

workers power

revolution
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The Blair world order

Hands off Afghanistan! US/UK Troops out now!

Privatisation: break the truce with Blair

Unison, the public sector union, has at last launched its £1 million advertising campaign against Tony Blair's drive to privatise what's left of the public sector.

The campaign had originally been set to start six weeks before during the Labour Party conference, but Unison leader Dave Prentis delayed it after the 11 September attacks in the USA. He argued that "the public is rightly more concerned about international events and world peace and we share their concerns."

Prentis had declared a one-sided truce in the battle between the unions and New Labour over privatisation. He cut a deal with the government that will undermine national resistance to the Blairite agenda before the battle has even begun.

The deal, agreed by Prentis and other union bureaucrats such as MSF's Roger Lyons behind closed doors in Brighton, consisted of a pledge to stem the growth in "two-tier" workforces. These develop where new employees of a private contractor, receiving none of the limited protection afforded by Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) reg-

ulations or TUPE, face worse pay, terms and conditions than their transferred colleagues who had previously been directly employed by a public sector organisation.

In addition, the Unison leadership claimed that it had won a major concession from the government, with the pledge to introduce a "fair wage resolution" either through new legislation or amendments to existing statutes. Prentis maintains that such a clause would deter the "worst" of the privateers from even bidding.

Since the Brighton conference it has become clear that Blair has no intention of introducing any legislation that might put off the would-be vultures from the private sector. He is quite happy to accede to the private contractors' association's request for self-regulation, with light "policing" by the Audit Commission. In short no "fair wage resolution" and so no legal obstacle to creating still more two-tier workforces, whether the contractors are "cow-boys" or multinational corporations.

Unison continues to proclaim its unqualified opposition to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), yet Prentis

boasts of having given the "green light" to three pilot PFI schemes where domestic and ancillary staff will apparently remain NHS employees. Such arrangements may well offer protection to Unison members in the short-term. But there is no guarantee that these workers will not transfer to the private sector at a later date.

In the meantime, the chance to mount effective opposition to profiteers running NHS facilities is lost. Even if NHS staff remain directly employed, PFI is an enormous, long-term subsidy from the government - paid for by working class taxpayers - to the likes of Balfour Beatty, Bovis and Sodexo.

The GMB's general secretary, John Edmonds, was not party to the backroom wheeling and dealing at Brighton, and was eager to denounce what was agreed in his absence. But this radical posturing hides a refusal to endorse strike action against privatisation, since it is a political, not an industrial issue.

Privatisation is profoundly political and New Labour has consciously placed itself in the vanguard of neo-liberalism, a twist on the Thatcherite push to privatise and slash social welfare spending.

And even union officials well to the left of Edmonds, like the RMT's Bob Crowe, have backed away from strikes that explicitly opposed the principle of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) on London's tube, opting to accept real but narrow concessions from Underground bosses on health and safety issues.

But if union leaders continue to perpetuate the fiction of a strict divide between the industrial and political, they will restrict the resistance and carve it up into piecemeal, local, rear-guard actions against the consequences of PFI, PPP, the Best Value regime and the various other forms of backdoor privatisation.

This strategy risks more heroic but isolated struggles such as that waged in the past year by the Dudley hospital workers, left to fight over the terms of their transfer to a private sector consortium. It reduces the prospects for winning the active support of working class communities using NHS hospitals, state schools and other services under threat. Important as the defence of members' pay, terms and conditions is, a united campaign, in which overtly political strike action will be a key tac-

tic, must go beyond the immediate economic concerns of the workforce and mobilise the whole local working class around the wider issues of funding, ownership and control.

At a local level, union activists will obviously need to use the national leaderships' verbal opposition to the two-tier workforce as a means of kick-starting industrial resistance that could gain official backing in the here and now. At the same time it will be vital to establish or relaunch cross-union bodies at the borough or city-wide level, committed from the outset to opposing privatisation as such and working to engage service users in the struggle.

Combined union and community "fight-back" campaigns, up and down Britain, have the potential not only to reverse the Blairite drive to privatise, but also to lay the basis for the new level of struggle that will be essential to win the resources needed for vital services run by the workers who deliver them and the residents who use them.

● For more on the fight against private finance in public services go to our website:
www.workerspower.com

Labour prepares workfare. Civil servants prepare strike

New Labour's work and pensions secretary Alistair Darling announced a new scheme for the long-term unemployed in week of Gordon Brown's autumn statement. Another case of trying to bury bad news!

From April 2002, 5,000 unemployed people will be told: take this job at the minimum wage, or we'll cut off your benefits. Darling has called this programme, which is based on the infamous US Workfare system, StepUP.

The scheme will be piloted in "areas once dominated by heavy industry" and those initially targeted will be the usual suspects: single parents, over-50s, the sick and disabled, the illiterate. And the jobs on offer? Haulage, construction and clerical work.

Not only has Labour dumped even the pretence of offering training, it is keeping down wage levels for workers in these industries. Why should a boss pay more when it can apply for a StepUP worker whose minimal wages will be paid by the government?

One of the pilot areas will be Cardiff. So, a skilled steelworker from nearby Llanwern, who was chucked on the dole when steel multinational Corus pulled the plug and the government refused to renationalise the industry, could end up being forced to work on a building site for £4.10 an hour. Step up? Set up more like!

This is the context of the current civil service strike in the Job Centres.

As we go to press 57 Job Centre offices, involving 2,500 workers, are on strike with 75,000 oth-

Charlie MacDonald, a PCS activist in Stratford, East London, spoke to Workers Power about the dispute:

"We realise this strike is more than just about health and safety. This dispute will determine the strength of our union fighting over a number of issues such as low pay and privatisation.

"This is not - as our management has suggested - an anti-claimants strike. We understand the reason for the increase in the attacks on staff is directly linked to the austere nature of the benefits system.

"A victory for us would give confidence to other public sector workers to take on New Labour.

"It is also a political strike. At a management conference in the ExCel Centre in Canning Town, Alistair Darling, the keynote speaker, told our managers that there was no new offer on the table, they should be prepared to sit this one out and get ready for the long haul. He said that he wanted the left in the PCS to suffer a defeat to weaken their chances in the NEC elections.

"If we win, of course, I think the left can do really well in the elections."

ers being balloted to join them.

The strike has been dubbed in the press, "The strike for safety screens". In fact, the civil servants' union PCS welcomes the friendlier office environment but objects to the lack of consultation over the whole Jobcentre Plus programme and the fact that there will be no safe areas where claimants (who may be justifiably angered at their treatment under the government's new rules) can be interviewed.

Even by the government's own figures the benefits regime under New Deal has increased the number of assaults on staff. Last year there were 9,290 non-physical and 395 physical assaults on staff compared with 4,887 and 264 respectively the previous year. The figures for 2001 show that the

trend is still going upwards.

So far the strike has been well supported. While management has tried to seduce scabs to cross picket lines with extra pay and lavish hotel expenses, many have responded by joining their sisters and brothers on the picket line.

But strikers are also aware that they have to keep up the pressure on the union leaders. After the initial vote for strike action by the 57 offices, 150 PCS members occupied the union headquarters to ensure the National Executive Council didn't backslide. Another lobby has been called for 5 December, the day after the ballot result is announced.

The reason for this is clear. While the general

secretary Mark Serwotka and the benefits and employment service leaders support direct action, the NEC can still pull the plug. The NEC has 42 right wingers on it compared with just 5 from the left.

The best way to ensure this pressure is maintained is for every office to elect a strike committee and for these to link up locally and nationally to form an alternative leadership. If some offices are weak, or scabs are being planned, or hardship begins to bite into some members' resolve, a leadership drawn from the rank and file can nip problems in the bud. And if the NEC does try to do a deal behind the strikers' backs, a national strike committee can challenge its authority.

But more than this, striking civil servants must link up with claimants and start a fight against the whole mistreatment of the unemployed. Tens of thousands are being sacked as the recession begins to bite. If civil servants don't want to work in an environment where angry claimants try to beat them up, they should fight against set up that breeds such desperation.

Call public meetings for the unemployed in every town and explain the strike. Open up PCS offices for claimants to get advice and produce campaigning materials. Boycott StepUP.

This way, the union's fight against management's cavalier disregard for workers' safety can be turned into a joint struggle of the workers and the jobless, against Labour's attempt to lower wages and disguise unemployment by "creating" dead-end jobs.

Hackney fights back against cuts

Hackney, one of the poorest boroughs in Britain, is yet again facing a savage cuts package from its New Labour run council.

Last year the council sacked its entire workforce, re-hiring them on longer hours, lower pay and shorter holidays. Despite six days of strike action, it refused to back down and launched a witch-hunt of strike leaders.

As it announced a further £50 million of cuts in November, it stepped up the victimisations threatening the jobs of both the chairperson and secretary of Hackney Unison.

The cuts package is set to decimate the already crumbling services. Home care visits to older people and the infirm will now last no more than 30 minutes. That's 30 minutes to wash, dress and feed each of Hackney's most vulnerable citizens.

The council has also attacked nurseries and education with a swingeing £10 million of cuts to be made to the education programme.

But if the hatchet men and women in the Town Hall thought that it had broken the will to resist by its workforce they are now being forced to think again.

Weekly strikes by library workers in defence of Saturday pay rates started on 24 November and are well supported by Unison members and the public. The grounds and maintenance workforce is currently being balloted for strike action - again over the new, lower pay rates. And the branch is seeking permission from Unison headquarters for a branch-wide ballot.

At a recent rally Unison branch secretary John Page hinted at more action saying, "When some of our more enthusiastic comrades end up occupying

council buildings that are due to be sold and are due to be redeveloped, we'll be supporting them as well."

The biggest cheer of the night came when George Binette delivered a message of solidarity from neighbouring Camden Unison: "We need to see this in the context of a New Labour government that is prepared to spend £120m prosecuting the so-called war against terrorism - twice what the deficit of this council supposedly is. We see what their priorities are: they are war and the defence of profit, not the basic needs of working class people in boroughs like Camden, Hackney and inner London."

● The branch is in desperate need of funds for strike pay and to defend its victimised representatives in industrial tribunals. Send cheques, made out to Hackney Unison to: Hackney Unison, 1-7 Westgate Street, London E8 3RW.

Are you an agitator?

If you are then we want to hear from you.

The Agitator is a new bulletin for trade union and workplace activists produced by Workers Power supporters. We want to advertise and build solidarity with workers struggles everywhere.

We want to hear about what's going on in your workplace - factory, call centre or office - and about your union.

We want you to write for it, distribute it and join the agitator network - to make it a bulletin for you.

So contact us now on 020 7793 1468 or email agitator@workerspower.com.

You can also download copies from www.workerspower.com



Subtle censorship and half truths

Truth is the first casualty of war – and it's dying in the Afghan war, writes *Frank Kellermann*, a member of Media Workers Against the War. Here he explains how the media compromises with the military

When John Simpson "liberated" Kabul many viewers, and also many media workers snorted in ridicule. But there was a serious side: hours before, the US Navy had taken out his only serious rivals – Al Jazeera, the Arabic TV network, had its office vaporised by an American missile on the night the Taliban quit the Afghan capital.

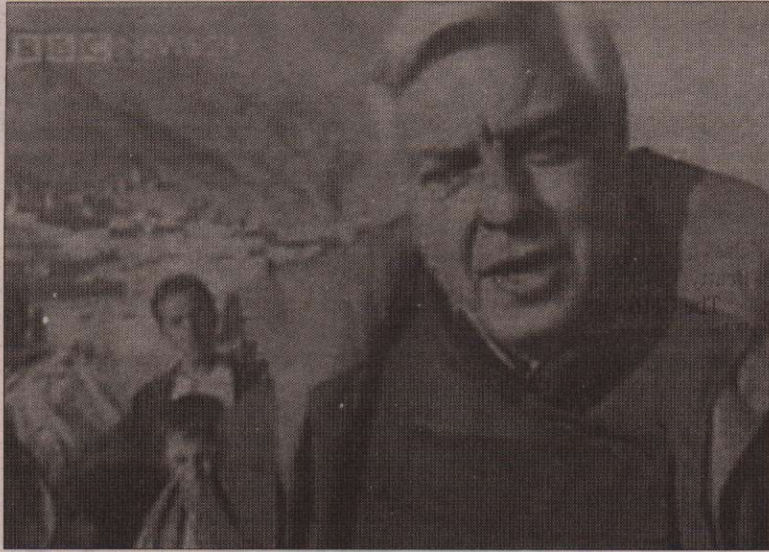
It was a signal as brutal as the US establishment can send: our military dominance gives us dominance of everything else – including the airwaves.

NBC and CNN were out of reach of Afghan bombs. So the American public has been able to consume George Bush's war propaganda live and uncut, 24 hours a day. US news bulletins now carry the banner "War on Terror" in yard high letters behind their mouthpieces for government press releases.

Whenever the wartime spirit looks like flagging, the tapes of 11 September are brought out and edited together into an emotive collage designed to send even hardened pacifists running down to the Army recruitment office.

In Britain the quality press and broadcast media congratulates itself on doing things in a more civilised way. They are under strict instructions to call this country "the British", avoiding the patriotic "we".

But behind the facade of objectivi-



The BBC's John Simpson "liberates" Kabul

ty, the UK media has once again disgraced itself in coverage of an unjust, brutal and squalid war. It has downplayed protest at home, peddled racist stereotypes of Muslims, and drowned analysis of the issues that are mobilising millions to resist imperialism.

This is how it works. There is very little overt censorship in the Times and the Guardian or the BBC, ITN and even Sky.

The only overt censorship comes in

the form of rules about taste and decency – most broadcasters and newspapers in this country decided not to picture the hijacked planes hitting the twin towers of the World Trade Centre after the actual events. Interestingly, the same publications are only too happy to show videos of bombs hitting Afghan bunkers and villages.

It is where the media meets the military – an encounter always charged with a mixture of fear and pheromones on

both sides – that the co-operation with censorship begins. There are strict rules issued by the Ministry of Defence to all writers, photographers and broadcasters covering "our side". Stay within the rules and you can be in the thick of the action is the general gist.

In the Afghan war a new limitation has come to the fore: health and safety rules. There are many courageous freelance journalists covering the war – but it is always harder for them to get to the right place at the right time. If they do to where the action is, it is often these people who get killed and injured.

In contrast the big news operations have good logistics. However, with dead journalists outnumbering the actual western military deaths so far the bosses of these operations are increasingly paranoid. Staff journalists are increasingly confined to "safe" places – with the news contingents policed and protected by private security officers, often with military backgrounds. The result is they are increasingly missing the big stories and the harsh truths – and many are frustrated about it.

The most effective layer of censorship is – as George Orwell always pointed out – self-censorship. There are "editorial policy" rules laid down by senior bosses that the day-to-day editors of papers adhere to. *The Guardian's* famous "policy" of not reporting demonstra-

tions, ever, was one example revealed by its non-coverage of the first big anti-war demo. Protests from within the paper had it overturned and the second demo was at last given coverage.

Another way the mainstream media filters truth is through careful selection of the people it employs. According to ex-Spy David Shayler, BBC employees are no longer vetted by MI5 – although he does say that the intelligence service has "an agent in every newsroom".

However, across Fleet Street and in broadcasting it is hard for politically outspoken journalists and union activists to hold down permanent jobs. It's no accident that some of the best writing and most critical comment in this war has come from journalists who have to make their living as permanent freelances.

These seasoned voices are not there in the newsrooms to challenge hypocrisy and cant on the production line where it's made. As a result the outlook of most media reflects the ideas and prejudices of the establishment.

Finally there is the problem of relentless 24-hour news. To keep the 24-hour bulletins fresh journalists are forced to rely on "wire" copy from centralised agencies like Reuters and Agence France Presse. It's often good and up to the minute – but it's not original: it's somebody else's truth and it may even be somebody else's propaganda.

Why the labour movement needs its own media

So what can we do about all this? In the first place, the working class movement needs to get off its backside and stop simply complaining about how crap the mainstream media is. The unions have enough resources to launch a national newspaper and radio station right now.

While most mainstream media are locked in a struggle for a declining, ageing readership – the labour movement and anti-capitalist movement would provide a ready made readership. It is a tragedy that the task of trying to find and output independent news is left to operations like *Indymedia*. While *Indymedia* plays a superb role as an organiser of protest it will never replace the need for labour movement papers, broadcasts and websites. But we need to learn from *Indymedia's* "just do it" attitude and start a serious campaign

for an independent, professional standard working class news media.

Secondly, activists can call the media to account. Forget the Press Complaints Commission – cut out the middle man and ring up the people you think are bending the truth. Because they're in the interactive era all media managers are acutely sensitive to audience reaction. Yet it is only the *Mary Whitehouse* types who are in the habit of phoning up national newspapers and TV. Most socialists would not even know the numbers to ring but media workers will tell you it's hard-wired into the brain of every right wing bigot in the land.

Finally, media workers have a major role to play. The NUJ, GPMU and Bectu have good policies on protecting members' right to report the truth free of censorship. Unfortunately all three media

unions had terrible positions on the Afghan war. The NUJ could not even bring itself to say "Stop the War" – despite its left-dominated NEC.

The union leaders will argue its necessary to take an equivocal line to keep the majority of non-active, generally pro-war members on board. But if unions want to stand up for media freedom they also have to stand against the force that bombs legitimate independent stations like Al Jazeera, or smashes up *Indymedia* in Genoa – just for giving the alternative story.

Media Workers Against the War swung into action early. Around 800 people packed into a meeting in London to hear stalwarts like Paul Foot and John Pilger tell it like it is. Latterly the effort has been boosted by the efforts of Yvonne Ridley, who was held captive by the Taliban, but still stood

up to demand an end to the bombing. Now there are a host of activities to make videos and websites that tell the other side of the story.

Al Jazeera was not just a mouthpiece for Bin Laden. The same goes for the Serbian state TV station the USA levelled in its last adventure. It was bombed because its "truth" was different from the world according to Uncle Sam and captain Tony.

The imperialists bomb and harass and censor the alternative voices on the fringes to frighten the alternative voices within the mainstream media. But Media Workers Against the War shows that, if we organise together, we can't be frightened into silence.

● Media Workers Against the War can be found at www.mwaw.org

No Sweat aims to put sweatshops on the run

The No Sweat Conference on 24 November was a great success. After a year of hard work 150 people came together to discuss the issues surrounding the global growth of sweatshop labour and to map out our plans to build the campaign in the future.

Dita Sari, the Indonesian trade union leader, imprisoned for organising sweatshop workers, addressed the conference and brought home to everyone both the grim reality of the factories in the Third World where the multinationals make their swanky goods, and the spirit of resistance among the workers themselves to the exploitation they face.

She spoke about the situation in her country and the tremendous repression that workers faced in trying to organise, and especially of the problems of women workers organising for rights as women, workers and for democracy.

Dita Sari nearly didn't make it – she was arrested for taking part in an occupation of a department store a week earlier, but was bailed just in time!

As well as Dita Sari, Bas Morris, head of KFAT (Knitwear, Footwear and Appar-

el Trades union), Martin Smith for the GMB London Region, and a host of trade union activists and students contributed to the conference.

No Sweat began a year ago in November 2000. We were inspired by the movement on US campuses that had successfully targeted and hit multinationals then selling \$3 billion worth of sweat-shirts made by the likes of Nike. It was a campaign based on direct action, it built links with the unions – and it worked.

So in Britain we thought – let's go for it. Workers Power and the independent socialist youth group, Revolution, took the initiative in launching No Sweat last year, along with the Alliance for Workers Liberty and other socialists and trade union activists. Niketown got the shock of its life when loads of us staged a big Christmas protest at Oxford circus.

Fighting the multinationals can make a difference. You can do something right outside your local GAP store or Niketown. Action can help expose a company and support the workers fighting back, like the Kukdong workers in Mexico, whose strike we supported.

The conference was organised to look back, discuss, and plan our next moves to take the campaign forward.

A speaker from Revolution spoke for No Sweat, explaining what we had done and about the necessity of bringing the anti-capitalist movement and union movement closer together.

This developed into a debate with speakers discussing how we need to win a new generation of young workers to organising in the workplace and building the unions. About how we need to dynamise the trade union movement with the spirit of the anti-capitalist movement – its willingness to skip bureaucratic procedures and Just Do It by organising action with the people around you. And developing internationalism where the local is part of what's happening globally, and its willingness to take militant action and breaking laws that are anti-working class, like the anti-trade union laws.

Some good ideas for campaigning came out of the conference, especially in terms of what we can do here in Britain to build the movement. A rep-

resentative from War on Want spoke about a campaign they are launching in conjunction with the Bangladeshi trade union movement, which No Sweat will support. Focusing on the Christmas and January sales sprees will be an important way of taking the energy generated by the conference out onto the streets. The Alliance for Workers Liberty proposed making concrete links between trade unions in Indonesia and union branches in Britain.

At the end Martin Smith spoke for the London region GMB said that the unions have to return to in-your-face organising and fighting for workers'

interests. That's the way to go. He also said GMB London Region supports No Sweat and wants to start organising the sweatshops in the East End.

We're going to keep up the pressure on Nike and Gap this Christmas season, but in the new year we're going to take the anti-capitalist movement home and start building real roots here, among the most exploited of the working class communities in Britain. We're helping to bring the anti-capitalist movement and the trade union movement closer together.

● Get involved with No Sweat. 07951 493 232

NO SWEAT!

www.nosweat.org.uk

Log on to the brand new No Sweat website to expose sweatshop employers like GAP and Nike

What future for the Socialist Alliance?



The need for a mass socialist alternative in British politics should be clear to every thinking militant.

New Labour is up to its armpits in the blood of innocent Afghans, having been the first to enlist in George Bush's filthy war of terror against one of the world's poorest nations.

A frontal attack on civil liberties and basic democratic rights has been launched by home secretary Blunkett, designed to criminalise every one of us who joins in the fight against globalisation and capitalism.

Blair is eagerly pursuing his privatisation plans in the public sector, bringing the big corporations in to feed off our most basic needs – health, education, local services.

Recession looms, job cuts are announced on a daily basis and Gordon Brown sits on his hands telling workers nothing can be done except to grin and bear it.

And against this background the ugly forces of racism and fascism thrive, scoring spectacular election results in towns and regions like Burnley and Oldham that New Labour has opted to leave for dead. Indeed, its attacks on asylum seekers and refugees offer hope and succour to the bigots because they are merely a polite form of their own hate-filled policies.

In the general election the Socialist Alliance pointed the way to building an alternative to all of this. While the SA did not achieve a major electoral breakthrough and much of its electoral propaganda was reduced, in essence, to a reformist programme, it did, nevertheless, achieve some important results which can be built upon.

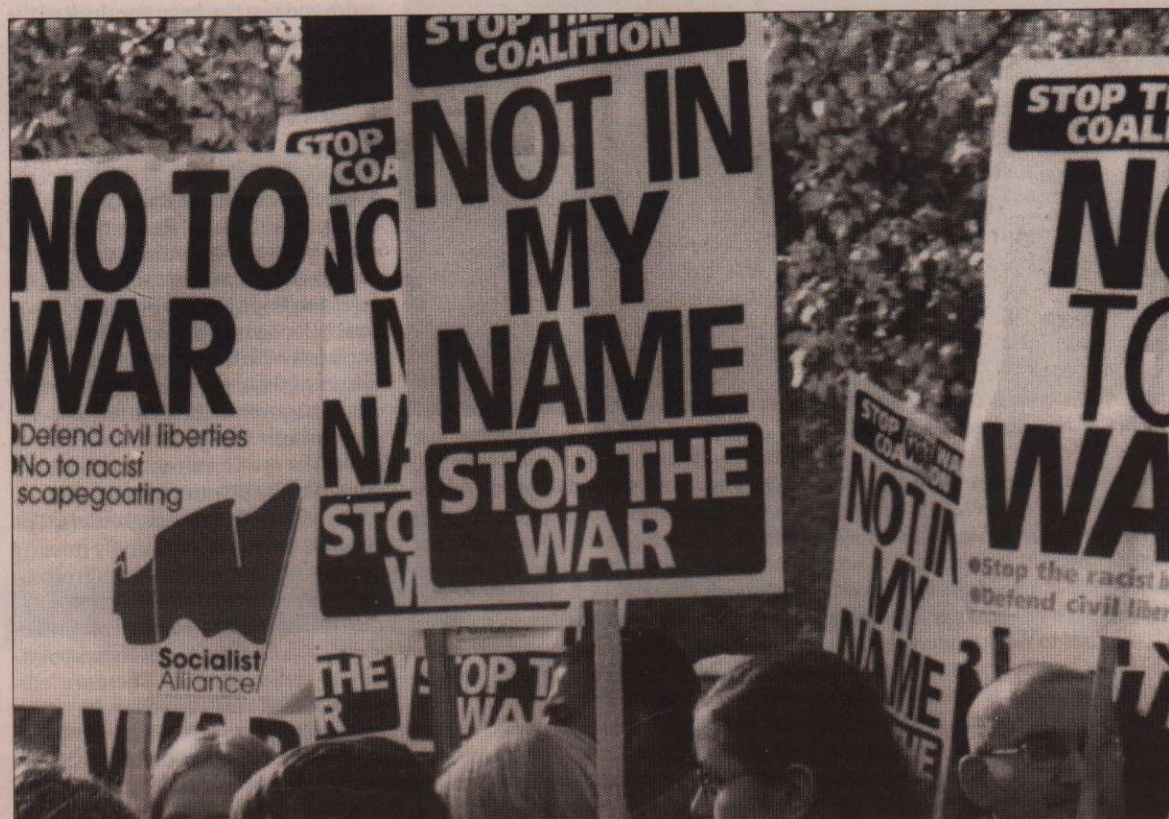
These were:

- Practical co-operation between the major far left organisations and some ex-Labour reformists to take the message into the working class that there could be a challenge, an alternative to New Labour.
- The beginnings of a break from total political and financial support for New Labour by forces within the more militant public sector unions.
- A limited but significant debate over the need for a new party and what sort of programme and structure it should have.

In other words the Socialist Alliance proved that it had the potential to become a vehicle to execute an organised break by sections of unionised workers and working class communities with the Labour Party. The justification for building and developing the Socialist Alliance lies in this potential.

Yet since the election the Socialist Alliance has suffered a series of setbacks.

- The numbers of activists mobilised in the election, in most areas, have started to dwindle, with many local alliances fading from the local political scene.
- The public profile of the Alliance – notwithstanding the efforts of a handful of people – has diminished. Political events have come and gone without comment or intervention by the alliance.
- In the great drama of the war and the anti-war movement the role of the Alliance was that of a backstage scene shifter, not a major player.
- At the structure conference itself – wrongly restricted to a one day gathering – the largest ever meeting of the Alliance has confined itself to discussing its internal constitution instead of con-



The Socialist Alliance missed an opportunity during the anti-war movement to put itself at the heart of the campaign

fronting the great political questions of the day and developing rounded answers to them.

Why is this the case?

The answer is contained in the proposals on offer from the largest single component of the Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). It views the alliance as an "electoral united front", an organisation that only really comes to life during elections. Its constitution enshrines this approach to the Alliance, as does its refusal to countenance any perspective of developing the Alliance into a party.

For the SWP such compartmentalisation isn't a problem. To deal with other issues the SWP favours other fronts and campaigns – the Anti-Nazi League, Globalise Resistance, Stop the War and so on. And from all of these it can hope to recruit to the SWP.

Our objection is not that the SWP recruits to itself. We are doing the same, and at an increased level. But such recruitment to our respective parties is not a viable perspective for the Socialist Alliance itself.

We do not counterpose building our

own organisation and mapping out a perspective of growth – outside of elections – for the Socialist Alliance that could, potentially at least, change the face of British politics. The SWP's approach does.

While there is no election in view, the alliance is being sidelined at worst, or at best, turned into an adjunct of the initiatives of the other campaigns. The inevitable effect of this is that between elections the Socialist Alliance will wither, its unaligned members drift away. It has no useful independent role to play as far as the SWP are concerned.

The clearest example of this was in relation to the war. Most people in the Alliance agreed with the idea of promoting a limited united front with broad forces around the slogan of "Stop the War".

No problem there. But within the movement many of us felt that it was necessary to expand the Alliance's own position in order for it to establish a clear socialist profile within the anti-war movement and on the basis of that recruit people to its ranks.

Yet, in the one national discussion of the war – at a liaison meeting in October – the SWP argued and voted for a resolution that limited the Alliance to having exactly the same slogans as the broader united front coalition. The Alliance had nothing additional to say, and as a result has had very little (two national leaflets) to say about an event of ongoing world importance.

This is the logic of viewing the Alliance as simply an electoral united front. It is disastrous because it leaves all those looking for something more – but not willing to join the SWP itself – high and dry between elections. It is a method of slowly suffocating the Alliance between elections and then hoping to revive it with a big kiss of life once an election looms.

None of this criticism is designed to detract attention from the enormous effort the SWP has put into the Alliance. But that work was centred on making it a viable electoral united front, and such a united front is doomed unless it can offer the mass of workers something more than a left reformist alternative at elections.

During the 1 December structure conference the Socialist Party left the alliance and walked out of the conference en masse. The triumph of the basic constitutional proposals of the SWP prompted this exit. The Socialist Party claimed that they could not live with the SWP's form of organisation – which they denounced as OMOV (one member one vote) – since it may impinge on their freedom to stand candidates wherever they saw fit, including against the Socialist Alliance (something the Socialist Party have already done in Hackney local elections).

The SP now risk putting themselves on the "sectarian fringes of the labour movement". And what is truly ridiculous is that the walk out is over a constitution – something that in any living organisation is always subordinate to politics.

If the SP had walked out over the war or over some other major betrayal of the Alliance in the class struggle, their action may have been justified. But the reality is that their walk-out is prompted by purely factional reasons. They fear a loss of control.

However, in another sense the SP walk out is a serious

blow. It leaves the SWP with a considerable majority and with no sizeable organisation acting as a counterweight to them.

Above all else this means within the Socialist Alliance that we need to defend and retain the basic democratic traditions and norms to prevent the SWP simply railroading the Alliance. But it also means redoubling our efforts to recruit currently non-aligned workers to the alliance. Such workers will demand democracy and demand that the Alliance provides them with political answers to the problems they face every day – and not just during elections.

At the conference – despite voting against a Workers Power proposal guaranteeing representation for the principal left organisations on the executive – the SWP put forward a slate for the leadership almost exactly in line with our proposal.

We now need to ensure that this leadership leads, builds the Socialist Alliance, preserves and deepens its democracy and helps establish the Alliance as a real and living force in the British class struggle that can offer a revolutionary alternative to New Labour.

Workers Power's proposals to the 1 December structure conference offered a real alternative for the Socialist Alliance. They avoided the paralysing and ultimately sectarian federal schema of the Socialist Party, which in its own way also sidelines the Alliance and restricts its potential to act as a pole for rallying mass opposition to New Labour.

Our proposals also sought to take the Alliance beyond the stage of acting as merely a "network" while avoiding prematurely turning it into an incoherent "multi-tendency" party incapable of advancing a programme to meet working class needs.

The key concepts behind our proposals were simple:

- The Alliance must commit itself to building a mass socialist alternative to Labour.

- The only alternative workers will take seriously is a party – if workers break from the Labour Party in significant numbers then it will be to another party not to a loose coalition.

- We are not yet at the stage where we can declare such a party but by setting it as a goal we can relate to workers in struggle with New Labour outside elections as well as during them. For that reason the Alliance must be an organisation that fights on all fronts. To fight on all fronts we will need policy on all fronts.

- We must therefore try to build the Alliance as a strong, locally rooted, active and campaigning organisation within which a serious debate on policies can take place.

- We have had enough of reformism. Millions of youth worldwide are inspired by the anti-capitalist message. They don't just want reforms, they want to tear down the system. Millions of workers across the planet are being drawn into struggle alongside these youth. This may not be happening on the same scale in Britain today, but it will happen in the future

- To rally such forces we have to prove in practice the vitality, practical usefulness and validity of revolutionary answers, of the revolutionary programme, in the here and now

- To the extent that we are successful we can rally people to a Socialist Alliance Party project that is the basis for a mass revolutionary alternative to Labour.

We do not want an electoral vehicle offering a microwaved version of reformist left-overs.

Nor do we believe we will be able to recruit thousands upon thousands of workers to an electoral vehicle. We want to set about the project of building a new movement, as part of the project of building a new party, that can seriously challenge capitalism before, during and after elections.

We want a party that can arm workers with the policies, means of struggle and forms of organisation that can win.

We are convinced that within a Socialist Alliance built on this basis and in this spirit we can convince workers of the need for a revolutionary party, without laying it down as an ultimatum to them before they join the Alliance. If you agree with this, inside and outside the Socialist Alliance, join us and help us achieve it this goal.

● For more on the Socialist Alliance and its future go to our website:

www.workerspower.com



A 'bleak and honest' portrayal

Not a shot is fired in the penultimate episode of *Band of Brothers*. By contrast, in the first few hours of the 10-part series bullets, bombs and mortars heavily outnumbered words.

Mangled bodies and the shattered limbs and minds of members of Easy Company littered the first half of the series. The starving survivors of a German concentration camp stalked our screens in the ninth episode.

This shift in tempo and focus has been one of the strengths of the series. We have been taken on a journey with a couple of dozen or so soldiers of the US 101st Airborne to hell and – for a minority – back: training on Britain's south coast; the D-Day jump behind enemy lines in France; the battle for Normandy, the fiasco of Operation Market Garden in Holland; bleak survival in the Ardennes in the winter of 1944-45; the beginning of the end in Alsace; and finally, the push through Germany to Berlin.

Christopher Dunkerly of the *Financial Times*, described it as a "bleak and honest" portrayal of war and in this sense an anti-war film. *Band of Brothers* has been criticised (by Lindsey German of the SWP among them) for lacking a social content. It is true that the series has not been overtly ideological. At most the series distinguishes in the last episodes between the committed fascist corps and the ordinary Wehrmacht –

Keith Harvey reviews *Band of Brothers*, BBC TV

soldiers like themselves. But there is no sense that this is a "war against fascism", "for democracy"; it also means there is no sense in which the members of Easy Company are fighting to "export American values".

The series is at pains not to demonise the German enemy. Early on one captured German turns out to be a young man brought up in the same US town as an Easy Company soldier but who returned to Germany in 1930 with his parents. Moments after he swaps stories of his old town with the American private, he is butchered on the side of the road along with a dozen others by an officer – the early days of the battle for Normandy allowed for few prisoners on either side.

In the last episode a German General is allowed to address his captured troops for the last time and his speech about comradeship in battle moves his American captors as much as his own men.

Band of Brothers is not really about the Second World War at all, its causes or the designs of the great powers waging it. It is about working class Americans who find themselves fighting a war they know little about, in places they have never heard of, concentrating on their own and their comrades' sur-

vival. And for the majority of combat troops this was the war.

It is left to the odd use of heavy symbolism by the series director to make broader points. Episode 9 opens and closes with a string quartet playing Beethoven amid the ruins of a bombed out German town as its inhabitants reassemble their belongings, while a few miles away the horror of the death camp is revealed.

Each episode moved us through France and beyond but also through the different experiences of platoon members: the medic coping with carnage and a lack of supplies; the replacement soldier drafted in to fill gaps left by the dead and wounded and meeting cold resentment from the veterans; the traumatised private, struck down with hysterical blindness. The power derives from the convincing portrayals of the inner conflict and terror.

The battle scenes are equally shocking. The mass casualties and chaos of the D-Day parachute drop are forcefully presented. You really feel the impact on each soldier of their own wounds or the effect of bearing witness to seeing your best mate torn to shreds.

Each time, *Band of Brothers* asks of its audience – and inevitably its male audience above all – could you deal with this, however just the cause you think you would be fighting for? It is not glamorous, it makes stone hearts out

of the physically brave, it crushes the sensitive, it dehumanises the survivors.

Although the series lack an overall in your face ideological message it does not sidestep the politics of the relationship between rank and file soldiers and officers. In the first episode a collective mutiny by Easy Company's NCOs forces the battalion commander to remove the company's CO because of his operational incompetence. They simply will not go into combat led by a fool. Their survival is at stake. This theme is returned to in the last episode when ruses are devised by Major Winters to avoid platoon members being sent on to fight the Japanese.

But equally a respected officer can lead his men into the most dangerous of operations. Dick Winters, Easy Company's CO, is the epitome of this. He shares their freezing fox holes, leads from the front. He even falsifies a report to his superior officers in order to prevent his men being sent into a pointless and suicidal mission to capture German prisoners to satisfy whim of the general command.

One small gripe. The very infrequent appearance of women in *Band of Brothers* was poorly done. Their roles added nothing to the drama and in fact their presence was only to highlight some quality or lack of it in one of the soldiers – the German farm girl who the US private gallantly refuses to rape being a case

in point. A Belgian nurse in Ardennes got more of an outing more before she was swiftly blown up had no function or character beyond provider of scarce supplies of bandages, morphine and chocolate to our medic hero.

Even in absentia women were only referred to when one wrote a "Dear John" letter to Captain Nixon. It was a film about men, perhaps better to have made women invisible altogether than dabble.

Still, this cannot detract from the power of the series. It will no doubt appear on video and DVD in the new year, maybe even be repeated on BBC Choice. If you missed most or all of it, make a date with it.

It may seem perverse at a time when US marines are securing bases in Afghanistan to commend a TV series about GIs invading another country. But in reality *Band of Brothers* is an antidote to the gung-ho banner headlines of the *Sun* in recent weeks with their comic book propaganda about the daring-do of the special forces.

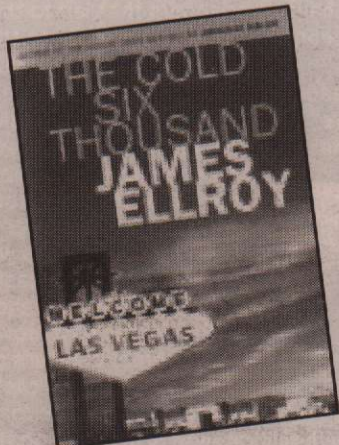
It is the actions of the US soldiers that supervised the mass execution of Taliban prisoners in an Afghan fortress that are a part of the ugly side of war that *Band of Brothers* wants to keep firmly in view. But at least the German prisoners shot by the US paratroopers of Easy Company got a last cigarette before they were butchered.

Ellroy's paranoid history of the American century

The *Cold Six Thousand* is the second part of James Ellroy's planned trilogy covering US history since the second world war. First published in April this year to catch the peak season for the airport blockbuster market, the book takes on new resonance following the war on Afghanistan.

The first book in the series, *American Tabloid*, revolves around the preparations for the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, designed to overthrow Castro's regime in Cuba, and the fiasco of the invasion itself. It culminates in the assassination of President Kennedy. *The Cold Six Thousand* starts where *American Tabloid* left off, in Dallas in November 1963. This time, the time period covers most of the 1960s and the central focus is the rising US military involvement in Vietnam.

Like the earlier book, the plot draws heavily on the paranoid conspiracy theories that see everything from the Kennedy assassination and the Vietnam war to heroin addiction among African



Dave West reviews *The Cold Six Thousand* by James Ellroy

Americans as the results of plots hatched between the CIA, FBI, the Mafia and the Ku Klux Klan, with corrupt Teamster bureaucrats involved in money laundering on the fringes.

Ellroy makes this version of history

plausible, at least within the fictional world he creates, by making his central characters the foot soldiers of reaction. Racist cops are recruited as deniable operatives for setting up CIA fund-raising opium poppy plantations in Indochina, and run small-scale organised crime outfits to flood America's ghettos with heroin. Their paths cross those of real-life figures ranging from J Edgar Hoover and Howard Hughes to former world heavyweight champion Sonny Liston.

The main narrative is sustained – for over seven hundred pages – in the style of nervous excitement. It is like speed-fuelled tabloid journalism. Occasionally the frenetic pace is varied when the plot development is through the use of transcripts of FBI agent briefings and phone taps. Ellroy succeeds superbly in imitating the bureaucratic language of terror that was revealed when masses of 1960s FBI files were later made public.

Don't try this book if you are after a bit of mindless escapism; it's not for

those with weak stomachs. Nor is it recommended for those who want to find out more about the history of the 1960s. The only forces resisting US imperialism that even rate a mention are the Vietcong and the US Civil Rights movement. Even here, individuals only enter the story for a few lines while the rifle sight is lined up or the explosive is detonated to murder them.

Ellroy's conspiracy theory of 20th Century history is the last resort of a despairing liberal, unable to understand the horrors of that century in any other way than the product of conscious plotting of a handful of corrupt and evil men in positions of power.

Where Ellroy is much more convincing is in his re-creation of the mental universe of his leading characters: their ingrained racism, misogyny, homophobia and their utter callousness. This is a work of fiction that serves as a reminder of the burning need to defeat imperialism, and of the seriousness of that task.

With Christmas coming people start buying – and sometimes even reading – more books than usual. Given the war against Afghanistan and the decision of US and UK imperialism to stamp all over the near and Middle East, do take the opportunity to read, Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban*.

This fascinating account of the Taliban's rise to power furnishes plenty of evidence on how the US, via its ally Pakistan, helped forge the regime that it subsequently decided to brand as terrorist.

Another good read is John K. Cooley's *Unholy Wars*. If you thought Osama bin Laden was always on the FBI's most wanted list, think again. This book lifts the lid on the entire period of the US/bin Laden alliance in the struggle against "communism" in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

With Sharon on the warpath *The New Intifada*, edited by Roane Carey, is an information packed guide to the reality of Palestine, the oppression suffered by its people at the hands of Israel (backed to the hilt by the USA) and the impact of Israeli terror on the lives and livelihoods of ordinary Palestinian workers and peasants.

If you can read these books over Christmas you will gain an insight into the issues behind the current major conflicts and that will certainly stiffen your resolve to fight back in the New Year. Seasons' greetings.

Picking over the ruins

The Bonn Talks, presided over by UN spokesman, Ahmad Fawzi, struggled for five days to reconcile the competing claims of the various Afghan factions and the designs of imperialism for the country after the defeat of the Taliban.

The US administration lacks any clear vision for the future of Afghanistan, apart from the need uproot Al Qa'ida and plunder the oil and mineral reserves of the region. Bush has made clear his disdain for nation-building in Afghanistan.

Russia is a heavy backer of the Northern Alliance and supports the latter getting as much power as possible, while Pakistan want to minimise it. Britain and the continental Europeans – particularly Germany and France – emphasise the need to construct a longer-term imperialist order, to “stabilise” the country or “nation build” and they want Iran in particular to play a key role in this.

One thing is for certain. Unless a stable regime is put together on the ruins of the defeated Taliban then Afghanistan will soon revert to little more than a patchwork of ethnic fiefdoms at war with each other and routinely oppressive to the population they rule over.

The big problem is that the US bombing has handed power to the Northern Alliance. Before 11 September they controlled only 10 per cent of Afghanistan. Now they control 80 per cent. This means that the Pashtuns – more than 40 per cent of the population are now grossly under-represented.

Led by its “foreign minister” Abdullah Abdullah, the Alliance itself is a highly unstable coalition between Tajik Islamists (backed by Russia), the Uzbek “general” Dostam – whose brutality is matched only by his treachery and side-swapping, and various Hazara groupings backed by Iran.

Everyone knows that these groupings are likely to come to blows as each tries to grab as big a share of the central power as possible. Hence the nation-building imperialists, (the former colonialists Britain and France), know that without hoops of steel (the French Foreign Legion and the British Paras) the staves of this barrel will rapidly fall or be blown apart.

But the Alliance does not represent the main ethnic group in Afghanistan,



Delegate at the Bonn meeting which will decide Afghanistan's fate

the Pashtuns – or more precisely, the Pashtun leaders. Therefore, two Pashtun groupings have also been invited. One brings together the representatives of the Pashtun ruling classes, various warlords and religious leaders. Some of them are held together in loose alliances – like the Peshawar group around Pir Sayed Gailani.

Others represent the control of different regions or towns in Afghanistan – like Abdul Kahir, a Pashtun Mujahidin leader who governed Jalalabad from 1992 to 1996 and controls this city again now. In the mid-1990s he was a friend of Osama bin Laden and offered him a house in Jalalabad city.

Finally, the former monarch, Zahir Shah, is the main champion of the idea of a broad interim government, since only this would allow him a political future as head of state. Being a king without a state or troops, he eagerly demands that UN troops be stationed in the country – permanently.

The Northern Alliance, whose forces now occupy Kabul, have resisted the need for such a UN force at all:

Burhanuddin Rabbani, the president before the Taliban seized power, and now Northern Alliance leader, ruled out the deployment of more than 200 United Nations peace-keepers.

But the exile delegations in Bonn, including the southern Pashtun factions, insist on such a force, and even the demilitarisation of Kabul, before they will agree to take part in any Kabul-based interim administration. Clearly they are unwilling to entrust their security or freedom of action to the tender mercies of the Northern Alliance.

Without agreement on who holds state (military) power on the ground, in the cities and towns of Afghanistan, all talk of an interim administration that is in any sense a government is pure fiction or fantasy.

Its representatives were curtly informed that there would be no large-scale funding for reconstruction unless they agreed to the presence of an international force.

This in all probability means the deployment of British and French forces in Afghanistan. Their aim is to reassure

the enemies of the Northern Alliance, especially the Peshawar forces keen on a return of the former King, Zahir Shah. Perhaps, the Northern Alliance may put in a bid for Russian troops.

The original plan to deploy a force from Muslim countries, led by Turkey and Jordan, in Kabul, has been put on hold because they are not in a position to supply large numbers of troops.

Whether all these plan will be agreed or adhered to it one thing is crystal clear – the Afghan delegates in Bonn, the UN and the imperialist powers are all agreed on one thing. They do not want democracy for the men and women of Afghanistan.

The former pro-Stalinist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), now renamed as the PVAP, was excluded from the talks from the outset. The “Alliance for democracy in Afghanistan” around the Social Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which played a significant role in the uprising in Herat – was not invited either.

And the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA),

a democratic women's organisation, has no role to play either.

It is a duty of the anti-war movement to expose the imperialist peace for what it is, mere pacification in the interests of the oil companies. We must continue to fight to get or keep the imperialist troops out.

We must fight for as many billions in reparations for the people of Afghanistan as the rulers of the USA, Britain, Russia, Saudi Arabia spent over the past 22 years in destroying it. The Afghan people must control this – not the foreign war criminals such as the USA, the EU, the IMF or the World Bank.

It is the task of the Afghan people – the workers' movement, the urban poor and the women in particular – to fight the imposition of any UN or other imperialist order on their country.

Only a sovereign constituent assembly which takes the arms away from all the warlords and creates popular militias, multi-ethnic ones in the cities and mixed areas will be able to tackle the enormous problems facing the country.

Everybody over 16 – including women who have suffered so much – must have the right to vote, to a secret ballot. The representatives must be recallable and replaceable by their electors.

Such an assembly – if Afghanistan's workers, rural and urban poor, women, youth, intelligentsia were fully represented – could start tackling the great issues. What are they?

- Get all imperialist troops out of the country
- Plan and implement the reconstruction of the country in the interest of the many not for the profit of a few.
- Give the land to those who work on it, free of debts, helping them to work it co-operatively, with modern equipment.
- Rebuild the factories, bridges roads, schools and hospitals under workers control.
- Liberate women from all enforced dress codes, grant full and equal civic rights, the right education, the right to work.
- Build up the permanent power of the workers and popular masses via a system of workers' and popular (council) shura.

Massacre at Qala-i-Jhangi: “the Americans are running the show”

It used to be “shot while trying to escape”. But that excuse used by captors to explain the killing of their prisoners is only of any use when killing the odd one or two.

When you want to massacre a few hundred prisoners, as the Northern Alliance and US planes did at Qala-i-Jhangi during 25-26 November, then you need another excuse. So the 300-400 foreign Taliban fighters (mainly from Pakistan and Chechnya) who surrendered at Konduz before being taken to the 19th century fort in Mazar-i-Sharif where they died, were said to have “started an uprising” which had to be put down.

Not surprisingly Northern Alliance General Dostum representatives whose soldiers carried out the mass execution and Pentagon spokesman, Army Lt. Col. Dan Stoneking deny any wrongdoing.

But after their capture the Los Angeles Times reported:

“Some observers fear hatred of the foreign Taliban runs so high among the Northern Alliance that Taliban prisoners may face mistreatment or even summary execution, both of which are prohibited under the Geneva Conventions.”

The Northern Alliance and Pentagon spokesman claim that the prisoners took weapons from guards. This is possible but only in very small numbers. Can anyone imagine that let us say 100 soldiers guarding prisoners

can be overwhelmed at once?! If the first few guards have been taken by surprise the rest of them would have been alerted.

It is clear from reports that many of the Taliban dead had their hands tied behind their back when they were killed. It is also reported that it was the tying up of the

Northern Alliance soldiers look on dead Taliban soldiers – some with their hands tied behind their back



prisoners that led to the revolt since they assumed that this was a prelude to their execution.

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld stated more than a week before the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif that he did not see the value in taking prisoners and wanted the foreign Taliban dead, as they would otherwise only leave to set up al-Qaida units in another country. This is the real reason for the provocations that led to the “uprising” and subsequent massacre.

And the US forces were on hand to co-ordinate the massacre. Time Magazine correspondent Alex Perry was present at the time and reported that “American and British forces have now joined in trying to quell the attack ... the Americans are running the show. ... the Americans and the British are coordinating airstrikes from their positions inside the fort on another part of the fort. And they're also directing the commanders inside when to tell their men to attack.”

Perry had no illusions about the task of the Western and Afghan forces: “The mission by the Americans and Northern Alliance is to kill every single one of them now”

The UN Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International have called for an investigation into the massacre, a request that has been rejected out of hand by the US and British governments. Even supporters of the war such as the Economist have cautioned against unbridled summary executions against prisoners.

We are all 'terrorists' now

Even before 11 September Britain possessed the most draconian set of counter-terrorism laws in Europe – codified in the Terrorism Act 2000 and the recent immigration acts.

Home secretary David Blunkett's addition to these powers – the anti-terrorism, crime and security bill – goes even further.

It is being pushed at maximum speed through a supine parliament with no serious debate – in the House of Commons at least.

Those who resist have been accused of being soft on terrorism. Only the Scottish and Welsh nationalists and a handful of Labour backbenchers have voted against it.

Firstly, it is a lie that this bill is aimed exclusively at perpetrators of terror attacks on the civilian population. If this were so its definition would

any doubt that its purpose is to remove normal legal protection for a wide range of actions and to extend cover to a wide range of police actions which are now illegal.

Its worst provision is that it will allow the government to detain indefinitely any foreign nationals they even suspect of being involved in terrorism. The home secretary does not have to prove it or even give reasons for his suspicion.

During internment without trial in the 1970s and 1980s hundreds upon hundreds of innocent Irish men and women were swept into camps, treated in a way the European Court of Human rights later called "cruel and degrading". Some of the worst miscarriages of justice in British history occurred under the baleful influence of this legislation.

During the Gulf War in 1991 the

This provision is not restricted to those suspected of being terrorists or even of having committed any crime.

Clearly Blunkett has taken into his Bill the entire wish list of the police faced with anti-capitalist protestors over the past year or two.

Other measures allow personal and private information held by government, local government, private companies etc, to be obtained by the police and others without any controls checks or safeguards. It also obliges internet service providers and mobile phone companies to keep long term records of mobile phone calls and emails.

The police will not need to claim reasonable suspicion of lawbreaking, merely that it is useful to their investigations, nor will they have to go to a magistrate or judge to gain authorisation.



Thousands of people marched against the war on 18 November – are we now all to be treated like terrorists?

not be so all – encompassing.

Section 2 of the bill defines terrorism thus: "acts of terrorism means acts of persons acting on behalf of, or in connection with, any organisation which carries out activities directed towards the overthrowing or influencing, by force or violence, of Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom or any other government, de jure or de facto."

So the activities of revolutionaries in this country and democrats organising against dictatorships abroad are all swept into the range of this measure. Asylum seekers claims can be rejected on grounds of suspected terrorism.

In clause 21(2) the definitions allow a person to be detained if they only have links with another person whom the home secretary suspects of being a terrorist. There is no definition of links so that the net can be thrown as widely as the home secretary wishes.

Under the Bill a state of emergency is to be declared, which enables the government to opt out of article five of the European Convention on Human Rights.

This state of emergency is declared before a single terrorist act connected with 11 September has taken place and which Blunkett even says he has no expectation of taking place.

Blunkett claims this is a pure formality. This is a lie. The multifarious provisions of the bill show beyond

Tory government rounded up "terrorist suspects" in Britain. Some 90 nationals from Arabic countries were imprisoned without charge. Many were held in solitary confinement for days. Few were ever charged with any offence.

In some cases the attempted police justifications were little more than blatant racist prejudices. But with no right to appeal these can not be uncovered or remedied.

Terrorism, as defined in the bill, is also extended to cover serious violence against property.

This clause can clearly be used against animal rights protestors, civil disobedience, and maybe also some forms of industrial action – anything where property can be said to be seriously damaged.

Proof that this law is intended for use against political activists is found in the inclusion (clause 93) in the bill of new powers for the police to demand the removal of items of clothing that a police officer believes are designed to conceal identity.

The idea that a police officer will approach a masked terrorist he comes across in the street or at an airport saying "Ere, 'ere, sunshine, let's 'ave a look at yer face?" is ridiculous. It is clearly aimed at those on demonstrations.

Failure to comply will now constitute a criminal offence resulting in imprisonment for up to one month.

There can be little doubt that high on the list of suspects will be trade unionists, socialists, anarchists, anti-capitalists, ecologists, and civil liberties campaigners who are organising protests, strikes or demonstrations.

The anti-terrorism, crime and security bill can easily be used to obstruct travel to international anticapitalist mobilisations – like Genoa or Brussels. Clause 116 provides for a massive expansion in controls of those travelling both within the United Kingdom and to and from it. Powers for searching, detaining and examining travellers do not require reasons for suspicion by the authorities. These examinations can last up to nine hours.

Thus the whole bill defines terrorism so widely as to make it the declaration of a real state of emergency. On the continent it would be called a state of siege. That is just what it is. In fact our democratic freedoms, won over centuries, are now under siege.

The trade union, socialist, anti-capitalist movement, plus immigrant communities, asylum seekers, anti war activists all need to mobilise stop this bill and, if it is passed as law, struggle to repeal the act.

We must fight hard to defend and recover our rights. Once again it has been shown that there is a very high cost to pay for patriotism and support for imperialist wars. It is the loss of freedom and civil rights at home.

Will Iraq be next?

First, it was because Saddam Hussein was behind the attacks on 11 September; then it was because Iraq was the source of the anthrax letters delivered to senators in the USA.

When not one shred of evidence could be found to back up these claims, the Bush administration "discovered" that Saddam was on the brink of developing "weapons of mass destruction".

This is the latest US excuse to move beyond the 10 year strategy of isolation and containment of Iraq to one of overthrow of Saddam Hussein and replacing his regime with a pliant pro-imperialist one.

This shift is occasioned not by any increase in the "threat" posed by Iraq. British and US intelligence agencies know well that Iraq is qualitatively disarmed. The outgoing secretary of defence, William Powell, told incoming President George Bush in January this year: "Iraq no longer poses a military threat to its neighbours". Rather, the 11 September attacks have provided an opportunity to get rid of Hussein's regime.

Richard Perle, the most visible and forceful advocate of action against Iraq outside of government, believes that success in Afghanistan means that the US can move "from one liberation to another". US vice-president Dick Cheney said last month that up to 50 countries could be targeted for a range of action, from financial and diplomatic to military. He later narrowed this down to several "rogue states" – as the imperialists like to call those who do not obey them 100 per cent – including Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Libya and North Korea.

At the moment, a powerful lobby in the US administration is pushing strongly for an early move against Iraq. This lobby is headed by Cheney, Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and his Deputy, Paul Wolfowitz.

Naturally, this would almost certainly provoke massive protests not only of the anti-war movement in the West and millions of workers and poor in the Middle East. It would also cause massive tensions in the so called "international coalition against terrorism". Amr Moussa, secretary general of the Arab League, which represents most Arab states, said in Cairo on 23 November that there was "a common Arab position that has been very clearly declared and conveyed to whoever it may concern regarding strikes against any Arab country".

Russia, a long term backer of Iraq, does not support an war to unseat Saddam Hussein. The French government has explicitly spoken out against it. Blair is not in favour but dares not contradict his US masters in public.

Exactly for these reasons, sections of the US administration – like Secretary of State, Colin Powell – remain cautious about moving quickly to the next war.

Meanwhile the UN last month "rolled over" for another six months the existing sanctions' policy while agreeing to look at the effects the sanctions have had inside Iraq – an investigation blocked time and again by the US and UK during the last three years. Since the 1991 Gulf war hundreds of bomb attacks by US and UK planes on installations around Iraq to have ensured Iraq's military forces remain weak.

But more harm has been done by the trade sanctions imposed on the country. The current policy of economic sanctions has destroyed society in Iraq and caused the death of thousands, young and old. The UN estimate is that around 250,000 "excess" child deaths can be laid at the door of the sanctions.

The list of controlled items – those that need approval from the UN sanctions committee before they can be imported by Iraq – has led to essential civilian goods being blocked on the grounds that they might also have military uses. The most recent report of the UN secretary-general, in October 2001, says that the US and UK governments' blocking of \$4 billion of humanitarian supplies is by far the greatest constraint on the implementation of the oil-for-food programme.

The report says that, in contrast, the Iraqi government's distribution of humanitarian supplies is fully satisfactory. The death of some 5-6,000 children a month is mostly due to contaminated water, lack of medicines and malnutrition. The US and UK governments' delayed clearance of equipment and materials is responsible for this tragedy, not Baghdad.

The next months will reveal whether the US administration feels it has the military and diplomatic leverage to move beyond sanctions to all-out war against Iraq. At the end of the day the US has the military capacity to act alone against Iraq, as long as they can get some logistical support from Saudi Arabia. Politically they could act alone, even without the diplomatic support of the existing coalition members, safe in the knowledge that they would have to accept it.

This makes it even more important that the working class and the anti-capitalist movement build a massive opposition against the imperialists' drive for world domination which fights against their war in the Middle East and Central Asia, and at home.

The massive 70,000 strong anti-war demo in London on 18 November was bigger than any political protest seen in Britain since 1990 and the biggest anti-war protest for 30 years.

We now have to transform this movement into a conscious anti-imperialist force which fights for the defeat of the enemy at home and links with the struggles of the oppressed.

We have to build new revolutionary parties and a new International which both acts as a leading force of the anti-imperialist opposition and at the same time connects this struggle with the only solution to annihilate war and poverty forever: a world-wide revolution against global capitalism.

Islam against imperialism

In the second article in our series on Islam *Dave Stockton* charts the rise of conservative anti-imperialism in the 1970s, which was imbued with hostility to secularism, democracy and the working class movement

The 1970s were a key period in the development of political Islamism as a mass, radical force. In the previous article we saw how its major organisations and theoreticians ideas arose in Egypt and Pakistan.

Sayyid Qutb was a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1930s. He argued that the absolute transcendent sovereignty of god in Islam invalidates the secular state, the nation state and the democratic state.

Qutb denounced the exploitative nature of western capitalism as a product of corrupt religions – Christianity and Judaism. Capital and private ownership of the means of production were not the problem, but financial speculation and money lending were. From this followed his anti-semitism.

Qutb saw in imperialism's efforts to dominate the Arab and Muslim world and in its backing for Israel an attempt to destroy Islam. Those rulers in the Islamic worlds – like Nasser – who introduced secular legal codes and western notions like socialism, nationalism and women's rights, were enemies of Islam.

Violent, revolutionary struggle against the imperialists and their local agents – jihad in the modern interpretation of the term – was necessary to restore an Islamic state.

In such a state religious law (sharia) would be restored, the ruler or rulers would be elected by the religious community of Muslim believers (the umma). Everything forbidden in the sharia would be banned: alcohol consumption, co-education, and the mingling of the two sexes at work or at leisure.

Abu al Mawdudi from Pakistan belonged to Jamaat-I Islami, founded in 1941. He believed in free enterprise and denounced socialism and communism as un-Islamic.

Problems only arose from usury and the system of international exchange. These drove out small and medium sized industrialists and farmers, created an impoverished proletariat and put economic power in the hands of "financial princes". Both Qutb and Al Mawdudi drew their radicalism from their hostility to the long-term domination of British imperialism in the region. Both were reactionary in that they opposed secular constitutions, women's rights, equal citizenship for non-Muslims, the divisiveness of parties (non-Islamic ones) and an at best ambivalent attitude to elections.

Clearly this ideology is not only reactionary but potentially totalitarian. If it is combined with the organisation of gangs of lumpenised youth, armed to attack the left and workers' unions, it approaches the character of European fascism, even if of a clerical and religious kind.

Al Mawdudi's own practice was not very revolutionary. Jamaat-I Islami participated in elections but also set out to permeate the officer corps and high command of the Pakistani army and police. It was always, at least initially, on the side of military coups like the Muslim Brotherhood. It favoured a military bonapartism, one hostile to the labour movement.

However, a development of self-proclaimed revolutionary Islamist groups took place, with splits from the Muslim brothers in the Arab world and the Jamaat in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

The splits were a result of the growing conservatism of the Islamic parties



Afghans fight USSR troops in the 1980s: Saudi Arabia implored Arab and Pakistanis to join the battle in the name of Islam

which became embroiled with the state as these countries' rulers themselves began to indulge in controlled islamisation from above to repress the left.

The revolutionary ferment among youth in the 1970s, the influence and the prestige of Stalinist, Maoist, Guevarist national liberation struggles, popularised the model of centralised, cell-based parties capable of underground work, guerrilla tactics and individual terrorist methods.

There was a wholesale adoption of these structures and also of the revolutionary, anti-imperialist rhetoric coming from third world Stalinism.

But it was the emergence of political Islamism in Iran and its apparent success in making a mass revolution, which gave an enormous boost to radical Islamism.

The Iranian revolution of 1978-9 was itself a result of the crisis of 1970s modernisation and secularisation.

The difference was that it drew in major figures from the Shi'a clergy, most famously Sayyid Ruhollah al-Khomeini (1903-1989). The Shi'a clergy, 60,000-strong, in the 1970s was much more hierarchical and independent of the state than the Sunni ulema.

The top ayatollahs felt threatened in their legal and educational roles by the Shah's modernising reforms – the White Revolution. These included a limited land reform, the opening up of Iran to US and European multinational corporations, expanding modern secular education, and granting women the vote and access to state employment.

Khomeini and a big faction of the ulema were opposed to all of these as were important sections of the ruling classes, the landowners and the bazaar capitalists (more traditional merchants, money lenders, manufacturers).

The population of the capital Teheran had more than doubled since the mid-1960s as young people flooded to the cities in search of work. Few of them found stable well-paid employment.

The repeated economic crises of 1970s and the bankruptcy of the Shah's regime created a mass of unemployed or semi-employed youth – the combustible material of the so-called Islamic Revolution.

The Shah's regime was murderously repressive. Savak, the notorious secret

police, arrested tortured and murdered the Shah's opponents, especially those on the radical, secular left like the Fedaii.

This Maoist-inspired guerrilla organisation originated in the universities. A radical Islamist parallel organisation also developed, the Mujahideen-i Khalq. Its ideology was a hybrid of Stalinism and socialism, but blended in with Islamism.

Khomeini by contrast, was the head of the reactionary but anti-imperialist wing of the ulema, from the mid-1960s onwards. He opposed votes for women and land reform.

He also opposed the Shah's role of gendarme for the USA in the Gulf region and all the modern, American cultural influences which the Shah's pro-Americanism imported. In short he was a reactionary conservative. Exiled to Iraq by the Shah, by the early 1970s his thinking developed in a radical direction.

His denunciation of the Shah became more total as did his attacks on imperialism. He broke with traditional Shi'a orthodoxy and developed the doctrine of the velayet-e faqih – the "rule of the jurist". Shi'ism, because of its long minority status in the Islamic world, did not recognise any state as the true expression of the Muslim umma.

Only when the hidden twelfth Imam returned would a truly Islamic state be a possibility. But Khomeini now argued that an Islamic republic was a possibility. The most respected interpreter of Islamic law should rule. Once chosen he should appoint politicians, though he would also be advised by an assembly.

This clerical dictatorship envisaged the existing high clergy effectively taking power, with one of them (Khomeini himself), taking the role of supreme guardian. But Khomeini's reactionary goal was allied to radical methods.

Khomeini was able to gain access to an enormous audience through the local mosques, whose mullahs mobilised vast numbers of demonstrators in response to his calls to the streets. They turned out the vast crowds to welcome Khomeini when he returned to Iran.

But when the time came for the overthrow of the tottering government left behind by the Shah it was the Fedaii and the Mujahideen who organised the support of troops coming over to the people, the storming of the police stations and arsenals and the mass distribution

of weapons, something neither Khomeini or the mullahs wanted.

Between February 1979 and May 1980, however, Khomeini remorselessly put into place the elements of his Islamic republic through plebiscites and elections. At first the Fedaii and the Mujahideen were able to mobilise hundreds of thousands on the streets.

But Khomeini and the mullahs quickly organised large gangs of armed thugs, the hezbollah. This street force beat up leftists and liberals alike, harassed and attacked their demonstrations, and closed down and purged the universities for two years.

The workers' shoras (councils) which had emerged in the final, decisive general strikes, were purged of "communists" and Islamicised. Women's rights were remorselessly eroded and the Islamic dress code imposed.

In short Khomeini destroyed the left and the bourgeois liberals via salami tactics. He was able to do so under a cover of anti-imperialist demagoguery – particularly during the occupation of the US embassy in November 1979 and the year long hostage crisis.

The Islamic Revolution was in effect an Islamist counter-revolution, which aborted the democratic and anti-imperialist phase of what could have been a socialist working class revolution.

The cause of the disaster lay in the total misunderstanding of the reactionary character of Islamism by the Iranian left – which viewed Khomeini (at least at first) as ushering in the "democratic" stage of the revolution, after which would come socialism. This misunderstanding proved fatal to the Iranian revolution.

But to the people of the Middle East what appeared to have happened was that Islamists had led a revolution that overthrew the chosen favourite of imperialism and established an Islamic state.

It seemed an historic event parallel to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez canal and his seeing off of the Anglo-French attack on Egypt in 1956.

The Islamists were soon to have another "heroic struggle" in the form of the Afghan civil war. In April 1978 a military coup led by Mohammed Taraki brought to power the Stalinist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). It set out to carry through reforms: women's rights, land reform and the

expansion of modern education.

Failing to develop or mobilise a social base for this in the countryside this programme provoked a traditionalist reactionary uprising led by the landowners, tribal elders and mullahs.

The PDPA fell into murderous faction fighting over whether harsh repression should be meted out or concessions be offered. The more "left" and brutally dictatorial faction of Hafizullah Amin won out.

But fearful of the collapse of the regime and the arrival in power of an Islamic regime hostile to the USSR, Russian troops took Kabul in 1979, killed Amin and put back in power the more right-wing conciliatory faction, led by Babrak Karmal.

Since this followed close on the heels of the Iranian Revolution – with its ferociously anti-American rhetoric and hostage taking, the United States, was determined to use Afghanistan as a way of counteracting what it saw as Soviet expansionism.

The US, with the support of the Pakistani regime of General Zia-ul Haq and the Saudi monarchy, launched a jihad against the PDPA regime. This war by the Islamists was an entirely reactionary one.

It was guided via five different Afghan factions plus a wide international network of Arab and Pakistani Islamists ready to fight the Soviet forces in the name of Islam.

The Saudis set out to mobilise young Islamists through their Wahhabi religious, cultural, and educational networks and through their links to the Muslim Brotherhoods in many countries.

Reagan and Thatcher jumped at the chance to give Russia its Vietnam. They poured billions of dollars and millions of pounds into creating an International Brigade of Islamist fighters.

This was funded by the proceeds of Gulf oil, trained by the Pakistani intelligence services the ISI and armed by Egypt's Anwar Sadat and, after his assassination by radical Islamists, by Hosni Mubarak. The training in Pakistan was overseen by western special forces, the CIA and the SAS. Elite fighters – the cadres who went on to rally around bin Laden – were given special training at the CIA's own camps in the USA itself.

It was this network that brought together fundamentalists from Saudi Arabia (Wahhabis), Pakistan (Deobandis), Muslim brothers from North Africa, Egypt, Indonesia, into a truly international Islamist jihadi movement.

From 12,000 to 25,000 Saudis alone fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan. In this movement Osama bin Laden played a key role.

By 1989 the Soviet Armed forces had had enough and a withdrawal was negotiated. The PDPA regime of Najibullah still managed to hold on to power till 1992.

But the Afghan war had an enormous effect – even more far-reaching than the Iranian revolution. Tens of thousands of young Islamists from all over the Arab and Muslim world had fought in Afghanistan. In the camps and Islamic schools in Pakistan they were subjected to mass indoctrination by the radical Islamist parties.

They returned to their home countries determined to continue the jihad against their own governments which – despite their support for the Afghan mujahideen – seemed lukewarm, secularist and pro-American.

Palestine and Israel: Two states is no solution

To get Arab states and Arafat to join the coalition against the Taliban George Bush went public in support of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Many on the left agree. *Richard Brenner* reviews *Two Nations, Two States – Socialists and Israel/Palestine*, a Workers' Liberty pamphlet

The latest pamphlet from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) group argues for a "two states" solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

It says this is the "only solution that takes account of the rights of both sides in the conflict, and therefore it is the only rational, just and progressive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

The authors support "an independent Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel", and emphatically defend the right of Israel to exist in areas where the Israeli Jews are a majority.

There is an immediate problem with this argument. The Israelis created a majority Jewish population in Palestine by forcibly expelling Palestinian Arabs in 1947-9 and denying them and their families the right to return to the territory of their origin.

At the same time, under the Law of Return, Jewish people of any nationality are entitled to Israeli citizenship upon arrival in Israel, even if they have never been there before.

This racist citizenship law is fundamental to the maintenance of a Jewish majority population in Palestine. If the Palestinians were allowed to return, then under any democratic system they would understandably and justifiably vote against being consigned to the status of second-class citizens and therefore against the state defining itself as specifically Jewish.

This historical reality has to be the starting point for any socialist response to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians is not simply the product of a bad policy pursued by reactionary right-wing governments. It arose directly as a result of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

The only way Israel could create a Jewish majority population on its territory was to drive out millions of Palestinian people, prevent them from returning, strip them of land ownership, and wage a series of bloody wars against any Palestinians that resisted.

It is the continuation of this policy that leads to the forcible settlement of Palestinian land on the West Bank today, complete with bulldozings of Palestinian homes, discrimination in access to water supplies and a regime of permanent military repression.

This is not some bloody aberration but the logical and necessary extension of the principles that underlay the foundation of the Israeli state.

The only just solution must encompass equal citizenship rights for Jews and Arabs and the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their land of origin. This means a state in which Jews and Arabs are equal, not a state that defines itself specifically as "Jewish" or "Arab".

The continued existence of an Israeli-Jewish state, even alongside a Palestinian state, would depend on the maintenance of racist citizenship laws and the exclusion of millions of Palestinians from the territory, providing



A Palestinian woman surveys the ruins of her house in the Gaza strip - bulldozed by orders of the Israeli government

the basis for a lasting peace, this could only condemn the region to further cycles of repression and war.

As if to prove the point, the AWL pamphlet quickly finds that support for a Jewish state in Palestine requires it to defend Israel's racist citizenship policy. The author of most of the articles in the pamphlet, Sean Matgamma, accepts that the return of the Palestinians would challenge the foundations of Israel's Jewish identity - so he rejects their right to return. In the pamphlet's introduction, written on 19 October this year, he describes the demand for the Palestinians' right to return to Israel as "collective resettlement in the territory now occupied by the Israeli Jews, most of whom were born there".

In a subsequent article, "The Origins of the Conflict" he explicitly rejects the Palestinians' right to return: "The 'right to return' in its straightforward sense is the demand that the events of the 20th century in Palestine be undone, that the film of history be rolled backwards. It is inconceivable that the Israelis will voluntarily agree to this. The demand that it should be at best the demand that the Jewish state should cease to conceive of itself as a Jewish state - not just get out of the West Bank and Gaza, and cease discriminatory or chauvinist practices, but cease to be the state of the distinct Israeli-Jewish nation. It is no more realistic than the call that the

British, French, German or Irish states should cease to be British, French, German or Irish, a call quite distinct from the justified one that they should let in far more refugees and migrants. The 'right of return' therefore, in practice, comes down to the 'demand' for the conquest and destruction of Israel."

This is an extraordinary passage to have been written by anyone claiming to be a democrat, let alone a socialist.

In the first place, Matgamma admits here that the democratic right of the Palestinians to return to the territory they lived in 50 years ago stands in contradiction to the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine. How then can he expect a lasting peace on this basis? How can there be a "rational, just and progressive" solution or a lasting peace if millions of Palestinians are excluded? This argument merely proves that the whole idea of a two-state "solution" is utopian and reactionary.

Also clear from this passage is that AWL actually prefer the rights of one group over the other - the "right" of the Israeli-Jewish people to preserve a majority secured through war, land seizures and racist laws takes precedence over the right of more than three million refugees living in squalor in Lebanon, Jordan West Bank and Gaza to return.

The reason given for this is that every nation, like France, Germany, Ireland

and so on, has the right to national self-determination and that this must encompass the right to a state of its own. The pamphlet says that to refuse this right to the Israeli Jews is to single them out as having lesser rights than other nations. It says, "the hidden assumption is that the Israeli Jewish nation is an illegitimate nation, and therefore does not have the same rights as other nations."

This is a dangerous and dishonest argument. Of course there are no "illegitimate nations" - the very idea could only be raised by a national chauvinist or racist. But there is a difference between a nation and a nation-state, and the state of Israel was created in very specific circumstances - the driving out of millions of Palestinians and the conquest of their land. Revolutionary socialists are not proposing to invert that crime and drive out the Israeli Jews, just to allow the Palestinians to return.

Instead of starting from this legitimate democratic national right of the Palestinian people, AWL starts from the idea that the right to a nation-state is an abstract good, one to be supported in all situations. By contrast, revolutionary socialists support the right of self-determination only where it is not exercised at the expense of the rights of another nation.

The "right" of white South Africans to a state did not take precedence over the right of the majority black population to vote. Why should the right of the Israeli Jews to a state take precedence over the rights of millions of Palestinians?

Even the example about Britain, France, Germany or Ireland used by Matgamma backfires. France is not Israel. But if "France" had been created 50 years ago by the dispossession and driving out of millions of its original inhabitants who were of a different nationality, if those original inhabitants still lived just beyond its borders in refugee camps, if those people were in permanent rebellion and insurrection demanding their rights, then socialists in "France" and elsewhere would certainly advocate their right to return.

And if some of the "French" settler majority complained that this would violate their "right" to a nation-state, revolutionaries would expose this argument as a justification for racism and colonial conquest, not as some expression of "French" democracy.

Just how far AWL is prepared to pursue this argument is revealed in a breath-taking passage in an article entitled, without apparent irony, "Unravelling the Issues". Here the demand for the right to return of the Palestinians is presented to the pamphlets mainly British readers in the following terms:

"...the real equivalent would be if many tens of millions of people, almost as many as the population of Britain, just across the Channel, were claiming a collective right to 'repossess' Britain."

This example is obviously supposed to frighten us out of supporting the Palestinians' rights by placing the reader in the position of Israelis who view

the Palestinians with hatred and fear? It tries to appeal to the reader's sense of national insecurity - a despicable thing for any socialist writer to do. Above all, it shows how shallow the writer's sense of internationalism really is. For what if it were a valid comparison?

If Britain had forcibly expelled and dispossessed "tens of millions" fifty years ago, and they were living in refugee camps just across the channel, then revolutionary socialists emphatically would support their right to return, and if that meant this island could no longer describe itself as a "British" state, we wouldn't care.

Genuine internationalism means supporting an end to all oppression on the grounds of nationality, not declaring that recent national and colonial conquests should be treated as final accomplished historical facts just so the victors can maintain their supremacist nation-states.

AWL's "killer argument" in support of the two states solution is that the largest Palestinian organisation, the PLO, also supports it. This is true - but it is a result of the PLO leadership's fatal policy of compromise with Israel and their abandonment of the historic rights of their own people.

The PLO under Yasser Arafat has persistently accommodated to Israel, handing over the names and addresses of Palestinian radicals to the Israelis even during their campaign of assassinations, allowing the Israelis to wriggle out of every one of their obligations under successive peace treaties, demanding an end to Palestinian resistance in favour of continued talks that yield nothing and utilising their position within the Palestine National Authority to demobilise mass resistance while the leaders enrich themselves and persecute their opponents.

A Palestinian state existing alongside Israel would be like the PNA today - a powerless Bantustan, leaving all the real control and might in the hands of Israel. That is why the task of revolutionary socialists is not to devise ever more "Marxist" excuses for Israeli domination of the region, but to fight for a genuine, lasting solution.

This is not, despite AWL insinuations, a policy of "driving the Jews into the sea", but a socialist republic with no single religious or national allegiance, one in which Arabs and Jews live together as equal citizens. The only force that can bring it into being is the working class, peasantry and urban poor of the Middle East.

The longer the Palestinian left equivocates on this issue, the more likely it will be that the PLO's failings will drive the heroic youth of the Intifada into the arms of the Islamists like Hamas, who do indeed oppose the reactionary solution of driving out the Jews.

As Karl Marx said, a nation which oppresses another can never itself be free. For as long as there is a racist and discriminatory Jewish state in the Middle East, the consequences will be disastrous for the Palestinians and the Jews alike.

Danish election shock

The right wins and the racists gain

The surname of the prime minister remains the same, but the politics of the government will change as a result of the elections in Denmark on 20 November.

The social democratic prime minister since 1992, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, and his party lost in a historic defeat. His successor will be Anders Fogh Rasmussen, leader of Venstre (which confusingly means Left, in accordance with an older way of describing liberals as a part of the left).

The social democrats got 52 seats, losing 11. The other parties of the left also lost; the Socialist People's Party went from 13 to 12 and the Unity List from 5 to 4 seats. Together with the so-called Radical Left, which in reality is a social liberal party, the left bloc only got 77 mandates against the right-wing's 98.

The scale of the defeat for social democracy can be measured by the fact that this was the first time since the 1920s that a single bourgeois party got more votes than the social democrats. The social democratic mayor of Copenhagen also nearly lost his majority in the local assembly after 100 years of social democratic dominance of the capital.

The liberals in Venstre are not able

to form a government on their own. They only have 56 seats and will, first of all, have to rely on the Danish People's Party of Pia Kjaersgaard. Her party is a nasty racist party on the lines of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party in Australia. Their main demands are for a tougher policy towards immigrants and law breakers. They gained nine seats and now have 22, thereby becoming the third largest party in the Danish parliament, Folketinget.

The most likely scenario is for Venstre to form a minority government together with the much smaller Conservative People's Party. But this government will be forced to rely on the support of other parties.

The outcry in much of the liberal intelligentsia, the left and from influential politicians and newspapers in neighbouring countries, will make it very difficult for the government to make Kjaersgaard's party an open ally. The bourgeois parties in neighbouring Sweden have, among others, been shocked by the fact that Venstre made so many concessions to the racists during the election campaign.

Pia Kjaersgaard told journalists, "I will seek influence where we can get it." She also, rightly, pointed out that Fogh Rasmussen will be called on to form a

"The bourgeois parties in neighbouring Sweden have been shocked by the fact that Venstre made so many concessions to the racists during the campaign"

new government largely as a consequence of the number of seats she can mobilise in his support.

Kjaersgaard also demanded a compromise between different parties on the question of "foreigners". The social democrats are obviously divided on this. The former foreign minister, Mogens Lykketoft, has rejected any common ground between his party, Kjaersgaard's party and the two other main bourgeois parties.

Other leading social democrats also reject any talk of a "national compromise", if that is made on the terrain of the right-wing. The former prime minister, Nyrup Rasmussen, on the other hand, promised his successor that his party will act as a "fair, constructive, and critical opposition". There is a clear divide and the fact that people like the former minister of the interior, Karen Jespersen, claim to have the same position as Venstre on "foreigners" is a disgrace to a party that was once built by Danish workers to defend their interests.

A clear re-orientation along socialist and revolutionary lines is needed if Danish workers and immigrants are going to successfully resist the attacks that surely will follow from a new right-wing government, relying on an openly racist party.

This re-orientation will not come from the centrists and not-so-reformed Stalinists in the Unity List, Enhedslisten. They have shown their true worth in the recent war against Afghanistan. In a statement, "No to war and terror", they say nothing about defending Afghanistan or defeating the imperialist troops, and "instead of war" they call for "consideration, observation of international laws and peaceful activities."

They call on "the Danish government and parliament to not choose war." The USFI section, the Socialist Workers Party (SAP), is a very active component of Enhedslisten and they have recently issued a document explaining their position. They characterise Enhedslisten as a party where "internationalism historically has been a weak point - both in

theory and practice." Theoretically it has been "characterised by remnants of Stalinism (popular frontist strategy etc.) and other currents' prejudices against the Fourth International."

And "in practice there has, furthermore, been a problem with the fact that 'international solidarity' has not very often been a question of activity".

Despite this devastating picture of a party without active internationalism and with an active Stalinist legacy, the USFI still maintains that the Enhedslisten today remains "the most likely starting point" for the building of "a party with a revolutionary socialist programme".

Without denying the necessity of working with, and perhaps even inside the Enhedslisten, it is clear that this party is a left reformist party. It's not even a centrist party, and any illusions about this can only lead to demoralisation and defeat.

Activists in the anti-war movement and the anti-capitalist movement, and those workers, immigrants, and youth that will be mobilised in the fight against the new government, need to break with this tradition and find their way to revolutionary communism.

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Aussie Tories play race card

Australia's image is one of a mean spirited nation which forcibly dumps refugees onto its poorer neighbours, writes Workers Power Australia.

A nation so racist it will not even allow those who have risked everything to set foot on its soil.

There is a lot of truth in that image. Certainly, the federal election was fought and won on a racist ticket.

John Howard's declaration that, "none of them will land" flatly contradicted his denials of playing the racist card. But racism has long historical roots in Australia.

It is a country where the indigenous people were not even counted as human until well into the last century and not granted the vote until the 1960's. The Prime Minister still will not apologise to a generation stolen from their families and used as servants by wealthy whites.

It is a country still talking about reconciliation and redressing the injustices of a colonial past in which the original owners of the land were massacred and dispossessed.

As of September 7, 2001, the Australian government was keeping 3,403 people in detention centers, the majority in Woomera, in the desert. This figure included 744 children, 111 of whom were not accompanied by a member of their family.

These figures do not include over 1,000 refugees who have been sent to Pacific neighbours for detention. The

total - close to 5,000 people - is a disgrace.

Labor and Liberal alike have locked up people who, even by the UN's extremely restrictive definition, should be classed as refugees. Because asylum-seekers are often forced by circumstance to travel without passports or other papers, the Convention says governments should not penalise refugees "on account of illegal entry or presence".

Despite this, the Labor government introduced mandatory detention in 1992. This means anyone who arrives without documentation is immediately locked up. Until recently, people had

all their personal belongings confiscated and were not allowed to contact families abroad, or even in Australia itself.

Australia is the only Western country with such a policy of mandatory detention. It is the only country that then hands people temporary protection visas that are valid for only 30 months and do not allow for the chance of family reunion.

Aside from the problems inherent in locking people up for nothing more than trying to escape hardship and injustice, the conditions in detention centres are in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Detention is what happens to those "lucky" enough to reach Australia's shores. A problem of equal size is the number of people, already granted refugee status by the UN, who languish in refugee camps in places like Indonesia.

Often these people have families already settled in Australia and are simply waiting permission to enter. Large numbers of those who recently drowned off the coast of Australia had all their papers, they had been waiting years to rejoin their families. No wonder they, and others like them, took the dangerous, and often fatal, trip by rickety fishing boat.

By the standards of the UN convention, something like 90% of the people held in detention centers are eventually granted some kind of visa. But what about the other 10%? Are these people not "genuine" refugees?

The problem is that the UN definition is too narrow. A refugee, by this definition, is a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group.

Australia chooses to interpret this very strictly. Race, religion, and so on do not cover, for example, women who face murder at the hands of their families for bringing "shame" on them - the so-called honour killings.

It does not cover women facing forced abortion or genital mutilation if they return home. It certainly does not count those who are elderly, ill or very young who can expect levels of health care in their own countries which will result in their deaths.

It does not account for those escaping from slave wages, from mass unemployment, from poverty and degradation, the conditions that huge numbers of people around the globe suffer daily.

It does not count the people who cannot prove that they will be persecuted if returned to their country of origin, the people that the Appeals Tribunal simply chooses not to believe.

The important issue here is that, even if Australia were following all the international conventions, it still would not be enough.

It should not be a question of alternatives to detention, of fairer criteria for visas, of greater refugee quotas or more lenient rules on who can seek asylum and who can settle.

We must not get caught in the trap of accepting the government's logic that some people are refugees and some just "economic migrants". That some refugees are deserving and some are not.

The only way through the jungle of regulations and definitions, used basically to disguise a racist policy, is to fight for a world without borders. If the borders were open, if people could come and go as they wished, there would be no "refugee problem".

A history of racist immigration laws

Predictably, a state that was racist internally, was equally racist in its external policy. Until the 1970s, a series of laws on immigration, known as the White Australia policy, was maintained by both the Liberal and Labor parties.

Its origins lay in the 1850s when there were large numbers of Chinese goldminers. In response to violent assaults on them by white miners, the colonial government placed restrictions on Chinese immigration. This was the first appearance of the great myth used to justify "White Australia" - the threat of an "Asian Invasion".

In 1901 the government passed the Immigration Restriction Act. Its declared purpose was to, "place certain restrictions on immigration and to provide for the removal from the Commonwealth of prohibited immigrants". As well as ending the employment of Pacific Islanders, this Act was a direct attack on immigration from Asia. This notorious law, which even required immigrants to pass a dictation test in a European language, was not repealed until 1953.

CAIN NKALA'S body was found in a shallow grave outside Bulawayo on 13 November. He had been abducted a week earlier by men armed with Kalashnikovs.

Nkala had been the chair of the local War Veterans' Association. At his funeral, President Robert Mugabe railed against foreign terrorists masquerading as journalists, and the violence of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Afterwards, several hundred supporters of the government party Zanu-PF burnt down the local MDC offices and attacked several of its activists. The security forces arrested six young MDC supporters who supposedly admitted to killing Nkala.

But Nkala's family have a different interpretation from the government. They believe he was killed by Zanu members because of what he knew about the terror campaign unleashed in his home area of Matabeleland. They say he was preparing to leave the country when he was abducted and killed. Behind this terror lies the simple fact that Nkala and the rest of his fellow war veterans had been unable to prevent Matabeleland from going over to the MDC during recent elections.

The sufferings of Matabeleland are only one part of the sufferings of Zimbabwe. State sponsored violence has reached endemic proportions as Mugabe and Zanu try to hold onto power in the run up to Presidential elections in April. Opposition forces claim that they can now only operate in the cities of Bulawayo and Harare because of the level of terror elsewhere. Foreign journalists are banned and the Zimbabwean free press had its offices burnt down and its staff threatened.

The new Public Order and Security Bill introduced a series of strict measures, including the death penalty, for what the government calls terrorism and subversion. It was brought in after the courts threw out terrorism charges against the leader of the MDC Morgan Tsvangirai in November. When he was speaking in support of the act in parliament, Mugabe claimed it was in support of President Bush's war on terrorism!

Mugabe knows his strongest card in these elections is to mobilise continued land occupations led by the war veterans. The commercial farmers, overwhelmingly white, still have a stranglehold on the land and the economy. While some 4,500 white farm-

ers still own 70 per cent of the best agricultural land the UN Development Programme estimates that 75 per cent of the population lives in poverty. Zimbabwe's government says that 45 per cent of the population cannot even meet "basic nutritional needs".

Mugabe himself, having been in power for over two decades, is mainly responsible for the continued land hunger and glaring inequalities in wealth in his country. His puny attempts at land reform over the years



merely lined the pockets of fellow cronies from the ruling Zanu-PF party. A growing economic crisis and his government's attacks on workers and peasants at the behest of the IMF has resulted in mass disillusion with his government - disillusion he wants to head off by launching a campaign against "white farmers and their foreign backers".

There certainly are foreign backers aplenty. The British Foreign Office only noticed "human rights abuses" in Zimbabwe when white farmers started being expropriated. Peter Hain rushed to their defence declaring Zimbabwe "a rogue state". A recent deal agreed by Commonwealth foreign ministers in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, whereby Mugabe was to call off the war veterans in exchange for financial help buying white land has fallen apart.

Mugabe announced a Presidential edict that seized the land of 1,000 white farmers with immediate effect. The transfers are to take place within three months - just before the Presidential elections. Already Jack Straw has threatened sanctions and black African leaders like South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, worried about land occupations spreading, warn of the dire economic consequences. Agricultural disruption and a white farmer crop "strike" threatens a 40 per cent commercial crop reduction this year.

This in an economy that has already shrunk by 8 per cent in 2001.

Meanwhile, the opposition is attempting to organise a Presidential election campaign against Mugabe's rule under conditions of growing intimidation and poll fixing. In doing so they have become the hope for many people in Zimbabwe but also for western powers outside.

The MDC which was originally initiated by the trade unions has rapidly become the vehicle for the opposition bourgeoisie and white farmers. As the Zimbabwean International Socialist Organisation (ISO -sister organisation of the SWP in Britain) put it in a recent interview (available on the IST's website) "After the referendum ... we saw the bosses and the commercial farmers also get into top MDC positions. That is when the party adopted right wing politics, supporting neo-liberal policies and the free market. That is the situation we see today."

Unfortunately this does not stop the ISO continuing to advocate a vote for this bourgeois dominated popular front party and being part of it. Instead of publicly breaking from this party as it adopts ever more rightist positions, thus alerting the workers to the betrayal about to be carried out by the TU leaders and the MDC, the ISO sees its election as a necessary "stage" the workers have to go through.

A united front with all forces fighting the growing attacks on democratic rights is one thing, supporting and participating in a party advocating a neo-liberal solution to the crisis is quite another.

The workers and peasants of Zimbabwe must certainly overthrow Mugabe if they are to bring a stop to this violence and misery. But to do this they must break from the MDC and its western backers. The imperialist bankers and politicians who support them now will in the future exact their price in debts, interest rates, free market reforms and the whole paraphernalia of structural adjustment programmes.

The workers and peasants of Zimbabwe need a real revolutionary workers' party that can win over the land hungry militants and solve the land question by giving it to the people who really farm.

They need a new revolution that can break the cycle of misery and despair by overthrowing the capitalist system that perpetuates it.

continued from back page

The bosses' Europe is a union of war mongering and aggressive militarism. The EU governments one after another rushed to back Bush's "war against terrorism" in the wake of the 11 September attacks on the World Trade Centre. EU heads were desperate to be seen in the front rank of those signed up to attack on the Taliban.

Britain promised 6,000 troops to fight in Afghanistan, Germany 3,000 more. France provided unprecedented naval and intelligence co-operation to the US. Unlimited money has been found for all the EU members' armed forces while pensions and health service struggle for scraps of funding.

The Brussels summit will hear a report from Romano Prodi, the head of the European Commission, about progress in putting together a force of tens of thousands drawn from different member states under a unified command.

Embarrassed by their utter dependency on the US for their "peacemaking" forces within Europe itself, the member states have been striving to construct their own "rapid reaction force". They hope to use this to secure "stability" in all regions in the EU's backyard (e.g. North Africa, Balkans, Middle East) where uprisings against reactionary pro-western governments can be put down.

The bosses' Europe is a union that erodes civil liberties with impunity. The UK has just passed a draconian bill which opts out of the European Convention on Human Rights to allow the Home Secretary to detain foreign nationals indefinitely and without trial who are "suspected" by him of involvement in "terrorism". This follows on for legislation last year which massively broadens the definition of terrorism to embrace most forms of anti-parliamentary protests movements.

It would have been impossible to back the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s with these laws and ANC representatives would have been locked up. In France the government has used the cover of the "war against terrorism" to adopt a "security law" designed to show that the ruling Socialist Party is tough on crime - this is likely to be one of the key themes of next years' presidential and parliamentary elections - and whose main provisions are aimed not at "terrorists" at all but youth.

In Austria after 11 September the government made it impossible to seek asylum in Austrian embassies abroad. Also wider powers of wire-tapping and house search were approved. All over the EU spy cameras cover entire areas. The number of police has been increased as well as stop-and-search controls, especially in poor neighbourhoods.

Their Europe is a union of states dedicated to crushing the anti-capitalist movement. Faced with the growth and success of the anti-capitalist movement over the last few years the EU states have gone from treating the activists with contempt to using the EU level bodies to co-ordinate their repression.

In the run up to the G8 summit in Genoa many EU leaders urged Berlusconi to restrict the free movement of protesters across Europe and prevent many from getting into Italy by suspending their own Schengen agreement that allows for free movement across EU borders. They urged the Italian authorities to repress the demonstrators and welcomed the use of a part of the army (the carabinieri) to counter the demonstrations on the streets.

Under the initiative of Germany they have, since Genoa, taken the first steps to create a Europol force whose job will be to share intelligence about the anti-capitalist movement.

The bosses' Europe is a union that is hypocritical and racist towards immigrants and refugees. The EU allows free access for capital across its

For full details of how to get to the Brussels demonstrations on December 13 and 14 contact Workers Power on 020 7820 1363

borders and demands the right for its bosses and bankers to operate freely anywhere in the world. Yet millions of legal immigrants working and paying taxes in Europe are denied the right to vote; many are denied employment in the public sector.

Immigration, for our leaders, is nothing but a commodity to be imported according to the needs of capital.

On the one hand it welcomes with open arms workers who are very well qualified and on the other hand it uses (but does not sanction) clandestine immigration to keep wages down. Refugees fleeing from political persecution or from economic devastation caused by IMF-devised and EU-backed policies in the Third World are denied entry or herded into camps surrounded by barbed wire, often for months or years on end. In the UK they have been denied money and forced into the indignity of using vouchers for food.

Their Europe is a union of deepening recession and growing unemployment. Europe, especially "euro-zone", is now in recession, led by Germany. This will deepen as we move through next year. Tens of thousands across Europe have already been chucked onto the scrapheap since 11 September.

Sabena workers from the collapsed Belgian airline will be in the front ranks of the demo. Austrian Airlines have announced the sacking of between 2,000 and 4,000 workers. Telekom Austria has sacked 5,000 in recent months. Thousands of Rolls Royce workers in the UK have been sacked.

The response of the European Commission in the face of this is typically pro-business: they turn a blind eye to their own rules to allow subsidies to be handed over to failing airline businesses, (i.e. shareholders) while allowing thousands of jobs to be destroyed in these same airlines.

For all these reasons the EU is as much a legitimate target for protesters as the G8 or the World Trade Organisation. D13/D14 must stand in the tradition of the international anti-capitalist protests begun in Seattle against the WTO in 1999, Prague against the IMF and World Bank last year and Genoa against the G8 in the summer.

The European Union is an anti-democratic and pro-business union that is seeking a more global role for itself to enforce anti-Third World polices and have a military machine that can back up its economic and diplomatic might.

The workers of the European Union must reject attempts to withdraw "their" nation states from this entity but rather combine our forces more urgently and militantly to overthrow the bureaucracies in each state and in Europe as a whole. We want to build a Socialist United States of Europe with real democratic rights for all and free from exploitation by the big corporations and militarism.

It is criminal for the bureaucratic leaders of the ETUC to try and keep the trade union march on D13 separate from the anti-capitalist demo on D14. Far from playing into the bosses' hands, the anti-capitalist movement, with its tactics of direct action and confrontation, has forced the globalisers to address the issues of global injustice. Trade unionists must defy their leaders and stay in Brussels for both protests.

A dynamic combination of the massed ranks of the labour movement and the creative courage of the anti-capitalist movement can stop the bosses in their tracks and consign their system to the dustbin of history.

Brussels D13/14 must be another step along that road. We'll be there. Join us!

Demonstrate!

Brussels 13 & 14 December

The European Confederation of Trade Unions have called for a mass international demonstration at the Laeken summit of the EU leaders in Brussels for 13 December. Last year in Nice they brought 80,000 European workers to town. They expect the more this time.

The next day a coalition of anti-capitalist groups from across Europe (D14) will hold another march to the summit made up of thousands of young workers and students. These groups believe that under the leadership of the European Commission and inter-governmental machinery the European Union (EU) "is being forged by capitalist and not social interests, that it is not democratic but repressive and is not peaceful but rather, threatens world peace."

School and college students in Germany, Belgium and Holland have called strikes during the summit. Supporters of Workers Power and their comrades throughout the EU and REVO - the independent socialist organisation for youth - will be there as we have been at Prague, Nice, Gothenburg and Genoa. We will be joined by anti-capitalist organisations across Europe like Globalise Resistance, by NGOs and members of campaigns like ATTAC.

Here are the reasons why British trade unionists, youth, students and anti-capitalists should be going to Brussels..

The bosses' Europe is a union of big business interests. The EU spent years debating and adopting a Charter of Fundamental Rights that excludes the rights to work, to social housing and to welfare benefits while the rights of capitalist property are guaranteed. The EU is regularly lobbied successfully by bosses' unions like the European Employers' Association (UNICE) and the Round Table of European business leaders while the trade unions are left in the cold.

Business ideas find their way into EU Commission draft legislation. The big push now is by the financial services sector in Europe. Their chiefs meet as the European Services Forum and Liberalisation of Trade in Services (LOTIS). In a series of secret meetings they succeeded in getting EU trade representatives to argue for an amendment to the World Trade Organisation's policies on services which backed the "necessity test".

This test would require Third World nations to prove that their regulations - from pollution controls to child labour laws - do not impede trade. The "test" is an even stronger version of the one embedded in the North American Free Trade Agreement, which has been used to such crippling effect against Mexico when it tried to stop a US company opening up a toxic waste site.

EU demands that all member countries raise high taxes on medium and low paid workers while giant corporations and the rich get tax cuts and offshore havens is a result of business lobbying. When EU business wants public services to be privatised and subsidies removed from education and healthcare these find their way into EU proposals.

A specific proposal at the Brussels summit says all public transport systems in major cities should be privatised and run for profit. The Commission sees its jobs as tearing down all health and safety, labour and environmental legislation that stands in the way of unrestricted entry of their goods and services into other states so that EU businesses can compete with their US counterparts in a race to the bottom.



Fight for a socialist Europe!



The bosses' Europe is a union of bureaucrats. EU is run by unelected bodies like the European Commission, European Council, Council of Ministers and Committee of Permanent Representatives while its parliament has no real powers. Yet according to UNICE, "In European countries, 60 per cent of new laws are introduced at a European Union level and 70 per cent of these measures (regulations, directives, decisions and recommendations) are concerned with the economic domain".

Tens of millions do not vote in European elections since they sense rightly that their representatives can make little or no difference, beyond setting up inquiries, asking questions and deliberating over the budget.

The Brussels summit will in part launch a "Future of Europe" reform process to overhaul existing EU treaties, set up a Convention with officials and politicians of member states in order to propose a new political framework for the EU to a summit in 2004, probably by then with several new members.

This process will be as closed and undemocratic as all other past examples of drawing up treaties; it will not involve the working people of Europe in the process through a democratically elected constituent assembly, based on one vote for all those living and working inside the European Union.

The bosses' Europe is a union of corruption. The lack of accountability leads to immense abuse and misuse of funds. Regular scandals over expenses for MEPs erupt or contracts awarded to Commission members' families and friends, only to be eclipsed by bigger scandals over the misuse of EU funds for projects abroad that are used to line the pockets of corrupt officials in the Balkans, Middle East, Turkey so that these governments will favour EU companies when it comes to awarding contracts.

Their Europe is a union against the poor and oppressed of the Third World. At last month's World Trade Organisation ministerial in Qatar the EU trade officials were among the worst imperialist representatives present.

Pascal Lamy, the EU's trade commissioner, had the breathtaking hypocrisy to call the new round of trade talks launched in Qatar as a "development round". Yet he fought tooth and nail to protect the EU's right to dump subsidised farm products in poorer countries which has a devastating effect on the poor farmers of the south who cannot compete against cheaper imports.

Lamy threatened to walk out unless he got his way on postponing to the future "negotiations with a view to phasing out" subsidies to rich farmers. The EU representatives refused to agree to the Third World request for a study into the effects of lower tariffs on the economies of the South before proceeding to lower them. Lamy was shoulder to shoulder with US trade representatives in bullying the delegates from the south with the threat that unless they agreed to a new round now they would have their debt relief programmes withdrawn.

Yet while the EU plays tough with the south it bends over backwards to help out the oppressive state of Israel. Last month the EU again refused to take sanctions against Israel for illegally exporting goods to the EU which are produced in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, yet at the same time they provide satellite monitors to track Palestinian activists.

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