Workers' Weekly

Vol. 21 No. 14 June 11, 1994 20p

Six Months On from the Joint Declaration

THE Joint Declaration of John Major and the Irish Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds, on December 15 last year was presented as a most important step towards peace. Some even suggested that peace in northern Ireland might be possible before Christmas.

Such a view was always rejected by serious analysts. Without the causes of the conflict being addressed and decisive action based on this being taken, how could a solution be possible?

Recently, Sinn Fein issued a list of 20 points which it wished the British government to clarify. The Northern Ireland Office issued in reply a 21-page document which claimed to answer some of them by reference to the Joint Declaration, whilst others were grouped into categories under which they were dismissed as not being requests for clarification. The government's stated position remains that no negotiations on the Joint Declaration are possible, only clarification. Now that it has supposedly issued the clarification, the government is calling on the IRA to lay down their arms.

A careful look at these documents makes it quite apparent that the government has totally failed to answer the crucial points raised by Sinn Fein. Its dismissal of these points as not being requests for clarification does not meet the needs of the time for decisive action to bring about peace, and

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Pickets and demonstrations against state terrorism in India held on 10th anniversary of Operation Blue Star

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Editorial

TWO WEEKS TO NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

Two weeks from now our Party's National Consultative Conference will take place in London on Saturday and Sunday, June 25 and 26. It is safe to say that this conference will be one of the most important conferences organised by the Party in recent years.

What will happen at the conference? What is its aim?

As has already been announced by the Party, the Conference will focus on the elaboration of the draft document of RCPB(ML), *There Is A Way Out of the Crisis*. In doing this, the Conference will not take the attitude of merely dotting the i's and crossing the t's of the document. The elaboration will itself have the orientation of taking forward the Party's work, it will point the way towards beginning planned work to build a practical programme on the basis of its general line. In contributing to the dicussion, Party activists and those activists from various struggles and anyone else who attends the Conference will as individuals address their comments to the document by turn.

Already it is clear that the Party has come a long way this year in taking the preparatory steps necessary in this period in which revolution is in retreat. The Coventry International Seminar right at the beginning of the year imparted an indestructible momentum to the Party's work, and by the March 19 rally marking the 15th anniversary

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does not fit with its claims that bringing peace to Ireland is its main aim.

For example, Sinn Fein raises the question of the political objectives of the government. In particular, "what are the British government's long-term interests and objectives in relation to Ireland?". The Northern Ireland Office reply that its aim, stated in the Joint Declaration, is "to see peace, stability and reconciliation established by agreement among all the people who inhabit the island ..." does not amount to a statement of its political aims in relation to Ireland. However, if the British government's objective in Ireland is peace, irrespective of the implications for the future sovereignty and political forms in Ireland, as they state, then it must follow this logic to its conclusion. Its refusal to follow this logic is what is blocking the peace process. Facts show that the British presence in Ireland is synonymous with violence, and the precondition for peace is that it must withdraw. This is the key step. Instead, the British government persists in putting the onus on the IRA, rather than itself, to bring the violence to an end.

Furthermore, the question of the sovereignty of the Irish over the six counties cannot be qualified. Sinn Fein justly raises the contradiction between the British government's recognition that "it is for the Irish people to exercise our right to self-determination" and its later qualification of that right. If the government accepts the right of the Irish people to self-determination, then this must mean what it says, namely that the Irish people themselves determine how to deal with the present partition of Ireland and all other Irish affairs. But instead, the British government gives itself the right to decide who should and who should not be allowed to take part in talks, it attempts to decide the agenda of talks and negotiations, it demands from Irish political parties that they must "abide by the democratic process", it itself defines the nature of this "democratic process". In other words, the government has given itself the right to decide issues which belong only to the Irish themselves and is thereby continuing to violate the right of the Irish nation to self-determination, despite recognising it in words.

It is not at all surprising that the Joint Declaration has failed to deliver the peace it promised in such circumstances. As government ministers have admitted on more than one occasion, the aim of the Joint Declaration was to put pressure on Sinn Fein. How could such an aim be considered as a move towards peace? The government must instead act on the implication of its words and the logic of the situation and open the way to ending the conflict in northern Ireland and resolving the tragic situation there.

At the present time the conditions exist for decisive moves towards peace in Ireland. For that matter, in order to pursue its strategic interests wider afield, as in the former Yugoslavia, in the Middle East and, generally, in the clash of the interests of British capital with those of other big powers, the government is driven to try to end armed conflict in its own backyard so as to keep its hands free. The Irish government for its part has taken away one of the pretexts offered by the British government for remaining in the north of Ireland by publicly stating that it will not annex the six counties by force. Britain must recognise that there is no ducking the issue that peace cannot be brought about other than by following the path of principle and removing the obstacle to the Irish people determining their own affairs.

For its part, the British working class must continue to demand that the British government carry through to its logical conclusion the recognition of the right of the Irish to self determination and declare its intention to end the union and withdraw British troops and all its state apparatus from Ireland.

Note: *Workers' Weekly* was not published on May 28 and June 4.

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TWO WEEKS TO NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

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of RCPB(ML), the Central Committee had prepared the draft document which began the work to establish the Party's general line for this period. The two-point programme of dissemination and elaboration of the draft document is carrying the work forward to the Consultative Conference. Now, how will the Consultative Conference set the agenda for a further advance?

The Central Committee is preparing six papers to facilitate the work of the Conference in this regard. Building on the line of the draft document that **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis**, they will further elaborate, as well as the theory which underpins the Party's analysis, the theoretical and ideological considerations for the further advance of the Party's work, outlining the direction for the workers' movement and the democratic movement and what is necessary for these movements to make headway. In this way, the papers will contribute to the aim of the Conference in further deepening and consolidating the general line of the Party and transforming this into an actual line of march for the Party and the working class. It is very evident that it is most important that the entire Party is involved in the deliberations of the Consultative Conference.

This raises the question of how the discussion at the Conference should take place. After taking part in study groups and other discussions over the past three months, Party activists will come to the Conference having clarified any points of confusion over the draft document, having done their work to fully grasp the analysis which the Party is putting forward, and with their views worked out. The National Consultative Conference will not be a forum for airing differences, nor will it be a matter of pointing out points of agreement or disagreement with the draft document, nor yet will it be a Seminar for questions to be put to the Central Committee. Rather, the individual participants in the Conference who wish to speak will in turn argue out the logic of their views, elaborating on themes from the draft document and in the same fashion respond to the substance of what is put forward by the Central Committee. Everyone is encouraged to take part in the discussion, which will be carried out in accordance with rules decided by the Conference.

RCPB(ML) is delighted that Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), has agreed to open the Conference and lead a delegation from CPC(ML). Delegations from the Communist Party of Ireland (Marxist-Leninist) and the Communist Ghadar Party of India will also attend.

The first day will primarily be devoted to the presentation of the papers of the Central Committee, while on the second day the emphasis will be on the contributions from the participating individuals. From the discussions will emerge the line of march of the next stage of the Party's work, and resolutions encapsulating the thinking of the Consultative Conference will be presented by the Presidium to round off the proceedings.

The National Consultative Conference will mark a further milestone in the work of the Party in this period, and will suggest new challenges for Party activists and supporters, as well as pointing to a new target for the next stage of the Party's work.

DISCUSSION

Quarterly Review of Contemporary Marxist-Leninist Thought

Now Available, Vol.1 No.1, Spring 1994

Published by Ideological Studies Centre (ISC)

Business Enquiries to: New Distribution, BM Box 2568, London WC1N 3XX

Subscription rates (Inland): Single Issue - £2.50 + 50p p&p; Yearly - £10.00 + £2.00 p&p

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10th Anniversary of Operation Blue Star:

Pickets and demonstrations against state terrorism in India

TO mark the 10th anniversary of the Indian state terrorist action, code-named Operation Blue Star, against the people of Punjab, a series of lunch-time pickets were held outside the Indian High Commission in Aldwych, London, from 31 May to 4 June. Pickets and demonstrations were also held across North America on June 4.

On that day in 1984, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, holy shrine of the Sikhs, was the target of attack by the Indian army where at least two thousand people were massacred, their bodies cremated and many more people were arrested. The attack, which lasted for three days, was carried out to allegedly "flush out" militants the Indira Gandhi government accused of being responsible for attacks of terrorism in Punjab. In reality, the action was directed against the people of Punjab who were fighting to redress various economic and political wrongs committed by the Indian state.

Indian state terrorism has continued unabated to date in Punjab, Kashmir, the North-East and elsewhere. People are still being killed in "fake encounters" or attacked in other ways. The pickets and demonstrations highlighted not only the situation in Punjab but all over India, and the fact that rights violations in India are persisting to this day. Members and supporters of the Association of Indian Progressive Study Groups (AIPSG), the Peoples' Front/East Indian Defence Committee (PF/EIDC) and other groups held pickets outside Indian diplomatic missions in Ottawa, New York, Washington DC, Chicago, San Francisco and Vancouver. Thousands of leaflets calling for a democratic solution to India's problems were distributed. The AIPSG and PF/EIDC also issued a statement calling for a world conference on Punjab "in order to press for a concerted effort to end the problem of state violence in India". "The conference will be a forum to defend the just economic and political demands of the people of Punjab, Kashmir and the rest of India and support democratic renewal as the only solution to their problems," the statement says.

In London, the demonstrators, including a contingent of the Indian Workers' Association (G.B.), supporters of IPSG (London), and activists of RCPB(ML), carried placards calling for an end to state terrorism in India, and condemning Operation Blue Star. The demonstrators handed out to passers-by and to people entering and leaving the building hundreds of copies of a leaflet issued by RCPB(ML) condemning Operation Blue Star.

CONDEMN OPERATION BLUE STAR

The leaflet, with the above heading, said: "In the ten years since Operation Blue Star, more than 20,000 innocent people have been killed in Punjab alone, and the figure is much higher if the victims of the November 1984 massacres in Delhi, Kanpur and other cities are included.

"Ten years on, the Indian government has yet to give a proper account of the reasons for its attack on the Golden Temple. Nor is there an official figure for the number of people killed during the operation, which was launched despite the presence of thousands of pilgrims. For its part, the British government has continued to remain silent on this atrocity.

"The people in Punjab were fighting to redress various economic and political grievances but the Indira Gandhi government dismissed their agitation as a 'law and order' issue and resorted to the use of force. This pattern has continued ▶

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THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

Draft document released by the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) for discussion, March 19, 1994

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and despite the proclamation of 'normalcy' in Punjab, civil liberties groups point to the persistence to date of extreme rights violations such as killings in 'fake encounters', disappearances and torture."

The leaflet called upon everyone concerned about state terrorism of the Indian government and about human rights violations in India and other countries to support and to participate in this action.

The response during the week from passers-by and from people entering and leaving the building – for example, to collect visas – was quite significant. For example, reflecting the sentiment of progressive and democratic people, one gentleman, who had left Punjab in 1952, having taken a leaflet, returned to express his appreciation of it, saying, "No matter where, violence always comes from the state." One young person, about to travel to India, talked for quite a while on the situation in Punjab and elsewhere, expressing concern about the extreme rights violations, and wished the picket good luck in its work.

The officials at the Indian High Commission had evidently been quite worried by the protest, and unsuccessfully tried to get the police to move the picket away from the front entrance of the High Commission.

A STIRRING CALL

At a rally at the Parliament in Ottawa, Canada, the speakers included Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist). He called upon everyone to unite to eliminate the present Indian state, after which all the peoples of India should decide what kind of system they want to establish.

Hardial Bains said none of the governments which call themselves democratic "have condemned the kind of genocide which has been going on in India for the past ten years". He said the storming of the Golden Temple and the killing of thousands of Sikhs in Delhi and other cities in November 1984 was a declaration by the Indian government that it was not prepared to even listen to the demands of the peoples of India, let alone address any of their problems. "The Indian government declared that anyone who raises their voice will be humiliated, that nobody will be allowed to live with honour and dignity any more." "How is it possible that such a thing carries on?" he asked. "How is it that on the soil of India, in the land of five rivers - in the land which gave rise to the ten Gurus, to the Ghadar Party and thousands of martyrs - how is it that we are still protesting, that we have still not reached our goals?"

Pointing dramatically at the Canadian House of Commons behind him, Hardial Bains said "there are not a few who have illusions that this Parliament will help us".

He said that as a communist, thousands of his comrades in India had laid down their lives in the struggle against the Indian state. "Let the saffron colour of defiance fight together with the red colour of sacrifice to open a path for progress," he appealed. Everyone should fight together to end the present system and then establish whatever system is considered best. "Let the sovereign people of all parts of India, from Punjab, Kashmir and Assam to Tamilnad, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh together forge a new union, a voluntary and equal union under which all the peoples will flourish," he said.

In addition to the World Conference on Punjab, the AISPG and PF/EIDC are also planning a series of international demonstrations and meetings to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the November 1984 massacres, in which more than 5,000 people were killed in Delhi, Kanpur and other cities following the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

Workers' Weekly

Newspaper of the
Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

June 11, 1994 Volume 21, Number 14

Subscription rates (Inland and EC):
45p per issue, £1.80 for 4 issues, £11.70 for 26 issues, £23.40 for 52 issues

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NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE

Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulston Street, London NW1

(nearest tubes: Euston/King's Cross)

June 25 and 26, 1994

Registration: June 25, 9:00 a.m.

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) is organising a **National Consultative Conference** on June 25-26, 1994, in order to discuss the draft document released for discussion at the rally on March 19, 1994, celebrating the 15th anniversary of its founding.

The aim of this conference is to involve all the forces which are concerned about the present state of affairs in Britain and the world in elaborating the draft document **There Is a Way Out of the Crisis** and to begin planned work to build a practical programme on this basis.

All activists in various struggles, other Communist Parties, their leadership and rank-and-file and broad masses of the people are warmly invited to attend the conference where discussion will take place on a topic-by-topic basis in which individuals will contribute their comments by turn. A number of papers prepared by the Central Committee of RCPB(ML) will be presented in order to facilitate the discussion.

Hardial Bains, national leader of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist), has been invited to open this conference and participate in the discussion. Various other Communist Parties and organisations from across the five continents have also been invited to attend, along with progressive and democratic personalities.

The National Consultative Conference is the most important forum which has been organised by RCPB(ML) in order to promote discussion on the questions of vital interest for the working class and people of Britain and internationally. Everyone is welcome. A registration fee of £25 (students and unwaged £10) is required to meet the conference expenses. Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided during the proceedings.

The conference proceedings will also be made available in print and video form.

For further details contact RCPB(ML), 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. Tel: 071-627 0599

Printed and published by Workers' Publishing House, 170 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LA. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.