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

Pete Firmin

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

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

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

The dockers have received less support in Britain. The TGWU, despite the "left" majority on its executive, would not give official support because the dockers' action is "illegal", ie outside the Tories' anti-union laws. Ironically, much of the publicity drive by dockers abroad would have been illegal here.

Instead the TGWU has given token support, with Bill Morris occasionally speaking at rallies, and supposedly collecting money for the dockers - very little of which has been seen. Morris's main activity has been trying to sell the dockers out. He has brokered deals with the MHDC behind the dockers' backs and then tried to get them to accept.

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

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

Some on the executive have pledged to oppose this, if necessary resisting the left in terms of who is and who is not prepared to support the dockers.

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TGWU's Liverpool office, and possibly the TGWU informing other unions and dockers unions internationally that they have withdrawn support, making a hard line to win solidarity action.

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

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

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

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

SUPPORT THE LIVERPOOL Dockers

Anniversary March
Saturday 28 September

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

NO TO CASUALISATION

Beating Blair's betrayal on post

TUC CONGRESS produced one of the strangest sights for years, Blairite union leader Alan Johnson of the Communication Workers Union was forced to criticise Blair's call for a ballot in the postal dispute and defend the decision of his executive to escalate the dispute.
Blair's intervention into the dispute calling for a ballot on the ACAS agreement was a stab in the back for postal workers.

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

It is to the credit of the CWU executive that it has resisted massive pressure from Royal Mail, the government and from Tony Blair. A ballot at this stage of the dispute would have had the effect of demo-billing the membership and place them under enormous pressure to vote for a settlement.

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

While this is a well-intentioned error unlike Blair's betrayal, it is a serious mistake in action. If the dispute could be settled by a vote of the union's membership, industrial action would never have been necessary.

The mandate for the dispute was an overwhelming endorsement of the union's position with 70% voting for industrial action on a high turnout. It was completely ignored by Royal Mail, hell bent on its job-slaughtering agenda.

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

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

The decision to call a strike for the weekend September 30 is a good start. Once again Royal Mail will be forced to accept the reality that CWU members support industrial action.

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

A victory in this case will be a lightening rod for other public sector workers to resist attacks on their jobs and conditions.
Defend a woman's right to choose

THE NATIONAL Abortion Campaign (NAC) held a strategy meeting last week to discuss the needed response to attacks on women's abortion rights. The recent series of hi-jacked media stories about women's abortion, fertility etc is clearly part of an NAC tactical offensive against a woman's right to choose. Look towards the anti-abortion organisations like LIFE to grab the headlines.

The NAC's role should be noted. While the tabloids revealed in the last week, the NAC has published articles suggesting a woman's right to choose has gone too far. All this has created a climate in which anti-abortion organisations can confidently mount a legal attack on women's rights. Anti-abortion organisations are calling for a national campaign to put their names forward in the pro-life movement. A new bill this session seems a strong possibility.

The NAC meeting, organised at short notice, was published by word of mouth, was well-attended and lively, full of women agitated and alarmed by recent events and the likelihood of legislation, and looking to discuss an organised response. The meeting agreed that campaigns need to be set up or re-visited in students' unions, and that the TUC and major unions need to lend support to the movement within the Labour Party and trade unions.

The NAC has asked for occasional articles, especially for specific events, and noted the need for a new national campaign. The TUC should make every effort to point out that the TUC is an organisation of women and men who are opposed to the destruction of life and that the TUC supports the right to choose.

Join fight for free education

Kathryn Marshall

AS A NEW YEAR begins in universities and colleges across the country, students are being bombarded by the threat of cuts. Since 1979 students' living standards have been cut, and the real cost of living has increased. The NAC has called for a campaign for free education and a minimum income for all students, and the TUC has supported these demands. The TUC should take the lead in this struggle.

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

Elkie Dee

A delegate’s week at the TUC

Greg Tucker of the RMT compares the class of the modernisers

"NEW UNIONISM" — running parallel with but distinct from New Labour — is meant to be the glittering vision for the week. Unfortunately, however, much of the TUC leaders tried not to rock the boat, the Labour leaders were determined to capitulate.

They had another script, a different political agenda. Blanket, Blair and Byers ran them out to deliberately rubbish the TUC. Implicit in the Labour leadership's actions was the belief that alliance with the unions has become an electoral embarrassment, impeding their courtship of donations from middle and large business, and the assumption that the trade union bureaucracy would in any case be unable to control the rank and file after the general election.

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

Key themes of government policy were to be highlighted — the import of our standing in the world, the need for European monetary integration to build a strong British economy.

Only two problems remained — on the minimum wage, over reentralisation and repeal of the anti-strike laws — but even here everything went to plan. Unable to outvote the demand from UNISON for a minimum wage of £4.26 an hour, TUC chief John Monks sought to bring others within the fold. Agisting another composite and a Government appointment for a back-of-the-yard which sought to confuse rather than clarify, the Congress moved on its way.

While the £4.26 figure was agreed, it will be presented in one of the key documents of the Labour Party's new social charter.

A notable result of the new unionism is the defeat of NUM and CWU positions of repeating all anti-trade union legislation and ensuring full rights to decide on strike action free of legal interference, in return for the heads of demands that Labour outlaw blacklisting of strikers and legislative full employment rights from day one.

And while Congress supported retention of the nationalised railways as a demand to be implemented early in the life of a Labour government, the position of the new unionists for reversal of all privatised companies for nationalisation was rejected.

The conference seemed to be easy going for the bureaucracy. Delegates were fatigue-saddled with the week's work was the quietest for years. This was largely because the Wednesday, three different attacks on the trade unions were launched by Labour in different parts of Blackpool.

Blair's spin doctors have a simple technique: advance a wild proposal of the record, deny it vigorously the next day, then implement the next week. David Blanket was due to speak at a fringe meeting and had asked for little publicity. Then catching the meeting organisers by surprise in the few days before, his office went up the meeting as the vehicle for an important announcement outlining the right to strike. Though Blanket back-peaked still, no one was disturbed.

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

And within hours Stephen Byers's final fish restaurant sale was sold at a price and mark-up to maximum. It is clear that his threat to break the link between the Labour Party and the unions is at the heart of the New Labour strategy. Put together the attacks have only one meaning. Defeated to prove itself a trade union has been trashed out of the direction it cannot be long before his proposals for some form of binding arbitration (ie. banning strikes) reappear.

UNISON's Rodney Bickerstiff strategy. Put together the meetings itself, it cannot do the job. If they are a threat to all future strikes.

John Edmonds

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

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

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

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

Step forward for trade union lefts

Neil D'LANEY

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

One was the first public event organised by supporters of trade union left organisations (Taku members) to meet together this year on the initiative of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

These lefts vary greatly in their politics, practice, and degree of influence within their respective unions. Together they organise multi-member extravaganza that forms a large percentage of TUC affiliated unions.

The meeting was attended by 45 delegates from a variety of British unions and pure campaigning organisations first met together this year on the initiative of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

He stressed the importance of bringing lefts from different unions together to discuss common problems and initiatives. The meeting was attended by 45 delegates from a variety of British unions and pure campaigning organisations first met together this year on the initiative of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

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

Despite the denials of junior Employment spokesman Stephen Byers, what he is purported to have said is not so new: the arch modernisers around Blair have been setting the stage for some time.

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

At the same time, Blair is dependent on working people voting Labour despite his policies because they desperately want to cast the Tories out.

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

No doubt more trade unionists will vote Labour at the election, but Blair is staking it all on themselves.

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

This is the reason for the little disloyal Labour from the Tories. But the Labour Party is ready to relive Blair and his cronies at every level of the party allows them to influence policy and potentially fight the leadership.

Blair knows this and it is why he and his predecessors have attempted to reduce the weight of the unions within the party. It is also why he might move to break them, without showing it.

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

Severing the links might also make it harder for union leaders to hold back their own workers. For years they have argued that we cannot 'rock the boat' because it might lose Labour the election.

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

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

The party conference is planned as a pre-election rally for displaying the awe-inspiring electoral powers of the leadership.

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

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

The conference agenda is full of motions unacceptable to the leadership. Blair ignores this and the media is much keener to focus on those who have swallowed all the policy changes but occasionally demur at the way decisions are made.

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

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

Those front benchers like Clare Short (and even Prescott) who occasionally summon the courage to make remarks about 'dark forces' have played their part in creating the machinery they criticise. Short's witch-hunting of Liz Davies (the renamed PPC for Leeds NE) at last year's conference is a prime example.

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

The fight to defend the link must be stepped up. Many trade unionists are seeking that the party that they believed was now under a leadership that would down them. Blair must be made to pay a price for his assault on working people and their organisations.


euro 26 per hour: delegates at the TUC have a coming gun.

**EDITORIAL**

Kim Howell. Wit no socialist?

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

There are only seven resolutions on the question. The profound impact these will have on British politics and on the working class is still not fully recognised.

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

Brighton Pavilion CLP rejects "the xenophobic and hysterical reactions of large sections of the Conservative Party and the Tory press to recent developments in Europe." It then calls on a Labour government to forge ahead on Europe.

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

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

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

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

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

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

We should respond at several levels.

It must continue to fight Maastricht-inspired attacks on state spending. We can take inspiration from the recent strikes and demonstrations in France, Italy and Germany, with others at work against Maastricht strikes. We also have to argue for increased state spending and in favour of economic expansion and a reduction in the working week to 35 hours to combat 26 million unemployed in Europe.

We need a radical programme for the integration of European economies in the interests of the mass of the population - workers, women, youth and immigrants. Workers. A new leap forward in the productive forces means a deepening integration of the national economies. But this must be on a socialist basis. It is possible to explain and popularise the idea of an alternative Europe. Tony Benn began this discussion in his Europe Bill. Europe has enormous resources and possibilities, but it means taking a very different road.

A Europe which guarantees social and democratic rights; the right to work; the right to social welfare benefits, equality for immigrants and women, defence of the ecology, economic growth, breaking from imperialist exploitation of the third world. Such a Europe is not the Europe of Maastricht.
THE LATEST US shelling and threats against Iraq have been presented as a response to Saddam Hussein’s attack in alliance with the guerrillas of the Kurdish Democratic Party - on the Kurdish city of Irbil. However, they have nothing to do with protection of the Kurds and everything to do with protection of US interests in the region, and with Clinton’s re-election.

They are also a response to Saddam’s manoeuvres which have humiliating the USA and Bill Clinton, and partially re-established his credentials in support of the Arab world.

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

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

In 1989-90, Bush was able to mobilise an unprecedented coalition in support of his war against Iraq. Not only NATO and the EU, but Russia, Japan and even the Arab League took part in “Operation Desert Storm”, as a result of which hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed.

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

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

There are several reasons for this difference. In the first place, Kurdish on huge oil fields. The seizure of Kuwait by Iraq, and the threat to Saudi Arabia, led to the fear that Iraq might control a huge part of the world oil market, raising prices and destabilising economies around the world. This was against the interests of both Arab and western states.

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

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

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

Yet another factor is the obvious dis- parity between US reluctance to act in support of Russia, and their immediate action against Saddam Hussein.

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

Ultimately, however, little of this matters. The lesson of the ‘New World Order’ is that the US can and will act as it please. If local allies are found to support such action, this can be a useful fig-leaf. If not, then the US will act alone, with Britain loyally wagging its tail and crooning along behind.

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

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

When a foreign delegation goes to a country
They take a wreath of flowers to the tomb.
Of the unknown soldier.
It tomorrow.
A delegate comes to Kurdistan.
And tomorrow.
Where is the tomb
Of the unknown soldier?
I ask, sir.
On the strand of every river
On the mouth of every mosque
Before the door of every church
Every town.
On every rock in the mountains
On any tree in the gardens
In the fields.
On every span of land
Under the sun of the sky
Do not worry, send a little lower
And lay down your garland.

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

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

Making hisidget, Clinton is finding it harder than Bush to build an alliance against Saddam despite using the same brutal methods.

On the eve of Iraq’s recom- mencing oil sales through Turkey, Clinton has used Iraq’s military support to the Kur- dish Democratic Party (KDP) to pre- vent the normalisation of Iraq’s economic relations.

Iraq has massive oil reserves. Its long-term ability to supply oil is on a par with Saudi Arabia. The US fears that western capitalism may be forced to pay Iraq a fair price for oil in the future.

In the past decade US client regimes in the Arab East have been able to top US needs.

The US aims to ensure that de- veloping countries with useful re- sources like Somalia and Iraq have weak leaderships which allow the peoples and natural re- sources of the Third World to be exploited in its interests.

The brutal military tactics of the US have alarmed every capi- talist government except that of Britain.

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

nomic interests and global author- ity of the US.

Many of these regimes had al- ready shown their desire to lift the cruel embargoes which harm only the civil population of Iraq.

Iraq’s Foreign Minister Tarak Aziz: The US sanctions do not aim to aid the peoples of Iraq and Kurdistan against Saddam.

This opposition to the isolation of Iraq is not rooted in solidarity for the humanitarian needs of Iraq’s peoples. They hope simply to profit from the oil trade with Iraq and that country’s pressing need for medical supplies and foodstuffs. That is why Turkey’s foreign minister, the pro-EU former Premier, Tanus Ciller, op- poses the US attack.

Turkey’s double elite, Arab and Kurdish workers and peasants need their own foreign policy.

Western anti-imperialists need to support their struggles against US aggression, against the block- ads, and for a free and inde- pendent Kurdistan.
Self determination for the Kurds

Thirty million Kurds constitute the world’s largest nation without a state. Kurdistan, at present divided by borders, is about the same size as France.

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

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

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

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

Arab nationalists rarely mention that the great warrior-king Salah ed-Din (Saladin), who defeated the Crusaders and reconquered Jerusalem, was not an Arab but a Kurd. Indeed, for Saddam Hussein, born in the same town (Mosul) over 500 years later, Salah ed-Din has become a symbol of his Arab national identity among Kurds.

The British were the first to use poison gas against Kurdish peasants.

In Iran in 1988, and in the Balkans its client nations were demanding freedom. However, this demand was frustrated both by Western imperialism in general and by the backward and chronically tribal nature of the Kurdish leaders.

The following First World War Britain ended up with the Treaty of Kor遗址.

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

Indeed, Brtish and French, in the so-called Sykes-Picot agreement which carved up the spoils of the Middle East, had agreed to establish a Kurdish state. This agreement was translated into the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which recognised a small, but independent, Kurdish state in parts of southeastern Kurdistan.

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

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

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

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

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

In Turkey, in particular, any manifestation of Kurdish culture, including their language, was banned by the newly established state.

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

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

The Gulf War and the New World Order

Order by Andre Gunter Frank and Salah Jaber

For this 70-page in-depth analysis of the meaning of the Gulf War and the political aftermath send a cheque or postal order for £3.50 payable to Pierre Rousset to: The Red Box, PO Box 413, Cardiff CF1 9YA, Britain.

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CENTRE STAGE

Socialist Outlook 108 September 2019

Bosnian elections

Legitimising partition, ethnic cleansing and genocide

AT THE TIME Socialist Outlook went to press, the results of the Bosnian election of September 9 were not known. But it was not too early to draw conclusions about the nature and purpose of these elections.

The commander of IOR NATO forces in ex-Yugoslavia, essentially an army of occupation, had closed that his 3,000 troops had "opened the door for democracy" in Bosnia.

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

The elections are being conducted on the back door of a unitary country. They legitimise Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic’s so-called Republic of Srpska and the ethnic cleansing and genocide that created it. They are rehabilitating war criminals.

The elections were the cynical outcome of the Dayton “agreement” which ended the war. The government was threatened and cajoled into last year. The position, conducted under US auspices at a time when the war in Bosnia had changed in favour of Bosnian forces, achieved the strategic objective of winding down the conflict through the course of the war.

The Dayton Agreement “handed” 49 per cent of Bosnia over to Karadzic and Mladic and their greater Serbian population. The idea that two war criminals could ever control political events in Republika Srpska beggars belief.

The candidates in the elections were a part of the ethnic cleansing gangs created by Karadzic and Mladic.

Despite the claims of fairness of Richard Holbrooke, NATO commanders and international observers, who claimed that the legitimacy could hardly have been a greater travesty.

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

Yet another sick joke.

According to some reports only 20,000 to 30,000 people actually went to vote in the election.

On the other hand, 4,000 Serbs crossed into Bosnia to vote. They were not crossing into an area controlled by a genocidal regime but one which remains multi-ethnic despite the war.

In no sense can this election be called fair. It is not surprising that the Bosnian government has said in advance that it will not recognize the results in the “Serb Zone” of Bosnia. When those outside the hands have been intimidated into not voting.

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

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

The Dayton Agreement actually handed over Bosnian forces to the so-called Serbs, a junior partner in the carve up of Bosnia. The Serbian aggression in the first place, has settled its differences with Milosevic and the US and has virtually recognised each others countries.

The Dayton Agreement also handed over Bosnia to the Serbs with the cynical purpose of gaining Milosevic and the US the opportunity to run things down to the ground.

It not only gives him a lease of life in Croatia but he can continue to influence parts of Bosnia through the London-Brussels-Croce Federation, a shabby alliance entirely to his advantage.

The outcome of the election is unlikely to change this situation. Nationalist forces are likely to be strengthened in all parts of Bosnia. Many Bosnian liberals will vote for President Alija Izetbegovic and the Bosniaks, in order to prevent a split vote from allowing a Serb or Croat nationalist to win.

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

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

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

SPECIAL OFFER

A Programme for the Irish Revolution

We are offering a special pre-election one-time offer of £3.50 to send a copy of the Programme for the Irish Revolution by Tomás Ó Céidigh. This is a Marxist analysis of Ireland since the forces

OFFER ENDS IN TWO WEEKS

NOTEBOOKS FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH

Two years in the writing, Socialist Democracy’s founding document, A Programme for the Irish Revolution is the result of years of research and political experience from the forces
Free Indonesian political prisoners

Adam Hartmann

An emergency solidarity appeal has been launched by the Subversive regime to depacitate Indonesia's emerging mass democracy movement. At least twenty members of the People's Democratic Party (PRD) have been captured and charged with subversion, including the president and general secretary, and the president of the PPBI (Indonesian Centre for Labour Rights). If convicted, they face the death penalty.

On July 27, supporters of the opposition party permitted by the dictatorship, the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), were forcibly ejected by the military from their offices in Jakarta. The regime used the riots, which erupted spontaneously in response to a protest to launch an anti-communist witch hunt against the PRD and other outspoken opponents of military rule.

According to security minister General Soedirman, the PRD's manifesto does not mention the official Pancasila ideology and is based on "popular social democracy." The PRD is accused of being the nucleus of the army's efforts to depacitate Indonesia's emerging mass democracy movement.

The PRD General Secretary Petra links with "left-wing social democratic forces overseas, Amnest International and the Australian workers' movement, as well as the New People's Army in the Philippines.

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

The regime was responsible for the slaughter of 16 people and all landless laborers who had been organized by the Communist Party and left nationalists when it took power through a military coup in 1965.

There is growing opposition to Subversive among the petty capitalists and professional classes, who crave stability and fear mass social unrest and wish to preserve Indonesia politically and economically. The regime's former allies in the West also fear that Subversive no longer guarantees stability.

The use of anti-communist rhetoric is a desperate attempt to create the political climate which brought the regime to power, and to reunite the middle class behind it against a supposed threat to "order" and national identity. The biggest threat to Subversive comes from the growing mobilizations of industrial workers, urban poor, small farmers and landless laborers, led by a new network of feminists and importune peasants and trade unions.

Formed in 1994 as the People's Democratic Union, transforming itself into a party in April 1996, the PRD has emerged as the heart of these mobilizations, drawing together the most radical organizations - leaders - the PRD, STN (National Peasants' Union), SMTD (Student Solidarity for Indonesian Democracy) and ALKAR (the People's Cultural Network).

It has developed a programme which fulfills the demands of the exploited and oppressed for democracy, human rights, and independence. It is the only party calling for an end to Indonesia's occupation of East Timor.

In a daring act of solidarity, 50 young PRD members joined 2000 Timorese students in climbing into the Dutch and Russian embassies on the 20th anniversary of Indonesia's invasion of East Timor.

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

Its programme includes demands for a living minimum wage and an end to the government's "deep labour strategy" for attracting foreign investment, decent conditions, workers' rights and freedom, workplace democracy, equality between male and female workers, and an end to military intervention in labour disputes and to the pro-employer bias of the courts.

The PRD has led strikes and demonstrations in food-processing, plastics and textiles factories, mobilizing first hundreds, then thousands, in struggles for payment of the minimum wage, equal pay and shorter working hours, culminating in a protest in Surabaya on July 8, involving 20,000 striking workers from ten factories demanding a 30 percent wage increase.

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

The PRD fights for a future free from exploitation and oppression. It is vital that the labour movement in Britain builds the maximum solidarity. Details of a forthcoming tour by a PRD activist will be included in future issues of Socialist Outlook, and a demonstration is called for Saturday, September 21st at 11:00 a.m. at the Plaza Hotel, 110 Oxford Street, London W1.

Anti-militarist jailed by Israeli regime

Sergeant (Reserve) Yair Yafi was sentenced to 18 days in military prison for refusing to perform his military duties in Hebron. Before being tried Yafi stated: "When a government allows attacks on the people, it is not up to the citizen to apply what it has signed, it is upon the citizen to apply those commitments.

According to the various agreements with the Palestinians, the Israeli army was supposed to be out of Hebron a long time ago. I will not be there in complete violation of what the government promised on behalf of our people."

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

In a statement released today, in a statement to the Israeli media: "The breakdown of the peace process in the occupied territories is not due to Israeli policy but the cruel reality of the present. The why this way I refused to serve the occupation in the past, I will continue to refuse to serve the occupation today, even if occupation is masked by rhetoric of 'peace process', and until the last Israeli soldier withdraws from the last inch of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip." Yair Yafi is a staff member of the IDC and of Israel's Hebrew magazine "MizrahiSheet.

Letters of Support: Letters, faxes & e-mails can be sent to the Alternative Information Centre and will be delivered to Yafi in prison. Tel: +972-2-241-159, +972-2-740585 Fax: +972-2-255 151 E-mail: airwin@trendline.co.il PO Box 31417, Jerusalem.

Send letters of protest to your local Labour embassy or consulate. Also write in protest to: Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, Kahan Street 3 West Jerusalem. Tel: +972-2-9773526, Fax: +972-2-9773526, Email: Likudl@likud.org.il, Prime-Minister@likud.org.il

Birmingham Community Conference

Unite to defend our services

Our demands on the next Labour government

Saturday 2 November 11:00-4:30
The Union Club, 7203 Penrose Road, Selly Park
Birmingham. (65 and 47 buses.

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

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

- Registration fee: £5 per organisation, £2 individual, £1 unemployed. Details c/o Union Club at the address above.
New Labour: just like the old liberalism

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

One positive result of Labour Party intervention was the 1906 Trades Disputes Act, which gave the unions the limited legal immunities which Thatcher swept away later in her war on the unions. The 1906 Act was based on drafts prepared by the Labour Party and the Taff Triage Board. Politically, this union link was all that separated Labour from the employers. The 1906 Labour Party led by Ramsay MacDonald and held by the Lords in 1902. This award added £25,000 compensation to the Taff Vale Railway Company against the main rail union, which was found liable for damage to property and business losses caused by a strike. Union leaders understood that this judgment could also apply to any other union involved in strike action.

Ramsay MacDonald

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

British imperialism and sought no more than parliamentary reforms within the framework of capitalism. But it is not the first Labour leader to prepare for a general election by attacking the trade unions and the working class. But the precedents are not inspiring.

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

Jim Callaghan tried to haggle public sector workers into line, and left the door wide open for Margaret Thatcher in 1979. And Neil Kinnock’s wretched attempts after last year’s miners’ strike helped guarantee defeat in 1987.

However, the swagger of the Blair-Blair Blairites, reliant on the unions of the Labour Party’s clout of Four and almost every shred of radical policy, has begun to create a debate among some on the left in Labour. How can it make sense for unions to donate millions in members’ subs to fund a party

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

What is perhaps most bizarre is that Blunkett and others seek to prove their conservative credentials by pledging repeal of what there will be “no return to the past.”

Yet their frenzied efforts to sever Labour’s historic links with the unions and with the working class threaten precisely that: a return to the miserable, middling right-wing politics of the Liberal Party before 1906, the period in which the working class had no independent political voice.

The 1899 TUC resolution which set up the initial Labour Representation Committee to which unions, socialist societies and cooperatives could affiliate, arose from the consistent failure of their traditional allies, the Liberals, to uphold the interests of the unions against an increasingly concerned employers’ offensive in the 1890s.

A succession of hostile court judgements had begun severely to restrict the right to strike, even the dimmer sections of the emerging union bureaucracy could see that the only way out was through legislation — and that required parliamentary representation.

Membership of the ILC more than doubled during 1901-2, primarily as a response by trade unions to the Taff Triage Board. The organisation was backed by the Lords in 1902. This award added £25,000 compensation to the Taff Vale Railway Company against the main rail union, which was found liable for damage to property and business losses caused by a strike. Union leaders understood that this judgment could also apply to any other union involved in strike action.

Indeed, as far as 1913 impatient socialist dissidents were choosing the Labour Party’s path to no more than “a wing of the Liberal Party.”

Labour Party leader Ramsay MacDonald was happy to do political deals with the Liberals.

The further rapid growth of the trade unions from 1910, followed by the extension of the vote to 14 million men after the war which opened up the next expansion of the Labour Party, which reached 2.1 million members by 1915, and 3.5 million by 1919. In fact these figures are deceptive: the party did not allow individual membership until 1918, and relied exclusively on affiliated organisations — it was overwhelmingly the party of the trade unions, reflecting their strengths and their political weaknesses.

Though proclaiming itself “socialist”, and adopting the famous “Clause Four” commitment to nationalisation, in practice Labour remained politically tied to machine which takes such de-light in attacking trade unions.

In a recent Tribune article, UNISON activist George Martin raised the call for a new Labour Representation Committee “as a pressure group within the party” to defend the unions against Blair’s “moderations.”

I am not for a moment suggesting that we leave the party. Indeed it is my view that if Arthur Scargill had stood for a Labour Representation Committee for the duration of a Campaign for Socialist After last year’s party conference, rather than walking out, he could have strengthened the left rather than weakening it.

Whatever the name, the centre of Geoff Martin’s suggestion should receive wide support on the left of the union. Of course, some observers have been sceptical: “Labour’s organs are revised, the不如 that rump that remains will be able to do much as ‘New Liberalism’. Our history is still very much part of present-day politics.”

Socialist Outlook’s politics

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Stop Blunkett’s bosses’ charter

Blunkett’s trade unionism, as exemplified by this about-face on the Petroleum Engineers’ job losses, is an attempt to shift the balance of power to the employers. The employers have a strong case to argue that the trade unions have failed to deliver for their members.

End The Embargo No War For Oil

CLINTON’S ENCIRCLEMENT of Iraq has forced Saddam Hussein to recognize the extension of the southern no-fly zone and agree not to reconduct his air defences. The maps show that Iraq is allowed no control over the great majority of its territory. The United States have made it clear that this is in order to protect their crucial oil interests, not the rights of the Kurdish people. Countless Iraqi people were slaughtered during the barbarous Gulf war. Millions have suffered since as a result of the devastation wreaked then and the sanctions subsequently imposed. The labour movement must oppose military action against Iraq. We must demand an end to the embargo. Despite the fact that the U.S. has engaged in extensive diplomatic discussion, it has failed to remonstrate the Gulf war alliance. In Britain however, not only the Tories but also the Labour Party have yet again shown themselves slavish followers of U.S. imperialism. We must demand an end to Labour’s bipartisanism and an end to the use of British bases by the U.S.

Socialist Outlook International Forum

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

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

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