMF-endorsed economic policies over three decades.

This period is a sad story of increasing debt, economic stagnation or collapse, and social crisis. Zambia's total external debt rose from \$814 million in 1970 to \$3,244 million by the end of the decade.

The situation then further deteriorated, with Zambia's external debt more than doubling to \$6,916 million by the end of the 1980s.

There has been much talk of how countries like Zambia are now being given "debt relief".

Yet it has received only just over 5 percent of the reduction it is supposed to get under the much vaunted Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.

The rest is dependent on Zambia speeding up its surrender to economic blackmail. Even at the end of the programme Zambia's debt payments will rise.

Every loan from the world's bankers has come with heavy conditions. The IMF and World Bank have forced the privatisation of over 250 Zambian public service companies.

None of this has produced the miracle promised by the quack doctors who prescribed the medicine. National economic production per head fell from \$1,455 in 1976 to \$1,037 by 1987 and then \$892 in 2000.

Zambians have repeatedly risen up against their poverty only to find that the great powers are not interested in anything so troublesome as democracy.

Between 1984 and 1986 students and workers demonstrated and struck against the government's austerity regime.

The uprising forced the government to say it would limit debt repayments.

In addition there were some minor curbs on the power of multinationals. The economy grew in this period, but the IMF retaliated by refusing all finance. Eventually the government gave in.

Privatisation

A recent example of how democracy is thrust aside was the privatisation of Zambia's state electricity company (ZESCO) and state bank (ZNCB) in return for debt relief. The government initially agreed to implement these measures, but this provoked large-scale resistance.

Following a major protest march, the Zambian parliament urged the government to rescind its decision to privatise. So ministers reversed their commitment to sell off the companies.

The IMF responded immediately by announcing that Zambia risked forfeiting \$1 billion in debt relief.

The government gave in. Another condition for receiving debt relief has been to curb public spending. This has forced the government to abandon plans to provide a living wage.

Health services have also been made too expensive to use, just as HIV sweeps through the continent. One in six Zambians between the ages of 15 and 49 years are infected with HIV. What a time to make pay people for even the most basic health treatment!

A recent study showed that nearly half of people in the Copperbelt province, one of the wealthiest regions of the country, could no longer afford to take their children to the doctor.

The World Bank itself reported in 1994 that following the introduction of health fees outpatient attendance fell by about 60 percent and attendance at childbirth clinics by over 20 percent in the capital, Lusaka. Despite this, a new World Bank health project called on the ministry of health to "pursue improvement in cost recovery through user fees".

This is the real face of imperialism and capitalism—war in Iraq, death through enforced poverty in Africa.

■ **For the full report go to www.wdm.org.uk/campaign/coludo/zambia/zamexecsum.htm**

IS IRAQ BUSH'S VIETNAM?

Bush and Blair are in deep trouble as the occupation and war in Iraq faces growing resistance.

The new puppet "interim government" is set to take over at the end of June.

Despite the fact that it is endorsed by a resolution backed by all the United Nations Security Council, the interim governments commands only contempt on the streets of Iraq.

And despite the apparent unanimity of the Security Council resolution, it papers over the cracks dividing the Great Powers.

France, Germany, Russia and China may be prepared to rubber-stamp the new puppet regime in Iraq.

But they are not prepared to lift a finger to help the US and Britain on the issue that matters most to them—the desperate shortage of occupation troops in Iraq.

Bush's strategy to use military prowess to encourage the other Big Powers to come in behind its leadership has badly misfired.

Jacques Chirac vetoed George W Bush's proposal for NATO to join the occupation.

France and Germany also blocked American demands for the bulk of Iraq's \$120 billion foreign debt to be forgiven. And they watered down Bush's plan for a "Greater Middle East" remodelled on Washington's orders.

And with evidence of officially sanctioned torture now emerging, seven members of the Security Council say they won't support an American motion giving US troops immunity from the International Criminal Court. France, Germany and Spain all opposed this move.

China has even threatened to use its veto if Washington forces the issue. This reflects the devastating impact of the torture scandals in US-controlled prisons such as Abu Ghaib and Guantanamo Bay.

Daniel Serwer of the US Institute of Peace told the *Financial Times* that he didn't "see any sign of the Europeans committing new resources" to help the occupation.

The international effort in Iraq was "stalled or declining" because of the "colossal insurgency" that began in April. This is the nub of the problem facing Bush and Blair. Their occupation has provoked growing resistance from the people of Iraq themselves.

In a further setback for the occupation, Bassam Qubba, deputy foreign minister in the puppet regime, was assassinated in Baghdad in June.

Meanwhile, radical Shi'ite leader Moqtada al-Sadr has called on his Mehdi army to stop fighting the interim government's security forces.

Back in April US generals swore to "destroy" the Mehdi army and to "kill or capture" al-Sadr himself. The effect was to make him a popular hero. A poll last month showed that 32 percent of Iraqis "strongly support" al-Sadr. His new apparently softer line may reflect a deal with ministers in the puppet

regime.

They have hinted that they won't implement an American decree banning al-Sadr from political office. Despite massive firepower, the political situation in Iraq is slipping out of the control of the US and British occupation forces. This doesn't mean that they won't use this power to hang on to Iraq, killing many more people in the process.

But the stark reality of popular resistance to the occupation is evident to everyone, inside and outside the Middle East, leaving US forces badly over-stretched.

The US army recently announced a massive expansion of the "stop loss" policy—preventing troops due to be discharged from leaving the army. Anyone in a unit set to deploy in the next three months can't be discharged.

Battle weariness and low morale now infect US troops. A recent Pentagon study found over half US troops in Iraq described their own morale as low and 75 percent describe the morale of their unit as low.

The war and occupation is a huge element in the political unpopularity of Bush, Blair and Ahern.

In a poll last week 53 percent of American voters said the war in Iraq was unjustified.

Some 61 percent thought the US was getting "bogged down". The shadow of Vietnam looms ever more darkly over the conquerors of Iraq.

■ Another victim of the US occupation



HANDOVER OF 'SOVEREIGNTY'

June 30th is the date set by Bush for the "handover" of sovereignty to a new Iraqi "provisional government". But if anyone imagines that real power is being handed back to Iraqis they need to think again.

The new "prime minister" of Iraq is Ayad Allawi, head of the Iraqi National Accord (INA), an exile group strongly backed by the CIA.

The INA was responsible for the notorious claim that Saddam Hussein could launch weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes. United Nations envoy Lakhdar Brahimi tried pushing for more independent candidates as president and prime minister.

But the Americans and their toadies on the now disbanded Iraqi Governing Council blocked these nominations. In January, Bush had to call in Brahimi to help give the planned interim government a veneer of legitimacy. The Americans had been shaken by mass demonstrations across Iraq demanding immediate elections.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration was prepared to overrule Brahimi in order to ensure it maintains its grip on the country.

But despite the appointment of Allawi, the real ruler of Iraq will be John Negroponte, US ambassador to Iraq.

He is a right wing Republican with a sinister record from the US-sponsored reign of terror in Central America during the 1980s. The occupation will continue.

Allawi says a "premature" withdrawal by the US and Britain "would be a major disaster".

Nonetheless, an overstretched US military has proved incapable of dealing with growing popular resistance in Iraq.

Some in the US Administration are even contemplating the prospect of defeat

Only a fool would underestimate the economic and military power at the command of US imperialism.

But the Bush administration, quite contrary to its own intentions, is dramatically demonstrating the limits of that power.

Rumsfeld legalises torture

DESPITE claims that recently pictures of torture and mistreatment of Iraqis held by US forces were the actions of a few bad apples, evidence has now emerged of how torture has been sanctioned from the top of the US government.

Recently a top secret Pentagon memo dated March 6, 2003 and titled "Working Group Report on Detainee Interrogations in the Global War on Terrorism," was leaked to the *Wall Street Journal*.

The memo "legalised" the use of torture at Guantanamo Bay and subsequently in Iraq.

The Third Geneva Convention states that prisoners of war and captured insurgents may not be "threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind" in order to force them to talk.

The Fourth Geneva Convention states that "no physical or moral coercion shall be exercised against" people living under occupation, especially "to obtain information from them or from third parties."

As well as being a signatory to the Geneva



■ Torture at Abu Ghaib prison in Baghdad

Convention, the U.S. government also ratified the UN Convention Against Torture in 1994.

This states that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."

As well as being a signatory to the Geneva

and therefore "neither the president nor anyone following his instructions was bound by the federal Torture Statute."

The memo argued that U.S. leaders ordering torture and war crimes as well as those carrying them out have several "defences."

One is the "necessity" of torture to extract information to prevent an attack.

Another is "superior orders"—that the torturers were only following orders — the defence used unsuccessfully by the Nazis at Nuremberg.

The memo also advised that Bush should sign a presidential directive authorising torture in order to protect his subordinates and minions from prosecution.

The memo redefines torture:

"The infliction of pain or suffering per se, whether it is physical or mental, is insufficient to amount to torture."

The Bush lawyers argue that the law "does not preclude any and all use of drugs" and that "disruption of the senses or personality alone is insufficient" to constitute torture.

His generals spoke of preparedness for a limited nuclear "theatre" war. The aim was to

Why millions won't mourn Ronald Reagan

World leaders gushed paeans of praise on the memory of former US President Ronald Reagan who died in June. But millions of people, including the survivors of the massacres by Reagan-backed military dictators in El Salvador and Guatemala, have no reason to mourn his death.

RONALD REAGAN became president in January 1981, when US imperialism was on the defensive.

This was just six years after the US defeat in Vietnam and two years after the revolutionary overthrow of two of its client dictatorships, of the Shah in Iran and of Somoza in Nicaragua.

Reagan's central aim was to restore US power, regardless of the cost in terms of human life.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq had invaded Iran, late in 1980. Reagan sent Donald Rumsfeld to Baghdad to provide support for Iraq even after it had used poison gas against Kurdish rebels.

In a further attempt to strengthen the US's position in the Middle East, he backed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. That cost tens of thousands of lives and culminated in the slaughter of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla.

Reagan sent US troops to Lebanon and the next year US warships provided cover for the Israeli withdrawal from Beirut by bombarding the city.

Reagan turned Central America into a killing field. The CIA created a terrorist army, the Contras, to fight against the revolutionary government in Nicaragua.

Tens of thousands suffered as it set out to murder government supporters and to destroy the economy—and was helped by US agents planting bombs in the country's harbours.

In the neighbouring states of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras the US financed death squads. These killed 40,000 people in El Salvador in just one year. Reagan's man in Honduras was John Negroponte — who takes over as US overlord in Iraq at the end of this month.

He sent US troops to Lebanon in 1983 and ordered the invasion of Grenada, a tiny Caribbean island, the same year.

He defended the racist apartheid regime in South Africa, opposing calls from the anti apartheid movement echoed in Congress for sanctions on South Africa. He even branded Nelson Mandela's Africa National Congress a "terrorist organisation".

Reagan's apologists claim he was responsible for the liberation of East Europeans in the Stalinist Russian empire. In reality a central part of restoring US dominance for Reagan was breaking the influence of the rival superpower, the USSR. He pushed through massive increases in US arms expenditure and deployed a new generation of weapons of mass destruction—cruise missiles with nuclear warheads—in Europe.

His generals spoke of preparedness for a limited nuclear "theatre" war. The aim was to

■ Ronald Reagan



cause a massively expensive arms race which would virtually bankrupt the USSR.

The people of the Eastern Bloc had been already liberating themselves without any help from the US long before Reagan came on the scene, with the popular insurgency in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1980.

Reagan's approach ensured their countries went into desperate economic crises, from which tens of millions of people still suffer 20 years later.

Nowhere was the horror of the US form of "liberation" more clearly shown than in Afghanistan.

Rebellion

There a popular rebellion was slowly wearing down a Russian occupation when Reagan took office.

His government set out to take over this rebellion so as to make sure it served US interests.

It poured in supplies of cash and modern weaponry to its friends for them to use against their rivals as well as against the Russians.

One of those friends, Hekmatyar, used these weapons to wreak havoc on the capital, Kabul, long after the Russians had left. Another was a certain Osama Bin Laden.

George W Bush says Reagan "restored" the American "nation". But only a small minority of the American people gained any benefit from Reagan's policies.

Early in his presidency he broke a strike of the air traffic controllers' union Patco, sacked all its members and dealt a devastating blow to the trade union movement.

He began massive redistribution of wealth from working people to the rich which continues to this day.

As a result the average worker in the US has lower real wages than 25 years ago and works 160 hours a year (a whole month) longer than when Reagan came to office.

It is for all this that Blair, Bush, Chirac and the others are praising Reagan. However, the only regret for hundreds of millions of people across the world is that he did not die two decades earlier.

The B movie actor who shopped his colleagues

REAGAN, the B movie actor, began his political career in the 1940s as a Hollywood union leader and liberal.

But he secretly fingered his colleagues to the FBI and collaborated with studio bosses to rid the movie industry of Communists in the 1950s. That got him a job as corporate mouthpiece for General Electric.

As the Republican right whipped up a backlash against the struggles of the 1960s, Reagan won two terms as California governor.

At the end of the 1970s, Reagan presented his hard-line conservatism as the saviour of the Republicans after the Watergate scandal and the collapse of the Nixon presidency.

Reagan launched his 1980 presidential campaign by denouncing "welfare queens"—a code word for Blacks—for living off "government handouts." Refusing to respond to threat posed by the AIDS epidemic which began to claim tens of thousands of lives, Reagan declared, "Maybe the Lord brought down this plague" because "illicit sex is against the Ten Commandments."

Reagan launched a war on organised labour, starting by firing 11,000 striking air traffic controllers in 1981, and set about cutting the federal budget, forcing 1 million people off food stamps and cancelling disability benefits to 500,000.

But he made sure to look after the rich, cutting the tax rate for the richest Americans from 70 percent to 28 percent. His policies forced up unemployment rates to their highest levels since the 1930s, provoking widescale misery and anger. In a 1982 visit to Pittsburgh, Reagan was met by thousands of furious steelworkers chanting, "F*** Ronald Reagan!"

To roll back the social movements of the 1960s and '70s, Reagan stuffed the federal courts with hard-line conservatives.

1944-5: LIBERATION FROM BELOW

It wasn't just US and British tanks that freed Europe from Nazism. GIOVANNI PESCE, an Italian partisan fighter, describes his experiences and the mass resistance to fascism

VETERANS OF the Second World War rightly remembered this month the suffering in the D-Day landings 60 years ago. But the official D-Day celebrations peddled a double myth.

First, that the leaders of Britain and the US were driven by principled opposition to fascism. Second, that it was the intervention of the British and the US military that was decisive in beating Germany.

Sixty years ago, far from passively waiting for British and US troops to arrive, courageous partisan resistance movements erupted in much of occupied Europe.

Giovanni Pesce, interviewed below, was one of the key leaders of a resistance movement in Italy that numbered probably over 100,000 active members, with many thousands more providing aid. He is one of only five partisan fighters to have been awarded the Gold Medal of the Resistance.

In Italy the resistance liberated the northern city of Florence in August 1944. Paris was freed by a mass uprising in August 1944, before the Allies arrived.

Of the 100,000 partisan fighters, 35,000 were killed, 21,000 were mutilated and 9,000 were deported to camps in Germany.

After the war the Hewitt Report, written for the British government, acknowledged that "without these partisan victories there would have been no Allied victory in Italy so swift, so overwhelming or so inexpensive".

The Communist Party was at the heart of the resistance movement.

The Allied invasion of southern Italy began in 1943. When key establishment figures turned against Mussolini he was forced to flee north and set up a puppet regime that was dependent on the German army.

By the summer of 1944 resistance was raging across northern Italy. In some areas partisans and popular liberation committees had taken control.

Workers struck in key industrial centres such as Milan, Genoa and Turin. In the south there were spontaneous land occupations and bitter battles against landlords.

There were widespread expectations of a general insurrection across northern Italy. Then the Allies announced they would advance no further until the spring of 1945.

None of the powers in the Second World War wanted to end up occupying areas where popular forces had taken power. Instead they were looking to redivide Europe into rival spheres of influence. Italy had been earmarked for the US and British sphere.

The instructions from Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, to the Italian Communists were to limit the aims of the resistance to opposing the Nazis.

The resistance movement survived the winter of 1944-5. The following spring the Allies began an advance.

But the movement rose again as the Allied advance got bogged down in early April 1945. In Genoa and Turin an insurrection began.

The people of Turin, particularly the factory workers, bore the brunt of the fighting against the Germans. They were eventually



■ **Top: A shaven head Nazi collaborator is marched through the streets of Rome after liberation, bottom: tanks roll through the streets but Italians fought for their own liberation**

able to combine with the partisans and force a German surrender.

By 1 May the whole of northern Italy was free and resistance fighters, ignoring orders from the Allies, had executed Mussolini after they captured him trying to flee.

Struggle for freedom

Giovanni Pesce told Tom Behan of his experiences as an anti-fascist partisan:

'I WAS born on 22 February 1918. We emigrated to France in 1922, when Mussolini took power. Dad had to leave because of his politics.

We moved to a pit village. There was nothing inside our house, just one big room where my parents and their three kids slept.

I could see the living and working conditions of miners. What struck me were the wooden shacks in which five or six migrant workers lived, mainly Algerians, Moroccans and people from the Balkans.

When I left school, aged 13, my parents sent me out to work and I went down the pit. I joined the union and the French Communist Party and took part in all the struggles of the popular front period.

I developed political awareness. I began to understand that if you wanted to change people's minds and improve their living conditions—whether it was migrant or French workers—you had to get organised

and unite.

You needed to take part in struggles, and I experienced my first battles and demonstrations. Our first victory was the election of the left wing popular front government in 1936.

Then General Franco launched a coup in Spain in 1936. I can remember huge demonstrations throughout France demanding help for the Spanish people.

Then the issue of sending volunteers to Spain came up. A group of Italians had left immediately—communists, socialists, anarchists and republicans.

Many Italians, including me, asked to be sent to Spain. Not only was I just 18, but my party didn't want me to go because they said I was too young. I went to another town and joined up.

For me it was a school of anti-fascism and democracy. I discovered the huge Italian contribution in the fight against fascism—it was virtually a university.

I was wounded three times. I took part in all the battles for the defence of Madrid. The battle I'm proudest of took place at Guadalajara, where we defeated the Italian army.

Lots of us were confused and worried, because many of those people were unemployed or very poor, and had been forced to come to Spain.

We talked to them across the trenches,

using a megaphone to try and persuade them that they should surrender.

Many of them had gone to colonise Abyssinia, but it had been a disaster, and we explained they had been used. I think all this helped to lower their level of confidence.

These years were a real leap forward for me. We still felt strong and committed even after we had lost the war. Even when you're defeated, the fact you've fought is a learning experience in itself.

We showed you could fight fascism. Spain was a huge moral, political and military training ground. It gave experience to thousands of people who then led the European resistance.

In 1940 the party sent me into Italy. Nobody knew me. I was meant to join the army and start to organise resistance against fascism.

However, I was arrested quickly, spent six months in jail, and was then sent into internal exile on the island of Ventotene. I got released a month after Mussolini was first arrested.

I went back to the town where I was born and knocked at my auntie's door. I had left town when I was four or five, but she recognised me and took me in.

I got involved quickly, setting up a local National Liberation Committee. Then the party sent me to Turin.

I had two or three safe houses, an arms dump, and a group of partisans who carried out attacks. Our job was sabotage actions, and to strike back against spies and their meeting places.

Nobody knew where I lived. It was terribly lonely. Nobody was meant to see me.

More than anything else, our actions had both political importance and an impact on morale. The vast majority of Italians were passive and frightened.

Deep down they hated the Germans. So the important thing was that every time there was an attack it gave people hope and confidence.

The second aspect was that these actions created links with the strikes which workers were leading in the factories.

The important thing wasn't killing a spy, but the repercussions this had. I'll give you an example—the Caproni factory in Milan. The boss had got more than 150 workers deported to Germany, where about 70 died in concentration camps.

These workers were really frightened—they never went on strike. I was ordered to kill him. So on my own—I was crazy—at 7.40 in the morning I went up and killed him and two other managers.

All the workers getting off the tram for the shift change started shouting, "Well done!"

The very same day the entire factory went on strike. That factory was "strike happy" until Liberation Day. The important thing wasn't the killing, but the effect it had.

After liberation there was a huge hope for a better world—work for everybody, an end to hunger. The conditions could have been created for us and our children to live in peace. But this didn't really happen, above all because of the Americans.'

Send your views to socialistworker@swp.ie or mail to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Bloomsday

The ghost of The Citizen alive and well in Ireland

By DAVID LYNCH

"I AM particularly pleased that major funding has been provided to co-ordinate the centenary celebrations in 2004 of "Bloomsday" and to mount a major exhibition of Joyce Manuscripts in the National Library as part of those celebrations, which are being marketed internationally as a major cultural tourism event".

These were the words of Minister John O'Donoghue before the recent Bloomsday celebrations and in his own terms it seems to have been a success. Hundreds of foreign academics and Joyce lovers descended on Dublin to mark the most celebrated fictional date in English literary history.

But it was with some irony that Bloomsday was celebrated just five days after the racist referendum that O'Donoghue and his cabinet colleagues pushed for.

The referendum had at its heart a closed minded, narrow and racist view of Irish citizenship. Citizenship is now to be decided on terms of blood line and a rigid view of what it means to be an Irish citizen was promoted by O'Donoghue and Fianna Fail.

While pushing this, O'Donoghue was also promoting the (economic) merits of celebrating a book that is a forensically detailed account of a day in the life of three Dubliners who hardly conform to a 'conservative description of the Irish Citizen.' Rather than the homogenous Irish nation of white Catholics that many supporters of the referendum want to see, 'Ulysses' is a celebration of difference.

Firstly there is Leopold the likeable Dubliner working in the burgeoning advertising business, friendly to a fault and willing to argue the case with those who question his "Irishness" because he is Jewish.

Secondly there is Stephen Dedalus the perennial gloomy outsider looking through his sly eyes and educated mind with some derision at the 'official green catholic Ireland' that was slowly emerging to replace British domination.

"I am servant of two masters, Stephen said, an Englishman and an Italian," says the atheist Stephen in a quote probably closest to Joyce's own stance on 'Irish independence'. Stephen like Joyce believed that there was no point getting the British out of Ireland if the new state was just going to be a conservative catholic one. The power of the Vatican had oppressed the Irish as much as the power of London.

And finally there is Molly an earthier more real version of Irish womanhood rather than the pristine, iconic representation of Cathleen Ni Houlihan so beloved of many of the writers of the Irish Literary Revival.

Chapter 12 (Cyclops) is where Joyce most completely ridicules the more ignorant sections of the 'Gaelic Revival'. These were those who looked deeply into a mythical Celtic twilight in an attempt to decide what it meant to be Irish. In a public house Leopold is on the end of a verbal lashing from one of Joyce's most unforgettable creations, the Citizen.

"The figure [the Citizen] seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed redhared freely freckled shaggybearded widemouted largenosed long-headed deepvoiced bareheaded brawnyhanded hairy-legged ruddyfaced, sinewyarmed hero."

He sat up at the bar, articulating his view of what constituted an Irish citizen. Leopold was excluded from the Citizen's vision of the nation by fact of him being Jewish. In 1904 the year that Joyce set the book there had been a pogrom against Jews in Limerick.

The Citizen, confronts Leopold Bloom, demanding to know "what is your nation". "Ireland," Bloom replies. "I was born here."

Under Ireland's newly amended Constitution, this answer would no longer be sufficient and thus the hero of Ireland's most famous novel might not be granted citizenship in Bertie Ahern's Ireland.

Despite partaking in the Bloomsday celebrations the stance taken on immigration and citizenship by FF/PD and Minister O'Donoghue is just the same as the moronic Citizen, meaning that his ghost is alive and well in Ireland one hundred years on from 16 June 1904.



■ James Joyce

music

ARETHA FRANKLIN'S "RESPECT" SHOOK THE 1960S. MARTIN SMITH LOOKS AT THE SONG'S HISTORY

What's in a song?

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to me." When Aretha Franklin belted out those eight simple words in the summer of 1967 the music world was turned upside down.

"Respect" swelled the trickle of overtly political soul songs into a flood. James Brown said, "Say it loud—I'm black and I'm proud."

The Impressions promised, "We're a winner," and the Staple Singers sang, "Respect yourself."

For Aretha Respect was primarily an appeal for domestic respect. At that time she was involved in a violent relationship with her husband.

But for those around her it was seen as a call to arms.

It was sung by the followers of Martin Luther King, it was the anthem of the women's movement and the Black Panthers sang it with clenched fists at their rallies.

From her childhood Aretha breathed the atmosphere of gospel politics.

Her father, The Reverend C L Franklin, was one of the most charismatic preachers of his generation.

A friend of Martin Luther King, he used his New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit to praise god and oppose racism.

Aretha made the huge break from her gospel roots at the age of 18

when she moved to New York and signed to Columbia Records. Aretha sang pop ballads.

The company hoped that she could become a new Diana Ross—the queen of Motown. Motown was the voice of young America.

It was the sound of hope, a belief that racism was going to end, and it was a product of King's civil rights movement.

Yet by late 1965 none of the nine albums Aretha had recorded with Columbia had shown a profit. The company dropped her.

Jerry Wexler at Atlantic studios immediately signed her up.

He sent her to the famous Muscle Shoals Studios in Alabama and argued that she should return to her unique gospel style.

Aretha's sound was darker yet still full of pride. She was no teenager singing about puppy love—she was singing about betrayal, violent relationships.

Hers was the sound of Black Power. The result was the stunning single "I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)"—the perfect mix of RnB and gut-wrenching gospel.

When Aretha re-recorded Otis Redding's classic "Respect" her fame was assured. Aretha crossed boundaries.

Her music appealed to the older generation of the civil rights leaders. Aretha sang at dozens of benefit concerts for King.



■ Aretha Franklin

When Detroit held an Aretha Franklin Day, King handed out the award and when King was murdered Aretha sang "Precious Lord" at his funeral. A version can be heard on the album *Amazing Grace*.

Activists

But she also appealed to the new generation of activists radicalised by the brutality meted out to the civil rights movement and the growing opposition to the Vietnam War.

Aretha put her hair into an Afro, wore dashikis and got involved in the growing women's movement.

Her stand made it easier for the likes of Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and Stevie Wonder to record artistically and politically more challenging music.

Classic Aretha songs like "Respect", "Young, Gifted and Black", and "Think" chart the evolving energies of the 1960s as

clearly as any history. Thirty years ago Aretha's song "Respect" summed up the hopes and aspirations of millions.

Today it has become the name of the new political movement in Britain.

Why? Because, as George Galloway says, "It sums up perfectly the different world we seek to build."

"Respect others—their cultures, religions, interests and respect yourself."

anti war concert

The gig they tried to stop

By DAVE LORDAN

"THE best concert I was ever at in my life. I'm going to rush out tomorrow to buy about ten CD's."

That was the reaction of just two of the fans I spoke to as they were leaving a packed Vicar Street after the first *When Bush Comes to Shove* gig on Saturday the 19th.

Along with fifteen hundred others they had just been treated to a six hour musical extravaganza with all of the acts as brilliant as they were diverse.

From Katell Keineg to Damien Rice, from Gavin Moore to Christy Moore, from Kila to Mundy to Mary Black to the Haliburtons to comedian Barry Murphy the whole lot rocked the house.

This was the gig they tried to stop and that made each note all the sweeter. Originally planned for the Point, venues had to be switched at the last moment

because of the ban on radio ads for the gig.

The ban was ordered by the Broadcasting Commission, a government appointed censorship body which decides what you can hear or see.

They banned the ad on the grounds that it was political. Hypocrisy. All through March and April we were bombarded with ads on the TV and radio for the Fianna Fail/PDs propaganda concert for the Day of Welcomes. Welcome to censorship more like.

I think it is no exaggeration to say that politics and music have never come together in quite the same way in Ireland as they did at this concert.

Everyone present, musicians and fans alike, knew that they were defying a government that sees its role in the world as an aide de campe in the great crusade by the oil companies and their political puppets to destroy the planet and make lots of

cash while they're at it.

The balconies were bedecked in the many colours of our movement. The Palestinian flag, the bright Orange banners of Globalise Resistance, anti war banners from around Ireland.

Political speeches were loudly cheered and obviously added to the atmosphere. Hundreds took away posters and leaflets to spread the anti-war word.

On the show front all the acts gave one hundred percent and there was something for everyone.

I loved the shamanic performance by Kila, the electric theatre of the Revs that sent a jolt of lightning through the crowd and of course the angry, emotional and defiant performance of the one and only Christy Moore.

Ireland's greatest artists and our most radical activists have shaken hands. I hope it is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

videos

THREE POWERFUL FILM EXPERIENCES

Mystic River, Girl With A Pearl Earring and Open Range

THESE ARE three new films just released on DVD and video to help you spend an evening winding down after the election campaign.

Mystic River is a powerful Oscar-winning drama. It centres on three friends whose lives are marked by two incidents which connect them.

Clint Eastwood directed *Mystic River* and it features magnificent performances by Sean Penn, Tim Robbins and Kevin Bacon. They are drawn back together when Penn's teenage daughter is found murdered in the

woods.

Girl With A Pearl Earring is based on the life of Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. Its visual style closely follows Vermeer's paintings. It is a passionate and emotional experience featuring Colin Firth as Vermeer and Scarlett Johansson as the painter's serving girl. *Open Range* is a Western directed by Kevin Costner.

It stars Costner himself and Robert Duvall as two honourable, solitary herders who come into conflict with the violence and corruption of a small town. All three films guarantee an enjoyable evening.

—PETER DAVID

FIANNA FAIL MELTDOWN

Worst Election Result for 70 years

AFTER its worst election result since the 1920s Fianna Fail is rattled.

Since the local election results began to pour in and it became clear that people had taken their anger out on the present government at the ballot box, FF top brass have been panicking.

Bertie Ahern openly flirted with the idea of cutting and running by becoming President of the European Commission, a cabinet shuffle has been promised, FF backbenchers have turned on their government partners now dubbed "The Oppressive Democrats" blaming them for the "right wing policies that have led to our defeat."

The same FF rural TD has called on his party to move sharply to the "social-democratic left" to win back support before the next General Election!

This election represented a conscious, angry, and radical rebuff of the present government and their neo-liberal political and economic agenda. The figures tell the whole story.

Fianna Fail lost a massive 105 city and county council seats. Their overall share of the vote scraped just 30% an historic low for the party.

The party took its most complete battering in urban working class areas, where the full force of the FF/PD government's right wing agenda has been most keenly felt.

In Cork City Council area their vote share collapsed to below 30%, in Galway City Council the FF vote now stands at a miserable 19%, and in Limerick City Council, FF only picked up two seats after winning just 16% of the vote.

But it was in Dublin that the party was most thoroughly routed. Huge increases in voter turnout in working class areas signalled doom for FF as memories of the bin tax, cut backs in health and education and the scrapping of the Community Employment Schemes weighed heavy in the minds of voters.

In Dublin City Council FF vote dropped by 13%, in South Dublin County Council the party only picked up six seats. The results from the Clondalkin Ward speak volumes of the anger felt by working class people towards this government.

A massive increase in the turnout in this strongly working class area saw Sinn Fein topping the poll and the SWP candidate coming within a whisker of preventing the FF candidate from picking up a seat.

Much of local government in Dublin is now controlled by left wing parties as Labour is now the largest party on Dublin City, Fingal and South Dublin County Council.

Before the election Fianna Fail strategists privately said that "anything close to losing 70 seats would be a disaster and we would be extremely worried then". But after losing over 100 seats FF must start looking at the next election with some trepidation.

With opposition to the use of Shannon by the US military, anger in trade unions at the planned break up of Aer Rianta and privatisation of Dublin Bus this unpopular government will have a lot on its plate in the coming

months.

While FF suffered at the polls the other big story of the election has been 'the rise of Sinn Fein' as much of the capitalist media ominously calls it.

Tens of thousands of working class people voted for Sinn Fein as the party registered a spectacular election result. Registering 8% of the vote and winning 52 seats the party benefited most from the class anger felt in urban areas towards the government.

The left vote hugely increased in this election as Sinn Fein support came from first time voters and disillusioned working class voters who did not want to vote for any of the major right wing parties.

While Sinn Fein celebrated, Labour registered a modest increase and the Green Party doubled their number of seats to 16, although they did seem to suffer for their wrong-headed support of the bin tax in Dublin.

The other great story of the elections, but one ignored by the capitalist press, was the strong showing by the socialists.

The Socialist Workers' Party came very close to picking up four seats after excellent polls in Ballyfermot, Dun Laoghaire, Clondalkin, and Artane.

The Socialist Party won four seats and came close to picking up four more. Joe Higgins registered a good vote in the European elections.



Where now for Sinn Fein?

"There is a cancer at the heart of Sinn Fein as a political party. Behind all the smoothly presented waffle, which cloaked much of its recent election campaign, remains a lie which simply will not go away."

That was the doom laden pronouncement from the *Evening Herald* editorial the day after Sinn Fein's results in the election.

The *Herald's* hatchet job on the party and its Dublin European candidate was to be expected but was obviously ignored by tens of thousands of its readership as Sinn Fein hovered up working class votes across the Dublin area.

Working class people voted for Sinn Fein in their droves to register their anger with the corruption, the cut backs, the privatisation, and the general way the Celtic Tiger boom has passed large swathes of urban Dublin right by. Sinn Fein pushed its motto of 'A Ireland of Equals' and spoke much of economic inequality in Ireland and this went down well with many people angry with the present FF/PD government.

However while the capitalist media and the right wing parties worry aloud that the rise of Sinn Fein could actually "shake the foundations of the body politic in Ireland" the reality is different.

While Sinn Fein used radical language in their recent election campaign their overall political trajectory is towards accommodation with the establishment and ultimately coalition government with Fianna Fail.



■ SF's successful Dublin Euro candidate Mary Lou McDonald and Gerry Adams, Top: Bertie Ahern is sure of one vote at least

Speaking on RTE Radio as the results came through on Saturday, Sinn Fein's Pat Doherty refused to rule out a coalition with Fianna Fail after the next election. The next day on radio party President Gerry Adams warned Labour not to enter government with Fine Gael after the next election, but refused to rule out his own party entering government with the hated FF.

While it may not happen after the next election, the lesson from history and what Sinn Fein is presently saying is that they will eventually coalesce with FF.

This film has run before. In the mid twenties Fianna Fail burst onto the scene as a party of the "small farmer and working man".

The party stood on a platform calling on the then Cumann na nGaedheal government to redistribute wealth more fairly. However Fianna Fail eventually entered government and became the principal party of the Irish capitalist class. In the 1950s Clann na Poblachta created a stir as a new left wing republican party boasting such able members as Noel Brown and Sean MacBride.

However after a strong showing in the elections of '51 the party entered coalition government and collapsed a few years later after being prevented from implementing its radical political agenda.

Parties standing on a left wing republican agenda have

flattered to deceive in Irish history. Just like the present Sinn Fein they talked radical politics but because they wanted to accommodate themselves with the system rather than trying to change the capitalist system itself, they eventually petered out or worse—became defenders of the status quo.

Gerry Adams recent comments on making compromises on opposition to the bin tax, corporation tax and Public Private Partnerships could just be a taster of more to come.

While welcoming the Sinn Fein vote as an expression of raw class anger against this right wing government, socialists have to continue to build a real alternative to the present economic system.

Good election for Socialists

SOCIALIST candidates registered some of their best election results in the history of the state on June 11.

With the voter turn out in Dublin areas up and a major swing against FF, socialist candidates won thousands of votes across the capital.

Socialist Party candidates polled well, winning seats in Fingal, Cork and South County Dublin. Prominent Bin Tax campaigner and independent socialist Joan Collins took a seat in Dublin's Crumlin ward. SP TD Joe Higgins got 5.5% of the vote in the Dublin Euro-election.

The Socialist Workers Party came close to winning four seats in Dublin. Three of the candidates won over a thousand first preference votes and came agonisingly close to winning seats for the left. Richard Boyd Barrett won 1,439 votes in Dun Laoghaire, Brid Smith won 1,049 in Ballyfermot and Gino Kenny won 1,044 in Clondalkin. Richie Browne also came within a hairs breath of taking a seat in Artane.

In Clondalkin Gino Kenny's result meant that the SWP candidate got more first preference votes than any of the four Fianna Fail candidates. The working class area of North Clondalkin where the SWP canvassed most saw a massive increase in turnout from the elections of 1999 as people saw that there was a real alternative to the politics of FF on offer. Gino was defeated on the last count after one of the FF candidates scraped in with transfers from his running mate.

This result shows that there is a real audience for left wing and socialist politics in working class areas in the country.

Socialists could have done even better if there had been a united socialist bloc standing in the election.

The Socialist Workers Party has called for such an arrangement, but unfortunately the call has not so far been taken up. Sinn Fein will be set to make major gains in the next Dail election and it is important that socialists will be in a position to offer a serious, united socialist alternative at that point.

While in this election the reformist left benefited most from the anger at the present government signs that the far left is building its profile and sinking real roots into working class areas are there for all to see.

'Sustaining Progress' maintains low wages

DETAILS of the Sustaining Progress Agreement on pay in 2005 and 2006 were announced as *Socialist Worker* went to press.

It offers workers the following increases:

■ 6% over 18 months for workers on less than €350 a week.

■ 5.5% over 18 months for workers on more than €350 a week

In the Public sector it will be phased in as follows:

■ 1.5% 01/06/05

■ 1.5% 01/12/05

■ 2.5% 01/06/06

In the Private/commercial semi-state phasing is

■ 1.5%, 1.5%, 2.5% at six monthly intervals (dates vary across companies).

Talks were continuing on non pay issues and details were not available as *Socialist Worker* went to press. These issues include:

■ Benchmarking Review Body and Higher pay review body

■ Increase in statutory redundancy pay ceiling

■ Process to deal with pensions (specifically, employers who change pension schemes).

THIS IS A BAD DEAL!

THOSE on low pay get an extra 0.5% increase but this is not enough.

A flat rate increase would be of greater benefit to those on low rates of pay but government and employers considered it too costly

Low paid workers will not be taken out of the tax bracket—another measure that would really help those on inadequate incomes.

Why are our union leaders not insisting on these measures as a basic condition of even discussing a new agreement?

Inflation will be at least 4% over the next 18 months, possibly higher.

In real terms our increase will come to about 1.5% over the next year and a half. In other words we will not see any real improve-

ment in our living standards.

We will continue to be crippled by mortgage repayments, rising health and car insurance costs and a range of stealth taxes.

In the likely event of inflation rising at a faster rate we will be worse off

The bulk of the pay increase comes at the end of the eighteen

month period.

This is obviously linked to the timing of the next general election

■ The ICTU Executive meets on Wednesday 23rd June.

■ Members in individual unions will be balloted

■ ICTU special delegate conference takes final decision on Wednesday 28th July.

Vote no: Don't be ripped off

These pay increases are insulting. At a time when the economy is growing, ensuring mega profits for the rich and huge salaries for company executives, workers continue to be told that they cannot be "greedy".

Cumulative pay increases over the last five years are quoted but neither union leaders nor government are quite so keen to give figures for cumulative price increases.

A quick glance at the statistics shows what many workers already know—we are being ripped off.

Over the next eighteen months we are offered increases of 5.5% to 6%. This increase will be eaten away first by the tax changes in the budget which push more workers into the top 42% tax bracket. It will disap-

pear altogether under the pressure of price increases for goods and services that ordinary people have to buy.

SOME FACTS:

Ireland is the most expensive country in Europe,

Dublin is one of the most expensive cities in the EU and it is the 21st most expensive city in the world

House prices nationally rose on average by 13.7% in 2003. Despite all the expert forecasts of a slow down in the housing market they are continuing to rise rapidly this year

Oil prices have increased by 22% so far this year

Ireland has the highest phone line rental of any EU state

Retail food prices are higher in Ireland than in most other EU

states. Tesco for example charges more for goods in its Irish stores than it does anywhere else.

It is highly likely that the rate of inflation has been underestimated. After all the same "experts" who supplied this figure were telling us last April that inflation was going to continue on a downward trend after it hit a 1.7% figure three months ago. They were proven very wrong.

This pay deal offers little or nothing to workers and expects us once again to give big business a free ride to extract all the profits it wants at our expense.

We know we were sold short by social partnership during the Celtic tiger. Don't let it happen again. Vote no and tell our union leaders we will fight for a better deal.

DECENTRALISATION: Union members meet to organise

WHEN Charlie McCreevy announced his plan to decentralise almost 10,500 civil and public servants, the problems hardly registered with either commentators or the general public.

"Taking civil and public service jobs out of an overcrowded capital and putting them into apparently underdeveloped towns is a nice, cuddly notion.

"As a general principle no one really disagrees with it," was how Fintan O'Toole in a recent *Irish Times* piece put it.

But it is now accepted that decentralisation was one of the issues that contributed to Fianna Fail losses in the recent elections.

It is now obvious that the government's plans are unravelling.

But the problems were there from the very start.

The proposal is to move nine government departments and a number of agencies from, primarily, Dublin but also Cork and Limerick.

However even very senior management were

only informed of the plan hours before it was announced.

The reason? They would have opposed it as unworkable – that the splitting of Departments into 53 different towns was administratively unworkable and that there would not be sufficient take-up to make the decentralised Departments viable.

Decentralisation will do nothing to bring power or control over decision making to the regions.

In fact dispersing staff throughout the country will make access for the general public even more difficult.

What logic is there in putting the probation officers for Dublin city in Navan or the Department of the Marine in Cavan?

Decentralisation is allegedly 'voluntary' but many staff feel under massive pressure to apply to move to hold their jobs.

The future for staff who don't apply has not been clarified.

In theory they could be redeployed to another area of work.

However the govern-



■ Speakers at the public meeting: Peter Nolan IMPACT, Willy Cumming AE&HS Branch Sec, Frank Barry AMICUS. Owen Reidy, SIPTU (left to right)

ment have not made any attempt to explain how this will be done.

For specialist grades and those in the agencies the issue is particularly difficult as there will not be any equivalent jobs remaining in Dublin.

Boycott

SIPTU and AMICUS recommended members to boycott the application process because of this uncertainty.

A recent public meet-

ing sponsored by the AE&HS Branch of IMPACT, pulled together, at very short notice, almost 150 people from across all the unions.

There was a real anger at being used as pawns to be played around with by Fianna Fail for electoral purposes.

The meeting agreed to establish a network of activists to coordinate future activities.

There is a real chance of beating the government's plan but staff will

have to organise across unions to ensure that happens.

If the plan does go ahead Fianna Fail's old friends, the development and building lobby, will be the ones that will make a killing.

Sites will have to be bought and new offices financed and built—the stuff of future Tribunals.

■ For further details of the *ad hoc* network against decentralisation contact Willy Cumming at 087/6811687

Civil Servants still fighting after six months

By a NIPSA activist

AFTER six long months of industrial action civil servants in N.Ireland are as determined as ever to win a decent pay rise.

Over 500 members of NIPSA have been on strike over the past few weeks as part of the selective strike action campaign.

On the 12th June, for example, workers in the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA) voted overwhelmingly to continue their indefinite strike.

They were under serious pressure from management to return to work.

Thousands of MOT examinations have had to be cancelled due to the action of the DVTA staff.

With the strike now in its 6th week the government has been forced to stop fining motorists for failing to have a MOT certificate for their vehicle.

Workers in the Office of Industrial Tribunals are also continuing their strike action as are staff in Derry's Pension Centre despite the best efforts of management who are attempting to break the strike by bringing scabs in from all over the north.

One of the most inspiring incidents however of the past few weeks is the unity of those workers involved in the dispute.

On the 10th June management in the Rates Collection Agency (RCA) in Belfast suspended 4 line managers for refusing to cover the work of an absent colleague, this was in line with the 'work to rule' in place since the start of the dispute.

At 11am the 60 workers in the office responded by walking out for the rest of the day. They weren't the only ones either.

Other RCA staff in Derry's Orchard House took to the street in solidarity. In Belfast workers from the Child Support Agency joined them. One RCA worker told *Socialist Worker*, "management thought that we wouldn't fight back, but we aren't done yet".

The response of the staff to the attack on their colleagues was tremendous, this after 27 weeks of threats and bullying from management. It was a clear example of the potential, even after such a long dispute, to escalate the campaign.

With the selective action continuing the focus now turns to Friday 25th June when NIPSA will hold a rally and march through Belfast City Centre.

The union has asked Civil Servants to stop work at 11.45am on the day in order to get to the assembly point in time to march.

Every effort must go into ensuring a huge turnout on the demonstration. We need to send a clear signal to management and the government that we aren't lying down.

However it is also essential that we let the Civil Service Group Executive of NIPSA know that we want more action. Management have not come up with any new money yet, they haven't even spoken to the union since March.

It's obvious then that there is not enough pressure on them to do so, despite the great efforts of those workers who have taken selective strike action.

One way to change that would be to up the ante. Instead of 500 workers being on strike for the last couple of weeks imagine 22,000.

That's the difference between the campaign dragging on and on or forcing the government to get out the chequebook.

Respect polls well in Britain

RESPECT was launched just 20 weeks ago. It was almost totally excluded by the British media. Yet it scored some big successes.

Respect managed to field candidates for the European Parliament and London Assembly elections in every constituency, producing millions of leaflets and raising hundreds of thousands of pounds.

And Respect made a spectacular breakthrough in north and east London. In the City & East constituency Oliur Rahman won nearly 20,000 votes—taking 15 percent of the vote and beating the Lib Dems into fourth place. In the North East constituency Dean Ryan won over 11,000 votes, taking nearly 9 percent of the poll.

Across the city of Birmingham, Respect won over 7 percent of the poll. In two wards, Bordesley Green and Springfield, Respect topped the poll. Respect did not stand in many council seats, but it polled very well in some seats it did contest.

In Preston Respect contested five central working class council seats and won

30 percent of the vote across these wards. Respect's success was not just won in areas with large numbers of Muslims. It was in mixed, working class areas like Haringey, Waltham Forest, Redbridge and Ealing in London, and similar areas in cities like Birmingham, Leeds and Leicester.

OLIUR RAHMAN, Respect candidate in the City & East constituency for the London Assembly, won 19,675 votes, 15 percent of the poll.

"WE RAN a massive campaign. I am chair of my trade union branch as well as being an anti-war activist and Bengali. We reached out to all those groups of people. We got no coverage from the national media and the Bengali papers gave a lot more coverage to the Tory candidate, who was also Bengali.

On polling day some Labour people at the polling station were calling us names. They were laughing at us—they are not laughing now. Now the pro-war Labour MPs in east London better watch out. We are coming for them."

Socialist Worker

(01) 8722682 <http://www.swp.ie> info@swp.ie

PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY €1.00 / £0.70p

inside:

Election Analysis

Fianna Fail in meltdown

Socialists move ahead

Why Eamonn McCann was right to stand in the North

Where now for Sinn Fein?

Turn to pages 3, 4, 10

STOP THE BREAK UP OF CIE & AER RIANTA

THE government has not got the message. They are pushing ahead with privatisation.

Transport Minister Seamus Brennan has started to give out licences to private companies to take up bus routes in Dublin.

He claims that there is a new bus route to Dublin City West – and so this can be handed over to a private company.

But there is already a Dublin Bus service there – it simply needs to be improved with a more frequent service.

Brennan's overall plan is to franchise out a quarter of the existing routes this year, a quarter next year and so on until the

whole company is eventually privatised.

If he is not stopped, large multi-nationals like First Group and Arriva will take control of our bus service through an association with some Irish front companies such as Mortons.

In Britain, this policy has brought dearer fares, a more infrequent bus service and worse conditions for workers.

In the run up to privatisation, Brennan has also ordered CIE to do a stocktaking exercise to see how much the Dublin Bus garages are valued at.

He wants to sell them off to property speculators and use the money to fund the break up

of CIE.

It is a Thatcherite plan that will eventually lead to more costs because bus drivers will have to be moved to outlying depots before they can start work.

The National Bus and Rail Union is balloting its members to take action and a big majority is expected.

But will the union leaders really carry through on their threats to take action?

Rank and file workers have already been dismayed about action being called off in the past.

This time around there should be no bluster but rather a seri-

ous strategy to take on Brennan.

AER RIANTA

MEANWHILE at Aer Rianta, Brennan is also pushing through his plan to break up the company.

Tragically, the top leaders in SIPTU and ICTU seem to be colluding with him.

During the negotiations on a new social partnership pay deal, they signed up to the break up of the company.

SIPTU leader, Jack O Connor subsequently tried to cover his tracks by stating that the union was still opposed 'in principle' to

the breakup.

But there is little point being opposed to the policy in principle and doing little about it.

The FF/PD government have been severely weakened by the election results.

There has been a resounding rejection of their policies.

Now is the time to turn them into a lame duck administration by carrying through the fight against privatisation.

Socialists will be campaigning among rank and file trade unionists for a rejection of a new social partnership deal and for co-ordinated opposition to the breakup of CIE and Aer Rianta.