

workers power

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Monthly magazine of the British section of the League for the Fifth International

As soldiers start to turn on Blair...

Get the troops out now



IRAQI RESISTANCE IS FIGHTING OCCUPATION

INSIDE

24 PAGE SPECIAL

- A draft action programme for working class power
- Iraq: USA and Britain face defeat
- Soldiers: disobey illegal orders
- Mexico: defend revolution in Oaxaca
- Anti-imperialism: weekend of debate

5
League for the
Fifth International

EDITORIAL

Three major conferences to debate question...

Which way forward?

This autumn sees three important conferences for the working class and anti-imperialist movements. Last month, the Rail Maritime and Transport union hosted a national shop stewards conference. This month, the Respect Coalition has called one for "Organising for Fighting Unions", while the Stop the War Coalition is holding its third national people's assembly.

These should provide a much needed opportunity for activists to debate the way forward. The movements against war, privatisation and racism are in an impasse.

What goals do we need to set ourselves, which obstacles do we need to overcome, and how we should organise? These are the questions we should be asking. Unfortunately, the season of conferences and assemblies is in danger of failing to address them.

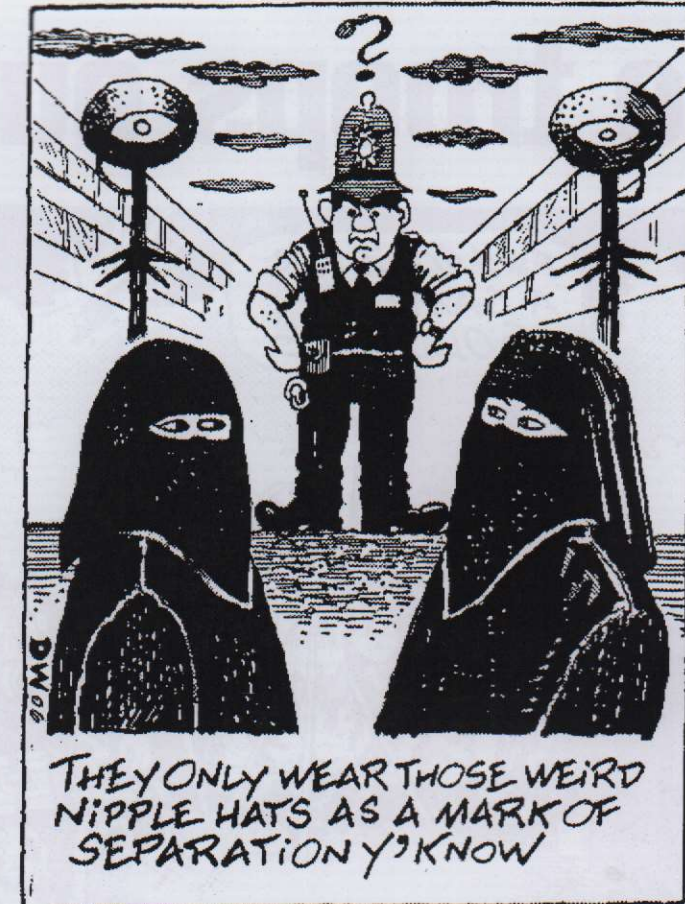
SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK

Let's look at the national shop stewards conference. Despite being better publicised than the RMT's previous conference in January, the attendance this October was lower. Only around 250 delegates turned up. The reason is simple: January's conference was called on the burning issue of "the crisis of political representation of the working class", while October's was on the narrower topic of a shop stewards network.

According to a 2002 TUC report, there are 230,000 workplace representatives in Britain. The problem is not the lack of shop stewards. It is the fact that they are hidebound by the officials, shackled by the anti-union laws and given no leadership by the lack of a political party.

The conference failed to address these obstacles. Instead, delegates were presented with a resolution which set the target of founding a National Shop Stewards Network in spring 2007. It declared in advance that it would not "interfere in the internal affairs and elections of TUC affiliated trade unions or the functions of the TUC". They were not even allowed to amend this, because "it has already been passed by the RMT Council of Executives".

But the unions are in the grip of a bureaucracy which habitually sells disputes out, limits strikes to one-day protests and abandons militants



in the face of victimisation. Despite criticising Blair all year long, they collapse like a pack of cards at Labour Party conference. Are shop stewards not supposed to challenge these traitors, organise in defiance of them, or break the link to Labour?

The left wing officials have clearly made a pact with the devil: "Let us organise a 'network' and we'll make sure it does not become a web to trap you in."

Instead, what we desperately need is a rank and file movement, independent from the officials left or right. For the election and instant recallability of all officials, who should receive the average pay of the workers they represent. For workers' control of all strikes and negotiations. Take the fight to the bosses with the officials where possible, without and against them where necessary.

RACISM AND WAR

Stop the War promises the chance to "organise our campaign in response to war and racism" at the People's Assembly on Islamophobia. Howev-

er, the previous two assemblies failed to organise anything. The first, convened on the brink of war, refused to advocate the strikes and civil disobedience that could have halted the invasion. The second, six months later, did support a Workers Power proposal to set up local people's assemblies as centres of resistance to war, racism and privatisation - only for the chair, Andrew Murray, to declare the decision void, as the assembly had no authority outside of the meeting!

Yet authority is exactly what we need - the authority to get the troops out now and stop the racist attacks.

We need to launch local assemblies to co-ordinate defence against racist attacks, and direct action - including walkouts in schools, colleges and workplaces - to force the government to withdraw the troops. Such assemblies should also confront the issues that the BNP and racist right use to whip up their racist fury: housing shortages, NHS closures, low pay. The best answer to racism is internationalism and unity in action against the bosses' offensive.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Organising for Fighting Unions has at least sent out a draft "Workers Charter" listing ten demands and four campaigning priorities. Delegates will have the right to amend these. And they'll have to. As it stands, the charter is completely inadequate.

Nearly all delegates will agree on the demands: for a living wage, free and publicly control public services, a liveable pension, a transfer of power and wealth to the have-nots, etc. And the campaigns to win them these - lobbies of parliament, local NHS campaigns, the Trade Union Freedom Bill - are already underway.

No rank and file movement, no local committees, above all no call for a political party. The absence of any meaningful strategy from the charter is no accident. It is essential to keep the gaggle of Labour lefts and trade union bureaucrats backing the conference in tow... and to safeguard Respect as the only alternative to those breaking from Labour.

The Socialist Workers Party, the prime mover behind the conference, is a past master at this kind of rally, dressed up as a conference. It does not see the united front as a tactic to force reformist leaders to go further than they would like, or expose them as fakers. Instead, it offers these "lefts" a platform, shields them from criticism and hopes to recruit from the base.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with recruitment. But Respect is not growing, it is shrinking - from 3,040 members a year ago to 2,160 today. Its sole tactic of fighting elections, its populist version of reformism and its top-down structure may provide a few upsets at the polls and a base for the local Muslim middle class, but it does not provide a basis for organising our struggles and challenging capitalism.

The conference needs to launch a campaign to break the unions from Labour and use their political funds to establish a new, mass, working class party. There should be a full debate about strategy and structure for the new party. For our part, we will fight for our own revolutionary action programme (see pages 8-13). We will argue for a combat party, which does not rely on a few unaccountable celebrities, but which fights in the workplaces and on the streets to overthrow the system.

Anti-Imperialism

Resisting Bush and Blair's 'War on Terror' at home and abroad

A weekend of discussion organised by Workers Power

- Victory to the resistance in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine!
- Hizbollah and Hamas: can islamism defeat imperialism?
- Imperialism and global poverty: the failed promises of the G8
- Latin America in revolt can Chávez beat Bush?
- Britain after Blair: a period of conflict
- Theories of globalisation: Leninism for today... and more

25-26 November

Leeds University Student Union

*£5 waged/£2.50 unwaged
Accommodation available*

Party Saturday night: DJs and refreshments

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>4 BNP leaders were in court again last month on charges of inciting racial hatred. <i>Workers Power</i> members look at how we can crush the fascist threat.</p> <p>5 A whole swathe of local campaigns have been set up to save the NHS. <i>John Bowden</i> argues that we need to link up the campaigns.</p> <p>6 As Labour MPs fell into line to vote down an inquiry into the war, in the US the army and even the neo-cons are criticising the decision to invade Iraq. <i>Simon Hardye</i> reports.</p> <p>8 Is the British army the disciplined weapon that the generals would like us to think? <i>Peter Main</i> looks at the possibilities of conflict in the ranks.</p> <p>9 Mexican troops invaded Oaxaca at the end of last month in order to suppress the popular people's assembly. Here we examine what happened and call for international solidarity.</p> <p>10 <i>Workers Power</i> is launching a project for the development of a new action programme for the working class. Here we set out our initial proposals for discussion.</p> | <p>16 Long thought of as a Social Democratic paradise, Scandinavia now has viciously neo-liberal governments in Denmark and Sweden. <i>Gunner Westin</i> reports.</p> <p>18 Russia journalist Anna Politovskaya was shot dead in Moscow last month. <i>Keith Sellick</i> looks at how she bravely chartered the horrors of Putin's war in Chechnya.</p> <p>19 North Korea has nuclear weapons. <i>Natalie Sedley</i> examines what drove the Stalinist state to develop them and the response of the US and its allies.</p> <p>20 <i>Joy MacReady</i> completes her two-part account of the Hungarian uprising of 50 years ago with a look at the second Soviet intervention.</p> <p>22 A radical anti-imperialist left has emerged in the European Social Forum. <i>Martin Suchanek</i> reports on developments at the Preparatory Assembly in Frankfurt.</p> <p>24 Spotlight on climate change. Kam Kumar challenges the idea that the market, taxes and capitalism can halt the destructive effects of climate change.</p> |
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NEWS IN BRIEF

SHAME ON YOU! PART ONE

Only 12 Labour MPs voted against the government for an inquiry into the Iraq war last month. Shamefully, a majority of the "Socialist" Campaign Group of Labour MPs voted against an inquiry. They made their loyalty clear. Not to the majority of the British people, who oppose the war. Not to the Iraqi people- the *Lancet* medical journal reports that 650,000 Iraqis have died because of war and occupation. And certainly not to "socialism". No, their loyalty is clear. It's to Blair, his party and their careers. As the words to *Red Flag* say, "cowards flinch" ...

SHAME ON YOU! PART TWO

George Galloway may stand up for the rights of Iraqis... but working class women will have to look elsewhere for support. Galloway has added his name to an early day motion designed to restrict the rights of women to abortion.

This presents a test for those socialist groups that support Respect. Will they denounce his backing for this attack on working class women, who will be forced to risk their health and lives in the hands of backstreet abortionists, or left to bring up unwanted children? Or will they be silent?

Above all, will they campaign to hold their MP to account and end his shameful anti-woman stance? That is, will they put short term electoral gain before the interests of the whole of the working class?

PARTY POOPER?

The coming conference *Organising for Fighting Unions* has a great chance to put transport union leader Bob Crow on the spot. Bob has been telling trade unionists that Labour cannot be reformed to act in the interest of the working class and he's not wrong. He's been pointing to the need for workers to establish political representation of our own. So far, so excellent.

So, if the *Organising for Fighting Unions* conference and its main backer, the Socialist Workers Party, were to adopt a call for a conference next year to actually set up a new workers party, could Bob be forced to back it? Chances are, we'll never find out. Because the SWP will do all it can to stop him being given that choice. They don't want to "scare him off" ... so another chance to build a fighting working class party will be frittered away... again for short-term advantage. What was that about flinching again?

FIGHTBACK

Climate change



The 4 November saw UK's biggest climate change demonstration. Over 22,000 people attended the march and rally in Trafalgar square - twice the size of the demonstration last year - which reflects the higher level of public awareness and media attention on the the Stern report. The demonstration was part of a international coordination against climate change that was organised in over 47 countries.

The demonstration itself was broad - from members of the Liberal Democrats campaigning for a green tax to people arguing that the planet is overpopulated and that this was the cause of the world's ecological problems. At the rally many of the speakers talked about the dangers of climate change, but were proved lacking when it came to ideas of how to stop it, with most of them pushing the kind of market reform ideas that Nicholas Stern had included in his report.

• For revolutionary answers, turn to the back page of this issue

Abolish tuition fees

The National Union of Students demonstration on 29 October shows the potential for students to be radicalised, writes *Sham Rajgor*

More than 10,000 students marched through central London on a Sunday - a small increase on previous anti-fees demonstrations. Students from across the country, as well as from Wales and Scotland (who, if studying north of the border, manage to escape paying fees) gathered together to voice their opposition to paying for tertiary education. Workers Power, alongside Revolution, the socialist youth group, was well represented on the lively demonstration.

Slogans attacked Blair for funding war and not education, for turning his back on his 1997 election promise of "education, education, education". It was evident that the NUS policy of retaining the cap on fees dominated the demonstration and speeches. We think that the whole system of fees should be scrapped - education is a right, not a commodity.

The NUS had hoped that the national demonstration would be a wake-up shout to the Labour government. But demonstrations are not enough. The time has come for coordinated direct action and non-payment in defiance of fees with full NUS support. Only by refusing to comply with the privatisation of education can we get an education system that is free for all, without the interference of market forces, and of a high standard.

On 2 November students in London also gave Jack Straw a noisy reception of "Jack Straw go to hell, get out of UCL" when he spoke at the university. We also let off helium balloons inscribed with "Jack Straw: war criminal", which gently floated above Straw's head, out of reach of security's arms.

• For more on Revolution go to www.worldrevolution.org.uk

Direct action needed to

By Leeds Workers Power

On 1 November, almost a year to the day when Nick Griffin and Mark Collett first appeared in Leeds Crown Court, the leaders of the fascist BNP were back to face a re-trial on charges of incitement to racial hatred. They were opposed by a small but militant crowd of protesters that were out-numbered by the BNP supporters.

The previous trial ended in a farce as the two were acquitted of half the charges and the jury was hung on the remainder, causing the case to be thrown out and now the retrial.

As the first court case proved, the bourgeois justice system is incapable of dealing with fascists. The working class has no control over the decisions that the

court makes and judges are completely unaccountable. In the present atmosphere of state persecution of Muslims and asylum seekers, of increasing racism fostered by the government and media to justify their military invasions and wars in the Middle East, Griffin and Collett's hate-filled diatribe against Muslims and immigrants is, unfortunately, tolerated and accepted by many, including in the judiciary.

The anti-fascist protest on the day, while being loud and militant, only numbered 100 at its height and was out-numbered by a large BNP presence of more than 200 people. While part of this can be accounted for by the lack of regional trade union mobilisation and the smaller student presence from Leeds' universities, it also vividly shows the failure of the Unite Against Fascism (UAF) campaign to reach out to and

involve the wider working-class community and youth in these protests.

UAF's strategy of small steering committees mobilising only a month - or in some cases just a few weeks - before these protests means that the wider working class community of Asians and anti-racist white workers remains absent from the anti-fascist movement.

This leaves UAF unable to mobilise the numbers needed to oppose the BNP at protests and leaves them incapable of bringing out more than a few people for campaigning work, as was seen by the poor turnout for UAF leafletings in this year's council elections in May.

This highlights the huge flaws in UAF's strategy for fighting fascism. Instead of adopting a working class orientation, they have aimed for "respectable" anti-fascism,

involving celebrities, religious leaders and politicians. But to keep these forces on board, they have been forced to drop the tactics necessary to defeat fascism and combat the racism it feeds off.

Having Labour, Liberal and even Tory politicians on board prevents UAF from criticising the government's policies of privatisations and cuts, which are the real reasons for the poverty and lack of social services that affect the working-class - not immigrants and asylum seekers. It also prevents UAF adopting the militant call for "no platform" for the BNP, which means driving their demonstrations out of our towns and cities and preventing them from meeting and distributing their racist propaganda around working class areas.

This has reduced UAF to little more than a platform from which

Don't rely on union tops to save the NHS

By John Bowden

“NHS SOS!” Just one of the messages angrily chanted by thousands of workers in Britain's health service on the 1 November lobby of Parliament organised by NHS Together.

The lobby came after a month of growing numbers of protests desperate to prevent the NHS drowning in a sea of privatisation, service cuts and job losses.

Unions warn that hundreds of immediate job cuts are just the tip of the iceberg - redundancies, post closures and job freezes would bring the figure to about 20,000.

This is having a devastating effect on patient services. According to London Health Emergency, three local examples of this damage include five intensive neo-natal cots to be lost from St George's hospital in Tooting; 480 job losses at the Hampstead Royal Free Hospital leaving wards desperately understaffed; and staff in non-clinical areas at Epsom and St. Helier Trust being asked to do their own cleaning, leading to the danger of

super bugs spreading to the wards.

London is by no means the only area to suffer savage cuts. At the Horton Hospital in Banbury, near Oxford, cuts could end 24-hour children's in-patient and emergency services, reduce maternity and obstetrics cover, and close the special care baby unit.

In West Sussex, St Richards hospital risks losing its A&E unit which could result in dangerously long journeys for emergency patients. In Worcestershire, maternity, paediatric and gynaecology services at the Alexandra hospital are threatened. A second ward is to be closed at Ipswich... and the list goes on.

This has not gone unopposed. Over 7,000 people turned out to oppose cuts at the Princess Royal Hospital in Hayward Heath, West Sussex, with 40,000 signing a petition. This came soon after demonstrations of 3,000 in Nottingham and around 6,000 in Hastings, plus marches in Brighton, Oxford, Huddersfield and Cambridge.

Trade unions have also been involved in actions against job losses and cuts, supporting local campaigns but often falling short of

industrial action. A Unison ballot of members in Gloucestershire Partnership Mental Health Trust came out with 80 per cent of members in favour of a strike against proposed cuts for action in December or January. Amicus said would ballot Blood Service members over the proposed closure of 14 blood centres across the UK.

NHS Logistics held two 24 hour strikes but failed to prevent the award-winning hospital delivery service from being sold to German company DHL.

Unfortunately the fightback has not yet reached the scale needed to force the government to back down. Local demonstrations against privatisation and cuts have not been linked into a national fight-back. Nor have the trade unions called national action across the whole NHS.

The NHS Together initiative, an alliance of trade unions and workers organisations involved in healthcare organised by the TUC, has restricted itself to the recent lobby of parliament focussing on getting the Labour leadership to 'listen'. The problem is that the Labour party has decided not to lis-

ten. They have pursued the Tory policies of increasing private sector involvement since 1997 and are showing no signs of turning back.

Saving the NHS means saving lives, today and in the future. If the union leaders gave a clear call to action, millions would undoubtedly follow. That's why everyone determined to preserve free and decent healthcare should be campaigning now for:

- A national demonstration of millions to save the NHS - backed by all union leaders;
- A national strike to stop the cuts and privatisation, in defiance of the anti-union laws if necessary;
- Joint delegate-based committees in every area to coordinate marches, strikes and occupations of all threatened facilities;
- Emergency cover to be provided only under the control of health workers themselves;
- An end to PFI and other privatisation rip offs; an end to the 'internal market';
- Nationalisation of all private healthcare and drug companies, without compensation and under workers control.

crush BNP thugs

politicians can proclaim their opposition to fascism without taking any of the action necessary to stop it.

UAF urgently needs to ditch these dead weights, who contribute nothing to the fight against fascism, and build UAF as a mass movement with bases of support in ethnic minority and working class communities where anti-racist and anti-fascist sentiment is strong and where there is the potential to mobilise many thousands for a militant fight against fascism.

This is made increasingly necessary by the atmosphere of racism and Islamophobia being whipped up by the government and right-wing media. UAF must take up the issues of racism, Islamophobia and the persecution of Muslims, and privatisation of services by the Labour government. Unless this is done, there is no way of draining

the racist swamp in which the BNP feeds. UAF must unite community groups with trade unionists, refugees and immigrants with workers in a united front against the fascists. If it does not do this, then the BNP will continue to grow and the violence and attacks against Muslims, refugees, immigrants and gays and lesbians will increase along with them.

To prevent this, we will need to build an anti-fascist movement that practices what it preaches:

- No Platform for Fascists: mobilise all anti-fascists and anti-racists, workers and youth on the streets to stop BNP meetings, rallies, paper sales and demos through direct action;
- For workers' action against the BNP: postal workers boycott BNP election material, media workers stop racist and fascist broadcasts,

council workers refuse to operate with BNP councillors;

- Organise community defence patrols in areas targeted by fascists;
- Call on the TUC and national trade unions to organise huge anti-racist demonstrations where the fascists are strongest;
- Defend refugee rights, down with immigration controls: poverty is due 100 per cent to Labour's anti-working-class policies and businesses cutting jobs and wages. Money is free to move around the world, so why can't workers look for better pay and conditions outside of their countries?

There is a bigger picture. Labour's privatisation and welfare cuts, its policies that favour the rich and big business at the expense of the workers and poor, all drive people away from "normal" politics and makes them look for other answers.

It's no good defending the centre ground when it means real cuts in services and real problems in the inner cities. Radical answers are needed - answers that are the direct opposite of the BNP's racist, nationalist and anti-working class violence. To stop the BNP posturing as representatives of the working class, we need a real working class party that fights for the interests of workers of all countries, black and white, whether migrant or not.

The problem is that right now the working class has no party that will fight for its interests and stand as an alternative to the BNP at the polls and on the streets. That's why we need a new workers' party to mobilise working class anger at the system and direct it towards the overthrow of capitalism and real freedom, not the genocidal nightmare of fascism.

MIDDLE EAST

Iraq: US and Britain

The US has lost control of Baghdad and is now entering the final phase of its occupation of Iraq. **Simon Hardye** examines yet another change of strategy for the imperialists

When Richard Perle criticises the Bush Administration for invading Iraq, then you really know the rats are leaving the sinking ship. Nicknamed the Prince of Darkness, because of his enormous behind-the-scenes influence in George Bush's administration, Perle is a leading member of the arch neo-con think-tank, the Project for the New American Century. He advocated the invasion of Iraq from 1998 onwards.

Now in an online article in *Vanity Fair*, Perle has confessed that if only he had known what was going to happen after the occupation "I probably would have said, 'Let's consider other strategies for dealing with the thing that concerns us most, which is Saddam supplying weapons of mass destruction to terrorists'," adding, "At the end of the day, you have to hold the president responsible."

Meanwhile the hapless President – according to a White House official – has stopped using the phrase, "stay the course" when speaking about the Iraq war, in case this gave the impression he was inflexible (*New York Times* 23 October). As we go to press, his Republican Party is expecting to lose control of the Senate and House of Representatives in this month's elections.

But worse for Bush – and his British poodle, Tony Blair – is the fact that the military chiefs have given up on the politicians and are signalling via the media that they want an exit strategy. The will to win of the world's military superpower is bleeding away on the sands of Iraq. Major military figures have come out against the indefinite occupation that the Bush administration, the Big Oil clique and the Israel lobby so wanted. In Washington, journals close to the top brass are demanding Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's head.

MILITARY IN REVOLT – WHY?

The first and most stunning factor is that they know they are actually losing control of Iraq. Last month, George Bush likened the situation to the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam, which, despite being a victory for the USA, drained the will to win. But the "Battle for Baghdad," as the Pentagon called it when they poured 12,000 additional troops into the city, has simply been lost – and the Pentagon knows it. The situation is looking more like the run in to Saigon in 1974. Patrick



Demonstration in Baghdad calling for US and British troops out, organised by Muqtada al-Sadr

Cockburn pointed out in *The Independent*: "Sunni insurgents have cut the roads linking the city to the rest of Iraq. The country is being partitioned as militiamen fight bloody battles for control of towns and villages north and south of the capital... The Sunni insurgents seem to be following a plan to control all the approaches to Baghdad... The city itself has broken up into a dozen or more hostile districts, the majority of which are

controlled by the main Shia militia, the Mahdi Army."

Cockburn sums the military situation thus:

- Upwards of 1,000 Iraqis are dying violently every week;
- Shia fighters have taken over much of Baghdad;
- Sunnis encircle the capital;
- 1.5 million people are refugees inside the country;

facing defeat

• Shia and Sunni militias control Iraq, not the enfeebled army or police.

Since mid-October the occupation has been unravelling at a remarkable speed. The Guardian reported on 20 October that 800 members of the Mahdi Army of Muqtada al-Sadr had seized the southern city of Amara from Iraqi forces, withdrawing only after negotiation in which their prisoners were released. The British had withdrawn from Amara in August, claiming it a success.

On 25 October al-Jazeera reported a raid carried out by US and Iraqi forces on Sadr City – a stronghold of the Shia militias in Baghdad. The raiding party immediately came under withering fire and was forced to call in air strikes. Nuri al-Maliki immediately protested to the US: "I am now Prime Minister and overall commander of the armed forces, yet I cannot move a single company without Coalition approval." At the same time, an attack on Camp Falcon in Baghdad suggested that the Green Zone itself is no longer impregnable.

Blair and Bush claim that British and US troops are only staying because Iraqis want them there. But a recent poll of Iraqi views by WorldPublicOpinion.org shows that 74 per cent of Shia and 91 per cent of Sunni Iraqis want American and British troops out. Only in Kurdistan, with hardly any US troops on the ground, and where the occupation means de facto independence, does a majority support the occupation.

US and British generals know that the armed forces are at full stretch and recruitment has slumped. They have used up their reserves – including the National Guard in the USA, who never expected to be thrown into a protracted all-out guerrilla war. The eruption of any other international crisis would find them simply unable to meet it. The political leaders are well aware of this scenario but, for them, retreat is unthinkable.

Most damaging for Blair were the comments of General Sir Richard Dannatt that, if this goes on, the British army would cease to exist in five years time. The BBC reported a British private's take on his commander's supposed concern: "He's just saying this because he wants to take us to another fucking war, in Afghanistan or somewhere else." The soldiers blogs, meanwhile, show blistering hatred for the man they really blame "B'liar".

In January 2003, Charles Sheehan-Miles, who was a tank crewman in the first gulf war, said "This war isn't worth the life of one American soldier." 43 months later

over 3,000 soldiers, mostly American but 119 of them British, have been killed.

THE ROAD TO CIVIL WAR

Bush and Blair know what is at stake. The failure to secure a victory in Iraq would signal to the world that the "war on terror" has been lost, that the US has been defeated. This war was undertaken to escape the "Vietnam Syndrome", which hampered the USA's military capacities for thirty years. They fear that the "Iraq syndrome" could ruin their whole strategy for achieving another American century, speeding up the emergence of rival regional blocs and even a rash of "rogue states". Defeat in Iraq – closely followed by the collapse of the Afghan puppet regime – would be a disaster.

The entire blame for the slide into civil war lies with the imperialists. Within months of the invasion Paul Bremer set up the Governing Council in Iraq, comprising thirteen Shia, five Sunnis, five Kurds, one Christian, and one Turkoman. From this point onwards the Shia and Kurdish leaders began to support the occupation, whilst the Sunnis opposed it. The re-creation of the state along sectarian lines preceded and provoked the outbreak of sectarian violence. It was part of a strategy of divide and rule – a policy used by the British in India that led to pogroms.

The co-optation of military organisations – like Badr Organisation, formerly the Badr Brigades of Hadi al-Amir (Sciri), and Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army – allowed the imperialists to continue the pretence that only Sunnis opposed the occupation. The reality on the ground in Iraq today is very different, with both Sunni and Shia militias fighting the occupiers as well as one another.

The government forces are not a unified state machine, able to discipline the religious or tribal factions. The ministries were all divided up amongst the militias before the government was formed. That was why the process took so long. It was a division of the spoils. Much of the brutal killing, of a sectarian and communal character, is the result of ongoing turf wars between them. Now it is widely reported that death squads, killing Sunnis at random, operate out of the Ministry of Defence.

Another strategy is to give Iran and Syria more of a role in the occupation of Iraq. The desperate idea is that Iranian involvement would go down better with Shia Iraqis and help tame the resistance. However, this strategy would not only be an admission of defeat, it would

also give Iran enormous power in the region. It would also drive Israel mad. That the US, which in the summer of 2006 was threatening Iran and Syria for backing Hezbollah in Lebanon, is now turning to a key member the "axis of evil" for support is a sure sign of an impending defeat.

PROBLEMS OF RESISTANCE

The tragic dilemma is that, despite the collapse of the occupation, the forces that can take advantage of this are very weak and confused both in Iraq and in the imperialist heartlands of USA and Britain.

In Iraq and the Middle East, the expulsion of the US will be a massive victory to everyone suffering under its yoke. The political hegemony of the USA is the major factor shaping globalisation and the current world order. It rests on the combined might of the USA's economic and military standing. The defeat of its armed forces would devastate the status quo and provide a huge boost for all those fighting neoliberalism and war.

The problem is that the resistance forces in Iraq have, thanks to the divide and rule policies of the occupiers, turned to brutal sectarian killings. Many working class forces mistakenly adopted a purely trade unionist focus on working people's immediate problems, rather than trying to lead the resistance. Thus the Islamist and Ba'athist forces emerged as the strongest and could well lead the country into civil war and ethnic cleansing.

It is urgent that working class forces rally to form a revolutionary communist party to fight for the democratic rights of workers, women, youth and religious and ethnic minorities. These can only be firmly established if the working class comes to power, not any of the forces of the Shia or Sunni hierarchy, the old Ba'athist dictatorship or the emigre billionaire bourgeoisie.

Sectarianism breeds in conditions that pervade Iraq today: over 50% unemployment, collapsed infrastructure, shortages of basic necessities. Only by seizing the great wealth of the country, currently secured in contracts to Western multinationals and the local bourgeoisie, can the working class begin to meet the needs of Sunni and Shia, Kurd and Arab alike, and pull the carpet from under the feet of the hardened sectarians. A workers republic of Iraq would, in turn, stand out as a beacon to the working class across the whole Middle East, encouraging them to rise up against their pro-imperialist dictators and form a free federation of socialist republics.

This is the strategy of permanent revolution. It is as relevant today as it was when Leon Trotsky first formulated it one hundred years ago.

BRITISH ARMY

Soldiers: disobey all illegal and immoral orders!

By Peter Main

Army chief Sir Richard Dannatt's statement that British troops in Iraq are "only exacerbating the problem" can only mean that those troops should be pulled out, that their mission is impossible.

Why go public? To influence "public opinion"? But, as every opinion poll shows, the majority of the public are already opposed to the war.

No, Dannatt's aim was to maintain the morale of his own troops. Discontent and disaffection are rising. In the age of emails and mobile phones, it is impossible to prevent the criticisms and doubts of rank and file soldiers becoming public.

That's why the web boards, blogs and letters pages of local papers are buzzing with the complaints and disaffection of rank and file soldiers. They point to a lack of decent equipment and a lack of concern for the fate from the top brass. And again and again they reveal that the mass of the Iraqi people oppose the occupation, that 'they don't want us here'.

Soldiers' rights

Revolutionaries stand for the defeat of the imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. But this does not mean that we are indifferent to the fate of the British soldiers, to their lives and well-being. After all most of them are young working class people - they may have volunteered but more often than not

they are effectively conscripted by poverty and boredom. They have been sent into harm's way by capitalist politicians, the generals, top brass and civil servants, just to boost the profits of the City of London and back Washington's global domination.

That is why it is not the pro-imperialist papers and politicians who really stand up for the rights of what they always call 'our boys'. It is the revolutionaries, who back the right of the Iraqis and Afghans to resist, who at the same time call for soldiers to have rights, to be allowed to meet and discuss, to expose the cold contempt in which the top brass hold their safety, and - above all - to refuse to carry out illegal, immoral and unjust orders.

Nevertheless communists do not of back calls for better equipment and funding for the British Army, which will only be used to repress the Iraqis and Afghans more efficiently, and dig British soldiers even deeper into the quagmire of the Middle East. We want something that will really reduce the bloodshed on all sides - we want to get the British troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now. Then, instead of fighting working people abroad, rank and file soldiers could be fighting against exploitation and injustice at home.

There is a weakness in all armies: they reflect the class structure of their society. You only need to listen to the officers' accents to realise this. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of soldiers come from working class backgrounds.

If soldiers question what they are doing in Iraq, then the official line that they are helping to rebuild Iraq is clearly unbelievable. By contrast, the explanation that they are there to guarantee American control of oil has the ring of truth about it. Why should a working class soldier risk his/her life for that?

Rank and file - organise

That's why revolutionary communists demand the right of soldiers:

- To form and join a union or party;
- To elect their own representatives;
- To refuse to obey orders where equipment is inadequate, the risks unacceptable or the orders themselves morally or legally wrong;
- To access uncensored communication;
- To terminate their service;
- To reduce secrecy over internal discipline and political control.

"But such demands would undermine the chain of command! They might even encourage mutiny!" the entire capitalist press and officer class will reply.

So let them answer one question. If this is true, doesn't it prove that the army can only function by hiding its true purpose and denying its troops their rights? It proves that the British Army does not exist to defend the British people from a foreign threat, but to defend the British ruling class from its millions of victims - at home as well as abroad. It is not a people's army - it's a capitalist army, run by the rich while the poor fight and die for their masters.

Bolivia: fight for full nationalisation

By Keith Spencer

Seven oil and gas multinationals signed agreements last month to handover 51 per cent of their shares to the Bolivian state and pay higher taxes. President Evo Morales called the deal, "mission accomplished for the Bolivian people." But the agreement falls well short of full nationalisation.

The dangers of semi-nationalisation were cruelly exposed last month in the miners' fight in Huanuni. On 6 October co-operative miners fought a pitched battle with miners, employed by the state firm Comibol for control of the Posokani mine, which produces 5 per cent of the world's tin. The fight left 17 dead and scores wounded, as miners threw dynamite at each other and blew up shops and houses.

Posokani has been mined as a joint venture between Comibol and the co-operative Fen-

comin since 2002. But the word "cooperative" is misleading. There are about 4,000 cooperative miners, some in large businesses. These concerns then employ 10,000 low-paid miners, who are barred from joining a union. Comibol, on the other hand, employs about 1,000 salaried miners, members of the FSTMB union.

In September, a workers' and peasants' campaign forced Morales to agree to create 1,500 jobs for Comibol at Huanuni and for more investment. The "cooperativistas" saw this as a threat and went on the offensive.

After the battle, Morales promised to nationalise the mines, allowing co-operativistas to become Comibol employees. This is a start but the miners and other workers must fight for:

- Full nationalisation: no role for cooperatives or multinationals. Mines to be run under the control of salaried workers;
- For a living wage for all miners. Raise the

pay of the co-operative employees of that of the Comibol employees;

- Unionise the co-operative employees;
- For a socialist plan for the mines and the surrounding region: jobs for all.

What the battle shows is that the workers and poor peasants can pressure Morales and the Movement Towards Socialism - the MAS - to act in their interests. But the populist government reflects the pressure of all classes. It refuses to rule decisively in favour of one side.

The miners and workers need to organise themselves independently of the vacillations and compromises of Morales and the MAS and build a revolutionary party that can fight for a revolutionary workers and poor peasants government to eradicate capitalism and fight for a socialist society.

For more on Bolivia go to www.fifthinternational.org/index.php?id=14,577,0,0,1,0

MEXICO

Defend the People's Assembly of Oaxaca!

By Dave Stockton

On Sunday 29 October, Mexican federal state forces stormed the centre of Oaxaca in a bid to end the occupation of the central plaza and re-take government and media buildings, occupied by popular forces since June. Several militants have been killed or injured and dozens arrested. The next day, 50,000 demonstrated in Mexico City in protest against the repression.

For four months, mass popular forces, spear-headed by striking teachers, have organised the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) which counterposed itself to the state and city administration. Their goal has been to remove a corrupt and oppressive governor, Ulises Ruiz, a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico for over 40 years.

The APPO has run local radio stations, organised self-defence, and created a situation of dual power in the state of Oaxaca. During the summer (July to September) this situation coincided with an national crisis following the presidential elections, which were plainly stolen from the left populist candidate Lopez Obrador by the neoliberal candidate Felipe Calderon.

Obrador fought this corruption by occupying the Zócalo in Mexico City and holding rallies of several million people. This campaign helped protect the APPO against intervention from the federal government. But since the abandonment of those mobilisations by Lopez Obrador, Ruiz's paramilitary squads have been mounting sporadic attacks on the teachers and the popular forces in Oaxaca.

Last month, Ruiz's thugs killed a young American Indymedia journalist, Brad Roland. Plainly the weakening of the nationwide mass mobilisations in October, and the problems of where the Oaxaca teachers' strike and street mobilisations should go now, all encouraged Ruiz and Vicente Fox to make their move.

Union officials won a vote to end the five-month strike by the Oaxaca teachers. This was a heavy blow and was connected to the failure to spread popular assemblies like APPO to the rest of Mexico and to bring the forces of the organised workers into the struggle. The inability of the movement to go forward and the ending of the strike gave the forces of reaction their first opportunity to crush Oaxaca. The mass forces that mobilised for Obrador, against the stolen elections, now need to mobilise to protect Oaxaca. Obrador – bourgeois politician though he is – should have used his position (he has declared himself the legitimate president elect) to call for an indefinite general strike; he should have called on the soldiers to refuse to repress the people. Shamefully, he refused to do so. This shows that he is no "president of the people".



Down with Ruiz!

Now, the mass organisations that gave him support should break their reliance on him and call on the urban and rural poor to blockade the roads and to halt the life of the country until the repression against the APPO is ended.

The course of events in Oaxaca has raised key problems that must be urgently addressed.

The strategy of depending on a change of president to make fundamental changes is not enough. Such methods cannot overthrow a government that still has the support of the army, the capitalist class and indeed Mexico's mighty neighbour, the USA.

The strategy of the Zapatistas (EZLN), embodied in the "Other Campaign", has proved just as useless. The Zapatista leader, sub-commandante Marcos, now renamed Delegate Zero, has been touring the North, holding local rallies, while the critical point had been reached in the mass struggles in Mexico City and Oaxaca.

Now the EZLN has called for mass nationwide action, blockades and so on, and even a general strike, but not until 20 November! Marcos should call on urban and rural workers to strike now, before the "mopping up" operation in Oaxaca is completed.

Either of these strategies – electoralism supplemented by a "people power" mock revolution or the "counterpower" of local rural communes – will enable the Mexican bourgeoisie to divide and conquer the forces of resistance.

The enormous scale of the mass mobilisations, the discrediting and crisis of Mexican bourgeois "democracy", the paralysis of the state for months, all indicated the opening of a revolutionary situation. But such situations do not last forever, nor can the masses be kept on the streets indefinitely, with no perspective as to how the issue will be resolved.

If the leaders of the masses adopt false strategies, if the trade union bureaucracy blocks the

way to action, then the forces of counter-revolution will recover from their fright, overcome their confusion and strike back – and all the more viciously.

The workers and peasants of Mexico must throw off these populist strategies and take up the weapons of a consistent class struggle, starting with the general strike, organised by popular assemblies, at whose core are workers' delegates from the mines, factories, rail and bus depots.

The independent, more militant unions, which have supported the mobilisations, must go all out to win the rank and file workers in the unions linked to PRI and National Action Party (PAN) to take action too. The soldiers must be won over, and the masses armed to seize power in an insurrection of the working people. To win support for this strategy, the number one priority of the militant vanguard in the struggles ahead must be to create a revolutionary party.

- All federal troops, police and PRI paramilitary squads out of Oaxaca!
- Bring the murderers of the people to popular justice!
- For an all out general strike to defend the APPO and kick out Ruiz and Fox!
- Popular assemblies of workers' and peasants' delegates in every city, town and rural commune!
- Down with Fox and Calderon – not a left-caudillo regime under Lopez Obrador but a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government based on workers' and popular assemblies, and armed militias!
- Land to the peasants! Factories, mines, and means of transport to the workers!
- A socialist Mexico as part of a Socialist United States of Latin America!

For more on Mexico go to www.fifthinternational.org/index.php?id=14,575,0,0,1,0

ACTION PROGRAMME

A draft action programme for the working class in Britain

Over the coming months, the revolutionary communist organisation Workers Power will be launching a project for the development of a new political programme for the working class movement in Britain.

We plan to research, draft, debate out and finally to publish a programme that will address the most important issues facing the working class, and provide a series of proposals for action that will aim to strengthen the struggles of today against war, low pay, privatisation, attacks on the NHS and education, climate change, racism, the victimisation of Muslims and youth.

We believe that such a programme should aim to link these struggles to the need for the overthrow of the capitalist system

and the establishment of a socialist society under the rule and control of the working class.

As a first step in this project, we set out our current thinking in the form of a draft programme. We hope that this will form a basis for discussion and debate, and that it will be revised, amended, where necessary corrected, and enriched in the months to come.

We invite all activists, workers and young people who want to see an end to militarism and market madness to participate in this process by discussing this draft and letting us have their observations, criticisms and suggestions for how it could be improved.

Tony Blair's decade of power is coming to a shameful end. Blair has launched bloody and illegal wars, against the will of the majority of the British people. He has repeatedly attacked the very public services Labour was elected to defend - the NHS, public education and local services. Under the cover of the 'war on terror', New Labour has stripped away a huge swathe of the very civil liberties that the labour movement was set up to fight for - he has massively extended detention without trial, restricted access to free legal advice, and subjected the people to unheard of levels of surveillance. And Blair's government has orchestrated a shameful and truly racist witch hunt against Muslims and asylum seekers - many of them victims of the wars and oppression that Blair supports abroad.

Blairism is not just a UK phenomenon. It is the British expression of a policy being pursued by the big capitalists and their governments all around the world. A new rapacious phase of capitalism - globalisation - has seen coordinated attacks on welfare, on public services, on pensions, on the rights and liberties of working people to resist. Privatisation, outsourcing, tax cuts for the rich and the stripping away of people's protection from the madness of the market are policies being pursued all over the world. This global orthodoxy of the capitalist politicians - neoliberalism - has massively increased inequality and social instability all over the world. And it is intimately linked to the new phase of aggressive wars being pursued with increasing desperation by the USA and its pliant British ally. The invasion and occupation of Iraq and Palestine, the shameless backing of Israel's attack on Lebanon, the war threats against Iran, North Korea and Venezuela all stem from the same root. Globalisation is nothing more than a new phase of the imperialist world system, in which the richest and most developed powers systematically exploit not only their own workers at home but bully, oppress and plunder less developed nations abroad.

But globalisation has not only united the cap-

italists. It has begun to bring together different strands of resistance to capitalism around the world. After the battle of Seattle in 1999 a new anti-capitalist movement saw hundreds of thousands unite in action against the neoliberal policies of the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, besieging their summits and assembling in new continental and even world social forums to debate how to strengthen the resistance.

In answer to the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq a gigantic anti-war movement rose up against the re-colonisation of the oil rich Middle East. Two million marched in London on 15 February 2003 in the biggest demonstration in British history. Another 15 to 20 million marched simultaneously in cities around the world.

In France, Italy, Germany and Greece mass movements of workers and youth resisted against the capitalists' attacks on workers' living standards - famously in France the mass rebellion against an attack on young workers' rights brought hundreds of thousands into the streets day after day, uniting school students and workers in strikes that forced the government to back down and blew a hole in the middle of the European Union's neoliberal plans.

In Britain - which is not usually in the forefront of resistance worldwide - there have been a flurry of local campaigns against attacks on the NHS and hospital cuts, and the government's planned attack on public sector pensions brought a million workers out on strike on the same day in March 2006.

So how can we take forward the resistance to Blairism and neoliberalism? What practical steps do we need to take? How can this resistance start to score real victories against the capitalists' policies and the weakened and unpopular prime minister who is carrying them out? Above all, how can we link the fight against the symptoms of capitalism - privatisation, inequality, racism, repression and war - to a fight against the system itself, and for a new socialist society based on meeting human need not private greed?

Workers Power believes that only by consciously adopting revolutionary methods of struggle and reclaiming socialism as our aim can we - the majority, the working class - overthrow capitalism and build a new world.

BRITAIN IN THE WORLD

Between countries and within countries, the gap between the haves and have-nots is growing apace. No matter how much of the globe's wealth and resources they grab for themselves, the rich and powerful need more: greater exploitation, harsher oppression, bloodier wars.

But wherever there is injustice, resistance to it grows.

Not every wave of resistance achieves its goals - far from it. There are cruel setbacks as well as breakthroughs. Most end with a rotten compromise, one that eventually comes unstuck, because neither side can live with the results. And so the stage is set for a bigger battle to settle the score.

And each battle sends more ripples around the world. The world is getting more unstable, more convulsive.

CONDITION OF THE MAJORITY

When Labour boasts of 11 years of economic growth, of record investment in public services, of low inflation and high employment rates, this does not chime with the experience of the majority in Britain today. Why, if we are enjoying a boom, is there so much discontent? Why do so many demonstrate against domestic and foreign policies, and fewer and fewer vote for the mainstream parties? The reasons are straightforward enough

- The growing number - and destructiveness - of unjust wars;
- The slashing and break up of public services;
- The extension and intensification of the working week and lifetime;
- The victimisation of young people, Muslims, asylum seekers and immigrants;
- The rising tide of personal debt, house and fuel prices, and job insecurity.

Capitalism has spread insecurity and inequal-

ACTION PROGRAMME

ity into our daily lives in order to raise the rate of exploitation of workers and the rate of profits of capitalists.

Manufacturing and mining jobs are replaced with low paid and insecure casual 'Mcjobs'.

Labour has linked every single investment in public services to 'reforms' which allow private companies to make a profit from them. New schools and hospitals can only be built via Private Finance Initiatives, new homes via housing associations. Their continued existence depends on their financial viability, regardless of need. So fire stations, casualty departments, hospital wards, community schools and post offices are shut - because we can "no longer afford" them, they were built for a "different era".

Labour talks of an "asset owning democracy", but millions live in a debt burdened dictatorship. Each adult owes, on average, £8,500 on credit cards and overdrafts, and a further £50,000 on their house. Rising mortgage rates and unemployment threatens to write off these "assets" more quickly than they were accrued.

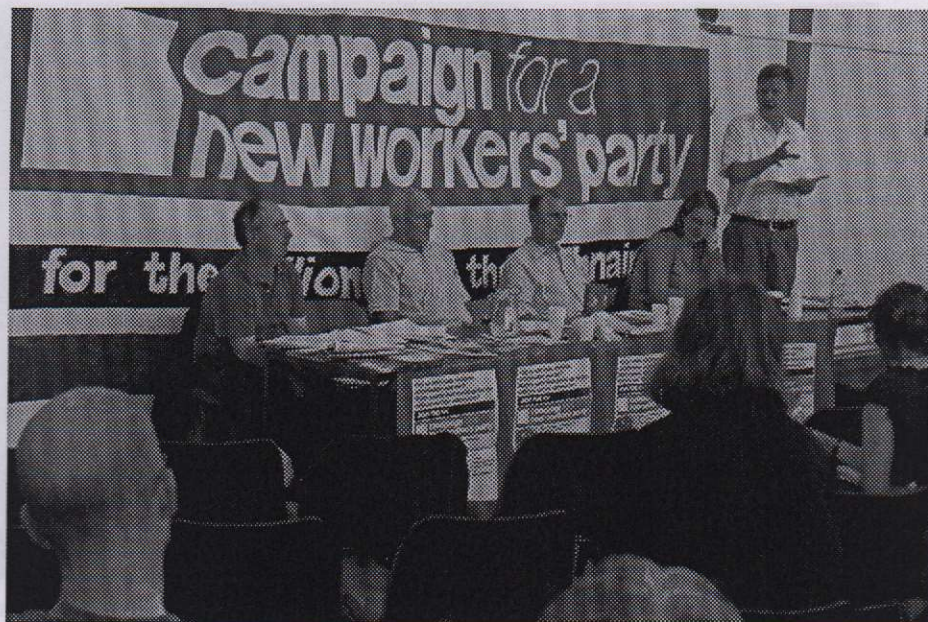
At work and in the treatment of the young and the old, there is no such pretence at democracy. Allegedly, our society can no longer afford decent benefits, wages and pensions. Stress, mental illness and suicide are rife among the young, forced into dead-end McJobs, saddled with student debt, or hounded by Asbo-empowered police. Pensioners, who, like youth, can't be fully exploited, are similarly thrown to the margins of society, robbed of the means to live in dignity.

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

Wherever resistance emerges, be it in the struggle against war or in defence of our pensions and hospitals, the working class faces not only the ruthless capitalists and their government, but a crisis of leadership and direction within our own ranks.

- Millions of public sector workers voted to strike to defend their pension rights in March 2005, and one million took action a year later, but our union chiefs let the Labour government off the hook. Instead of striking together they signed vague deals, one by one, selling away the pension rights of future generations. Now Labour is planning renewed attacks on our pensions. The decisive fight has only been postponed;
- Two million marched to stop the war in February 2003 and thousand of school students and workers walked out when the bombing began in March, but the anti-war and union leaders refused to call mass strikes, which could have brought Britain to a standstill and stopped the war from happening;
- Four million workers have stopped voting Labour since 1997, two unions have left the party and half its members have deserted it, yet there is no new party of the working class to channel this anger and direct it towards real change. The situation is so dire that in some areas the fascist BNP are able to lie and claim that they are defenders of the working class.

Resolving this crisis of leadership is the key to the future. Time and again, workers and youth have shown their capacity to fight. Time and again our leaders - the Labour party and the layer



of bureaucrats that dominates and controls our trade unions - have betrayed us.

We need to transform our organisations. In the trade unions we need a rank and file movement to put control back in the hands of the workers themselves and to stop the bureaucrats holding our struggles back. We need local and regional coordinations of delegates from each and every one of our campaigns, organisations and struggles to unite action according to democratically agreed decisions at the base, not stitch ups between officials at the tops. And we need a new working class party, one that aims not to replace one capitalist government with another band of careerists in suits, but to lead action to break the power of the tiny minority of capitalists and replace it with the rule of the working class millions.

To achieve this, from the very first step the Labourites and the union leaders will oppose us. We will need to confront the misleaders and create a new leadership to replace them.

Trade unions

Union membership has halved from 13 million 25 years ago. But there are still nearly seven million workers in the trade unions. They are essential organisations for the protection of workers and to win advances in pay and conditions.

We propose:

- A massive unionisation drive to bring hundreds of thousands of workers in low paid, casual and non-union jobs into the trade union movement. Special attention to the immigrant workers; special measures to attract young workers;
- Fight for the complete abolition of the anti-union laws brought in by the Tories and maintained by 'New' Labour;
- For 100 per cent trade unionism - restore the closed shop.

The unions are run by a bureaucratic caste that stamps on members' rights of and demands control of all actions so it can to hold back, compromise or betray our struggles. We demand:

- The annual election of all union officers;
- The right to recall them instantly;
- To deter careerists, all officers should be paid the average wage of the workers they represent;
- For strikes and occupations against job losses, sell offs, attacks on pay, pensions and conditions;
- All strikes and negotiations should be under the control of the workers in dispute;
- Solidarity strikes - if we all stand together we can break the anti-union laws that ban solidarity action.

Many unions are still funding Labour, the very party that is attacking the workers.

- Break the unions from Labour;
- Maintain political funds but use them to found a new workers' party.

ABOLISH POVERTY AND INSECURITY

Hundreds of thousands work on or for less than the minimum wage. Millions of children live in poverty. One and half million are unemployed. And this is at a time of economic boom - imagine what it will be like when the next recession bites.

- For a minimum wage set at the European Union's Decency Threshold of two-thirds of the average salary - £7.50 an hour - for all workers regardless of age;
- For a maximum working week of 35 hours with no loss of pay;
- Cut the hours, not the jobs. For job sharing with no loss of pay to abolish unemployment and reduce working hours;
- End all means-testing of benefits and set them at the level of the minimum wage;
- For a 1 per cent rise in pay for every 1 per cent rise in prices. In the face of sharp hikes in gas bills, rents and house prices, committees of workers should calculate the real cost of living, not capitalist economists;
- Raise child benefits to cover the real costs of raising a child, and introduce a grant, equivalent to the minimum income, for all students over 16;

ACTION PROGRAMME

- Outlaw all insecure employment contracts. Full employment rights for all from the first day at work - sick and maternity leave;
- Against the right to sack workers at will, we demand workers' control of hiring and firing;
- Nationalise all companies that declare redundancies or fail to pay the minimum wage;
- No discrimination against part-timers and temps, women and young workers, migrant workers. Equal rights and pay for all;
- Guarantee all final salary pension schemes - ban companies from closing them down. State pension to be fixed at the level of the minimum wage. Nationalise all private pension schemes and combine them in a single state-guaranteed scheme.

The fabric of life on Britain's housing estates and forgotten rural areas needs urgent repair:

- Stop the hiving off of estates;
- Freeze rents;
- Scrap council tax and replace it with a tax on wealth;
- Committees of workers should draw up an inventory of local needs for the regeneration of our communities - for a programme of public projects - under the control of the project workers and the communities they serve.

TAX THE RICH, NOT THE POOR

"We can't afford it!" say the bosses. They are lying. We are supposed to believe that our society can 'afford' the obscene wealth of a few at the expense of the millions.

The Labour left and other reformists limit their demands to a general increase in tax. But why should workers pay more? There is a job of redistribution to be done. Taxation should be used to attack inequality and fund improvements for the many.

- Tax the rich, not the poor;
- For a swinging tax on unearned wealth;
- Raise taxes on the inheritances of the richest families;
- Raise taxes on corporate profits;
- Raise income taxes on those earning huge salaries - eliminate it for the poor;
- Abolish council tax and replace it with a progressive local income tax;
- Abolish all indirect flat rate taxes like VAT;
- Confiscate the property of the rich tax evaders;
- Abolish tax havens and loopholes.

Local, regional and national democratic rights

- Fight for local authorities to set budgets to meet the people's needs on housing, transport, schools, leisure facilities, hospitals and environmental



- protection - and for central government funds to deliver them;
- The Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly should have the powers to tax the rich and nationalise big business;
- The Scottish and Welsh people should decide what level of devolution, autonomy or full independence they want. For the full right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales, including separation from the UK if they want.

THE NHS

New Labour came to power promising to defend the NHS. But scores of thousands of jobs have been cut, waiting times remain appallingly long, wards and whole hospitals have been closed, nurses remain on poverty pay and privateers have been allowed to corrupt and distort the running of public healthcare.

The "internal market" has saddled NHS trusts with over £1 billion of debts, which in turn led to over 20,000 job losses in 2006 alone. Countless beds, wards and even hospitals have been closed. Thousands more are in the pipeline. But this is peanuts, compared with the cost of privatisation: the independent sector treatment centres will cost the NHS £5 billion and the privatisation of NHS Logistics a further £3.7 billion. This is a straight transfer of working class taxes to company profits.

- Reverse all the cuts;
- Scrap PFI and all fraudulent privatisation schemes;
- End the madness of the "internal market";
- Nationalise all private health organisations and drug companies without compensation;
- Abolish all patents and business secrecy in health research;
- No prescription, dental and other charges: free healthcare for all;
- For workers and users control of the NHS;

- For a swinging tax on the wealth of corporations and the super-rich to fund increases in health spending.

NATIONALISATION AND WORKERS CONTROL

Despite shrill warnings about 'living beyond our means', the bosses and their loyal media hounds are silent about what these means actually are. Efforts to establish how much wealth is in the hands of the banks and the giant corporations are blocked by "commercial confidentiality". Attempts to tax their profits are greeted with howls of indignation.

But publicly owned post offices, hospitals, pensions and schools - along with railways and buses, energy and fuel industries, utility boards and communications networks - were all possible, 30 years ago.

The banks, insurance companies and finance companies must be nationalised. All the privatised utilities must be nationalised under the control of the workers in those jobs, who should run them for social need, not private greed. And there should be no compensation to the profiteers, who have milked them for years. Their surpluses must be used to abolish poverty and raise the living standards of the millions.

The working class must demand the right to investigate big business - banks, industries and services - and the super-rich. How large are their real profits and assets? Where does the money go? How have they got away with paying so little tax? With the help of trusted professionals, workers could draw up a full account of Britain's wealth, and determine to what extent it should be taxed and how much of it needs to be confiscated and put to work for the benefit of the community.

It is not possible to plan the goods and services that society needs today, to educate and train the next generation, to provide for our elderly a decent standard of

ACTION PROGRAMME

living - without taking finance and industry out of the hands of a tiny, unaccountable and secretive minority, and placing them at the service of the great majority.

We are the wealth-creators, not the proprietors or the money-men. We are only demanding our own wealth back, and the right to run our own lives.

DEFEND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Our rights to effective trade unions, trial by jury, freedom from random police harassment, and even to protest have been cut back. Under cover of the 'war on terror' an unprecedented system of state surveillance has been introduced, with cameras everywhere, new rights for the police to detain without trial, Asbos allowing the courts to punish people who have not been convicted of any offence and even the threat of a DNA database.

"If you've done nothing wrong, you have nothing to fear", say Blair, the police and the right-wing press. But this infantile argument assumes that the government has done nothing wrong and never will. In fact, it gives the state extraordinary new powers to persecute and repress immigrants, workers and activists who resist them.

- Down with all the anti-terror laws and special police powers;
- Free all the prisoners held without charge;
- End stop and search, which the police invariably use to harass youth, black people and Asians;
- No more dispersal orders, which are used against legitimate protest and against working class youth;
- Disarm the police, who have twice shot citizens going about their business, simply because they "looked Muslim";
- Restore the right to trial by jury for all, and elect all judges and magistrates;
- Full equality for lesbians and gays, including equivalent rights to heterosexual couples in childrearing, inheritance, legal recognition, marriage, life insurance;
- For the right of all victims of bigotry and violence to self-defence;
- Abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords;
- Proportional representation in all elections.

STOP THE WAR ON MUSLIMS

Labour, the Tories and the right wing media are deliberately poisoning Britain with their attacks on Muslims. This whipping up of irrational hatred of the outsider, the unknown, the "other" is reminiscent of the anti-Semitism that preceded the Second World War.

Racism is the defining legacy of bankrupt capitalism in its imperialist era. No longer able to take the whole of society forward, incapable of developing poor countries, it seeks to turn the



blame for its colonial wars and its economic plunder onto those who seek respite from this cruelty in the West.

The capitalists fear the unity of these people with the native working population. For example, it is trying to break up the anti-war movement by attacking one of its major components: the oppressed Muslim minority. It even seeks to make the "respectable" part of this minority - the property owners, the clergy and the parents - responsible for promoting "Britishness" among their women, youth and workers. Not content with a Church of England, the bourgeoisie now wants a Mosque of England.

Similarly, insecurity over jobs, falling wages and intensifying working conditions, shortages in housing, school places and hospital beds are all blamed on immigrant labour. Never mind that barely any of these stories of benefit scroungers is true, or that the gangmasters - legal and illegal - refuse to pay decent wages; the point is to find a scapegoat for capitalism's ills. And who better than capitalism's most vulnerable victim: the asylum seeker and the migrant worker?

- No restrictions on the right to religious practice and expression. For the right to wear the veil, and the right not to;
- No persecution of religion, but no privileges for religious leaders either: no religious control of schools; no exemptions from tax for religious institutions;
- Abolish citizenship classes and tests. The working class has no interest in demanding forced assimilation into the 'culture' of capitalist Britain, but should offer instead voluntary integration into an internationalist working class movement that fights exploitation and oppression everywhere;
- Abolish immigration controls - full citizenship rights, including the right to vote, for all who wish to come and live in Britain;
- Smash the fascist BNP, who prey on white people's fears and whip up

violence and hatred against Muslims and immigrants. No platform for the fascist hate-mongers. Organise self-defence squads against their thugs.

WOMEN: EQUALITY AND LIBERATION!

In the 1920s, the suffragette movement secured the vote for women. In the 1970s and 1980s, the modern feminist movement fought against sexism and restrictions on women's role in public life. But once the upper class and middle class women won greater acceptance in public life, they abandoned their working class 'sisters', millions of whom still earn far less than men and then return home to a second job of domestic servitude.

The job of liberating women is unfinished business. Today we need a working class women's movement, as a crucial component of the movement of the whole working class.

Women are still considered natural childrears and home-makers. They are often forced into part-time, temporary and low-paid work, around which they have to fit in another four or five hours' labour in the family home. If they don't want it, they may be subject to domestic violence. Laws restricting abortion and divorce protect this unwritten code.

- For a women's right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy - free abortion and contraception on demand! No restrictions or time limits;
- Immediate divorce on the request of either partner;
- Full equality for lesbians in all aspects of the law;
- Equal pay for work of equal value, as determined by workers themselves;
- Free crèche and nursery facilities;
- Publicly funded refuges for victims of rape and domestic violence;
- Subsidised state restaurants, laundries and cleaning - socialise domestic labour to abolish women's' double burden of work and housework.

ACTION PROGRAMME

YOUNG REBELS SHOW THE WAY

Young people have been at the forefront of the anti-war, anti-poverty and anti-racist struggles. They spontaneously kick against injustice and side with those fighting back. They tend not to be weighed down with the cynicism caused by past failures. They are the future - which is why the bourgeoisie spend so much time trying to demonise them to older people, to crush their spirit and instill fear and discipline into them.

Asbos, dispersal orders, stop and search give the cops full rein to clamp down on youth at will, no courts needed. Petty bans on wearing hooded tops or just hanging around means young people are harassed at every turn.

At school, constant testing serves to single out the children of middle class and better-off parents, who have had the time and money to give them a head start. The rest can learn discipline, and basic literacy and numeracy. And to those that go on after school, tuition fees, draconian laws in residential halls, course cuts, maintaining a part-time job to make ends meet, all this makes student life more precarious than ever.

At work, young people are entitled to a lower minimum wage than adults, and are bullied into accepting zero-hours contracts, split shifts, unpaid overtime and the most menial tasks.

- Equal pay and equal contracts for young workers now;
- Abolish Asbos, dispersal orders, stop and search;
- For a massive expansion of youth centres and free recreational activities;
- No academy or trust schools;
- All schools and colleges should be run by the parents, students and staff who work in them;
- Scrap tuition fees - a living grant for all students;
- For students' political and academic freedom;
- For school student unions, student unions independent of state funding;
- For a revolutionary youth movement to challenge youth oppression and the system that causes it.

STOP CLIMATE CHANGE

Global warming is already happening. Unless there is a massive global reduction in the burning of fossil fuels by industry, in the use of oil, petrol and coal, and a halt to deforestation, scientists and governments alike predict an environmental catastrophe. This, they say, could see many more cities subjected to devastation like in New Orleans, the flooding of Bangladesh and other countries, terrible droughts in Africa, and a reduction in living standards globally by up to 20 per cent. For those already living on less than \$1 a day, the suffering this will bring is unimaginable.



Meanwhile, like Nero, the capitalists fiddle while the planet burns. They propose 'emissions trading', which will allow the big polluters to buy licenses to keep polluting. As the biggest polluters are mega-corporations, they will be able to afford lots of these licenses. Meanwhile our grandchildren are being sold out; sold to a world immeasurably poorer and more dangerous than the one we live in today.

It can be stopped - but only by a massive reduction in the burning of fossil fuels.

- For massive investment in sustainable energy production funded by taxing the corporations and the rich;
- Expropriate the big polluters;
- Huge publicly funded expansion of public transport, rail and electric bus;
- Force the oil hungry car manufacturers to switch to minimum use of fossil fuel propulsion;
- Stop airport expansion plans;
- Redeploy all workers in downscaled polluting industries to jobs on equal pay;
- The only 'green' taxes should be on the rich, not the poor.

Blair wants to use the global warming crisis to commission a new generation of privately owned nuclear power plants. We demand the shut down all unsafe nuclear plants - no privatisation and no new private sector plants. Workers must fight for the right to inspect all nuclear facilities and for the power to shut them down if unsafe.

Global warming can only be reduced by a worldwide reduction of the burning of fossil fuels and an end to deforestation. This massive task can only be achieved by stripping the big bourgeoisie of their right to private property and breaking down the barriers of the capitalist nation state. International action to protect the environment can only be coordinated fully by a federation of workers' republics that owns and controls energy production.

WAR AND REVOLUTION

Britain is an imperialist country. From India and Egypt, Kenya and Malaya in the past to Iraq and Afghanistan today, our

rulers have time and again subjected weaker states to colonial conquest and armed interference.

Despite their lies, they do not do this for 'national defence', but to exploit foreign countries and impose their will on the world. The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan aims to allow Britain and America to help themselves to the wealth of the Middle East and to impose pro-Western regimes. Neither democracy nor 'the war on terror' have anything to do with it.

The working class has no country. It is not loyal to the British capitalists. We must demand

- Troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan and Ireland now;
- Not a penny, not a person for British imperialism;
- Pay reparations to occupied countries devastated by UK/US wars;
- British troops should refuse to obey illegal and immoral orders;
- For the right of soldiers to organise their own union free from officers' interference;
- Solidarity with the resistance fighting occupation in Iraq and Palestine;
- Cancel arms sales to repressive regimes;
- No war or sanctions against Iran or North Korea.

The British government must be forced to abandon its Trident weapons programme. US military bases should be withdrawn from the UK. Britain should get out of NATO and cancel all military alliances with imperialist countries. The government should be forced to publish all secret treaties for the division, re-division and exploitation of the world.

The anti-war movement needs to go beyond passive protest and campaign for strike action and blockades to stop the march to war, to block the supply lines for the weapons of destruction that Blair is unleashing on Iraq and Afghanistan.

The capitalists will never be persuaded to disarm through pacifist pleading - they will have to be disarmed. Therefore it is in the interest of the workers to fight for the defeat of the British government in its military adventures and to turn

ACTION PROGRAMME

the war of the imperialists for control of semi-colonial countries into a civil war against the bloodthirsty capitalists.

WORKING CLASS DEFENCE

None of these demands can be securely achieved without encroaching on the power and privileges of the ruling capitalist class. Each one aims to increase the political cohesion and social strength of the exploited classes, drawing ever-wider layers into the ranks of the resistance. The ruling class would retaliate by trying to smash our movement.

Can there be any doubt, in the age of 'shock and awe', that if the British working class began seriously to threaten the power and privileges of the rich, then democratic niceties would go out of the window? Then Basra would come to Britain, and the ruling class would quickly show that all the contempt they show for human life in Iraq and Afghanistan is based not only on national arrogance but deep class hatred.

From the miners' strike and the poll tax through to the May Day demonstrations and anti-war protests, police attacks on demonstrations and working class actions are a regular event. To prevent them from inflicting major defeats on our struggles, workers need to defend themselves.

Terrorism is a complete dead-end. Killing individual politicians etc, let alone innocent civilians, can only hand an opportunity for further repression to the state and confuse the mass of the people. Against this strategy of despair, we propose to adopt the communist tradition of mass working class organised self-defence. Well trained defence teams - comprised of workers from the mass movement and asserting their democratic right to self-defence - are the best way to resist police attacks and even to make individual officers question or refuse their orders. Far from frightening off the less combative in our ranks, it will embolden them, because they would see the most determined fighters are serious about their defence.

The police and special forces - SO19, SAS, SBS, etc. - exist to defend capitalist property. Capitalism cannot be overthrown unless the exploited classes dismantle and smash this armed body, which is the final defence of the ruling class. Workers' self-defence groups must therefore aim for the eventual establishment of a workers' militia, capable of resisting and breaking up the capitalists' state forces, eventually replacing them.

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER

Whenever a struggle develops to the point that it affects the whole working class - whenever it becomes a class-wide struggle - workers should form delegate based councils of action to draw all the different parts of the movement together and collectively hammer out and execute a plan for victory. In a heightened period of

class struggle, these councils of action can often begin to take on the role of running society. Because they are based on recallable delegates from a wide range of sectors of the working class, and because they can implement their decisions without recourse to a bureaucracy, they are in embryo the basis for a new form of state, a workers' state.

Whenever the workers mobilise in struggle on a class-wide scale, in mass strike waves, multi-million strong marches or a general strike, the question is posed: who rules society? These highpoints rarely, if ever, coincide with elections and never normal peaceful elections. Such critical points have arisen a number of times in Britain - in 1919-21, 1926, 1931, 1972, 1978, 1984. Usually, however, the leadership of the unions and the Labour Party have defused them or betrayed them, giving the bosses and their state forces the chance to regroup and return to the offensive, with disastrous consequences. At such moments the struggle for power is not an optional extra - it is the key to victory or defeat.

To take power the working class needs not just militant and democratic trade unions, not just councils of action, it needs a revolutionary political party to give a clear lead in all these mass organisations - a lead towards the seizure of power, towards revolution.

NEW WORKERS' PARTY

In Britain today millions are turning their backs on Labour - hundreds of thousands, who looked to the party to effect real change in the interests of the working class, have vowed not to vote for it again and are looking for alternatives. In this situation, and with two major unions - the RMT and the FBU - now outside the Labour party, it is time for a new workers' party.

We call on the trade union movement as a whole to found a new working class party. Union leaders should break with Labour and call a conference to debate out the structure and programme of a new party, funded by the unions' political levies.

There should be a full and democratic debate on the new party's programme and structure. Revolutionary workers should take part in that debate, and argue for the party to adopt a revolutionary programme and a fighting disciplined structure, designed not to allow a caste of leaders to govern on our behalf in parliament, but to fight in the workplaces and on the streets for a forcible overturn of the system.

A new party that limits itself to achieving change through elections alone - or even mainly through elections - will never overthrow capitalism. When the capitalists faced a left reformist government in Chile in 1973, the army organised a bloody coup. The British ruling class would not hesitate in using its armed might against

its "own" workers.

Revolutionaries cannot impose their views on the working class but can and must tell the truth, honestly and openly. Workers who fight back against the many attacks of capitalism are intelligent and courageous enough to consider our arguments and draw the practical conclusions. We are convinced that they can and will be won to a revolutionary programme, if it is put before them in their everyday struggles. But only on the condition that the revolutionists show them at each twist and turn of the struggle that the most determined revolutionary action is the best policy.

This means that we must, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels said, "disdain to conceal our aims." Those left wing parties who do conceal their aims, who pretend to be reformist populists as the SWP do in Respect, or who advocate a left reformist programme for a new workers' party as do the Socialist Party, (with the excuse that the mass of workers are not ready for a revolutionary programme) are quite simply not revolutionaries. They zigzag between reformism and revolutionary politics. With this method they can never and will never defeat the union bureaucrats and the bosses' agents in the Labour Party like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. They will always crumble and capitulate at the final moment.

At the same time revolutionaries must not act like sectarians who stand aside from the struggle or who present their programme as an ultimatum. Revolutionaries must show in every major struggle how to win that struggle but also how it leads to the inseparably linked questions of property and power. Who owns the vast means of production and who controls the machinery of violence and repression? The capitalists.

Only a revolutionary workers' government, based on the mass organisations of workers' democracy, established after the break up of the repressive machinery of the capitalist state - the police, the army - could seize the vast resources of the banks and corporations and begin planning to abolish inequality, insecurity and oppression. As part of a world revolution, a democratic plan of production and distribution could replace the madness of the market with a sustainable future of equality and plenty; a voluntary federation of socialist republics could replace strife and war between nations. Ultimately, as exploitation and class division disappear, there will be no need for a coercive state apparatus fixed permanently against the people. In place of war, poverty, repression and climate catastrophe, a great flowering of human culture will begin.

It is towards the formation of a new revolutionary working class party in Britain, and a new world party of social revolution, that this programme is directed.

SCANDINAVIA

This year, has seen right-wing governments on the offensive in Denmark and Sweden. In the past few months, Danish workers and youth have taken to the streets in their thousands, while in Sweden the government that won elections in September has now outlined its programme of attacks. *Gunnar Westin* of the Swedish section of the League for a Fifth International, Arbetarmakt, outlines the tasks of the left in both countries

Danish workers and

Danish workers are taking to the streets in their thousands, and occupying workplaces in opposition to the new conservative government's cuts. On the opening day of the Folketinget (Danish parliament) on 3 October, there were mass demonstrations in 10 Danish cities.

The movement is the biggest since the strike in Easter 1985. In Århus alone, Denmark's second biggest city, 30,000 workers and youth participated in protest demonstrations of a size not seen in decades. At the same time, a national strike of day nursery workers continued into its third week and 25 different parent groups blockaded day nurseries in solidarity with the strikers.

Students occupied many schools in the city after decisions taken on mass meetings, at which committees were elected to organise blockades, banner making and so on. In Copenhagen, 15 high schools were occupied on the day of the demonstration. Leading student activists talked about the inspira-

tion from the French student movement that stopped the infamous CPE law.

The movement started on the 17 May with a nationwide demonstration against cuts in the pension system and attacks on unemployed youth. This protest forced the government to take a step back and modify its proposals. Shamefully, the Danish Social Democrats tried to take the credit for this, despite its negotiations with the bourgeois parties to reach a deal, which would have only limited the scale of the attacks.

This autumn the government set a new budget, which included cuts of 4 billion Danish crowns (about £370 million) in local authority support. At least 15,000 jobs are being threatened and councils are going to be forced to make huge cuts in the day nursery service, education and many other social services. In Århus alone it is expected that 410 million Danish crowns are to be cut every year until 2010. On top of this, the government wants to force people to work longer hours.

Another part of the offensive is the racist policies against the country's immigrants and refugees. Measures that undermine the possibility to get a permanent residence permit for refugees or get social security assistance, as well as ones that hinder the possibilities of a fair and equal education of immigrants' children (for example attacks on two-language education), are being pushed by the racist Danish People's Party, one of the parties in government.

Danish workers took to the streets in the run-up to the October demonstrations with regular local strikes and protests. For example, in Århus, 12,000 took to the streets on the 12 September. On the 20 September another 7,000 youth went out to march against the closure of "The House", a facility that is a combination of library and cultural centre. Local trades councils and different trade unions such as the local government workers and social services staff have taken part and supported the demonstrations.

In response, Prime Minister

Swedish government

The defeat of the Social Democratic government in the September elections was the price it paid for doing nothing to combat rising unemployment, inequality and poverty.

During the election, the new "Alliance for Sweden", led by the Moderates – the party of big capital – talked about maintaining the welfare state and not undermining the trade unions but now, in power, it has outlined a huge attack on the working class.

- Attacks on unemployment benefits. The government will cut what it pays towards unemployment benefit and increase workers' contributions. Most workers will have to pay as much as £20 extra per month.
- Abolition of tax deductions for union subs (worth up to £90, a year to the individual worker) and contributions to unemployment benefit funds. All these cuts undermine the ability of the union movement to support its mem-

The social democratic leaders have been in power for 12 years and have weakened working class' organisations

- bers. They will also make it harder for unions to recruit young people as they are on the lowest wages.
- Limiting access to the unemployment fund to 300 days (or 450 days for parents with children below 18 years of age). After 200 days, the benefit will go down from 80 per cent to 70 per cent (of the average wage received in the last twelve months of employment). After 300 days, the unemployed will be thrown onto a "work and development guarantee" worth only 65 per cent of the earlier average wage.
- Increased discipline and surveillance of the sick. The bosses will have the right to demand medical

- certificates from the first day of sick leave, rather than the sixth day.
- The government will make it cheaper for employers to hire young people or the unemployed. Also, according to Maud Olofsson, the Centre Party leader and commercial minister, the new government will investigate a French-style CPE.
- There will also be a programme of privatisations. The state is going to sell off property to the value of over £10 billion over the next 3 years – with 53 out of 55 state companies up for sale. The government is also likely to continue selling off the remaining public housing

youth fight the cuts



March in Copenhagen against the cuts

Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that, "the municipalities have got more money than ever before". This is sheer spin. Although council budgets have been rising by 0.6 per cent a year since 2003, this is in real terms a fall in resources after demographic changes in an aging population and inflation are taken into account.

Meanwhile, the coffers of the Danish state have never been fuller, with an 80 billion Danish crown surplus. Fogh Rasmussen is more concerned with using state finances to support Danish participation in the bloody imperialist occupation of Iraq than meeting the needs of the workers.

The movement must convene a

national conference to debate how to continue the struggle. Karsten Ditlevsen of the Unity List, a reformist electoral party composed by different leftist groups, has already proposed this.

Conference should

- Build local committees of action that can co-ordinate the struggles and organise demonstrations, occupations and strikes and offer solidarity. Such committees should take their inspiration from the school students and be delegate-based bodies. They should also convene themselves as a national body to lead the offensive.

- Fight for a general strike against the government's neoliberal offensive. It was only after a general strike started to become real possibility that Jacques Chirac and Dominic de Villepin stepped back in France earlier this year over the CPE.

- Drive the bosses' government from office.

The movement must also discuss what sort of government Danish

workers and the anti-cuts movement need. We need a workers' government that breaks from administering capitalism and its cuts. Such a government should also immediately stop the Danish involvement in the occupation of Iraq and support for US imperialism in the Middle East. It could tear up the racist laws that the bourgeois government has been implementing, and fight for equal rights regardless of national origin or ethnicity.

A workers' government would have to eradicate the market and the bosses' state – and replace it with socialist planning and a state based on the workers' own democratic organisations and defence guards.

Such a revolutionary working class government could then go on and play a decisive role in connecting the class struggle in Denmark with the struggle in other countries.

To be able to achieve such a government, a new revolutionary party of the working class, based on its mass organisations and the social movement against government's cuts, has to be built now.

It goes on the offensive

and encourage people to buy their houses. This will hit young people especially hard because they often cannot get a loan from the banks.

- Harsher discipline will be enforced in schools with minister Jan Bjørklund advocating more examinations even for 7 year olds. Teachers are to be given more rights to punish students. He also wants to separate academic from vocational education.

- The bosses, however, will have a reduction in the tax on capital wealth with 50 per cent as a starter and complete abolition next year.

Workers' resistance

Several unions are organising national demonstrations on 15 November and the syndicalist union has announced a political strike on the same day. Another demonstration has been called by the LO (Swedish TUC) on 14 December and a branch of the Industrial Metal Union has also raised the call for political strike action. Despite this,

no strike action has been called by the LO leaders.

Any attempt to weaken workers' rights, such as for unemployment benefits, must be met by the same response they received in France – mass mobilisations and strikes against all further privatisation and to renationalise those sectors already privatised by the former government.

In other words, these defensive struggles must not only unite their forces but prepare to go onto the offensive. A successful struggle against the government cannot stop at only mobilising around defensive demands. The workers' movement now has to start to develop an alternative programme.

But the reformist leadership cannot be trusted to lead this struggle. The current leaders, after being in power for 12 years, have weakened the workers' organisations and made them pay for the crisis of capitalism. They paved the way for the right's current offensive.

The reformists' base of support

has been seriously reduced. Social Democracy, which gained 2.5 million votes in 1994, got only 1.94 million in September, its worst result since 1928. The Left Party, 11.99 per cent or 631,011 votes in 1998, lost half its voters, down to 5.85 per cent or 324,722 votes in September.

In the elections, Arbetarmakt, Swedish section of the League for the Fifth International, called for critical support for the Social Democrats and the Left Party while emphasising the need to fight for a revolutionary action programme against the bosses' offensive which would be unleashed whichever party won.

The dramatic decline in working class support for both of the reformist parties raises the question whether they still retain the support of the layer of working class militants who must lead the fightback against the bosses' offensive. As yet, there is no evidence of any significant forces emerging to the reformist parties. The most likely source of resistance to the bosses'

offensive, therefore, is from the lower echelons of the unions and the reformist parties and the youth organisations affiliated to them.

To these workers we say, put your leaders to the test: demand that they fight to defend the working class against the present attacks! Mobilise all the mass organisations of the labour movement. Stop accepting privileges and break with the politics of class collaboration. We believe the experience will show that these leaders and their parties are totally unfit for the class struggle, that a new revolutionary mass party as an urgent necessity.

Above all, we have to encourage workers and youth to take the struggle into their own hands and thus avoid the disaster that leaving the struggle in the hands of the reformist leaders can bring.

In this way, through united action and patient political debate, we can win workers away from reformism and to revolutionary politics.

REVIEW

Russia: Putin tightens his grip on power

Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was murdered last month. She was a trenchant critic of Russian president Vladimir Putin's war crimes in Chechnya. *Keith Sellick* looks how her work and other recent books have recorded the rise of Putin's dictatorial powers

Anna Politkovskaya was gunned down last month in a lift in her Moscow apartment block. She was the 13th journalist to be killed, "contract-style," during Putin's presidency. In her book *Putin's Russia* (published 2004) she charts Russian crimes during the war in Chechnya, Putin's very own contribution to the "war on terror." In this war, according to Anatoly Kulikov, deputy chair of the Russian State Duma committee on security, 500,000 Chechens have fled their homes and up to 40,000 been killed.

In her book Politkovskaya uses the case of Colonel Yuri Budanov to expose the brutality of the Russian war in Chechnya. In March 2000, a drunken Budanov beat one of his own officers – for refusing to blow up a Chechen village during an exercise – before setting off in search of "terrorists". He found 18-year-old Elza Kungaeva, tied her up, took her back to his quarters, tortured and raped her before strangling her to death.

The military court, which tried Budanov, did everything in its power to let him off, including enlisting the psychiatric testimony of the Serbsky Institute, which under Stalinism was used to diagnose dissidents as schizophrenics. But for once international pressure forced Putin to act in support of "justice" and the judge sentenced Budanov to ten years.

Politkovskaya also charts the ferocious rise of anti-Chechen racism after the Moscow theatre siege in October 2002. The Moscow police picked up Chechens, planted drugs or grenades on them, held them without trial or charge, and ordered their employers to sack them.

She writes about how a school parents committee tried to have the seven-year-old Chechen Sirazhdi Digaev expelled for "bullying". "We Russians are making sure Sirazhdi never loses his sense of being a pariah," Politkovskaya says. In the context of the media onslaught on Muslims, backed by Labour ministers in the aftermath of the 2005 London bombings, this should be a warning to us of where such actions can end.

PUTIN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Financial Times journalist Ian Jack's *Inside Putin's Russia* (published 2005) describes Putin's foreign relations and the rise of the security services in government. After 9/11, Putin offered full support to Bush's bombing and invasion of Afghanistan, agreed to a US base in Uzbekistan and joined up to the "war on terror". But



Anna Politkovskaya

in his second term, Putin has turned towards cultivating better relations with China and India, making agreements with central Asian republics, and exerting pressure on neighbours such as Ukraine and, currently, Georgia. But despite the wars and threats he still has his admirers in Blair and (till his downfall) Berlusconi. The European Union has generally been silent over Putin's war crimes in Chechnya.

Hand-in-hand with this more assertive foreign policy has been the rise of the FSB (the successor to the KGB) and the military. By 2002, 58 per cent of top federal government posts and 70 per cent of regional government posts were held either by the military or FSB. The figure was less than 5 per cent in 1988 under Mikhail Gorbachev. The FSB has also works with the judiciary in taming any opposition to Putin from within the new ruling class, people such as the business oligarchs, Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Vladimir Potanin, who became multi-billionaires in the 1990s by buying state enterprises cheaply (or illegally).

Their ill-gotten fortunes – and the need for police enforcers to protect them – eventually drew them into politics. But their big mistake was to imagine they could outmanoeuvre and replace Putin. Restored capitalism in Russia necessitates a bonapartist ruler, using a powerful military-bureaucratic state apparatus to enforce his will – even against major individuals or whole sections of the ruling class itself. Had Berezovsky and co. known or remembered

their Marxism they might not have made this elementary mistake. Instead they were hounded out of the country or put into jail and their huge corporations, like the oil giant Yukos, summarily taken over.

The Russian state's increasingly open dictatorial methods have been justified by the "war on terror" in Chechnya. And here there are parallels with Bush and Blair's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: the lies and cover-ups, the brutality and killings under the occupations, the curtailment of democratic rights such as Blair's anti-terror legislation, Bush's Patriot Act and Putin's rule from the Kremlin, and the increasing use of racism to isolate and persecute Muslims and Chechens.

THE RUSSIAN LEFT

But despite the increasing repression and corruption, the working class is organising. The Russian leftist Boris Kagarlitsky, speaking in London over the summer, described how independent unions are being formed and more strikes occurring, especially in multinational companies. One example of the repression that he cited was the 2006 Social Forum, where more than 600 activists were detained and prevented from attending it (in 2005, 1,200 activists had attended). He said there was no space for a reformist left as there was no money being spent on welfare or infrastructure. The \$200 billion stabilisation fund is only used to buy US government bonds.

He described how the Russian left split earlier this year with the right-wing going off to support the so-called democratic opposition to Putin – the alliance of former chess world champion Gary Kasparov with the racist Communist Party of the Russian Federation and the fascist National Bolsheviks.

Kagarlitsky likened the current period as being similar to the late 1890s: Marxists must go to the workers and build an all-Russian workers party with a revolutionary programme. He said that this programme must be a transitional programme – one that takes up social and democratic goals. Given the size of the Russian working class (Kagarlitsky estimates it is 80 per cent of the population), the role of Russia on the world stage and the poverty and immiseration of its people, it is a task that is both necessary and attainable. And one which, if successful, will have the same impact as the founding of the first Russian revolutionary party – the Bolsheviks.

NORTH KOREA

The big power diplomacy behind North Korean nuclear crisis

By Natalie Sedley

The recent testing of a nuclear device by the “communist” dictatorship of North Korea sparked condemnation by the imperialist powers, with the US envoy to North Korea, Christopher Hill, hypocritically declaring, “North Korea needs to understand that the rules apply to everybody”. This comes from a country that currently possesses around 10,000 nuclear warheads, and expects this enormous military might to be kept beyond challenge, particularly by a country they have singled out as an “outpost of tyranny”, in a region where they, along with Japan and the European powers, have important strategic and economic interests to protect.

This act of rebellion will now be met with UN sanctions, definitely including a ban on luxury goods, trade, travel and financial transactions relating to the arms trade. Beyond this, however, the scope of the sanctions and any further action are still under debate. America’s aims may be tempered by the varying interests of the other governments, who previously took part in six-party negotiations with North Korea - Russia, China, Japan and South Korea.

Of these, Japan is the most willing to “get tough”. Previously North Korea’s third largest trading partner, since the test, it has already banned all North Korean exports and citizens from entering Japan. Vladimir Putin, on the other hand, warned against pushing their government into a corner and partially excused the nuclear test on the basis that the negotiations adopted the wrong “tone”.

A greater hindrance to the imperialists’ plan, however, is posed by China and South Korea, both countries with expanding interests in North Korea. Since 1998, South Korea has pursued a “sunshine strategy” to coax Kim Jong Il’s regime into greater co-operation, the cost of which has been high. According to the opposition party, \$1.2 billion has been given to projects such as the Mount Kumgang resort just north of the border. Despite the US believing that this generates cash for the North’s nuclear programme, the South Korean regime continues to defend its strategy.

South Korea is also cautious about sanctions, to which they have only reluctantly agreed. This reflects both short term priorities and long term goals. South Korea is directly threatened by the North’s massive military presence. The South’s strategy is to encourage gradual change, while



maintaining stability in the North: hence their massive food aid programme.

This stands in sharp contrast to the US strategy to isolate the North. For the South, this raises the prospect of the collapse of the regime, followed by unification, which would impose unbearable economic costs. This conflict was highlighted last month, when the Washington pressured Seoul to join its Proliferation Security Initiative, an alliance directed against the North.

CHINA'S CO-OPERATION

By contrast, China, expected by some to be the biggest obstacle to US plans, has been much more open to co-operation. Beijing is anxious to maintain its role as an intermediary between the Bush administration and the North, but this only partly explains calls on Kim Jong Il to stop the development of nuclear weapons. Another factor is the fear that Japan and South Korea might decide to follow suit, leaving China surrounded with potentially hostile states possessing nuclear weapons.

Unlike the US, China is not pushing for regime change in North Korea, where she currently has important economic interests. For example, Chinese state-owned companies are proposing to invest more than \$880m in an iron-ore mine near the Chinese border. While China will sup-

port the imposition of sanctions in principle, she will not approve of the severity of US proposals. A collapse of the already precarious North Korean economy would terrify the Chinese state, particularly given the potential for mass migration across the 1,400km border. There is already unrest China’s north eastern provinces, caused by widespread lay-offs in state-owned industries.

A crisis in North Korea thus poses an immense threat of destabilisation and crisis in the region. Such fears extend beyond China, with Western analysts also worrying that an isolated North Korea might “behave even more badly” or that sanctions would trigger its collapse and unleash nuclear mayhem. The conflicting viewpoints of the big players, far from representing different moral stances on nuclear proliferation, are all closely tied to economic and diplomatic interests.

For the Bush administration the main fear is that the arming of North Korea will challenge US hegemony across the region and give confidence to Iran to continue her development of nuclear weapons. The US is therefore pushing for the harshest possible measures, rediscovering rhetoric about the “axis of evil” to encourage support for this stance. It is also seeking to use the situation as a lever to bring China, a potentially rival state, under its wing in a struggle against common enemies.

By acquiescing in the adoption of sanctions, Beijing has maintained its decades-long policy of never directly confronting Washington’s interests. This is essential because of China’s economic dependency on the US. At the same time, Beijing has been careful to reassert its position as the key negotiator with the North.

At the core of all this is the America’s role as the world’s strongest imperialist superpower, the self-appointed global policeman that is itself above the law. This superpower uses its immense military might to push through its neoliberal economic agenda: tearing down every barrier to trade, enforcing privatisation, and attacking trade union and workers’ rights. Any regime that politically, militarily or economically challenges this hegemony becomes a target.

North Korea, as a relic of the Stalinist bureaucratically planned economies of the twentieth century, is certainly such a regime. While condemning its despotic leadership, socialists must defend its right to stand up to imperialist domination, to organise its economy on the basis of planning not profit, and to possess nuclear weapons just as the imperialist states do.

WORKER'S HISTORY

The crushing of the

In the second of a two-part article, **Joy MacReady** looks at how the lack of a revolutionary leadership and the treacherous role of the Stalinists were able to crush the Hungarian revolutionary movement in November 1956

At the end of October, under the pressure of the masses the Stalinists appointed Imre Nagy as Prime Minister. The country had been brought to a standstill by a general strike. The masses had driven out the hated secret police, the ÁVH, and were demanding the withdrawal of the Soviet troops.

The Soviet troops had been brought in swiftly from western Hungary to crush the uprising, evoking a non-existent clause of the Warsaw Treaty, but the soldiers quickly began fraternising with the locals. They had been in the country for some time and knew far more about the situation than the troops of the second intervention that were rushed in from Rumania. Many Soviet soldiers deserted to the Hungarians.

Each day the papers printed reports from the provinces that showed that the revolt was nationwide. Revolutionary councils were formed in the principle towns: Debrecen, Győr, Magyaróvár, Tatabánya, Miskolc, and Veszprém. Power was in the workers hands, as well as the railways, which refused to transport Soviet troops and supplies.

The Stalinists frantically tried to regain control as the Soviet intervention was falling apart. Then Nagy played the role he was brought in to play – to calm the situation, to call an end to the fighting, and to disarm the working class. He announced that the next election would be under the multi-party system; he called on the Soviet troops to withdraw from the capital and promised to begin negotiations for a complete withdrawal from the country. He recognised the organs set up by the revolution and asked for their support.

On 31 October, the fighting ended and the Soviet troops began to leave Budapest. The insurgents were releas-



ing political prisoners – up to 5,500 were freed. Budapest began to look more like normal – the buses started running and work was beginning again in the large factories.

Although some budding revolutionary organisations, many formed from ex-members of the Communist Party, warned that the freedom fighters should not to lay down their arms until the demands of the revolution had been fully implemented, after a decade of severe state repression, their organisations were weak and they did not have the influence needed to lead the struggle.

The masses also believed that Nagy could resolve the issue of state power and so the workers' councils refused to challenge him and the Stalinists for political power. The committees saw themselves as potential alternative local government but ceded central political power to Nagy.

At this point the effective power in Hungary was divided between the Nagy government and the armed people themselves, as represented and led by their national committees. It was dual power. But without a political party with a revolutionary programme that laid out in concrete terms the need for revolution, to struggle for power with the Nagy government, to call for "All Power to the

Workers Councils", to smash the stranglehold of the Stalinist bureaucrats and re-order society, the revolution would stall and eventually fail.

Nagy of course had no intention to resolve the question of power in the hands of the workers. "My friends, the revolution has been victorious," he told a mass demonstration in front of the parliament on 31 October. He demobilised the people and lulled them into the belief that the struggle was over. Yet, at that moment, Nagy was in secret negotiations with Russian officers and their troops were already on their way back on the eve of 1 November.

Hungary was important for geo-political reasons, it was an important buffer for the Russians from the West, it was industrialised and had natural resources. But above all, if they lost control of Hungary then revolutionary movements would spring up across all Soviet Republics, as was seen in Poland earlier in the year. It was necessary to repress the Hungarian uprising before the unravelling began.

On 2 November, the Soviet media launched an all-out attack against Nagy and the "clique of counter-revolutionaries who had come to power in Hungary". On 4 November, after the Hungarian delegation had been arrested, the Soviet

For the first part of this article go to <http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?id=130,1161,0,0,1,0>

Hungarian uprising

army launched a surprise attack on Budapest at dawn. Armed resistance was hastily organised but it was powerless to stop the Soviet forces.

Janos Kádár, the first secretary of the central committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (the re-named Stalinist party) announced that a new government had been formed which has appealed for the Soviet Union for military assistance: "The Hungarian Government of Revolutionary Workers and Peasants requests the assistance of the Soviet Army Command in helping our nation smash the forces of reaction and restore law and order to the country in the interest of our people, the working class and the peasantry." Nagy sought political asylum in the Yugoslav embassy.

Despite a general strike and fierce street fighting against superior Soviet armoured units, the Soviet's military intervention was effectively over by 10-11 November. Young workers accounted for 80 to 90 per cent of the wounded, while students represented 3 – 5 per cent. Nearly 20,000 Hungarians were killed and there was aerial bombardment of the major proletarian strongholds.

The workers tried to prolong the revolution by forming the Central Workers' Council on 14 November, but it was too late – Stalinists had regained control and the repression began again. Thousands of people were sent to prison and Soviet forced labour camps. Some 2,000 people were executed.

The events of October and November 1956 in Hungary showed the workers' and students' will to fight when they took up arms against two Soviet military interventions. They toppled a hated Stalinist government and smashed the secret police, the ÁVH. They created workers and revolutionary councils that became the real power in every factory and most localities.

The workers organisations and the government were in a struggle for power and a dual power situation developed. The Hungarian revolution showed that without a revolutionary programme – and a political party to fight for it – the spontaneity of the masses could not develop a strategy to take power and the uprising was crushed.

The tragedy of the Hungarian revolution was that the workers were unable to create a revolutionary leadership and programme of action that could establish a government and take power to defend the political revolution and extend it to the rest of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

Events leading to October

1944: Fall of dictator Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya, the last commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian navy who skated very close to fascism first with Mussolini and then with Hitler. Invasion by Red Army to liberate Hungary from the Nazis - and then they stayed. In late 1944, the "Political Police Section" was established (ÁVO, later ÁVH) under the Stalinists control. Mátyás Rákosi becomes Communist Party leader - with Stalin's backing.

1947: Exposure of "counter-revolutionary conspiracy" of Hungarian Unity. Many politicians flee Hungary.

1949: Trial of László Rajk, interior minister, on a charge of being Tito's agent in a plot to overthrow the People's Democratic regime in Hungary and to restore capitalism. His "confession" was used against him and he was executed.

1950: The first Five Year Plan, launched 1 January, was aimed at accelerating the programme of "Socialist industrialisation" and improving the country's defence capacity. State control over the direction of labour was reinforced by the abolition of the right to choose one's place of work and the right to strike.

March 1953: Death of Stalin

July 1953: Imre Nagy, rival to Rákosi and loyal Stalinist, presented the "new course" in order to improve living standards consumer goods production would be encouraged at the expense of heavy industry. Collective farmers would be allowed to leave the agricultural cooperatives and take their own property with them. The second Five Year Plan was never implemented. It was to begin in January 1956, but the new plan was not published, although its directives were only described in very general terms and the emphasis was back on industry.

1956: Khrushchev denounced the "crimes of Stalin" in February 1956 at the 12th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. In fact he carefully restricted himself to revealing the dictators crimes against the bureaucracy itself. Promises were made to relax the police terror regime, to open the labour camps and improve living standards.

In June and July series of strikes in Sepal and Greater Budapest. Meeting of the Petöfi Circle, called by the Union of Working Youth

At the end of July the workers of Poznan, Poland, struck, demonstrated and brutally fired upon by the internal security forces which killed 54 and wounded at least 300.

October saw students in Szeged march for the right to form own organisation and on the 23 the student's of Budapest's Technological University marching in solidarity with Poland.

Peter Fryer - obituary

The 50th anniversary of the Hungarian uprising also sees the death of Peter Fryer, who as a young reporter on the *Daily Worker* exposed the Stalinist lies about the uprising.

Fryer joined the Communist Party in 1945 and had worked on the *Daily Worker* for nine years when he was sent to Hungary in October 1956. His task was to report on the "counter-revolutionary" uprising.

At the border with Austria he saw 80 bodies - shot on a demonstration. Soon after he attended the election of a workers' council at a state farm. The workers apologised for the election taking all day because "we have never done this before."

During the lull in the fighting in late October Fryer edited an English Language paper that gave full support to the workers fight.

After the repression, he wrote A

Hungarian Tragedy, which was a defence of the revolution. The book played an important role in the debates in the Communist Party in the lead up to its 1957 congress and led to the expulsion of Fryer.

Fryer, along with a number of other Communist Party militants, joined Gerry Healy's band of Trotskyists who had intervened vigorously into the CP's crisis. However, he soon fell foul of Healy's regime and did not return until Healy's own demise in the 1980s.

He was also the author of *Staying Power*, a history of black people in Britain and pursued his interests in history and music.

Fryer should always be remembered for his brave reporting of the truth about the Hungarian uprising and the part he played in defending the revolution and delivering a blow against the lies and slanders of the Stalinists.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

The Left Organises

On 3-5 November, 150 delegates from all over Europe met in Frankfurt for the first meeting of the Preparatory Assembly of the European Social Forum. *Martin Suchanek* was there

The EPA was assembled to discuss the results of the fourth European Social Forum held in Athens in June this year and the way forward for the anti capitalist movement. Though as usual the main organisations from France, Italy and Germany talked-out any serious proposals for change in its structure, its capacity to take concerted action against neoliberalism and war, the growth of forces calling for change and willing to fight for it was a real step forward.

The largest delegations in Frankfurt came from Greece, France, Germany, Italy and Turkey. The attendance from Eastern Europe including Russia has also markedly increased. There were smaller, but active delegations from Austria, the Basque Country, Belgium, Denmark, Portugal and Sweden, plus a representative from Palestine. The biggest "absence" was the British, including a complete "no show" from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

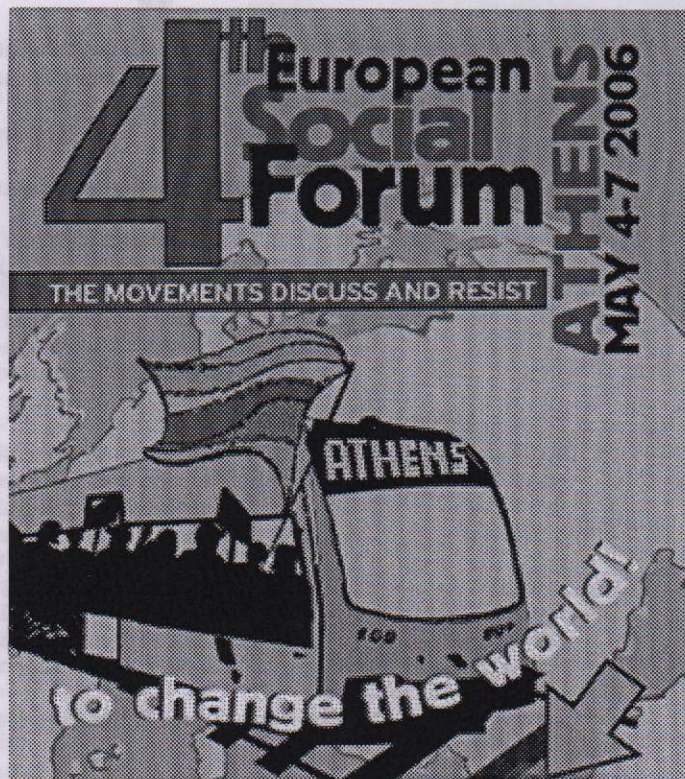
All the major forces in the ESF were present. On the right wing, the European Left Party, the trade union bureaucrats, the NGOs and Attac, There were also the more unions like COBAS from Italy.

However, the role of the "centre", traditionally played by the centrist forces of the Fourth International (USFI) and the IST-SWP was this time only filled by the FI alone. All the SWP's sister organisations -even Linksruck from Germany -boycotted the meeting.

The EPA started on Saturday morning, with a report and balance sheet of the Athens ESF and a discussion on the "future for the movement".

There was a general agreement, that Athens was a very vibrant, lively event and had a very large participation from youth and radical working class activists. Also the number of trade unions sending delegations had increased. It had drawn in large numbers from Turkey and increased the participation from Eastern Europe

That Athens was much more rad-



ical, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist did not please everyone. Also the lifting of the ban on political parties was contested. Athens also saw the emergence of an organised opposition to the dominance of reformists and their hangers-on - an Anti-imperialist Space.

Many organisations - including the Creek Social Forum itself, the Turkish organisations, immigrant organisations, some of the delegates from Italy, the organisations from the Anti-imperialist Space - saw all this as a real achievement.

Others were far from pleased. Judith Dellheim from the German PDS urged the need to go back to the ban on parties, supposedly in order allow their members and leaders to "speak freely as individuals." In reality this means freedom from being held responsible for the deeds of their parties such as Rifondazione's participation in a neoliberal and imperialist government.

Likewise representatives from Attac and ARCI (Italy) expressed their concern, that the ESF would "narrow" its basis and become dom-

inated by anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist forces and communists of all sorts.

Most of the organisations at the ESF saw the main problems of the ESF as "lack of efficiency and transparency". Of course, we are far from denying this. But behind these criticisms lies a political struggle, as a speaker of the L5I pointed out.

Whilst there has been a real increase in struggles over the past year or so, the ESF and the EPA have failed to either fully reflect this or have an impact back upon these struggles. It is not a question whether or not political parties are welcome as such, but what they stand for - for resistance to the attacks on workers and the oppressed or for carrying out neoliberal austerity measures and imperialist interventions. How can we ignore the fact that parties like RC in Italy are now actively pursuing the latter course? Nor can we ignore the fact that parties like PCF in France or the PDS -Left Party in Germany are heading in this direction. To be silent on these issues

is the biggest "lack of transparency imaginable. The problem of the ESF therefore is not that it is "too radical" as Attac had claimed, but because it was and is not "radical, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist" enough.

Speakers from the "European Confederation of Oppressed Immigrants" or the Turkish newspaper "Revolutionary Proletariat" also argued that the ESF (and the EPA) had to become organs to co-ordinate struggles and take them forward rather than remain just talking shops.

An Anti-imperialist Network

Up to now, the more radical forces have worked in isolation from each other. On the Friday before the ESF there was, as usual, a day for network meetings. This time one of them was the Anti-imperialist Network formed out of the anti-imperialist space in Athens. It gathered organisations like the Organisation of Greece Communists, Turkish organisations of Stalinist origin, the PFLP, the Basque nationalist Left and youth, and the League for the Fifth International and the youth organisation Revolution.

Its aim is better to co-ordinate those who want to turn the ESF into a body to mobilise for the struggles of workers, the immigrants, the youth, the nationally and racially oppressed and fight the reformist parties and NGOs who are blocking of these steps.

It agreed to call for maximum support for the Beirut International Solidarity Conference (16-19 November) to mobilise together against the G 8 in Heiligendamm (2-8 June 2007), building a mass demonstration and an anti-imperialist/anti-capitalist block on it, to organise its own seminars and workshops within the counter summit.

Also it was agreed to cooperate closely with the anti-repression-network and the anti-war network, which itself agreed on an international day of action in support of Palestine on 17-18. April 2007.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation. We fight to:

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
- Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
- Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
- Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
- Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty.

This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.

We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

We fight racism and national oppres-

sion. We defend refugees and asylum seekers from the racist actions of the media, the state and the fascists. We oppose all immigration controls. When racists physically threaten refugees and immigrants, we take physical action to defend them. We fight for no platform for fascism.

We fight for women's liberation: from physical and mental abuse, domestic drudgery, sexual exploitation and discrimination at work. We fight for free abortion and contraception on demand. We fight for an end to all discrimination against lesbians and gay men and against their harassment by the state, religious bodies and reactionaries.

We fight youth oppression in the family and society: for their sexual freedom, for an end to super-exploitation, for the right to vote at sixteen, for free, universal education with a living grant.

We fight bureaucracy in the unions. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice, and earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. Rank and file trade unionists must organise to dissolve the bureaucracy. We fight for nationalisation without compensation and under workers control.

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by force. Though

these parties still have roots in the working class, politically they defend capitalism. We fight for the unions to break from Labour and form for a new workers party. We fight for such a party to adopt a revolutionary programme and a Leninist combat form of organization.

We fight Stalinism. The so-called communist states were a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite, based on the expropriation of the capitalists. Those Stalinist states that survive - Cuba and North Korea - must, therefore, be defended against imperialist blockade and attack. But a socialist political revolution is the only way to prevent their eventual collapse.

We reject the policies of class collaboration: "popular fronts" or a "democratic stage", which oblige the working class to renounce the fight for power today. We reject the theory of "socialism in one country". Only Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution can bring victory in the age of imperialism and globalisation. Only a global revolution can consign capitalism to history.

With the internationalist and communist goal in our sights, proceeding along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International.

That is what Workers Power is fighting for. If you share these goals - join us.

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FIGHTING UNIONS CONFERENCE

Hosted by Respect

10:30-6:00pm

11 November

Shoreditch Town Hall

London E1 6JX.

email sam@respectcoalition.org

PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY: THE WAR ON TERROR AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

Hosted by Stop the War Coalition

10:00-5:30pm

18 November

Camden Centre Judd Street

London WC1H

www.stopwar.org.uk

ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Hosted by Workers Power

1:00pm on Saturday onwards

25-26 November

Leeds University Student Union

£5 waged/£2.50 unwaged

Contact Workers Power for more details and to book place

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The fight against climate change

By Kam Kumar

The Stern report, published in October 2006, made headline news in Britain and the USA. Former World Bank official and Head of the Government Economics Service Sir Nicholas Stern teamed up with Al Gore, former vice US president, to take on the task of convincing the US to wake up to the threat of climate change.

The report predicts catastrophe for the planet unless action is taken now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But we already knew this. The causes for climate change are understood and have been public knowledge for some years. Environmental scientists and campaigners have been issuing warnings and bleak predictions for years.

So what is different about the Stern report and why is the government seen to be taking it seriously after sweeping aside the issue for so long? Perhaps it is because this report is a study into the economics of climate change.

Whereas environmental scientists have warned about the disastrous damage being done to the planet and its consequences for millions of people, this report gives special attention to the "economic ruin" that climate chaos is set to inflict on profits in the first world.

Stern warns "if we don't take global warming seriously we are going to see a massive downturn in global economies". This angle has meant that capitalist ears have suddenly pricked up. Now a major bourgeois economist is saying that unless action is taken now, there will be a 20 per cent drop in world GDP (£3.68 trillion). However, if urgent action is taken, this figure lowers to £184 billion - a huge saving.

The report describes what many have been predicting for years - fatal environmental disasters such as: extensive drought, agricultural ruin with plummeting food production, floods from rising sea levels displacing up to 200 million "climate refugees", melting glaciers causing water shortages for 1 in 6 of the world's population (currently a billion people), and 40 per cent of species becoming extinct by 2050.

This situation is catastrophic and will mean millions of people will die as a direct result of climate change; basic life needs will be further threatened - access to water, food production, health and land use.

However, as a true servant of capitalism it

is plain to see that Sir Nicholas Stern has "the economy" (i.e. profits) as his main concern. The same priority - money over millions - was voiced by Margaret Beckett, when she said "this is not just an environmental problem, this is a defence problem". Stern's prediction of economic recessions and 200 million climate refugees searching for first world shelter is fuelling the capitalists' nightmares.

This report may aim to pressure the US to commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but so far Bush has kept quiet. However Mohammed Barkindo, secretary general of the OPEC oil producing countries, called Stern's proposals to cut emissions "rather alarming".

In the past the US position was notori-

The profit-driven capitalist system is incompatible with the needs of humanity

ously indifferent to the consequences of climate change and openly admitted that it would not be prepared to upset the big oil companies and businesses by committing them to reducing carbon burning. Bush would not upset them because it would mean a loss of profits for the US economy. Since the US produces one quarter of all the world's greenhouse gasses, despite having only 4 per cent of the population, international action to tackle climate change would need to include the US.

But the measures needed, even as described by Stern, will mean bad news for US big business. It would mean a shift away from fossil fuel production to more renewable forms of energy like wind energy, bio fuel and enforcing power stations to reduce CO₂ emissions. This of course is a very basic minimum - and would still require tackling the enormous waste of energy under capitalism. But the simple fact is that the big corporations will not agree to tackle this because it would mean enormous loss of profit.

This exposes the profit-driven capitalist system as incompatible with the needs of humanity. Production for profit now stands

in direct contradiction to the survival of the natural basis on which the production and reproduction of human life depends.

The damage to be caused by climate change will affect everyone - but not with equivalent force (at least not at first, anyway). Three quarters of the world's population has never benefited from clean water, electricity and energy luxuries that the west enjoys daily. Of course, the hardest hit by global warming will be the poorer parts of the world. Poorer countries are more dependent on agriculture which is the sector most affected by climate change. Even in Europe it was estimated that the heat waves of 2003 caused 35,000 deaths and agricultural loss amounted to \$15 billion, but the Stern report warns that this will be "commonplace by the end of the century".

Stern's main proposal is to establish carbon pricing and trading in entitlement to carbon emissions. This, he believes, would allow market forces to work to tackle climate change. But the whole idea is a capitalist fraud. It means super rich airline and airport tycoons can continue with their plans to expand operations and sharply raise the level of CO₂ they emit. In turn they will buy other countries' entitlements to carbon emissions, adding further inequality to world development and blocking efforts to curtail the worst polluters.

Environmentalists like George Monbiot demand that capitalist governments should change their policies, but working class people, with no ties to capital, need to go further. We should demand massive investment in sustainable energy production funded by taxing the corporations and the rich, expropriation of the big polluters, a huge publicly funded expansion of public transport, redeployment of all workers in down-scaled polluting industries to jobs on equal pay.

Above all, we should fight for the market economy itself to be abolished. Competition in the market means businesses will not allow their costs to rise and their profits to fall, and even if they do a competitor would drive them out of business and carry on burning fossil fuels.

This spells disaster. The market needs to be removed and in its place the working class needs to establish a democratically planned economy - only under workers control can be global production be planned fairly and adopt responsible policies for the planet and for the future of human society.