

workers power

revolution
against
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capitalism

British section of the League for the Fifth International

**DEMONSTRATE:
END THE OCCUPATION OF**

IRAQ

Saturday 27 September, central London

More information: contact Stop the War Coalition 020 7053 2153/4/5/6 or www.stopwar.org.uk

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The Hutton Inquiry is a smokescreen

Far from 'lifting the lid' on the workings of government, it is a distraction from an obvious fact that needs no investigation – Tony Blair and the whole machinery of government lied to the people to justify the unprovoked attack on Iraq.

They said the West was threatened by Iraqi weapons of "mass destruction", meaning chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. There was no evidence for it – it was a lie.

They said Iraq tried to import uranium from Niger. The evidence was forged – it was a lie.

They said there was a real danger that Iraq could launch an attack on Britain within 45 minutes. There was no evidence for it – it was a lie.

Blair's chief weapons expert knew these claims were lies and hinted as much to the press. For this he was hunted down and threatened by the Ministry of Defence and the security services.

By the time millions of people were marching against the war on the streets, while opinion polls were showing a clear majority against war, while Labour MPs were coming under massive pressure to vote against the war, Blair had already decided to join the US attack. British forces were already committed to action.

Back in September 2002, British planes patrolling over Iraq switched to offensive action, bombing Iraqi air defences in preparation for a ground attack. The lies followed after: to "create" a legal basis for an illegal war, and to "create" a majority in favour of it.

Blair really does have blood on his hands. Not just the blood of a top security expert who suffered an attack of conscience, but the blood of scores of thousands of Iraqi people: residents who were blasted from the air and then left to rot.

Iraqi cities are left without basic amenities; civilians gunned down by trigger happy GIs in drive-by shootings; thousands crippled and maimed by Bush and Blair's real weapons of indiscriminate destruction, including sickening cluster bombs and napalm.

No wonder there is resistance and

no wonder it is growing. Bush, Blair and the media try to claim that the Iraqi resistance is just from "remnants of the regime" – but this too is an obvious lie. A mass movement is emerging against the occupation: in protests, pickets and marches on the streets; in stone throwing by young people against tanks and jeeps, in armed attacks on soldiers and barracks; in suicide bombings against the institutions of foreign control and collaborators with the US-appointed authority.

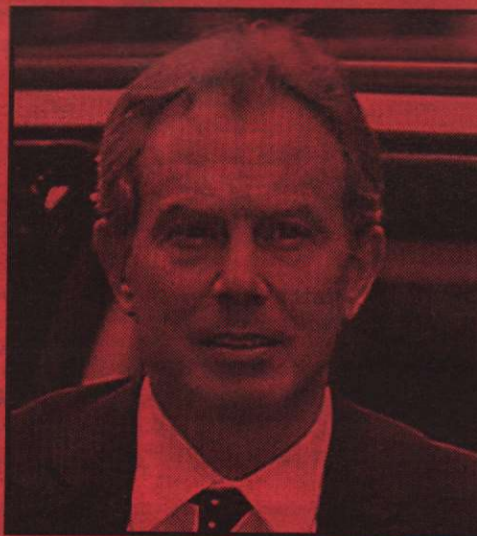
And the resistance is not just in Iraq. Here too, the millions who marched in February have since seen all their doubts confirmed. Our opposition comes not just from a sense of solidarity with the victims of Bush and Blair's grab for oil and global domination. It comes from the realisation that we have been fooled – that the enemy of the Iraqi people also plans to attack the living standards and conditions of working people here. They can find billions to attack Iraq but can't give the postal workers a decent pay rise or give students a grant. Above all there is the realisation that for all our democratic freedoms, when the chips are down, our views don't count.

Let's March in London against the occupation on 27 September. Let's keep the movement against the occupation going by broadening it into protests at army bases, trade union boycotts of military goods and transports, blockades of US companies that are profiting from the looting of Iraq.

Let's not allow the antiwar movement to dissipate, but broaden it by creating People's Assemblies in every town and city, drawing in representatives from every strike against low pay, every anti-racist, environmental and anti-corporate initiative, every workplace, every estate where people are fed up with Blair and want change.

And let's pile the pressure onto the union leaders and antiwar MPs to stop playing Blair's game: break with New Labour for good. It's time we had a new party of working class people, not one that rules for the oil billionaires and the warmongers.

THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT



- Guilty of lies
- Guilty of mass murder
- Guilty of war crimes

THE PEOPLE'S SENTENCE

- Bring down the war criminal Blair
- Build people's assemblies in every city
- Build a new workers' party

Postal workers: time to deliver action

Frank Kellerman argues that to beat Royal Mail, postal workers need to learn the lessons of the firefighters dispute

Members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) are currently balloting on strike action over pay. They face a problem well known to every militant firefighter: intransigent bosses edged on by New Labour - and a union leadership hesitant to use the stored up militancy and power of the rank and file.

The Royal Mail bosses face a dilemma created for them by New Labour. The government still owns the Royal Mail and despite toying with part privatisation has never had the guts to do it. But it has done two things to drive the all important "market forces" into the industry. It has backed the regulator, Postcomm, in its insistence on cost cutting at the Royal Mail; and it has encouraged big private postal companies to make inroads into the Royal Mail's monopoly. One spin off of this arrangement is that there are now four companies that could potentially act as strike breakers if a dispute

begins courtesy of New Labour.

As a result, the Royal Mail managers have not sought a head on confrontation with the workforce; their jobs could be on the line as well if the privatisers steal their work. Instead they have relied on negotiations to secure the job losses they have needed so far, as well as piecemeal "modernisation" of the letters business. But now they need even more job losses and bigger changes in work practices. Hence - just like the Fire Brigade employers - they have tried to link this far-reaching change to a goal of the union: the "roadmap to £300 a week".

The leadership of the CWU, at its June 2003 conference, narrowly won the idea of trading job losses for increased pay. But they lost on a vote to restrict a ballot over the new deal to delivery workers alone. The ballot draws in the entire workforce, making the Royal Mail modernisation a make or break confrontation with management.

WHAT WE SAY
Vote Yes for action. Organise a delegate strike committee to put the organisation and negotiations in to the hands of the rank and file.

It is clear that CWU general secretary Billy Hayes does not want this fight. Despite taking a principled stand on issues like the war, Palestine and anti-globalisation, Hayes is the fiercest defender on the left of the union link with New Labour. That conditions the way he approaches this dispute - as part of a wider political battle to "reclaim" the party. He has

seen what happened to his FBU ally Andy Gilchrist who allowed the government to run rings round the union, setting it back both in the workplace and in the inner-party struggle.

Hayes' strategy no doubt is to take a big "Yes" vote from the ballot into negotiations thinking this will wring further concessions out of Post Office bosses. That was effectively Gilchrist's strategy too - but he walked into a confrontation unprepared and led the union into a serious defeat.

Many in the rank and file - particularly the London region and other big cities - are determined to make sure the strings attached to the supposed 14.5 per cent deal on offer are removed and that this opportunity to gain a substantial pay rise does not pass. They will see the "Yes" vote as a cue for action - not just for more shadow boxing with the Royal Mail bosses.

That's why a rank and file strike

organising committee should be set up as soon as possible, and demand official status, drawing in delegates from every branch and region.

The lesson of the firefighters dispute is when it comes to strike action members can't rely on their leaders - especially when they are tied to New Labour. When you pick a major fight with a public sector employer you must expect and have plans to deal with Labour government inspired witch-hunts and organised strikebreaking. Alastair Campbell may be about to leave but the man who organised the fight against the FBU, Phil Bassett, is still there and ready to add the CWU's scalp to that of the FBU.

Any attempt to sanction strikebreaking by companies like Hays, TPG, UK Mail and Express Dairies should be met with solidarity action by the rest of the trade union movement, and an organised blockade of all their other regular business.

Media hypocrisy on health treatment

Last month, the press claimed that the NHS was going to rack and ruin because of asylum seekers. These "health tourists" were, according to headlines such as "Migrant horde in hospital rampage" (The Sun) and "Asylum threat to hospitals" (Daily Express), costing the NHS millions each year.

But the British Medical Association and the Home Office's own research has shown the health treatment asylum seekers receive is poor and patchy at best because of the dispersal system. It found no evidence of the NHS "being milked by immigrants" but plenty of evidence of the second class service provided to asylum seekers.

Furthermore, such headlines ignore the thousands of workers from overseas actively recruited by government and agencies to work in the NHS. In 2001-2 more than 40,000 nurses applied to register in the UK from overseas. The numbers from developing countries such as India, Nigeria, South Africa and

Ghana have significantly increased. The Royal College of Nursing estimates that there are 30,000 overseas nurses working in the NHS and a third of all nurses in London are from overseas.

In 2001, more than 7,000 nurses from the Philippines went to work in the NHS. Another 6,000 went to work in countries such as the US, Zimbabwe and Zambia are having difficulties providing basic health care in the countryside because of the loss of their trained nurses. The Philippines government wants the issue discussed at the WTO meeting this month in Cancun.

They come here to escape poverty: a nurse in the Philippines earns the equivalent of just over £100 a month.

The Department of Health bans nurses from certain developing countries from working here but last year more than 3,000 were recruited from "banned" countries.

Unison published a survey last month that found that the number of complaints of racial

discrimination by overseas nurses has risen. These nurses are often put on the lowest grades even though they are highly trained. Some who work in the private sector have been forced to work long hours and had their documents taken away from them so they can't change job. Unison has been campaigning for better rights and safeguards for overseas nurses in the UK.

The UK government has prevented asylum seekers from working in this country, many of whom are health workers. At the same time, it has encouraged the recruitment of nurses from countries that can ill-afford to lose such trained staff.

The NHS is not being bled dry by asylum seekers, it is the UK government that is bleeding dry the health services of developing countries. Workers have a right to work wherever they want. But the rich countries should be forced to compensate poor countries for the years of training that they are effectively getting for free.



Last month, the socialist youth group Revolution organised a picket of the Daily and Sunday Mail offices to protest against its racist asylum coverage. The Mail group has been at the forefront of the hate campaign against immigrants. Anti-racists and Revolution handed out leaflets nailing the tabloid - and government - lies on the issue and kept up a series of lively chants. For more information on Revolution activities go to <http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk>

Teach the government a lesson over Sats

As the new academic year begins government and teachers are on a collision course. The battle will commence over the pupil's key stage tests (known as Sats), writes Kate Foster. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) is set to ballot its members in the first term on a boycott of tests at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The tests, introduced by the Tories, but extended by the Blairites, are hated by teachers, pupils and many parents. Why?

First, Sats have little or no educational value. Schools are awash with tales of ridiculous questions and totally inaccurate marking. One of the most entertaining speeches at the NUT conference was at an anti-Sats fringe meeting when children's author Pat Thomson described how one of her stories had been used for a Key Stage 2 test. She volunteered to sit the test on her own work herself - and failed!

Not surprisingly Pat Thomson is part of a growing band of authors who are opposed to the tests. Such authors include Michael Rosen, Anne Fine, Melvin Burgess and Phillip Pullman. Author and teacher Alan Gibbons is co-ordinating the campaign among authors and one of the objectives is to get authors to refuse to allow their work to be used for the tests.

The tests are so despised by teachers that it has proved to be very difficult to recruit markers for the tests. Most teachers refuse to have anything to do with them. This year student teachers were being recruited to mark the tests. As a result the accuracy of the marking is generally poor.

What you can do to fight Sats

Support for a boycott has been growing over the past year. An indicative ballot in the spring showed the vast majority of primary NUT members supported a boycott. The union leadership, however, failed to go for a full ballot and the tests went ahead.

At the union's annual conference in Harrogate at Easter delegates voted unanimously for a ballot to boycott not only the tests in primary schools but in secondary schools as well. The union leadership, which had originally opposed a boycott at secondary level, changed its position in the face of overwhelming support for a total boycott.

● All NUT members should be campaigning for a "Yes" vote in the ballot. Don't wait for the ballot papers. We need as much pressure as possible on the union leadership. At the end of this academic year there will be an election for the union's general secretary. We need to let every candidate know that

Second, the tests are distorting the curriculum and forcing teachers to "teach to test". Subjects which are not included in the tests, such as drama and music, are disappearing from the primary school curriculum. In their desperation to get children through the test some

any backsliding on the anti-Sats campaign will mean defeat for them. We should remember that the last time we boycotted SATs, when they were first introduced, the action began unofficially, led by rank and file teachers and initiated not by the union but the London Association of Teachers of English (LATE).

● Students should build on the brilliant example of the anti-war movement in schools. The walkouts and protest showed that school students have organisation and power. Get organised and build student boycotts of the Sats.

● Parents and other activists can also get involved in the campaign. Contact your local school and NUT members. Organise street stalls and petitioning. Any union boycott will be immensely strengthened by parental and community support.

For more info: <http://www.stopthesats.plus.com> and <http://www.late.org.uk>

schools are spending most of the year just coaching children to pass. There are booster classes to get some children up to level 5 - the only one that counts in the government statistics. Children are being forced to practice and re-practice for their Sats.

As Pat Thomson said: "If I couldn't get full marks on this, who could? The answer seems to be children who have been trained to pass the Sats. It is not for children who think outside the frame. It is not much good if you know more than the question setters predict. It is not for those who want to think, to imagine." In other words some children are just too clever to pass the test!

Finally, the Sats are used to attack teachers, not to help children develop. The government will fight over Sats, not because they think the tests are good or accurate but because they are part of the strategy of testing and target setting. A strategy that seeks to introduce performance related pay, reward schools who "toe the line" and undermine schools with a predominately working class intake, particularly if they dare to question the dictates of the Blairites in the DfES. It is a strategy of divide and rule, of control and punishment, which has little to do with effective, liberating education. The testing regime has become so pervasive that we now test children more than 80 times in their school careers. Even the head teacher of top public school Winchester College said recently that children in Britain are over tested.

Children do not learn from the endless Sats tests. In fact research shows that they have a detrimental effect on children's learning. The only people to benefit are the private exam boards making massive profits, government statisticians and their masters in the DfES and Downing Street.

In Britain as in Iraq: imperialists detest democracy

With their excuses for war crumbling, Bush and Blair are falling back on the biggest lie of all: that they conquered and occupied Iraq to bring democracy and freedom to the Iraqi people.

Five months have passed since Bush declared the war over. In that time, the occupiers have done nothing to secure democratic rights. No elections called – instead all power is in the hands of American officials. A 'governing council' has been appointed, with representatives chosen by the Americans from reactionary parties including capitalists, nationalists, Islamists, former generals and Ba'athist officials, the heads of tribes and, to their shame, the pro-capitalist Iraqi Communist Party.

The Iraqi population has no right to elect its leaders – and the "governing council" has no right to ... govern. It is a fig leaf for the occupation – a council of collaborators with the dictatorship of the occupiers.

Why do the Americans and British fear the introduction of the very democracy that they claimed as justification for war? Because the majority of the Iraqi people – the working class – is already organising. The working class will undoubtedly use every democratic opportunity available to it to stop the seizure of Iraq's industries and services by western companies and to demand jobs, benefits and control over their own lives.

This has been shown most clearly by the brave struggle of the newly formed Union of the Unemployed in Iraq which has the simple demand: jobs or unemployment benefit. The US regime have rejected this demand and repressed the UI's marches and protests.

The capitalist occupying powers are resisting and curtailing democratic rights because they fear the demands and the power of the workers.

Though Britain is a richer and more stable country than Iraq, the capitalists here take fundamentally the same approach to the democratic rights of the mass of the people. Events of the last year culminating in the Hutton Inquiry have highlighted just



how restricted, stunted and curtailed democracy really is in Great Britain, "the oldest democracy in the world".

The majority of the people and the working class in Britain opposed war. But they had no means to stop it, no democratic mechanisms available to impose their will. The decision was made by the Prime Minister and a small group around him. Against the wishes of most of their constituents, the majority of Labour MPs voted for war in the interests of their petty careers.

But the problem is not simply that the Labour MPs are miserable self-serving individuals who put their own comfort and careers above the lives of the long-suffering Iraqi people. It is that between five-yearly elections the working class has no chance

to replace these representatives, even if they breach their promises, ignore the popular will and lie and deceive to hold onto office.

The Hutton Inquiry reveals also that the secret police – MI5 and MI6 – played a daily role co-ordinating pro-war activities with the Prime Minister, MI6 systematically preparing false reports to deceive the public. When it became clear that David Kelly had expressed his doubts about the fraudulent weapons claims to journalists, MI6 head Scarlett demanded a sinister "security-style interview". Meanwhile MI5 bugged the BBC to try to find out where it was getting its evidence of Blair's lies!

Events this year have revealed to millions that real power in Britain resides not in parliament or the people, but with a shadow

apparatus of generals, spymasters and civil servants: an unelected apparatus selected from among trusted members of the ruling class. This real state is an instrument of violence and coercion – a conspiracy against the people.

It includes the unelected judiciary, such as Lord Hutton himself. After all, if you were accused of a serious crime, could you appoint the judge? Could you decide exactly what the judge was allowed to investigate, the terms of the whole inquiry? That's what Tony Blair did.

Also granted a free pass into the charmed circle of secret government are the oil barons, the arms manufacturers, the US multinationals and the press oligarchs.

The conquest and occupation of Iraq is

an imperialist war – a war of capitalists to control and exploit the resources and the workers of the Middle East. To pursue it, the ruling class has had to pursue a war also at home – a war against the truth, and a war against the right of the working class majority to exert its will over the course our society will take.

Therefore, despite the radically different conditions in the two countries, the interests and the tasks of the working class in Iraq and in Britain are fundamentally the same: to organise mass struggle against the undemocratic restrictions imposed on us, to build up our own power against that of the warmongers and oligarchs.

In Iraq the workers are organising marches, demonstrations and sit-ins against unemployment and occupation and are trying to establish independent trade unions. They will need their own workers' party – one that opposes the governing council and fights for the rule of councils of the workers themselves.

In Britain, the second People's Assembly of 30 August brought together over 800 delegates and issued the call for local people's assemblies/social forums to be built in every town and every city in Britain, drawing together the mass antiwar campaigns and the rebellious youth with trade unions fighting low pay and privatisation.

These are the first stirrings of an alternative to the fraud of capitalist democracy – a democracy of the working class. Here too we need a party of our own, an alternative to New Labour that can really fight for the interests of working people: the defeat of the occupation, the downfall of Blair, the dismantling of the dictatorship of capital and a socialist society free from the bloody priorities of profit.

- Build people's assemblies / social forums and working class democracy
- Defeat the bloody occupation – withdraw the troops
- For independent workers' parties in Britain and Iraq
- For a new International and working class rule

Sue Thomas says the deal on offer to Natfhe will lead to more performance related pay and local deals

College pay offer designed to divide and rule

Members of Natfhe, the union for teachers in higher education, should reject the pay deal currently under discussion. The employers, the Association of Colleges (AoC), are offering 3 per cent for this year and 3 per cent plus transfer onto a new national harmonised teachers scale from August 2004.

Natfhe's national executive is recommending the offer, arguing that the new scale includes faster progression and an extension of the top of the scale which will bring us close to our aim of parity with school teachers.

After protracted negotiations, the employers offer was made conditional on all the unions recommending the deal – the other major player, Unison, plumped for recommendation straight away. Despite this blackmail, the deal was opposed strongly by some Natfhe national executive members. Opponents of the deal included half the national negotiators and over a third of

the further education committee of the NEC. The opposition was led by members of Natfhe Rank and File, an organisation of militants in the union, and included others well beyond the traditional left.

Why should the deal be rejected when college teachers have been fighting for so long for a return to national scales and for parity? First, the deal does not guarantee parity with school teachers. The top point of the new scale (£30,705) will be discretionary, to be used for "recruitment, retention and motivation". In other words local employers can decide who gets carrots, if anyone, and who gets nothing. Stronger branches may be able to force automatic progression, many won't.

Second, the pay increase for this year is particularly poor, being less than the rate of inflation. And what has happened to the Teachers Pay Initiative money? Many staff have been receiving payments under this scheme. We are glad to see the back of the scheme – but the money is supposed to have been

consolidated into core funding and available for pay increases. In which case where is it?

Third, the "national" scale is nothing of the sort. Leaked employers' documents show employers' thinking on the deal. While Natfhe members are looking forward to automatic progression to decent pay, the employers have other ideas. The AoC wrote to its own members a few weeks before the final offer was clinched making clear that: "The Association recommends a move away from automatic incremental progression for new appointments to a process of performance management linked to pay progression".

So increments will now depend on whether your line manager says you are "performing". And just in case their members were still worried, the AoC made it clear that: "The strategy is a framework for modernising pay arrangements which colleges will be able to consider locally and implement in line with funding achieved within the methodology prescribed by Success for All and local labour market circumstance"

This means that employers can retain or introduce the iniquitous pay banding systems which cap pay for many lecturers.

This is precisely the sort of arrangements encouraged by the government's *Success for All* document which gives some extra funding for FE – but tied to targets that will force colleges to follow the dictates of local industry even further.

Finally, this is not a proper national deal. The employers' proposals are merely "suggestions" to the local colleges. The root of this is the semi-independent corporate status of the colleges which allows local institutions to determine their own pay and conditions. The national executive says that this is why we are better off with a national scale that we can fight to implement locally. They say we will be thrown back on local bargaining if we throw this deal out. But we are going to be forced into local bargaining by this deal anyway!

The real alternative is to renew the fight for parity with teachers and real national

scales. We also need to win over Unison members to fighting alongside us. The Unison leadership is arguing that the job evaluation introduced in the deal will allow their members access to better pay rates. But without more funds in the colleges' budgets, and a serious fight, the job evaluation will favour the bosses not the workers!

Last year, Natfhe Rank and File argued we should reject the deal that paved the way for this agreement. We were in a tiny minority. Members wanted to give the talks a chance. It is little comfort to be proved right. But we now have to explain that decent national pay will come only if we launch action including if necessary all out indefinite national strike action. We have to force the employers to sign up to pay proper national scales in every college. If that means confronting the "independent" and corporate status of the colleges – well let us join with other unions facing the same problems in a fight to roll back the break up of the public sector.

Trade unions

As more workers threaten to take action, what are the prospects for trade unionists today? And will a new round of militant action help reclaim the Labour Party for the trade union chiefs – or lead to a split, asks *Mark Hoskisson*

Where next for the workers' movement?

For socialists and union militants the climate is improving. Our side is regrouping. The class enemy is less confident. Socialism is no longer a dirty word. Surely, to use one of Blair's jingles, "things can only get better".

Unfortunately the class struggle doesn't work like that. Unless we can win decisive victories, press home our advantage against capitalism and its government agents, the danger of new defeats will always exist. And it stems from the central fact that the working class movement is facing a crisis of political leadership of historic proportions.

The weakness of the left union leaders – the awkward squad – has been on display last two years. On the eve of the 2001 general election there was a major postal strike. It was illegal and unofficial. It was spread by militants. It ended up with a victory.

Since then Billy Hayes, the new left leader of the CWU, watched management destroy 17,000 jobs without ordering a day's strike. This reveals two things. First, the rank and file were up for a fight and were capable of fighting without official backing. But second, on the big issue facing the post – privatisation and massive cuts – this rank and file have no strategy independent of Hayes. The bureaucracy is still capable of containing anger, even after it has burst into action.

The same picture emerges when we consider the firefighters' strike. The willingness to take action was evident in the huge vote for a strike in pursuit of the unifying demand of 30k for firefighters. When the FBU eventually called a strike the action was rock solid. But, faced with the terrible wavering of their leaders when New Labour turned the pay battle into an assault on jobs and conditions, the left leadership collapsed in a heap.

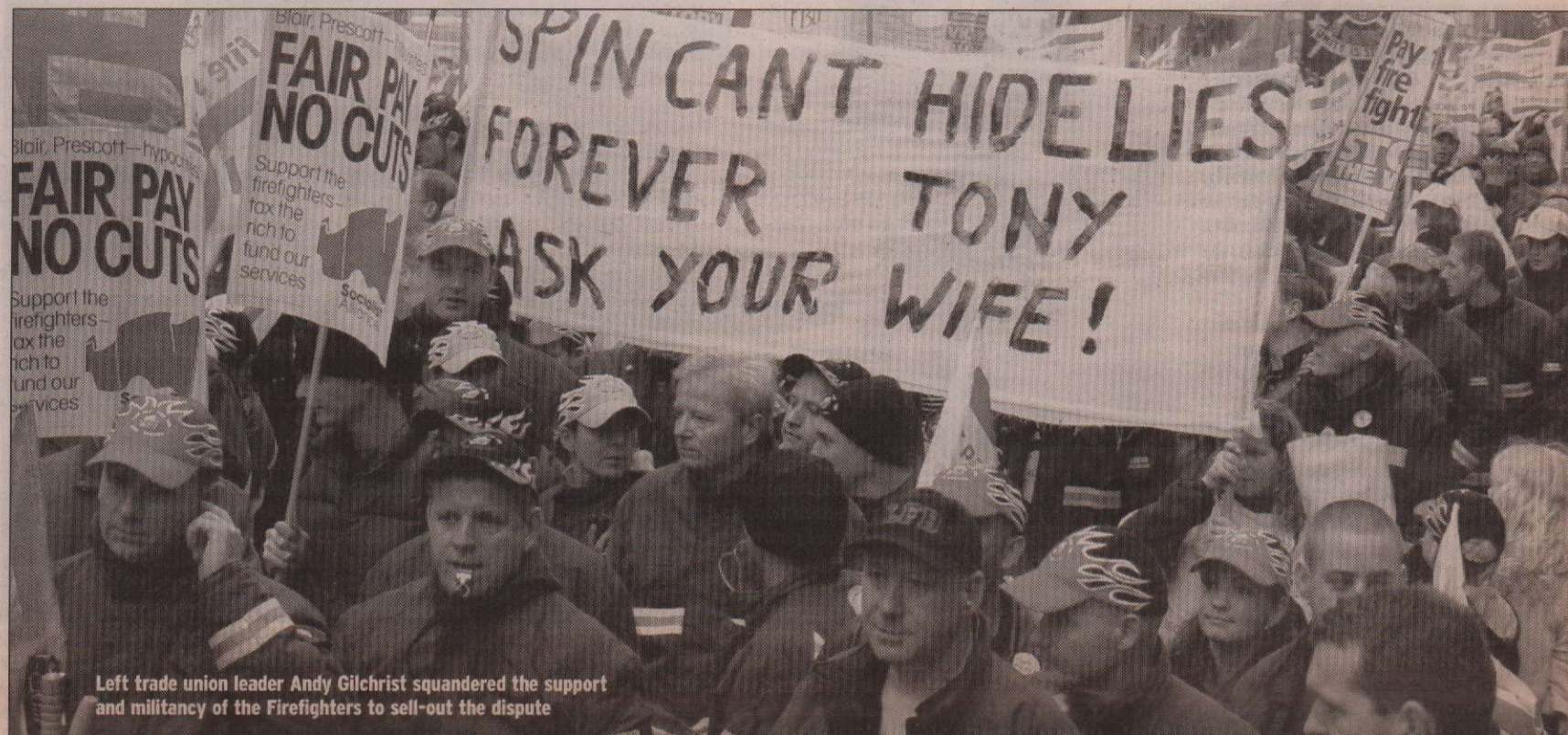
Andy Gilchrist, having kept a tight bureaucratic grip over both the action and the negotiations, stood firm against calls for an all out strike. With the war against Iraq looming, Gilchrist proved loyal to the British capitalist state – strikes were called off. Then, when union militants won a conference vote to continue with action – Gilchrist used delaying tactics to ensure that nothing was done while the war was on. Finally, Gilchrist wore down enough members to be able to recall the conference and win a vote to surrender.

The awkward squad – in the shape of Gilchrist – failed its first test. He was exposed as a typical high-living expense-account bureaucrat, incapable of standing up to government threats to impose a deal – anything but awkward.

Other strikes over the past year all display the same features – the public sector pay campaign, the London weighting campaign, the lecturers' struggles, the benefits agency strike and the battles on the rail. All reveal workers ready to fight.

But they also reveal that the rank and file are incapable of acting independently or of making the bureaucrats act decisively. Socialists need to build networks, on however small a scale to begin with, of militants into permanent groups, capable of organising campaigns if not yet actions.

Failure to do this means a strategy of reliance on left leaders. The FBU dispute showed the folly of such a strategy in a strike. The fate of Mick Rix, of Aslef, shows



Left trade union leader Andy Gilchrist squandered the support and militancy of the Firefighters to sell-out the dispute

its folly with regard to transforming the unions. Rix was a left leader in the Stalinist mould. He used his victory in Aslef to purge the union of its right-wing dead wood. But he did this in a totally bureaucratic way. Control of the executive and union machinery by the left officials was the beginning, middle and end of the strategy. The result? Rix has just lost to a right winger and Aslef is no longer "awkward". This demonstrates the danger of relying on left officials without building a independent rank and file movement.

RECLAIM LABOUR?

The mass opposition to the war created a major crisis within the Labour Party. The impact of the 15 February demonstration on Labour was enormous. The handful of relatively principled anti-war MPs suddenly grew into a full-scale backbench rebellion, renewing hope in some quarters that the Labour Party could be reclaimed. Nowhere was this more the case than in the big trade unions.

The victories for the awkward squad convinced a new layer of bureaucrats that, to win union elections, they had to distance themselves from Blair. Even Blairites like Jack Dromey of the TGWU fought his election campaign as a born-again critic of New Labour. So, a new crop of decidedly not-so-awkward bureaucrats like Tony Woodley in the TGWU and Kevin Curran in the GMB began to win elections. Both made noises about reviewing their unions' relations with Labour. Both claimed to be "awkward". Yet both are clearly of the safe and traditional centre-left.

Tony Woodley is the man who shaped the TGWU's campaign to save the Longbridge car plant – a campaign based on opposition to strikes, occupations and re-nationalisation. Woodley worked with businessmen for a brazenly capitalist solution to the Longbridge crisis. One demonstration was all he allowed, while in the background he nego-

tiated job cuts to keep the plant open. He played a similar role in Ford.

Curran has excellent working relations with Blair behind the scenes.

The speed with which these bureaucrats recently moved to end the strikes by British Airways staff at Heathrow is an indication of the type of leaders they are. Strikes are battles to be solved and ended quickly not battles by their members to be won.

Together with Derek Simpson of Amicus-AEU and Dave Prentis of Unison, Curran and Woodley now constitute a powerful centre left axis in the TUC. They will move away from the craven service unionism of old. They will present themselves as "traditionalists" representing the interests of their members. As Derek Simpson announced, "we are beginning to act like a trade union."

This trade unionism is, however, strictly limited. It is not anti-capitalist, class struggle trade unionism. It is rather "bargain hunting" trade unionism: containing disputes so they do not go beyond the realms of what the bureaucracy decree "possible" and exercising bureaucratic control over disputes that do take place. To make this brand of trade unionism more effective these bureaucrats will need to extend their rights to recruit and negotiate. They will need friends in government willing to grant such extensions. And this is where their goal of "reclaiming the party" comes in.

Politically, the centre-left share the strategy of key awkward squad members like Billy Hayes in the post. They aim to "reclaim" the Labour Party by getting the Brown and Cook faction back in the saddle – despite both supporting privatisation and Brown bankrolling the slaughter in Iraq. In other words, the "reclaim Labour" strategy of the bureaucracy aims to reclaim the party from the very right wing Blair and place it in the hands of the centre right Brown and Cook faction. In terms of policies little will change. But there will be one

big difference. The key union bureaucrats will be consulted on how to attack the working class and ensure their co-operation and involvement in those attacks.

The idea of a new party is ruled out completely. Derek Simpson has been very clear on this: "Labour is the only party that will do anything for the people I represent. I don't see any point in withdrawing funding... We have to ensure that Labour beats the Conservatives in the next election. It's as simple as that."

To this end the new axis will be critical of Labour, but, as Kevin Curran put it, "a critical friend", because: "Let's never forget that we are the party, not Number 10."

And Dave Prentis chimed in by spelling out what the new not-so-awkward squad's plans were: "I'll be meeting the new boys – Derek Simpson, Tony Woodley, Kevin Curran – to talk about closer links and, yes, we will be talking about how we reclaim our party and it's about time we did."

All of this talk has a clear aim – marginalise the harder left union leaders like Crow and Serwotka (Curran has said that he cannot work with Crow) and the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs. This will stop the moves to the left in the unions, and, more importantly stop the drift towards cutting links with Labour. The sense of political anger that many union members feel towards Blair will become focused on a battle within the Labour Party rather than on a campaign to establish an alternative to it.

A WORKING CLASS ALTERNATIVE

All of this makes the fight for a rank and file movement inside the key unions even more important. But it also underscores the fact that this fight has to be just one part of a broader political campaign for a new party of the working class, if we are to succeed in preventing Labourite reformism from being given a new lease of life.

We must call on the union leaders and Labour left to break with Blair and rally anti-

capitalist and anti-war forces to a new workers' party. In no way does this call depend on whether or not we are strong enough to set such a party up. At present of course we are not – but the need for a new workers' party has been posed by the objective situation and the class struggle itself. It is critical to break the hold of the warmongers and their slavish allies over the working class. Socialists and union militants must develop a set of tactics to prepare the way for this.

We must demand that the lefts support all moves in the unions to democratise their political funds and that the union votes in the party be used to mount a leadership challenge to Blair. They should organise local meetings – with the Stop the War Coalition and others – to discuss challenging Labour MPs who support Blair at the polls.

The danger of the "Reclaim our Party" project is that it could become an excuse to do nothing. MPs and union leaders must be forced to oppose every PFI, PPP and Trust scheme and all proposals to dismantle national agreements, inside and outside of parliament. They must lead national strike action, even in defiance of the law.

Finally, a new workers' party has to be anti-capitalist – with a view to it becoming part of a new international. It will need to be fully democratic and based on a clear programme – and we will fight for it to be a revolutionary programme.

Opportunists will condemn this perspective as pie-in-the-sky. Yet, compared with passive reliance on the likes of Billy Hayes and Bob Crow or dreams of turning the Labour Party into an anti-capitalist vehicle – it is the only realistic goal. Furthermore, each battle in the coming months and years will convince more and more union militants and socialists that it is a goal worth fighting for. Workers Power urges all our readers to fight for a new workers' party.

Letters and reports

The Brent by-election

The government has called a snap by-election in Brent East for 18 September, writes Jeremy Dewar. Although the seat is a Labour stronghold (Labour won 60 per cent of the vote in the general election) the party clearly wants a short campaigning period to halt erosion of its support.

With Blair, Hoon and Straw in the dock over deceiving the nation into backing its Iraqi bloodbath, New Labour strategists are right to fear a backlash. And workers are absolutely right to punish Labour in this by-election by withholding their support. Any vote for Labour – even if the candidate Robert Evans personally voted against the war in the European parliament – would be seen as endorsement of Bomber Blair.

However, neither can we recommend a vote for the anti-war candidate, Brian Butterworth of the Socialist Alliance.

In the past, Workers Power has called for critical support for SA candidates at the polls. This – along with our participation in the SA project as a whole – was based on the

Any vote for Labour – even if the candidate Robert Evans personally voted against the war in the European parliament – would be seen as endorsement of Bomber Blair

potential for the SA to act as a catalyst in the building of a new workers' party, and on the possibility of going to the electorate with a consistently – i.e. revolutionary – socialist programme.

Events in the past few months have proved that this potential no longer exists.

The increasingly dominant component of the SA, the Socialist Workers Party, have not only turned their back on the project of building a new workers' party, they have flirted with the idea of a cross-class alliance with the middle class leaders of Britain's mosques. And far from firming up the SA's left reformist programme (itself an inadequate answer to the burning questions facing the working class) the SWP has shown an indecent willingness to water it down further. They seem ready to replace key socialist policies with vague "core values" of "peace and justice".

The depth of this opportunism can be seen by the fact that the SA were apparently willing to stand aside for New Labour if it had chosen Shahid Malik as its candidate. Malik has an atrocious record of supporting the war and George Galloway's witch-hunt on Labour's NEC but, crucially for the SA, has the support of Brent's sizeable Pakistani community.

Under these circumstances, it would be wrong for workers, youth, black and Asian minorities to vote for Butterworth. The SA project is increasingly irrelevant – even an obstacle – to the needs of the working class and oppressed sections of the community. Workers Power advises our readers to abstain or mark their ballot papers: UK Out of Iraq.

Revolution global gathering a great success

About 100 activists from Revolution groups across Europe gathered outside Prague for 5 days at the beginning of August to discuss ideas, organise action and party, writes Sean Murray. It was a fantastic success and everyone learned a lot and had a great time.

Everyday we held workshops on different issues from revolutionary theory like class and women's oppression; and history, the Russian Revolution and Spanish Civil War; to current issues today like the rise of racism in Europe and the Palestinian intifada.

There were also practical sessions on how to organise for demonstrations – de-arresting people for instance – and self-defence against fascists. A simulation game where we got to "replay" the Russian Revolution worked well, except that we messed up a couple of important episodes – better luck next revolution!

Most importantly we debated and passed a Manifesto as a platform to unite all the Revolution groups internationally, and as a basis for groups of youth to join from around the world.

It's based on the manifesto that Revolution Britain had adopted, with new sections on fascism, Iraq, the media, the right to party and legalisation of drugs. It will be up on the Revolution website and out in booklet form soon.

Entertainment was provided by our own DJ and a bar helped us quench our thirst every evening as well as helping us to raise funds to support our comrades in the Czech Republic. Three local Czech bands came to put on a gig and the place filled up with Czech punks and some Czech MCs and breakdancers came along for a couple of nights and mixed it up too.

Before we left everyone signed a Revolution flag to send to our comrade Mario Bango from Revolution Slovakia, in prison for defending himself from a fascist attack. This campaign – and campaigning against racism and fascism in general – will be a key focus in all the Revolution groups in the upcoming year.

There were some downsides. In most workshops we discussed in three separate language groups, Czech, English and German. People were talking about more imaginative ways of translating and mixing it up more next year so we can each find out more about other groups' experiences and problems. Revolution members from Nigeria, Indonesia, Canada, and the USA couldn't make it due to money problems. We want to fundraise over the next year to make sure we can get representatives from the groups to the Global Gathering.

As it was, we filled about half of the building, and next year we're determined to get twice as many people there at least and have the whole place to ourselves! If you missed this Gathering, make sure you get to the next one! Come to your next Revolution meeting and find out more.

COKE IS DEATH

Dear comrades,

On Friday, 22 August at 12:10pm, an attempt was made on the life of Juan Carlos Galvis, a worker at the Coca-Cola factory in Barrancabermeja, and president of the Subdirectiva of the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Colombia (CUT) and of union branch in Barrancabermeja, Colombia.

At the moment that Juan Carlos was being driven to his house, two men who were riding on a motorcycle fired several shots at him, which were repelled by Galvis's bodyguards, saving his life. The attempted murder was committed 50 metres away from the corner of street 47 and avenue 19, in front of the Colegio Santo Tomas, when he was being transported from the Union office of the public works company of Barrancabermeja towards where he lives.

In *Caracol News*, 22 August, the reporter announced that this murder attempt was presumably committed by paramilitaries. Effectively, in the past few months, these groups have been constantly sending threats against the life of Juan Carlos Galvis and other union leaders of Sinaltrainal and the CUT.

On 20 July 2001, through his lawyer in the United States, Juan Carlos Galvis presented a lawsuit against Coca-Cola and other companies for the death threats on him. Other lawsuits alleging human rights violations were presented in the same court in Miami by other workers and by Sinaltrainal.

On 22 July of this year, in a press conference broadcasted world wide, we announced the beginning of the International Campaign Against Coca-Cola, for the violations that this corporation is committing against the rights of workers and communities. Juan Carlos was responsible for the press conference which took place in Barrancabermeja.

We ask social, human rights and popular organisations to denounce this new attempt against Sinaltrainal. Send letters of protest to: Armando Gómez, Jefe de Recursos Humanos, Coca Cola Femsa S.A. or email: gomari@femsa.com.mx

Yours sincerely,
LUIS JAVIER CORREA SUAREZ
President, Sinaltrainal

Asylum slammers slammed

Dear comrades,

You don't have to be convicted of a crime to have your liberty taken away from you in the UK.

The government's policy of detention of asylum seekers has yet again been criticised. Chief inspector of prisons Anne Owers slammed the detention of children in a report on Dungavel detention centre in Scotland. Recently, the Kurdish Ay family were detained at Dungavel for a year and the four children, the youngest being seven, were denied access to education, friends or any social life. The family were deported last month in a specially chartered plane.

Members of the Scottish parliament have also attacked the use of detention centres for children and slammed the Scottish executive and the Home Office for defending the policy.

However, criticism has so far concentrated on the detention of children. The whole policy of keeping asylum seekers, whether children or adults, in locked centres should be ended for they have committed no crime. Indeed, most are seeking asylum because they have had crimes committed against them.

Three of the asylum seekers accused of rioting and causing the fire that burned down Yarl's Wood detention centre last year were acquitted. Two were found guilty. However, the "not guilty" verdict did not please the Home Office and the three men have been detained by the Immigration Service and "will be deported at the earliest opportunity", although they are innocent of any crime. Now what was that about British justice being racist justice...

Yours sincerely
MARSHALL SOMERSET
London

League exposes Ukrainian fraud

Investigations that the League for the Fifth International carried out in August revealed that individuals claiming to be a Ukrainian section of the League were in fact members of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). No section of the LFI in fact existed in Ukraine. In an unprecedented political fraud these people, numbering up to 20, infiltrated the LFI and pretended over three years to be members through a series of elaborate lies and deceptions. At the same time these people were perpetrating the same fraud on several other left groups internationally.

We were alerted to this by an accusation made on a web discussion group towards the end of July, and by the subsequent identification, by an LFI member of a leading figure in the CWI (Oleg Vernik) pretending to be a member of our section.

Consultations with the CWI, the International Bolshevik Tendency and others enabled us to confirm that a number of CWI

members were involved in an elaborate confidence trick. The CWI have suspended the individuals concerned. The deception took place on a considerable scale, involving attendance at international demonstrations, other meetings and congresses, meetings held in Kiev with foreign visitors, the production of publications, writing polemical articles against other tendencies (including the CWI).

The fraudsters acted in a highly co-ordinated fashion, ensuring that many of them expressed and expounded the views of the tendencies in question in a relatively sophisticated manner and with apparent complete conviction.

The number of tendencies deceived in this way, and the sheer level of activity required to sustain the deception, suggest that this grouping could have had little time for anything else, let alone systematic activity in the working class movement. We await a full explanation as to how the Ukraine CWI, which profited financially from this scam,

could play these games over three years without sounding the alarm bells with their leadership in Moscow and London.

In short, over the last period, when socialists of all countries were mobilising against capitalism and war, these people busied themselves defrauding anti-capitalist and antiwar organisations. The only two motives imaginable for such a deception could be monetary advantage (in plain terms theft) or a conscious attempt to discredit revolutionary internationalism.

The exact reasons for what was in fact a very elaborate confidence trick must await further evidence since no large sums of money were involved, at least on the part of the LFI. Of course the sheer number of tendencies defrauded, could lead to the sums involved being considerable. Given the difficulties which distance, very limited resources and language barriers place in the way of common daily work, such deception is always a possibility. Fortunately it is a rarity.

Anti-war movement

Second People's Assembly: a missed opportunity

By Kirstie Paton

Four months after George Bush declared the end of major operations in Iraq, this bloody imperialist adventure refuses to leave the headlines.

As Tony Blair took the stand in the Hutton inquiry, the 50th British soldier was killed in Iraq. Yet not a single weapon of mass destruction has been found. The "liberated" Iraqi people – denied work, electricity, water and basic security – have turned their anger against the gun-totin' invaders.

Most importantly of all, the millions who stood up against the war earlier this year are still angry. They remain ready to punish Blair and demand justice for the Iraqi and Palestinian people.

Tony Blair is in the weakest position he has ever been. Alastair Campbell's forced resignation underscores his growing isolation. He should be looking vulnerable. The sad truth, however, is that he isn't – or at least not yet.

The second National People's Assembly should have been a great opportunity to address this problem. How can we refocus the movement so that it can take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to force the warmongers from office and get the British troops out of the Middle East? How can we go back onto the offensive, like we were in February and March?

Unfortunately, the leadership of the Stop the War Coalition – the Communist Party of Britain (Morning Star) and the Socialist Workers Party – provided totally inadequate answers to these questions.

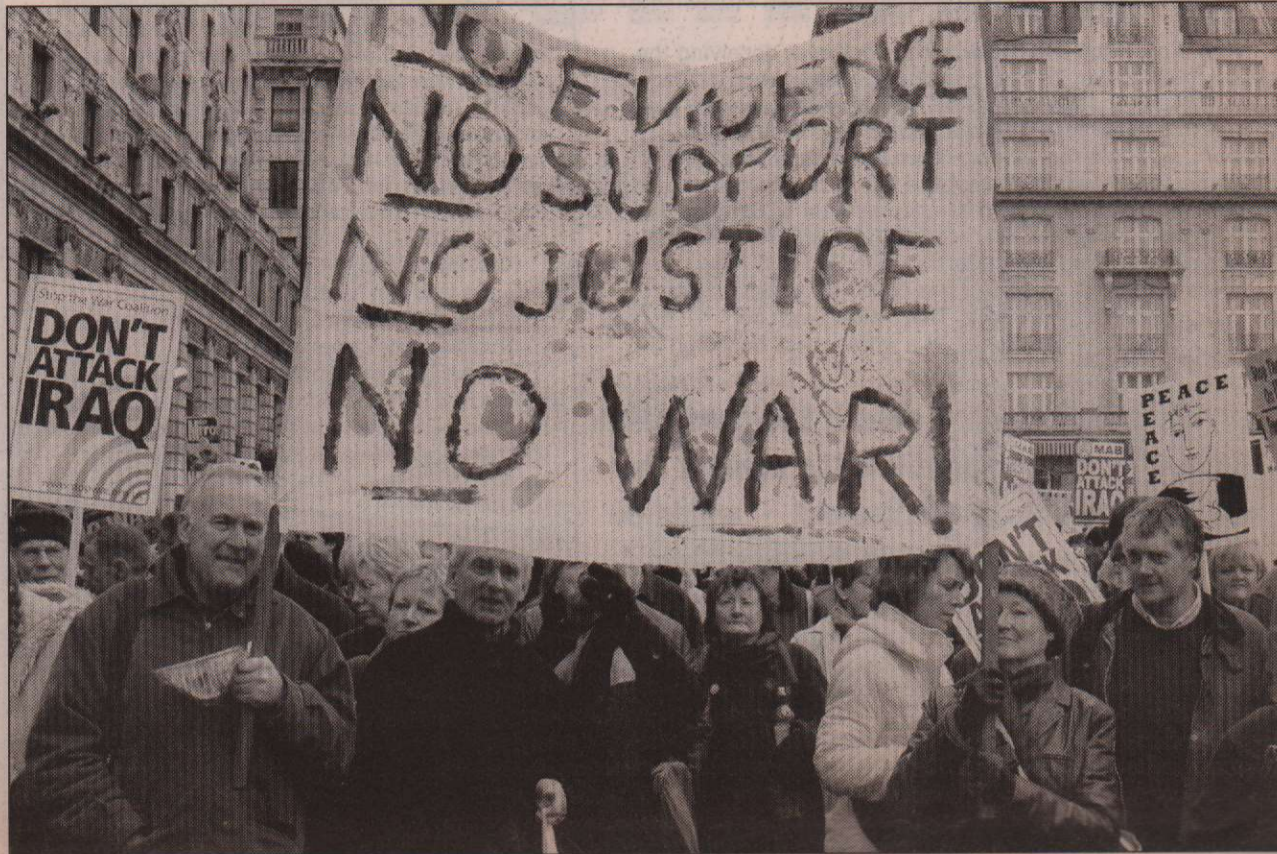
Their declaration to the Assembly called for a public inquiry into the government's "whole war policy" and for "the withdrawal of all British and US military forces from Iraq". It ended by insisting that the "British

government... adopt instead a foreign policy based on principles of peace and social justice". As if an imperialist state like Britain could ever adopt such a foreign policy! Do these socialists not remember Robin Cook's "ethical foreign policy", which involved selling hawk aircraft to Indonesia to repress its national minorities? Britain is one of the leading capitalist countries in the world. So long as this is the case, its foreign policy will always be shaped by its capitalist interests.

And who would control a public inquiry? The government would appoint another judge like Lord Hutton, trained in the no-jury courts in the north of Ireland and drawn from the ranks of the ruling class. We can be sure that without a mass movement on the streets mobilising to expose the government lies and hold the Labour MPs who voted for war to account, it would produce another whitewash. The SWP even helped vote down an amendment from the Socialist Party that said such an inquiry would only be legitimate if convened by the trade unions and anti-war movement.

The People's Assembly, like the last Stop the War activists conference, was dominated by long speeches from top table speakers like Tony Benn, Lindsey German and John Pilger with amendments and resolutions being relegated to 20 minutes at the end of the day. This format is virtually designed to restrict activists from having time to discuss, debate and exchange ideas based on successful activities in the localities.

In Manchester, for example, the local coalition – like many others around the country – wanted to keep together and organise on the streets after the end of the war. The activists found that they had many views and values in common: anti-racism, internationalism, anti-capitalism and democracy. They formed their own People's Assembly, which immediately started to



campaign in solidarity with the Palestinians. They built a mock "Israeli wall of steel" outside the Town Hall and pulled it down, protested against Manchester's police attacks on the right to demonstrate in privatised town centre, and built support for striking electrician on a major building site. This has not diminished their ability to oppose the war and the occupation of Iraq: it has strengthened it since more people have come across its activities.

And Manchester is not a one off. Cardiff anti-war activists formed their own social forum to carry out the same kind of campaigning. In Sheffield, Leeds, Durham and London similar initiatives are in progress.

These local people's assemblies and social forums can keep the movement together and broaden the scope of our impact in Blair's Britain. More than that, through developing a network of people's assemblies and social forums, we no longer have to be reactive. We don't have to wait for another war. We can fight back now. Indeed, if we can mount mass campaigns against NHS foundation hospitals, in support of the post workers and for immigrant and asylum seeker rights. We will begin to create a far larger base from which to build an opposition should Blair and Bush try to launch another war.

A resolution from Cardiff Social Forum, initiated by Workers Power members active there, was put to the Assembly. It welcomed the setting up of local peoples assemblies and social forums and called on the anti-war coalitions to do the same in all areas "with the aim of building an anti-globalisation movement of the scale and vitality of the anti-war movement". This policy obviously struck a chord with the delegates, as it had at the first Assembly.

This time, despite the SWP opposing it, as they did at the first Assembly, it was passed by a majority. The SWP has consistently refused to back the project of building social forums or local people's assemblies in Britain. We believe this is a sectarian position, based on the premise that only the party can unite the struggles. In fact hundreds of thousands of activists today want to unite the various struggles, without necessarily being ready to join a socialist organisation at present. The SWP in pursuit of narrow party self-interest prefers to use its own fronts, like Globalise Resistance and the Anti-Nazi League, which are wheeled out and then parked at the whim of the SWP's leadership.

It must become the aim of every anti-war activist and anti-capitalist activist to build local social forums/peoples assemblies in the

run-up to the European Social Forum in Paris in November. Britain had one of the liveliest anti-war movements anywhere in Europe. Yet, it lags behind other European countries when it comes to the development of a mass and ongoing anti-capitalist movement and in developing links with trade unionists in struggle.

Internationalism is not just about solidarity. It is also about learning from other peoples' struggles. If the Italians have built a mass movement that can act on issues as ranging from asylum seekers to workers rights, then maybe we should look at adopting a version of their social forums. If the French workers can paralyse whole cities as they did in the spring by co-ordinating their struggles in action councils (called "interpros") then that too might hold lessons for our struggles.

There is no shortage of issues to struggle around. But if we keep each issue locked into its own separate united front, Tony Blair will remain in office. No matter how weak Blair is, unless there is a stronger force to oust him, he will not fall. But if we link the issues on which there is mass anger and hatred together, we can begin to loosen his grip on power.

Of course we aim, on the basis of fighting together in the struggles, to win these activists to revolutionary socialism. But, in order to do that, we should help them broaden their experience rather than artificially confine it to a single issue. This may of course lead to activists developing their own ideas outside of the party framework or comparing the policies and theory of different socialist organisations. Is the SWP really afraid that, in open competition, its politics will not win out?

The continuing attacks on social services, public sector pay and asylum seekers will have a meshing effect on the anti-war, anti-capitalist and workers' movements. And out of that new organisations of struggle will emerge.

- Link the issues!
- Build social forums/local people's assemblies everywhere!
- Drive Blair from office!

Euro elections: The SWP will fix it

Full out continues from the Socialist Workers Party's attempt to build a broad, cross class alliance as a replacement for the Socialist Alliance. Recent internal circulars, – for "reliable members only" – are doing the rounds on the e-lists.

In them, Rob Hoveman, the SWP national secretary of the SA, declares that, "There has been much absurd speculation about new coalitions alliances/parties" and that "Talk of a Peace and Justice Party is hot air."

The SWP leadership has obviously found it necessary to cover up its failed attempt at drawing in leading figures from the Birmingham Mosque around the candidature of Salma Yaqoob, an attempt that necessitated them removing almost the entire Birmingham SA leadership.

And cover up its failed national approach to the Stalinist Communist Party of Britain for an electoral

alliance which was publicly rejected in the pages of the *Morning Star*.

At the same time, however, the SWP leadership explains the importance of bringing in broader forces and changing the name of the SA if necessary.

It calls on all SWP members to join the Socialist Alliance so as it needs to be "seen to be putting on weight".

It points out that the SA is going to ally itself with the Socialist Party in the Midlands and the Alliance for Green Socialism in Leeds, but disparagingly refers to both these forces as "deeply sectarian" and having "no idea of how to tap the potential to build a left alternative".

Hoveman expresses the desire to find "much more relevant forces". No doubt these comments will make it much easier to find alliance partners!

The term sectarian is used regularly throughout the circular to describe anyone, in or outside the SA,

who has political differences with the SWP.

The question of the Euro elections in June 2004 is also dealt with. SWP members are told of the chance to build the SA "or some broader formation".

They are told to find candidates on the broadest basis and then they "need to start acting as candidates... whatever the selection process becomes appropriate further down the road."

This is a very SWP view of democracy in a "broad alliance" – the party appoints the candidates who are then rubber-stamped sometime later. The acting candidate does the rounds, not knowing which party or alliance she or he is representing, what its programme is, when or whether the candidacy will be made official.

It all makes the Labour Party selection process look almost super-democratic!

The war has, according to Rees, "redivided the left". He advances three categories: right, left, and the ultra-left sectarians.

There is a pro-war left, (Clare Short before her re-conversion, Nick Cohen, David Aaronovitch and Christopher Hitchens).

Then there is "the left that built the Stop the War Coalition", which consists of the SWP, the Communist Party of Britain, the Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Party, the Green Party, the Labour left, trade unions and Globalise Resistance, large sections of the Muslim community and CND.

Third, there are "a small number of left sects", who Rees claims "opposed the foundation of the Stop the War Coalition or, though nominally supporting it, actually opposed it at every turn or took no active part in building it". The avoidance of naming organisations and the sliding scale of supposed opposition to Stop the War should warn even the most artless reader that sleight of hand is going on here.

Workers Power joined the Stop the War Coalition from the beginning. We supported the involvement of the Muslim community and the mosques. Our members worked in local STW groups and initiated or helped set them up in a number of areas. Our trade unionists initiated walk-outs, marches and demonstrations when the war started – especially our teacher members, who were among the very few workers to organise strikes. Some of Rees's charges (specifically regarding involvement of Muslims) apply to the Alliance for Workers Liberty. This shunting together of different organisations with different politics is a sure sign of a dishonest and shaky argument.

The purpose of all this is to say to SWP members, many of whom are worried about this new line, "You have no need to listen to the arguments of those who criticise us: they are all do-nothing, sectarian islamophobes."

But the real core of Rees problem is how to re-assure *Socialist Worker* readers (and SWP members) that "talk of 'cross-class alliances' or 'popular frontism' by a minority in the Socialist Alliance" is completely wrong. He fails.

Here the argument resumes its slithery course. The Muslim community, he says, "is in its majority working class" and it "has been the bedrock of Labour support in many inner cities". The first statement is not surprising since the "Muslim community" like all communities is a multi-class community. It is a social pyramid: at its top are a few well known multi-millionaire capitalists; followed by a layer of small industrialists, often employing sweatshop labour, of their own communities, lawyers, doctors, and other professionals and religious leaders. At its base is a much larger mass of lower middle class, working class and unemployed workers.

The real question is which class the "leaders" of this community represent. The religious leaders, in general, will represent the most influential – that is those who make the biggest financial contributions. Certainly, these leaders have traditionally mobilised a substantial vote of the community through the mosques to support Labour in the past. Just as the Catholic priests mobilised voters with an Irish background to vote Labour, because of the Tories' support for Loyalism.

Is it possible that there will be individual imams who are, or think they are, socialists, just as there are "socialist" priests and rabbis? Their participation in progressive political movements is possible but they do not make up a phenomenon for which a new tactic or "broad alliance" is needed.

Rees continues: "Of course there is a minority inside the Muslim community that is middle class", but this is not a problem because "they too have been on the receiving end of the Labour government attacks about 'asylum seekers', 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism'. Some have been radicalised by the war. This has made them open to working with the left."

But even these attacks fall with different degrees of severity according to class and political alignment. What we are talking about is what these leaders' class position means when we try to draft an electoral programme with them.

The SWP after the war

We agree socialists should try to win organised and unorganised Asian workers and militant Asian youth to a fighting socialist and anti-imperialist platform. But this does not mean winning the supposedly influential leaders of the community. Many of these community leaders, after the courageous fightback by Asian youth in the Lancashire and Yorkshire towns, urged the parents to take them to the police stations and hand themselves over, a disastrous course of action.

To enter into negotiations with the leaders of the mosques, the imams and the elders, to deliver the votes for a broad – that is vague, limited, empty – political platform headed Peace and Justice is to go to the wrong place altogether. Why is the SWP, which used to denounce participation in elections in general, now engaging in extreme electoral cretinism?

Seeking an alliance with a religious community – its clergy and institutions – clearly means compromising on the platform that is to be fought for. Hence, the SWP leaders attack the idea of making abortion or gay rights "a shibboleth". John Rees in his article tries to turn the tables on his critics saying that "critics of the Socialist Alliance strategy who claim that all Muslims are anti-gay or anti-women are speaking from...ignorance".

Certainly Workers Power has said nothing of the sort. Certainly many individual devout Muslims may accept the democratic argument that it is not up to the state to impose discrimination or oppression on women or gays.

What we have said is that the mosques, as institutions based on the Qu'ran and the Sharia, condemn gays and are against many democratic rights for women, such as the right to abortion. To say this is not Islamophobic. So too is the Catholic Church, Protestant evangelicals, Orthodox rabbis and so on. This does not mean that all believers in their congregations are anti-gay bigots and supporters of the oppression of women (although a good number are).

Many Muslims will support socialists even though they disagree with women's and gay liberation – they will support them because they are anti-war and anti-imperialist, because they are anti-racists and fighters for the oppressed. They may even change their minds on these issues, so long as the socialists for whom they vote – or with whom they work – stay true to their own beliefs on these issues and do not drop them as "shibboleths" or obstacles to winning votes from the "broad community".

But the SWP and the Socialist Alliance are not going to ordinary Muslims, to the workplaces and factories, to the unions with large numbers of Asian workers, to the youth who are often in conflict with the elders and the mosques. They prefer to go to the leaders. They want a bloc with the whole community, even if that means a cross-class alliance and chucking out vital principles.

It is inconceivable for example that Dr Nazim as head of the Birmingham Mosque could publicly agree to back a lesbian campaign that openly campaigns for lesbian and gay rights, the right to abortion, secular education and the separation of church and mosque from state and so on. It is highly unlikely that Muslim businessmen will support a substantial rise in the minimum wage, repeal of the anti-union laws – let alone the expropriation of the whole capitalist class. This is why it is wrong in principle to establish an electoral alliance with members of the exploiting class.

Having made the case for an electoral

In August, John Rees devoted a full page of *Socialist Worker* to "The Left after the War". In it he advocates an electoral pact with the leaders of Britain's Muslim community as a way to capitalise on the mass anti-war movement. *John McKee* explains the dangers of such a policy



Above: Asian youth in Bradford fight back against racists and police. Many community leaders wanted to hand them over to the police. Below: thousands of Muslims mobilised by the Stop the War Coalition need to be won to a workers' party not a popular front



alliance with the Muslim community that includes its "middle class" elements, at the end of his article John Rees says: "There is no cross-class alliance being proposed for the future of the Socialist Alliance".

He then asks: "But is it absolutely ruled out that socialists could enter such an alliance?" He goes on to cite in his favour "the body that made the Russian revolution – the Soviet of Workers, Soldiers' and Peasants Deputies" an example he believes where Marxists have made alliances "with sections of the middle class, or the petty bourgeoisie, to use Marxist jargon".

Rees hopes this piece of confusionism will convince wavering SWPsters that the SWP is following in the footsteps of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. But it is not. The class alliance the Bolsheviks made was with the peasantry. The peasantry – even the small stratum of rich peasants – had a revolutionary grievance against Tsarism: ownership of the land being concentrated in the great landed estates of the tsarist nobility.

Yet the Bolsheviks never presented a common electoral programme with the peasantry. They included in their programme for socialist revolution and working class power the pledge to give the land to those who till it – the peasants. To achieve this they worked in the soviets, a form of the united front, to make a revolution. They tried to win over the poor (landless) peasantry and agricultural workers to the Bolshevik programme and party.

Where you do find the idea of a worker and peasant party, a cross-class alliance, is in the programme developed by Stalin and Bukharin and put into practice with disastrous results in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27. Beyond this you have the Popular Front of the 1930s. Such a strategy was entirely alien to Bolshevism from 1903-1917 and from the Third and Fourth Internationals in their revolutionary periods.

The reason Workers Power is so opposed to this alliance is not out of pedantry or a lack of concern for taking up the enormous opportunities to build a new mass revolutionary movement. We supported Stop the War and urged it to form people's assemblies in every town and city to draw in masses of workers and trade unionists, youth, the immigrant communities. Such local assemblies could, in a period of heightened struggle, become the basis for the soviet-type organisations that Rees refers to. And, yes, we want not only the rank and file but their leaders too.

In the anti-capitalist movement – and in Globalise Resistance too – it is we who argue for a real broadening and opening out, for the building of social forums like those in Italy, which can mobilise hundreds of thousands. And in the Socialist Alliance we argued for a policy of approaching the unions at every level to win them and their resources to the idea of a new working class party, which will debate and agree on its programme. Revolutionaries we believe should argue for a revolutionary programme.

The difference is not that the "sectarian" Workers Power wants to shrink the movement, to exclude Muslims. (Ironically, it is the SWP's excluding out of anyone who disagrees with their current adaptation that is shrinking the movement.) The difference is that we insist on the duty to criticise these leaders when they duck out of the fight. And, like Marx and Engels, we "disdain to conceal our views". We can be sure our temporary allies in united fronts will not conceal theirs, so neither should socialists.

The problem for John Rees and the SWP leadership is that they do not believe the new movements – anti-capitalist, anti-war, and a reviving trade union and political current – can actually be won to revolution. They believe we have to produce "big results", especially electoral success. How? By mimicking reformism or populism and striking deals with the reformist or populist leaders, based on no awkward criticism and "not making shibboleths" out of any programmatic issue they object to. In fact this method will arrest the development of the hundreds of thousands new activists moving towards revolution. The revolutionary Communist International and the Fourth International had a term for this method – centrism.

The fight to build th

Keith Spencer and Dave Stockton examine the history of the first mass international, The International Working Men's Association, and the lessons for today's anti-capitalist movement of the struggle of Marx and his supporters to win anarchists, socialists and trade unionists to the banner of revolutionary Marxism

The International Working Men's Association (IWMA), later to be known as the First International, was founded on 28 September 1864 at St Martin's Hall in London. It lasted only 12 years yet had an enormous influence on the world workers' movement. It was the first organisation that tried to guide and lead the struggle for socialism on a world scale. All future internationals claimed a historic link and debt to the First International and to Karl Marx's role in the leadership of it.

In the anti-capitalist movement of the early 21 century the IWMA has been repeatedly referred to as the model to follow by those seeking a movement that can turn ideas into action on an international level. Often the supposed "broad and loose nature" of the First International, which contained anarchists, Marxists and trade unionists committed to neither current, is contrasted favourably to the Communist International founded by Lenin and the Bolsheviks and constructed on democratic centralist lines. Thus those seeking a "decentralised", multi-tendency organisation, neither totally reformist nor totally revolutionary, have taken as their model the First International. Wrongly, as we shall see.

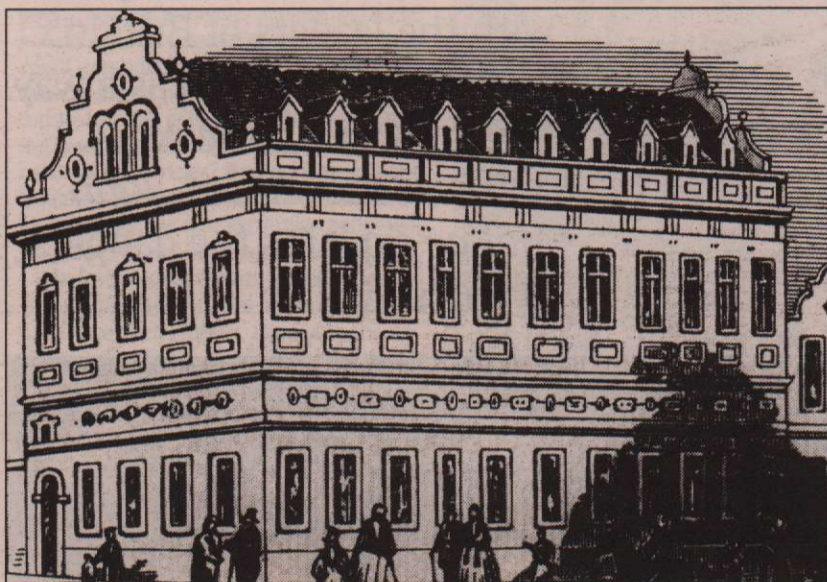
Certainly, the IWMA was founded by an extremely heterogeneous collection of forces. But its 12 years of existence was marked by a series of struggles between these different tendencies. This struggle was waged by the central leadership of the International, the Central or General Council, located in London and guided and led by Karl Marx.

ORIGINS AND FOUNDING OF THE FIRST WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL

The IWMA was the product of a felt need for an international organisation among British, French and Belgian workers. It was greatly aided by the presence of large community of political émigrés in London, resident there since the defeat of the 1848-50 revolutionary upheavals on the continent. Without their political, literary and linguistic skills it could never have existed for so long. This fusion of real mass workers' organisations, important European trade unions, with socialist and radical democratic activists was the essential basis for its launching and life.

A powerful stimulus to international co-operation lay in the rising militancy of British workers themselves. Permanent unions of skilled workers had mushroomed in the 1850s and early 1860s in Britain, particularly in engineering and in the building trades. Between 1859 and 1862 a series of lockouts and strikes wracked the building industry in London.

A new group of trade union leaders had come to the fore, some willing to use more militant methods. These leaders also wanted to work towards an international organisation to build links and overcome division with European workers, in a situation where foreign workers were often used to break strikes. These leaders such as Robert Hodgson of the carpenters' union, George Odger of the shoemakers' union and William Allan of the engineering union, set up the "Junta" (a Spanish word for council) and worked closely with the London Trades Council, which had been formed in 1860 and whose secretary was George Odger.



St Martin's Hall, London, where the First International took place and poster advertising the meeting (right)

The Junta also wanted to build a campaign for reform of voting rights (workers still had no right to vote) and saw the value in having international links in this struggle.

In Britain, radical and working class political groups had long championed international causes such as the independence of Poland, Italy and Ireland. The workers movement supported the North against the South in the American civil war (1861-64). English cotton workers declared their support for the anti-slavery stand of President Lincoln despite the North's naval blockade on raw cotton exports which caused mass unemployment and hunger in Lancashire mill towns. Another Polish uprising against the Tsar took place in 1863 and rallied enormous sympathy and support in both Paris and London.

Growing relationships between European trade union leaders led to the decision to found the International in 1864. British union leaders, European refugees in London and a delegation of French socialists attended the founding meeting. The French were largely followers of Pierre Joseph Proudhon – the founder of anarchism – and trade unionists with a sprinkling of French Blanquists. Also present were English Owenites, Chartists, Christian Socialists, Irish and Polish nationalists, Italian followers of Mazzini and German communists. It met under the chairmanship of Edward Spencer Beesly, an English Positivist historian and professor at London University. Marx himself did not speak at the meeting but was, as he wrote to Frederick Engels in Manchester, a "silent figure on the platform."

The meeting set up a provisional committee to draw up a programmatic declaration and a set of rules of the new international. Here was where Marx really intervened. The drafts submitted by various individuals were mutually contradictory and filled with purely democratic rhetoric. Marx promising to take the best ideas offered wrote a totally different document, but did it so skillfully that most of the members of the provisional committee were very pleased with it.

Marx commented in a letter to Engels: "It was very difficult to keep the thing in a form which made our views acceptable at the present stage of the labour movement. Time is needed before the movement, now

revived, will permit the old vigour of language." This did not mean that Marx opportunistically dumped the principles of the communist movement enshrined in the Manifesto of 1848.

Indeed it is remarkable how much of the fundamentals of what he and Engels had written then were in fact incorporated. Starting from an apparent description of the progress of the workers movement since the 1840s and its recovery from the defeats of 1848-51, everything described in the *Inaugural Address* and the *Rules of the International* is there to illustrate a basic tenet of class struggle socialism.

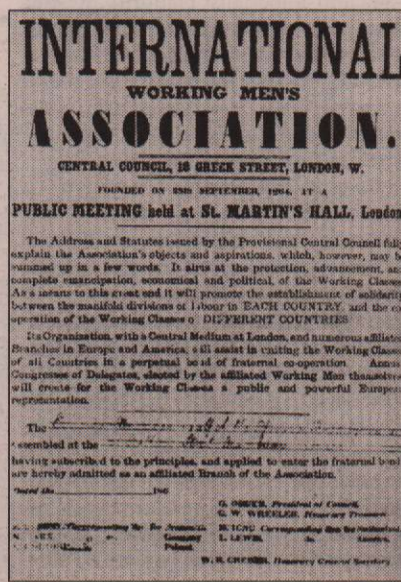
Thus when Marx describes the success of the legal movement for the Ten Hour Day in Britain he calls it a struggle "between the blind rule of the supply and demand laws which forms the political economy of the middle class, and social production controlled by social foresight, which forms the political economy of the working class." He goes on to say that it was "the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class."

He praises the successes of the co-operative movement, particularly where it had organised production without capitalists. That workers can do this proves that "like slave labour, like serf labour, hired labour is but a transitory and inferior form, destined to disappear before associated labour plying its toil with a willing hand, a ready mind, and a joyous heart."

However he argues "co-operative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries. To save the industrious masses, co-operative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently, to be fostered by national means." From this follows an inescapable conclusion: "To conquer political power has, therefore, become the great duty of the working classes."

In a period where the United States had just proclaimed the "emancipation" of the slaves Marx used this term to describe the freedom from exploitation of the working class, the wage slaves.

In the short rules, which Marx also drafted, he stated the basic principle of class



mated Society of Engineers with 33,000 members and the United Excavators with 28,000 members.

In France, the membership consisted of two main groups: trade unionists, who were recovering from a period of reaction in which unions had been banned; and the Proudhonists. The trade unionists, such as Eugene Varlin, in the main adopted a syndicalist outlook. By 1867-8 they had won some reforms, including some favourable but limited legalisation, from the government and were looking forward to a period of rapid growth.

The followers of Proudhon held to a socialism that expressed the outlook of the self-employed skilled artisans and small-scale peasant producers – then still a large social force in France. He tended to see interest-bearing capital, banking, as the core of capital rather than industrial capital. He was against state ownership of production. He was against strikes and regarded trade unions as useless or even harmful. He was also against women being drawn into production.

Against the forces of developing capitalism, Proudhon counterposed artisans, with their small workshops coming together to form co-operatives, drawing interest-free credit from "people's banks" to fight off the competition of the huge modern capitalist enterprises. This principle, called "mutualism", would eventually lead, he believed, to the ousting of the capitalists.

The first three congresses of the international, Geneva 1866, Lausanne 1867 and Brussels 1868 saw a struggle over these ideas between the Proudhonists and General Council, increasingly called, if a little inaccurately, "the Marxists".

A succession of congress resolutions either rejected the Proudhonists' favourite solutions such as free credit banks and co-operatives or put them into a practical and auxiliary context. At Geneva in 1866, a series of resolutions drafted by Marx, on co-operatives, trade unions, a campaign to limit the working day to eight hours and on protection for women's and children's labour, were passed against the Proudhonists' opposition. The right of women to work and the need for universal free and compulsory education was asserted.

These were supplemented at Basle and



Delegates at the Geneva Conference 1869

The First International

The Paris Commune is declared



Lausanne by resolutions that supported the collectivisation of major industries.

At Brussels, it was stressed that co-operatives would only play a positive role where they arose out of a struggle with the capitalists and not from patronage by the bosses, the state or the churches. Recent struggles around co-operatives in Argentina have confirmed this basic position of the First International.

Marx also led the London-based General Council to fight for a recognition of the role of trade unions as organs of working class defence and support for the use of strikes. By the Basel congress of 1869, the IWMA was at its zenith. Marx's position and his policies had won massive support from socialists and trade unions.

Positions developed in the *Communist Manifesto*, but which only a tiny handful had read hitherto, were now spread to hundreds of thousands of workers, forming policies for a new and rapidly growing working class movement, which was taking action throughout Europe, and in the Americas too.

However, within these victories and the growing influence of the IWMA was growing the seeds of disunity and fragmentation.

THE FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR AND THE PARIS COMMUNE

In the War of 1870-1, France was defeated by Prussia, which then created a unified Germany. The French Emperor Napoleon III went into exile and the new right-wing government of Thiers, far more terrified by the armed workers of Paris than of the Prussians, tried to seize the cannon of the National Guard and disarm the workers. But the central committee of the National Guard quickly alerted the workers and easily foiled Thier's manoeuvre.

This led to the outbreak of civil war between bourgeois, royalist and clerical forces centred on the Versailles National Assembly, and working class Paris. On 26 March the central committee of the National Guard held elections to the Paris municipality or Commune.

The new Paris Commune consisted of 96 delegates, mostly workers, comprising adherents of the insurrectionary communist Auguste Blanqui, the petty bourgeois republicans (Jacobins) and an important minority who were members of the IWMA. Delegates to the Commune were paid a maximum wage and were recallable at will

by their electors.

Tragically the Commune made a serious tactical error when it failed to take the military offensive against Versailles. It even refused to seize the Bank of France with its huge gold reserves. The Commune soon found itself besieged and attacked by the Versailles army. Nevertheless, in the two months of its existence it carried out many progressive reforms, such as separation of church and state, the abolition of the death penalty, reforms in working conditions, and above all the formation of a citizens' army.

Around the world, the IWMA threw itself into agitation in support of the Commune, holding meetings and distributing papers and pamphlets in its support.

For Marx and Engels there were three great lessons from the Commune outlined in Marx's famous address *The Civil War in France*. This was actually adopted by the General Council of the IWMA. Marx concluded that it was no longer sufficient to take hold of the existing bureaucratic and military state machine and reform it. The Commune had shown that, for all its limitations, it was the embryo of a new type of state, one which would abolish the standing army and arm the working class and its allies; instead of only voting every four or five years all delegates would be instantly recallable, and these delegates would be paid only an average worker's wage.

The second main lesson was the need for a party of the working class. The lack of an organisation capable of leading the working class seriously hampered the Commune's ability to fight the republican government. Over 30,000 Communards were killed and many more exiled or imprisoned. Never was the workers' International more needed. It was vital to organise workers' parties, on a worldwide basis and to combat the reactionary witch-hunt against the left that was now sweeping Europe.

STRUGGLE WITH THE ANARCHISTS

It was at this very point, when its resources were needed to fight its external enemies, that Bakunin and his anarchist followers set out to paralyse the international in a devastating internal struggle. Michael Bakunin, born in Russia around 1814 first met Marx in 1844. He had been active in the revolutions of 1848 in Germany. In 1868, he set up the Alliance for Social Democracy,

which gained considerable strength in Switzerland, Spain and Italy.

The organisation had applied to join the IWMA en bloc. Marx and the General Council rejected this application and urged its members, including Bakunin, to join the existing national sections of the International in the different countries. Bakunin then apparently dissolved the Alliance. In fact, he preserved it as a secret faction operating within the IWMA.

Given the Bakuninists were opposed to parties and politics in principle it is no surprise they chose to launch their onslaught over the lessons of the Commune. A number of factors meant that this would be the last battle for Marx and the General Council. The defeat of the commune ushered in a deeply reactionary period in Europe.

The very base that Marx had been able to rely upon – the British trade unions – was losing interest in the International and the very idea of independent working class politics. The growing trade union movement had won an extension of the franchise in 1867 from the Tories, who were seeking to outmanoeuvre the Liberals. This still did not give the vote to the majority of the working class men – the unskilled workers – let alone women. But, it allowed the leaders of the skilled workers unions to enter parliament with the support of Gladstone's Liberal Party.

Indeed, they became a sort of Labour appendage of it – later known as Lib-Labs. In 1871, the Liberal government in its turn brought in legislation recognising trade unions as friendly societies and giving them legal protection. There was a faction among the trade unionists on the General Council that saw alliance with the Liberals as the way for further advancement.



Also the return by Marx to the bold language of the *Communist Manifesto* in *The Civil War in France* and the IWMA's support for the Commune terrified the rightward moving union leaders. George Odger and Benjamin Lucraft, members of the General Council, resigned in 1871 over it. Odger joined the Liberals. Even Applegarth and Mottershead – long supporters of Marx were moving away from the IWMA.

In Switzerland, among the artisan Jura watchmakers, the Bakuninists had been organising secretly ever since their admittance to the international. The London IWMA congress (1871) forbade membership of any secret organisation or body that had as its aim goals outside of those of the international. It demanded the amalgamation of the Jura federation and the older pro-General Council Geneva group.

The fight, however, was not just over Bakunin's secret factionalism. The London congress passed a resolution on political action that was a head on challenge to the

Bakuninists. The anarchists were opposed to both the political action of the working class, which they believed was at best a diversion and at worst a subordination to the ruling class because it sometimes meant fighting for reforms, and the idea of a political party, which they argued would replicate the centralised authority of the capitalists. Instead, they rejected organising the working class in a political party in favour of building small conspiratorial groups that would carry out violent actions to hasten the end of capitalism.

Throughout 1872, the fight continued between the two groups. Marx recognised that the IWMA was being destroyed by the factionalism. However, he never underplayed the fact that this fight was a struggle between turning the International into a sect and the perspective of building a genuine mass working class movement.

THE HAGUE CONGRESS

The stage was set for the last real congress of the IWMA in The Hague in September 1872. The first three days were spent arguing over credentials, which finally produced about 40 delegates supporting Marx and the General Council and 24 for Bakunin.

The congress backed the powers of the General Council to suspend or expel sections and individuals who refused to carry out the programme and policies of the international. Bakunin's expulsion marked the end of his political career and he retired from politics and died in 1875.

Another resolution on the necessity for working class parties was debated and passed. The last debate was the location of the General Council. Marx and Engels put forward the proposal to move it to New York. The influence of the IWMA had

"I think the next international, after Marx's writings have exercised their influence for a few years more, will be directly communist, and will be definitely devoted to the diffusion of our principles."

Engels to Sorge, 1873

been growing there both among political refugees but also among US-born workers. By the early 1870s, the IWMA had 30 sections and more than 5,000 members in the US. Therefore, there was a valid reason to move: to escape repression in Europe and to join up with the growing movement.

However, another reason was to remove the General Council from Europe and the hands of the anarchists and the Blanquists. In a strange unprincipled alliance the anarchists could now expect support from the Liberal leaning British trade union leaders. After all, both were opposed to independent working class politics – the former because they were opposed to mass political struggle, the latter because they wanted to get into parliament as Liberals.

The proposal to move the headquarters to New York was carried by 30 to 14 and the General Council moved and Marx's ally, Adolph Sorge, became its general secretary.

However, the International did not flourish in the United States and its formal final

congress took place in Philadelphia in 1876. In reality the reaction to the defeat of the Commune in Europe, the emergence of the British skilled workers' unions as a privileged aristocracy of labour, the rebirth of anarchist sectarianism, all dealt death blows to the IWMA.

Marx and Engels – believed that the International had – temporarily – outlived its usefulness. In a letter to Sorge in 1873 Marx wrote: "...It will be a very good thing that the formal organisation of the International shall, for the time being, be allowed to retire into the background...The course of events and the inevitable development and interlacement of things will spontaneously ensure the uprising of the international in an improved form."

LESSONS OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

The IWMA introduced the politics of Marxism in a popular form to the growing working class movement. It restated and elaborated the role of the working class in overthrowing capitalism and defeating the ruling class. It had outlined the role of trade unions not only in organising the working class but also as providing a means by which workers could fight their exploitation by creating political parties. It developed positions on political action, including taking part in elections separate from and independent of all bourgeois parties.

It set the fight for reforms and campaigns like the eight-hour day in the context of the struggle for "the complete emancipation of the working class". It supported the first revolutionary seizure by the working class of political power – the Paris Commune. It learned and developed from the Parisian workers' actions the position on the necessity to smash of the bourgeois state, replacing it with the workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which was opposed by the various anarchists, who believed in insurrection by small conspiratorial groups.

It had popularised key parts of the *Communist Manifesto* and developed its programme of demands, positions that are still with us today: the demand of a progressive income tax, socialisation and planned production not simply localised co-operation; the need for a workers' militia to combat the bosses' army; support for the national struggles such as freedom for Poland and Ireland. It had led campaigns, especially in Britain, over questions such as the eight-hour working day, social insurance and housing. The International by its practice and its struggle had laid the basis for the theory of a democratic centralist international with an international programme, discipline and goal.

For a decade, Marx, Engels and their supporters were able to lead the emerging struggles of the workers and the trade unions, ally revolutionaries with sincere reformists who were moving leftwards and combat the misleading ideas of the anarchists and utopians socialists. They were able to lay the foundations of theory and practice of a scientific class struggle socialism in the working class. It was to lay the basis for new Marxist Internationals.

Writing to Sorge in the US in 1874, Engels commented: "For 10 years, the International Working Men's Association dominated European history in one of its aspects (the aspect that looks to its future). It can be proud of its achievements. But, in the old form, its life is over... I think the next international, after Marx's writings have exercised their influence for a few years more, will be directly communist, and will be definitely devoted to the diffusion of our principles."

Brazil: Lula government turns on workers

The Workers Party led government has been in power for a little over seven months and already it is renegeing on its promises and attacking workers' pension rights. *Stuart King* explains the reasons behind these attacks

When Luiz Inacio da Silva – Lula – was elected President of Brazil last October there was great rejoicing among progressives, socialists and trade union movements around the world.

Castro and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela praised him at his inauguration. The US trade union movement, the AFL-CIO, organised a celebratory gathering for him in Washington and declared that they would stand "side by side" with him as he attempted to solve Brazil's enormous economic and social problems. The progressive governance conference, the Third Way organisation founded by Blair and Clinton, welcomed him to London in July. Many of the movements and individuals associated with the World Social Forum saw the victory of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT) – a party that had helped found and host the WSF – as confirmation that "another world was possible".

Yet within six months of coming to power Lula's government is facing mass public sector strikes and demonstrations against his proposed attacks on government workers' pension rights. The government is pushing through a law increasing the retirement age for state employees to 63, adding more years to qualify for a pension, and cutting its value to 70 per cent of final salary.

Mayday saw over a million workers march in Sao Paulo where slogans against the pensions law were to the fore. Lula declined to attend preferring to go to mass. July saw the first of a series of public sector strikes against the law – 500,000 state employees walked out bringing ports, airports, schools and museums to a halt. In early August, the week Congress was voting on the bill, 50,000 public sector workers travelled from all over Brazil to the capital Brasilia to protest. They were greeted with tear gas.

The pensions question is a vital one for Lula – and for the trade union movement. The pensions of state employees, generous by Brazilian standards, must be reduced if the government is to deliver on its budget cuts promised to the IMF and international bankers. The previous neo-liberal government of President Cardoso tried and failed to bring in such measures: Lula, then in opposition, opposed it!



The dispute reveals a lot about the real nature of the new government. Brazil is a country of enormous contrasts of wealth and poverty – even by Latin American standards. The richest 1 per cent of the population take between them over 13 per cent of the national income; while the bottom half of the population, 85 million people, shares a mere 10 per cent of national income. 44 million people have a per capita income of less than one dollar a day. Only one third of the economically active population has a registered job, while a huge informal sector, made up of day and temporary labourers and the self-employed, struggles in the cities and shantytowns to

earn enough to eat.

Yet it is not the wealthy that Lula's government has targeted but rather a section of the slightly better off workers. There is a good reason for this. To win the elections Lula's PT made an alliance with important sections of Brazilian capitalists who would pull the plug on the government if any measures were taken which threatened their wealth. This alliance, or popular front to give it its classic name, reaches into the heart of the government.

Following the example of Gordon Brown in Britain, one of the first measures taken was to make the central Bank independent of government. Lula then appointed

Henrique Meirelles, the former head of the US banking group First Boston as its head. Meirelles knows a thing or two about helping the poor: as head of First Boston he earned \$1.5 million a year making profits out of them.

Meirelles joined a long list of capitalists who were given cabinet posts – such as the Minister for Development, Trade and Industry Luiz Fernando Forla, who was president of Brazil's biggest food company, or Agriculture Secretary Roberto Rodrigues, former President of the Association of Agribusiness, the big farmers' club. Jose Alencar from the Liberal Party, who is one of the country's largest Textile employers,

already occupied the Vice-Presidency. PT members ended up with only 18 out of 29 cabinet posts.

After a recent visit to Brazil, Walden Bello, a leading figure in the anti-globalisation movement, reported: "Lula's success in winning over key sectors of the business, says Jose Correa Leite, a leader of the civil society movement ATTAC, stems from his ability to convince them that he will inaugurate a new era of 'national capitalist development' that would protect and reconcile their interests with those of the lower classes. Taking advantage of the cross-class distress caused by eight years of neoliberalism, Lula has managed to unite the peasants, urban poor, workers, middle class, and fractions of the elite behind a distinctly non-radical programme of reviving the economy via an expansion of domestic demand and stimulating national industries."

This popular front alliance might have delivered 61 per cent of the vote in the Presidential race, but it means that Lula has made the PT a prisoner of important sections of the Brazilian ruling class – as well as the imperialist bankers. Within months of the election the government was backtracking on its promises to the workers.

The PT explains this as a result of "economic circumstances". A close adviser to Lula, Luiz Dulci, declared that after they were elected "an act of financial terrorism" took place – \$3.5bn in capital fled the country. Brazil became "a plaything in the hands of the creditors" and interest rates rocketed. Their answer was to get the bankers involved in running the economy, to "put monetary stability before our programme". No question here of this "left wing socialist party" (as Lula recently described the PT) introducing strict capital controls, cancelling debt payments, massively hiking taxes on the rich – instead it was the workers and rural poor who had to pay for the crisis, to tighten their belts.

In February, Lula delivered Brazil's largest budget cut ever, over \$14bn. As a result the government "reassured the money markets" and exceeded even the IMF's demands with a projected 4.5 per cent budget surplus. Interest rates rocketed and manufacturers like Volkswagen started laying off workers. Instead of creating 10 mil-

Fourth International joins capitalist government

It has been a cardinal principle in the Marxist movement that revolutionaries never join governments committed to defending the capitalist state. As revolutionaries stand for the smashing of that state, and the defence of workers interests against it, it is absolutely impermissible to become part of such a government.

Lenin castigated the Bolsheviks who wanted to join the provisional government after the downfall of the Tsar – a government made up of Social Democracy (Mensheviks) and Social Revolutionaries as well as "progressive" bourgeois figures. The Communist International laid down clear guidelines forbidding communists from having any truck with "bourgeois workers' governments" – governments of the Socialist and Labour Parties of the Second International.

Trotsky's Fourth International from its inception fought against Stalin's policy of encouraging the communist parties to form and join bourgeois governments of the Popular Front in

the 1930s. From rejecting the united front with Social Democracy – for example in the struggle against fascism, because they were "counter revolutionary" – the Stalinists swung to entering popular fronts with them. In Trotsky's words, "every opportunity presenting itself anywhere was used to make an alliance not only with the Social Democracy, but also with its masters, the liberal bourgeoisie, and this treacherous capitulation to bourgeois democracy received the pompous name of 'peoples front'".

Today the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (Usec), whose British supporters produce the paper Socialist Resistance, tramples on these principles of working class independence. Explaining the decision of the Usec supporters in Brazil, the Democratic Socialists (DS), to enter Lula's popular front government they declared "to refuse to accept would have been seen within the party and in particular among millions of voters, as avoiding their responsibilities." (*International*

Viewpoint May 2003) In fact quite the opposite. DS's refusal to join the government would have been a signal to millions of workers that the PT government was selling out their interests to the bourgeoisie. By taking up a government ministry the DS was not just betraying Marxism but sowing illusions that Lula governs in the workers and peasants interests.

The Usec has been awarded a single post in the government. Miguel Rossetto, long time DS member, was appointed Minister of Agricultural Reform. *International Viewpoint* declares that Rossetto will implement agricultural reform as a minister and that "this could help the self-organisation of rural workers". This is self-serving delusion. Rossetto sits in a government that has no intention of implementing radical reform of the land, let alone the agrarian revolution that is necessary to break the back of the landed oligarchy. The pitiful land reforms promised have already been watered down (see main article). Rossetto sits in a government that, far

from 'helping the self-organisation of rural workers', denounces peasant seizures of the land, directs its police and repressive forces against the rural landless movement (MST), and jails its leaders.

Leading figures in DS have even gone so far as to justify the bringing in of bourgeois sectors into the government. Raul Pont, former mayor of Porto Alegre and leading DS member, was quoted in a Brazilian daily saying, "Many corporate businessmen and landowners understand that the financially based model is exhausted and they know they should also make an effort." The "effort" of taking forward "national capitalist development" in Brazil, the stated aim of Lula's popular front!

None of this capitulation has saved the DS from being subject to a witch-hunt. Currently the PT leadership is threatening to expel a DS senator and three of its members of congress. Their crime? To publicly oppose the government proposals on the pension cuts. This is a straw in the wind. Lula needs to remove and

intimidate all opposition, as he knows his honeymoon with the masses will not last once he is forced to renege on his promises; they might pose a threat in the future. Meanwhile, Rossetto sits in the government telling the landless that they have to be patient because there aren't enough resources for land reform. When Lula is ready, and when Rossetto and the DS have exhausted their role in deluding the masses, they will be summarily ejected from the government and the party.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International has crossed class lines.

In 1936 Trotsky said of the Stalinists, referring to the revolutionary years of the Communist International, "Of the theory and practice of the first four world congresses there is not a breath left in the existing Comintern". One could add in the Usec's case "there is not a breath left of the revolutionary Fourth International". Long live the Fifth International.

lion jobs as promised, half a million jobs have been lost. Unemployment has risen to an official level of 12 per cent, while under-employment remains rampant. The main casualties of the budget cuts are the pitifully small reform programmes aimed at alleviating poverty – such as the “Zero hunger programme” and land redistribution and resettlement programmes.

By March this year the MST, the organisation of the landless in Brazil, decided they had had enough. It ended the truce with the government on land seizures, declaring the government had done too little to redistribute land to millions of landless in rural areas. Brazil is a country of massive landowners and chronic rural poverty. Figures produced in 2000 showed that 3 per cent of the population owned 60 per cent of all the land. The MST has been organising land occupations for two decades as a means of forcing Brazilian governments to redistribute land – land often lying unused.

Land invasions, blockades and protests were launched throughout the country and by early July Lula was forced to call a summit with the MST leaders. The MST demanded that at least a million landless people had to be given farms by 2006. The government said it had resettled 60,000 families in its first six months and the MST “had to be patient”. The government claimed it could not go faster as it lacked resources to pay for electricity, water and credit for the new farms. Lula even donned the red cap of the MST for the cameras. But within a week of the meeting one of the most militant MST leaders, Jose Rainha Junior, was seized by police and taken to a high security jail accused of organising an occupation.

Any serious land reform is blocked by a lack of resources to carry it out. The previous government “resettled” 260,000 families but without cheap credit, fertilisers and technical assistance such farmers are doomed to poverty and bankruptcy. Cardoso’s neoliberal government also threw open the doors to cheap food imports, often subsidised products from the USA. Over a million peasant families went bankrupt during his Presidency – four times the number who were resettled on the land. Lula’s government is already pleading lack of money and resources to speed up land resettlement, while at the same time cutting the budget to pay the international bankers.

It is little wonder that Lula’s first six months in power has won nothing but praise from the rich and powerful. *Time Magazine* has dubbed him “Brazil’s Blair”. John Snow, the US Treasury Secretary, has heaped praise on Lula’s economic policies: his budget targets, tough market reforms and cuts in public expenditure. The IMF and World Bank have joined in with plaudits for his “responsible” economic policies.

Coming into office on a wave of working class support the PT government is already showing its true colours. Having decided to work within the framework of the international capitalist system the PT finds itself doing its bidding. Attacking the poor and dispossessed, defending the speculators and the rich, while calling for patience and understanding. The limits of reformism in Brazil are being sharply exposed.

Early signs indicate that the Brazilian masses – both inside the key CUT-affiliated unions and in the MST – are beginning to realise this and are preparing to fight for their demands independently of Lula and the PT leadership. The task in the next period is to rally the workers and rural poor around a revolutionary alternative to the rapid reformism of Lula.

But this is not just a battle inside Brazil. Lula and his strategy hold an important position inside the anti-capitalist movement internationally. All anti-capitalist activists should follow closely what is happening in Brazil because this is where the reformist programmes of Walden Bello, Susan George and George Monbiot lead to. The European Social Forum in Paris this November and the World Social Forum in Bombay next January need to firmly turn their backs on the idea that the working class and poor farmers can defend and extend their interests in an alliance with the local big bourgeoisie and the institutions of globalisation.

Argentina: Kirchner's populist policies cover for attacks to come

The gains of the workers' and unemployed struggles of the past two years are being softened up by the new President's populism, writes *Keith Harvey*



Argentina's President Nestor Kirchner is welcomed by wellwishers as he visits a shantytown in Buenos Aires

In December 2001 the most popular chant on the streets of Argentina as it was convulsed by mass anti-government protests, was “Out with them all”. This slogan summed up the pervasive hatred of millions of workers and middle class people – not just for the then President and his cabinet – but for all the politicians and parties that had held or shared power since the military dictatorship collapsed in the early 1980s.

The people’s charge sheet was long. First of all the Radical Party in the 1980s passed laws that made it impossible for the army and navy chiefs who “disappeared” up to 30,000 people in the 1970s to be brought to justice. Then when the Peronists came to office in the guise of Carlos Menem in 1989, they defended these laws. But Menem added his own brand of venality. He appointed five supporters as Supreme Court judges so as to give him an in-built majority in any contentious decisions.

In addition Menem sold off most of the state’s industrial assets and public utilities to foreign multinationals, earning vast sums, corruptly salted away by government figures and Peronist trade union leaders.

By following the advice of the IMF closely in the 1990s – maintaining a fixed currency, cutting state investment in health and education, promoting an export-led model of growth – Menem and his Radical successor (from 1999) De la Rúa brought the country to economic collapse.

Not just the personalities but the whole post-1983 regime and constitution fell into deep discredit. In December 2001 the people rose up and De la Rúa was forced to flee the Presidential palace in a helicopter; two more Presidents came and went in as many weeks as the people refused to accept the confiscation of their savings.

But despite massive protests by the unemployed workers’ movement, a wave of factory occupations that put 200 plants under workers’ control, and an explosion of popular assemblies in most town and cities,

the discredited politicians held onto power throughout 2002. The refusal of the trade union leaders to call the millions of organised workers into strike action alongside the struggle of the unemployed and the factory occupations allowed the Peronist President Duhalde to stabilise the situation.

When new Presidential elections were held in April this year the millions who 16 months earlier had demanded “all of them must go”, returned to the ballot box to elect yet another of “them” to office. President Duhalde’s preferred successor, fellow Peronist Nestor Kirchner was elected unopposed in the second round after ex-President Carlos Menem withdrew rather than face humiliation at the polls. Kirchner took office in June with a mere 22 per cent of the popular vote from the first round.

To shore up his weak support Kirchner has played the populist card in his first few months in office. He has taken a number of measures that have proven widely popular with the electorate. His first move was to replace the chief of staff of the armed forces and the head of the navy. Vowing to rid the army of anyone remotely linked to “dirty war” crimes. He also forced the retirement of 27 generals and announced a large-scale purging of the federal police.

One of the most popular elements of Kirchner’s electoral platform was a promise to end the “impunity laws” that guaranteed that the torturers and murderers in the armed forces from the period of dictatorship would remain untouchable. In late August a packed congress surrounded by cheering crowds passed a bill repealing the impunity laws, the first step in a long process of bringing the perpetrators to trial.

Kirchner has also set about purging the Supreme Court of Menem’s corrupt appointees. The court has been a symbol for many Argentines of the decadence and cronyism of the 1989-99 presidency of Carlos Menem. In July, a congressional committee recommended the impeachment of Supreme Court chief justice Julio Nazareno,

a close friend and former law partner of Menem. At the end of June Nazareno resigned and is likely to be followed by another four judges.

As a result of these moves, Kirchner’s approval rating has reached nearly 90 per cent in recent opinion polls. Of course, none of these measures broadens or deepens the institutions of Argentine democracy. Indeed, as governor for 11 years of the Patagonian province of Santa Cruz, Kirchner had a track record of packing the provincial supreme court and other public offices with his allies.

Throughout 2002 the Argentine masses built up impressive democratic organisations of struggle: the popular assemblies, the piqueteros and the National Assembly of Occupied Factories. Through these bodies they mounted a year-long struggle against the employers and state forces. By contrast, the purged supreme court and new federal police hierarchy can be relied upon to continue to oust workers in control of their factories, kill demonstrating workers and youth and sanction the theft of billions of pesos of people’s savings by the banks.

In the sphere of the economy, Kirchner has criticised past privatisations and foreign investors for making huge profits out of the country and annoyed business leaders by refusing to immediately agree to their shopping list of demands. He says he will not pay the massive foreign debt – payments were stopped more than a year ago – by starving the people. He promises a new phase of development and job creation will be inaugurated. Like Chavaz in Venezuela and Lula in Brazil, tirades against neoliberalism are an obligatory part of Kirchner’s speeches.

But this anti-neoliberalism is in fact a policy of boosting “national capitalists” rather than an attempt to counter the effects of the free market on the workers and urban poor. Kirchner hopes the devaluation of the peso 18 months ago will boost business exports further and with them profits.

This has happened noticeably over the past half year.

But the working class has been impoverished by devaluation. It has lost some 24 per cent of its real wages on average, while those on workfare schemes saw their relief cut by 36 per cent. Twenty million people are living below the poverty line, including more than half of wage earners, who earn less than \$400 a month.

The so-called hard line that Kirchner is taking in negotiations with the IMF over the repayment of the foreign debt is also a fraud. A deal is due in September. Last month the IMF heaped praise upon Argentina’s rulers for meeting “the fiscal and monetary targets of the transitional arrangement with comfortable margins.” In the fight to cut social benefits and thereby run a fiscal surplus – to be used to repay debt – the IMF said Argentina had “overperformed” Yet Kirchner is bent on raising the fiscal surplus to a 3 per cent of the GDP at least.

In discussions with the IMF now underway to resume debt repayments Kirchner may well secure some reduction in debt mountain that has to be repaid. But even if half of the external debt was written off, the debt would still remain at \$80bn, including the new debt created by the conversion to pesos and the proposed bail-out of the banks, which are about to be compensated for their losses!

In December 2001 when the crisis erupted the debt amounted to 62 per cent of the GDP. Even if it were halved today it would amount to at least 80 per cent of GDP. And to pay for this health, education, and public sector jobs will be slashed.

Through his early populist measures Kirchner aims to strengthen the people’s confidence in the very institutions of state that moved them to revolutionary action in the “December days”. It is these very institutions that Kirchner will try to deploy to crush renewed resistance to the painful IMF inspired measures that will come over the course of the next year.

Iraq: build the resistance

Three huge bombs in Iraq during August have blown sky high the myth that the US army of occupation is in control of the country. First, Iraq's main oil pipeline to the north was set on fire. Worse followed when the UN headquarters was ripped apart killing the UN's chief envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello, along with at least 23 other people. Then on 29 August a massive car bomb at the end of Friday prayers in Najaf assassinated Shi'a leader Mohammed Baqr al-Hakim. America's pro-consol in Iraq, Paul Bremer, has declared that "tens of billions of dollars" will be needed to keep in control of Iraq.

On top of that more US soldiers have been killed, bringing the total combat fatalities since Bush declared "hostilities over" in May to 66 – more than were killed in fighting during the invasion.

Who is behind these operations? Almost certainly clandestine units of the old Saddam Hussein regime, acting alone or in alliance with non-Iraqi Sunni Muslims that have entered the country since April.

The Special Republican Guard and the various security and intelligence organisations, numbering at least 40,000, deliberately melted away rather than be out-gunned by superior US firepower. An army of nearly 400,000 troops was disbanded to join the ranks of the unemployed. Many retreated with their small arms and ammunition largely preserved, and no doubt a battle plan to fight the occupation rather than the invasion.

The rearguard action has chosen its targets with the aim of making Iraq ungovernable by the US. Many acts of sabotage – including against Baghdad's water supply – make it clear that, despite the presence of 150,000 foreign "liberators", the conditions of life for ordinary Iraqis continue to worsen. Physically life is worse than under UN sanctions and the brutal and tyrannical regime of Saddam Hussein – even if politically there is greater freedom.

An unemployed Iraqi soldier said to reporters: "We hated Saddam, but at least we had the power and the water, and at least we felt safe on the streets. Now everybody is afraid."

APPROACH

The assassination of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqr al-Hakim was aimed at those "moderate" Shi'a forces that have taken a pragmatic and even conciliatory approach to the US occupation forces. He headed the Supreme Assembly for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Sciri), one of the main Shi'a Muslim groups in Iraq. The group had, until recently, been based in Iran and owed much to the conservative clerics ruling Iran, who have funded the organisation for 20 years.

Ayatollah Hakim, 63, was imprisoned and tortured as an opposition leader in Iraq during the 1970s and finally fled to Iran in 1980. He returned to Iraq in triumph in May, just after major combat operations were declared over by the US. Thousands of Shi'a Muslims welcomed him back to his birthplace, the holy city of Najaf in southern Iraq.

Two of the main Shi'a groups – the Daawa Party and Ayatollah Hakim's group – are critical of the Americans but ready to co-operate with them. Hakim was represented on the governing council set up by the US in July by his brother and deputy, Abdelaziz Al Hakim. Shi'ites hold a majority of seats on the council and, for the US rulers, bringing on board Shi'a leaders is crucial to the success of their task of finding points of support for their occupation. The Shi'a Muslims make up some 60 per cent of the Iraqi population and suffered terrible repression under Saddam.

Faced with these setbacks in Baghdad, Donald Rumsfeld rushed to claim that hun-

It started with guns and grenades against GIs, now it's massive bombs against the UN and leading Iraqis. The US cannot countenance the only measure that would stop it: pull out the troops and give self-determination to the Iraqi people



The aftermath in Najaf

dreds of foreign Islamic militants "along the lines of al-Qa'ida" had recently arrived in Iraq and they were the ones behind the bombing. He had to claim this to protect his all too recent boasts that the Saddam remnants were all but busted, after the recent killings and arrests.

The suggestion that the "remnants" of the old regime can be easily uprooted is a piece of self-serving propaganda. The fact is that the brutal searches and killings of Iraqis every day is turning those that hated Saddam into enemies of the US forces.

The Sunni population bore the brunt of the civilian and military casualties of the war (now estimated as 70,000 killed or injured). Their families (and tribes) have every reason to seek revenge or sympathise with anyone who will take it. But the Shi'a population is increasingly disaffected too. In the capital followers of Muqtada al-Sadr, a young cleric who is seeking to become the leader of the Shi'a opposition, has denounced the US-appointed governing council as a puppet body and mobilised anti-US demonstrations. Occupation troops have opened fire on them. Shi'a opposition is also growing in the south, in and around Basra.

Former British officer and defence expert Michael Yardley has said that the attack on the British military policemen were not random attacks. "You need at least half a million troops to police this country effectively, which we do not have. Either the intelligence assessment was deficient or George Bush and Tony Blair were willing to take an unacceptable degree of risk in this campaign."

The basic problem for the occupiers is that they do not trust any native Iraqi force either military or political to have even a subordinate share in running the country. They fear Kurdish separatism, Shi'ite fundamentalism and Ba'athist revanchism too much to risk free elections.

The majority Shi'a population of the south of the country and in the slums of Saddam City in the capital itself, initially cautiously sympathised with the overthrow of the Iraqi dictator. They too could have been won, in part at least to supporting the US occupation if they had been given a share in a "democratically elected government".

But once again it was a "no way" from

WHAT WE SAY

- All UK/US troops out of Iraq now.
- No UN "peacekeepers" for Iraq.
- Out with the IMF, World Bank and the US and UK corporate carpetbaggers.
- Down with the CPA and any "Iraqi interim administration".
- For a revolutionary Constituent Assembly to decide on the country's constitution.
- For the right to form independent trade unions and political parties; no to press censorship.
- For a programme of emergency public works under the control of the Iraqi locally elected popular committees.
- Victory to the Iraqi intifada against the occupiers.
- Build a revolutionary workers party in Iraq to fight for a workers and poor peasant's republic.

Rumsfeld and Bush. They wanted a pro-US, pro-Israeli puppet regime that would lease huge military bases to the US in perpetuity and award all the oil and reconstruction contracts to US (and a few UK) companies.

So the US-led occupation force and their Iraqi puppets – which include the shameful Iraqi CP leaders, returned from exile – are now the target of broadening range of opposition. However appalling the political leadership of these resistance forces, they are becoming, de facto, a national liberation movement. Anti-war and anti-imperialists around the world, while taking no political responsibility for these leaders or their tactics, must unconditionally support the Iraqi resistance struggle to drive out the occupiers.

UN RESPONSE

People ask why attack the UN when it is only bringing aid? It should not be forgotten that whatever the differences over this war the UN is the collective arm of the imperialists. The UN was responsible for years of sanctions and hundreds of thousands of deaths of Iraqi children. The UN endorsed the constant bombing of Iraq by the US and UK enforcing the so-called

"no fly" zones.

The attack on the Canal Hotel has put the UN into retreat and sent home upwards of half its staff. The NGOs are following suit. Doubtless the more nervous US and UK corporate carpetbaggers will leave town too – though they will have been accorded the highest grade of security. After all, the future of Iraq lies in their hands, as far as Washington is concerned.

Above all the bombing of UN headquarters has opened up all the old conflicts within the imperialist camp. Bush and UK foreign secretary Jack Straw have impudently called for assistance to maintain order from other "willing" powers. But the numbers of the willing are shrinking by the week and those countries desperate for US approval (and dollars) would probably prove more of a liability than an asset.

The Europeans (France, Germany and Russia) have responded that they would only help with armed forces if the United Nations took charge of and legalised the occupation and "reconstruction".

Translated from diplomatic-speak, this means that are still holding out for a juicy slice of the pie (oil reserves and reconstruction contracts) and seeking to put back the multilateral chains of the UN around the US. Some hope! This would be of no benefit whatsoever to the Iraqi people but it would be a humiliating blow to the US regime's "new order".

In Europe and the USA we must work all out for the growth of a mass movement to get foreign troops withdrawn from Iraq. The tabloid press that shrieks "support our boys" has blood on their hands as well as the tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis.

At the same time, we should condemn any calls from muddleheaded "antiwar" figures like British MP Glenda Jackson, to send in UN peacekeepers. There is no peace to keep and will not be while a single imperialist occupier remains there. The USA itself would never let its troops put on the blue beret – and without the massive US presence Iraq is unoccupiable.

We must make the demonstrations against the war on 27 September as huge as possible. We must relaunch the anti-war movement as an anti-occupation, anti-imperialist movement.

US troops voice disillusion

"It is a quagmire and it is not going to be easy to get out" – says Susan Schuman. She is the mother of a GI, Justin, serving in the Iraqi town of Samara, at the heart of the "Sunni triangle", where the highest casualties among American troops have been suffered.

She is against the war. "I want them to bring our troops home. I am appalled at Bush's policies. He has got us into a terrible mess", she said.

Breaking the normal rules of military discipline and the normal custom that families keep silent about their sons and daughters, whilst a war is on, US servicemen and women and their families are beginning to speak out.

"We don't feel like heroes any more. We are outnumbered. We are exhausted. We are in over our heads."

Private Isaac Kindblade of the 671st Engineer Company

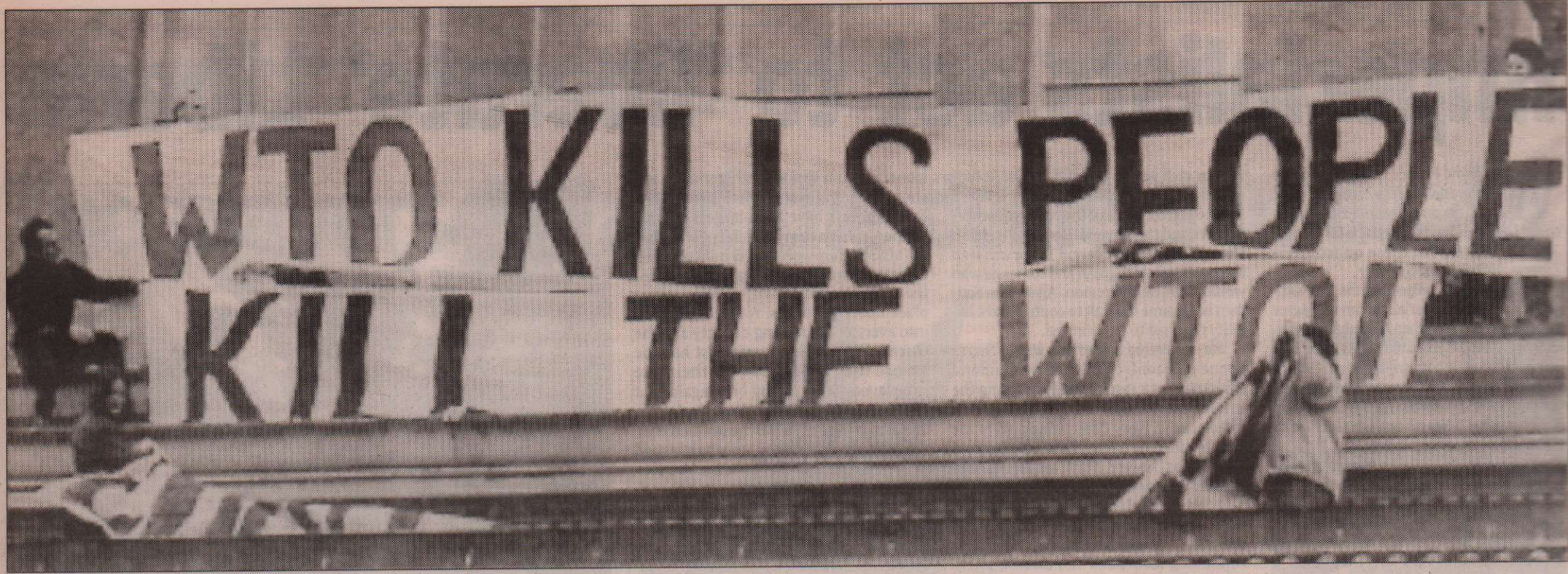
Not surprising. At the present rate of US casualties George Bush would be seeking re-election in November 2004 with a record of some 700 US troops dead since the war's supposed end.

One soldier's message, posted on a website, shows the disillusionment that experience of the realities on the ground brings. It shows the impossibility of spin and propaganda to cover it up for long.

"Somewhere down the line, we became an occupation force in [Iraqi] eyes. We don't feel like heroes any more", says Private Isaac Kindblade of the 671st Engineer Company. He continues: "We are outnumbered. We are exhausted. We are in over our heads."

Via email and web chatrooms many GIs are making their growing disaffection widely known back home. They are more aware than anyone of the brazen lie that they are "liberating Iraq". They know it from the reactions of ordinary Iraqis on the street. Where are the Iraqi crowds cheering and supporting their "liberators"?

We should support all the spontaneous organisations, which the troops and their families are setting up, that are calling for immediate withdrawal.



What's at stake in Cancun

Between 10-14 September 146 member countries of the World Trade Organisation will meet in Cancun, Mexico. Targets are being set for a further opening of third world markets to exploitation. *Keith Harvey* looks at the plans

The saturation of markets in North America, Europe and Japan makes it imperative that multinational corporations get access to markets in the semi-colonial south. China and India are the prime targets. The rules of the WTO are designed to pry open these markets, not only through the drastic reduction of tariffs, but by "beyond the border" measures. The result will be the further subjugation of economies and peoples in the developing world.

At Cancun a small select group of about 25 members will take the key decisions behind closed doors. The others will be barred from the most critical meetings. Any deal will only be put to the rest later. Those countries daring to resist will be blackmailed, bribed, or bullied. Aid, IMF and World Bank loans will be promised or withdrawn depending on how countries react to the demands of the big powers. Market access, particularly any preferential trading arrangement with the USA, will be put on the line. Smear campaigns will be launched against any minister, trade diplomat or government daring to step out of line. How do we know all this? It is all contained in the book *Inside the WTO* launched to the fury of the WTO bureaucrats in the run up to Cancun and based on interviews with Third World ambassadors to the WTO in Geneva.

Agriculture is the critical issue at Cancun. The last set of international trade negotiations in the 1980s and 1990s (the Uruguay Round) saw developing country governments agree to more liberalisation, while the imperialist countries increased their levels of protectionism. Post-Uruguay Round subsidies to developed countries producers in the OECD have increased from around \$248 billion to about \$311 billion. "Dumping" – the export of products below the cost of production – has increased. By the WTO's own admissions, the EU dumps about \$72bn a year onto the poorest countries, while the USA dumps \$19bn. This is the result of the Common Agricultural Policy which lines the pockets of farmers and agribusiness in Europe while destroying the livelihoods of farmers in Africa and Asia. In the US and the EU, money is given to farmers to stay in production, whilst multinationals offer producers rock-bottom farm gate prices so that government subsidies are primarily benefiting the big agri-business corporations.

Developing countries' farmers have been

wiped out by dumping. Small farmers in the South are losing the battle to compete with the cheap imports flooding their domestic markets. Rural unemployment and poverty are on the rise.

At the WTO's conference in Doha, the current round of negotiations was cynically described as the "development round": poorer countries would get more this time, specifically the reduction of dumping and subsidies by Europe and the USA. But it just hasn't happened. That is why the developing countries governments – not natively anti-imperialists – are making increasingly hostile noises to the rest of the WTO agenda.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Another issue at Cancun is the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (Trips). The Trips agreement requires members to provide a 20-year long patent protection to inventions. It gives multinationals patent protection over seeds, the very source of life, and medicines.

A massive international campaign over access to drugs for the Aids epidemic led in December 2002 to an WTO agreement permitting the manufacturing of cheaper generic drugs domestically in order to mitigate the Aids crisis and those of other treatable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.

But the USA refused to sign up to it – the pharmaceutical industry was one of the biggest campaign contributors to the Bush administration. Washington wanted more controls on the export of generic drugs from countries such as Brazil and India to other Third World countries that could not manufacture them themselves.

Only at the very end of last month – the eve of Cancun – did the USA sign up because the South's representatives made clear that no agreement on anything was going to happen without movement by the USA on this.

Even so the big pharmaceutical firms have won huge concessions. Compulsory licences must be obtained by any country wanting to export generic drugs, as must any country wanting to import them. The aim of the expensive, bureaucratic negotiations with patent holders is to make it difficult for companies to produce cheap alternatives to expensive branded drugs and allow the USA to veto Third World firm exports to any country (e.g. the Philippines) that the US drugs companies deem to be capable of manufacturing them. This in effect means the very poorest countries can

Protectionism – for or against?

As long as capitalism exists protectionism will be used by the developed countries against the products of the global south. Here free trade would be a positive gain for the semi-colonial countries. NAFTA, the Common Agricultural Policy and other protectionist weapons of imperialist states must be abolished. As long as imperialism dominates these countries the countries of the South are entitled to protect their economies from dumping and subsidies of the powerful multinationals by using tariffs and quotas.

The drive of the IMF and WTO to

privatise infrastructure and social services presently provided by the state must be broken. The result, where the IMF and World Bank have succeeded, has been to make once free water, education and health provision unaffordable for millions of people. We must defend and extend these services at the expense of the capitalists, paid for by taxation and confiscation of profits.

The IMF, World Bank and WTO must be abolished and the representatives of the South, countries exploited by imperialism, must immediately disengage and delegitimise them.

have their medicines – but the price is that the countries with a chance of breaking out of poverty, through the development of knowledge based industries like pharmaceuticals, must be stopped from effectively competing with the multinationals of the G7.

In the run up to Cancun, formulas are also being worked out between the US, EU and Canada for steep tariff cuts for the developing world's imports. On 12 August the US announced it would like to have tariffs be brought down to zero by 2015 and the EU published a proposal to have maximum tariffs of only 15 per cent.

If the developed countries get their way in Cancun, the implication is that developing countries' industrial tariffs would be brought down across the board to very low levels. Tariffs – import taxes – are the only protection most developing countries have against the superior competitive and technological edge of the imperialist multinational corporations. Slashing tariffs will only cause further deindustrialisation and unemployment.

Added to this a decision will be made in Cancun on whether or not to start negotiations in the areas of investment, competition, procurement and trade facilitation. If the US and EU have their way, the agreements in investment and competition will remove the ability of governments to regulate the activity of foreign investors. Eventually, these new agreements would force developing countries to put all foreign companies active in their states legally on a

par with domestic industries. If agreed this would just lead to local companies going bust as they fell to predatory pricing by the multinationals.

This will effectively extend the remit of the WTO to capital investment as well as trade, levering open the economies of developing countries to the further ravages of globalisation.

Separately to the Cancun discussions, there is a much horse trading going on over free trade in services (the so called General Agreement on Trade and Services, or GATS). This is designed to open up markets like water or education to western firms – look at Iraq today being pawed over by Bechtel if you want an idea of what the USA and EU have in mind. The developing countries are supposed to be formulating "offers" to the big powers of what they are prepared to open up to the multinational service companies.

Unfortunately for the WTO – and its newly installed figurehead, Buddhist monk Superchai Panitchpadki – the governments of the developing world are increasingly prepared to challenge the inequalities that stand behind "free trade". Despairing of getting progress on agriculture, they are increasingly digging in over GATS, the "investment issues" and tariff reduction.

On top of that they are attempting to make the WTO into a nominally democratic organisation: with formal meetings, minutes, impartial chairs etc. A group of 15 "like minded" developing countries put forward a whole plan for constitutional reform of the

WTO that would effectively put it under control of its Third World membership. It was summarily rejected.

BLOCK PROGRESS

The anti-globalisation theorist Walden Bello has issued an influential call to use these issues to block progress at Cancun since the key to maintaining the momentum of the WTO is getting the investment issues onto the table, he has called for this – plus the democracy issue – to be a line in the sand.

Unfortunately the courage of the capitalists of the Third World always seems to run out the further they are from the masses actually affected by imperialism's plunderous trade policies. Arguably it was only the crass attitude of the WTO and Bill Clinton, combined with the presence of thousands of demonstrators on the streets, that gave them the courage to walk out of the Seattle conference without an agreed declaration.

Cancun – according to the WTO – is not "make or break". It's a "reviewing" conference on the way to a final accord in late 2004, they say. In practice, preventing an agreement at Cancun will deal a severe blow to the momentum of globalisation. With trade falling as a proportion of world GDP, and GDP growing slower, it will be a further proof that globalisation is above all else a policy – not just some disembodied objective force we all have to live with. Its been promoted by policy: it can be reversed by policy – and so can the deepening hunger, ill health and illiteracy of the countries it affects.

In the dreams of the globalisers, one day all this calculated horse trading will come to an end: the EU and America scrap their farm subsidies, the developing countries scrap their tariffs and human history reaches a crescendo to the accompaniment of Bechtel engineers marching into the waterworks and power stations of the whole world. In their nightmares the WTO falls apart, with competing trade blocs being formed between the major powers, and access to the superprofits on offer in the global south restricted.

Our aim is to make sure the nightmare comes true.

At Cancun, the Mexican workers and their allies – the international anti-capitalist movement, must make the meeting the site of mass blockades and protests of the kind that derailed the Seattle ministerial.

Imperialists act to 'liberate' Liberia

Where did France call on the US to intervene recently? And, in what country does George Bush want to see UN peace keepers replace US troops? The answer to both these questions is Liberia, writes Keith Spencer.

This complete reversal of the Iraq situation shows the imperialists can still agree to occupy a country when their shared interests are threatened. And this was the case in Liberia and the countries around it which have become the centre of a joint imperialist intervention, involving the US, Britain, France, the UN and a Nigerian force financed by the imperialists.

The ostensible reason for the recent intervention in Liberia was to stop a bloody civil war by removing President Charles Taylor. He was ushered into exile in Nigeria in August helped on his way by 3,000 US marines anchored off shore, a battalion of Nigerian troops, and a promise of asylum in a country of his choice. His departure was met by cheering in the streets.

Gyude Bryant, a businessman who is not associated with any of the main rebel groups or with Taylor's government, heads the current interim government. Elections are planned for 2005. While fighting is continuing outside of the capital between various guerrilla factions, Bryant can immediately call on 200 US troops, 900 Nigerians, with another 2,000 plus soon to arrive.

Taylor came to power after a particularly

vicious civil war in the mid-1990s. At first opposed by the US he was later levered into power courtesy of the Nigerian peace-keepers and the imperialists. Like Saddam Hussain in an earlier period Taylor was seen as a potential strongman and someone who would stabilise the region. Again like Saddam he became difficult to control and a liability that had to be removed.

He sponsored a guerrilla war in Sierra Leone and controlled massive diamond smuggling as a result, finally sparking the British intervention in 2000. He backed a failed coup in Ivory Coast, which led to the country dividing along along religious and ethnic lines between North and South. The ensuing near civil war in a country previous held up as a model of development by the IMF led to the intervention of 4,000 French troops currently "maintaining order". He backed continuing incursions into Guinea, where one in seven of the population are refugees from Taylor-inspired wars.

Far from being a strongman to stabilise and maintain order and peace in the area, Taylor bled the country dry both literally, by exacerbating and causing wars, and metaphorically by selling off timber, diamonds and other raw materials to his business cronies.

The support for Taylor finally receded when yet another guerrilla army was launched against him. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (Lurd) was

launched from Guinea with a smaller offshoot invading from Sierra Leone. The Lurd fighters have been largely trained by the Guinean army which is the recipient of \$3 million worth of US military assistance programmes. This year Lurd reached the capital Monrovia. With fighting taking place upon its streets, refugees pouring into every neighbouring country and the threat of famine the imperialist had the excuse they needed to oust their one time favourite, claiming once again that this was a humanitarian intervention in another "failed state". Beneath, however, this touching concern for human rights and peace there are more fundamental reasons for the intervention.

The US, Britain and France wish to stabilise a region that has had a 20-year long history of wars and political struggles. The area is rich in natural resources such as diamonds, timber and rubber. The US tyre manufacturer Firestone is still a major player in the country having been there since after the second world war. There are also oil deposits offshore. So friendly governments backed by UN and imperialist troops would go a long way in ensuring contracts will go to the right firms.

The intervention has also given a fillip to Nigeria which is being promoted by the imperialists as a potential regional power now it is back under civilian rule. Retired Nigerian general Abdulsalami Abubaker,



Peace keepers "escort" refugees in Liberia

who oversaw the transition to civilian rule in Nigeria, led the negotiations for Taylor's departure.

Twenty years of warfare in Liberia has cost the lives of about 250,000 people, about one in 12 of the population, and injured many thousands more; the UN currently helps about 150,000 Liberians in refugee camps bordering the country with another 100,000 camped in Monrovia itself. Thousands of others are displaced throughout the country. Similar situations exist in parts

of Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast and Guinea.

The present government may bring some respite for the people of Liberia. But unless the workers and peasants of the country join with their brothers and sisters in neighbouring states to take control of the natural resources and industry out of the hands of the multi-nationals and the murderers, thieves placed in power by their old colonial masters, the imperialist system will once again plunge them into misery and despair.

France: hot autumn predicted in Larzac

Between 8-10 August between 200,000 and 350,000 people gathered for three days at a huge rally in the southern French countryside on the Larzac plateau. They debated how to ensure a hot autumn for the right-wing government of president Jacques Chirac and premier Jean-Pierre Raffarin.

A government spokesperson nervously denounced the event declaring, "By stirring up the concerns felt by a number of professions, the minority extreme-left activists have only one real goal: to paralyse French society." Right-wing commentators attacked the event as a "summer-school in anti-establishment activity."

Too right. It is only a pity that in every country across Europe, and around the world, such "summer schools" did not take place, uniting trade unions, anti-war and anti-capitalist activists. One seminar focused on the need to unite all the separate campaigns into a huge action on the scale of a general strike. Others planned to protest in next month's World Trade Organisation anti-summit in Cancun, Mexico. Raffarin and Chirac may have

thought they had broken the back of the huge protest wave against their pension reforms back in May. If they believed that the cowardice of the union leaders meant an unwillingness of their members to resist the wholesale attack on the social gains of the workers and farmers, Larzac shows they were dead wrong.

Joël Collot, one of the striking actors from Montpellier in May, fighting against the marketisation of culture, said: "You can sense that trouble is brewing for the autumn."

The gathering in Larzac was not only concerned with matters French either. Everyone is aware, in the era of corporate globalisation, that events half a world away can change their lives for good or evil with amazing speed.

The meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which will take place in Cancun, Mexico on 10 - 14 September, has far reaching consequences. On the agenda is the forced handover of public services, agricultural trade and natural resources to a handful of multinationals. Chirac and Raffarin, despite their occasional denunciations of neoliberalism, are more than ready

to go ahead with this.

Indeed all the EU governments, from Social Democrats like Schroeder to rightists like Berlusconi, are in the process of launching similar attacks on the social gains of ordinary people in the name of meeting competition from "our rivals" and expounding on the total impossibility of "bucking market forces".

Thousands of people packed into huge tents to listen to debates over the impending government "reforms" aimed at cutting the education system, privatising France's public services and the imposition of genetically modified crops. The unions of teachers, train drivers, postmen, students, health workers and actors, as well as the farmers, were present in huge numbers and were recruiting supporters and planning militant action for the autumn.

José Bové, leader of the Confédération paysanne and recently imprisoned for protesting against McDonalds and GM crops, said: "The month of September mustn't merely be hot, it should be scorching; everyone must be on the streets. If there are lots of us, we will be able to make a difference." He went on: "If we

do nothing, France's education, its farming community, its health service and culture will all definitively be forced into the commercial sector."

Bové is certainly among the most outspoken figures in France's "mouvement altermondialiste". He is not afraid to advocate and lead direct action, not only in France but in Seattle in 1999 and in Brazil in 2002. His denunciations of the US and UK war against Iraq and his support for the Palestinians encouraged the movement to spread on a worldwide scale.

The French movement rightly rejects being called anti-globalist on the basis that it is for global action and solidarity with movements fighting the exploitation of the multinationals around the world. But at the same time it does not take up the more radical term anti-capitalist.

ATTAC, its major umbrella organisation is certainly not very radical in its politics and has friendly relations with French Socialist Party leaders. There were and are good reasons to fear that if this neo-reformist current gains the upper hand in the movement this would mean a serious reverse, a battle which may be played out at the coming



European Social Forum in Paris.

Nonetheless the huge mobilisation in Larzac strengthens the left and the direct action wing of the movement. If it leads to a big upsurge in the class struggle in France this autumn the second European Social Forum in Paris could be as vibrant and radicalising as the first in Florence.

For four days last November, Florence was the site of the European Social Forum (ESF). A historic meeting of the anti-capitalist left and the biggest anti-war demo in decades, 60,000 people from 105 countries attended the ESF. Some 426 associations - trade unions, campaigns, movements - officially participated. In addition dozens of political organisations had stalls and organised more than 300 seminars and workshops. Not since the 1920s has such a huge international event taken place in Europe for political discussion and the linking of struggles.

The second European Social Forum will take place from 12 to 15 November 2003 in Paris. Don't miss it!

For more information call Workers Power on 020 7820 1363 or see <http://www.fse-esf.org>



Europe's largest arms fair will open in London's Docklands this month. As the dealers set up their stalls, plans for disruption and protest are being made. *Jon Underwood* explains the politics behind the arms industry

The players behind the dealers in death

The 2003 Defence Systems Equipment International (DSEi) arms fair will be the most spectacular exhibition staged this year in the UK. The 2001 fair attracted 664 exhibitors; this time it will be over 1,000. The 2001 fair also featured 13 national pavilions, 6 warships and 15,000 visitors; 2003 will outstrip these figures.

But, if you're thinking of dropping in to buy a Scud, be warned: there is a strict entry policy. Israeli generals are welcome; Palestinian militants are not. Industrialists will find an open door; workers had best stay away. This is the real obscenity of DSEi: not just that it sells weapons that kill, but that the people behind it choose who shall have the right to kill.

DSEi, due to take place between the 6 and 12 September at the ExCel Centre in London's Docklands, is organised by Spearhead Exhibitions at the behest of the Ministry of Defence, its main sponsors. With privatisation, the state is no longer the main supplier of arms, but it remains the main pusher. Through DSEO (Defence Export Services Organisation), it trumpets the case for UK arms around the world.

Anyone remember the "ethical foreign policy"? That became a sick joke when it was revealed Britain was selling Hawk warplanes to Indonesia, then involved in a genocidal war against East Timor. Now those Hawks are involved in the bloody suppression of Aceh separatists and arms exports from the UK to Indonesia have risen twenty-fold in the last year.

Despite this, the Blair government continues to claim it acts ethically when it comes to handing out arms licences. They point to the many offices of state consulted on each sale. They make much of the fact that less export licences have been granted to Israel, for example.

We take a different ethical view. We say that no export licences should be granted to Israel. And, if it is wrong to sell arms to Israel, is it any better selling arms to the USA? The USA spends more on arms than the next 20 nations put together. The USA props up Israel, and countless more repressive regimes. Since World War Two, no nation has started more wars, either by itself or through its proxies. And when it comes to the question of who can be trusted with weapons of mass destruction, which is the only nation to drop an atomic bomb on another?

And what of the UK armed forces? Are they somehow a more "responsible" armed force in the world? Ask the people of Iraq! And in times of crisis the reality of their role becomes clear. The armed forces, along with the police and other security services, are the private security guards of the rich and powerful. The army scabbed on the recent firefighters strikes.

The history of the workers' movement is littered with examples of the reactionary intervention of the British Army. For example Churchill sent the army into the South Wales coalfields in 1910. And for many other nations the British army has been the most violent and repressive expression of British imperialism over the years.

We may well ask, why is our money being spent on promoting the filthy business of arms sales?

In reply, governments have argued that arms exports are a major source of revenue to the economy. Not so. Our money not only promotes the arms trade, it also props it up. Far from being a huge source of revenue to the UK economy, the arms business is in perpetual need of subsidy, not only through DSEO, but also in the form of export credits, insurance and support for research and

development. Since the arms industry is shrouded in secrecy, the exact figure cannot be calculated but the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (Caat) estimate £763m a year or £8,500 for each job related to arms exports.

There is another sense, however, in which the arms industry is vital to British capitalism. It is intimately bound up with other (non-military) spheres of production. The electronics industry, for example, is highly dependent on military research and development. It is therefore unthinkable for the British state to ban armaments production without wholesale restructuring.

The arms industry is engaged in a mad scramble to update its technology. As this becomes more and more expensive, so profits are increasingly squeezed. The need to lower basic unit costs leads to merger mania with the result that a few giants now dominate the industry: Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon in the US and BAe Systems in the UK.

Increasingly the pre-eminence of these giants is based on control of the hi-tech know-how. A host of smaller companies service them, taking on much of the manufacture. While national governments subsidise the giants, they increasingly look to other countries, partly to achieve the lowest possible production costs, partly to secure markets, and partly under the influence of governments who wish to pursue political alliances (with the EU, for example).

Funding and hi-tech development are clearly important, but the fundamental reason why British governments support the arms trade is also what informs how we should organise against it? It is impossible to treat the arms industry as a single issue, as do campaigns such as the Caat. It has done vital work in exposing the workings of the arms industry, keeping the issue in the public eye, and maintaining pressure on the UK government to at least explain its actions.

However, Caat labours under an illusion: that the UK state will voluntarily disarm. No capitalist state will do this, because at the heart the state is its army and police force. The threat of violence is the only way of ensuring basic supplies can be safeguarded and markets protected. Having a monopoly of violence guarantees the domination of the many by the few. This is the key reason that capitalist governments are wedded to the arms trade and why organising against the arms trade means challenging capitalism itself.

In the same way, we should not greet the involvement of bodies such as the UN in arms regulation as a step towards a more peaceful world. The involvement of the UN merely cements the control of the major imperialist powers, while giving them greater legitimacy. It is a cruel irony that the Security Council, seat of the greatest warmongers on Earth, now oversees arms sales.

But if parliaments and the UN cannot bring about arms control, who can? The answer is in the alliance of anti-war and anti-capitalist activists with the working class: in other words, the overwhelming majority of the people.

To win this majority, we must challenge the call of patriotism wherever it is heard, and not shirk from calling for the defeat of "our" armed forces in war.

Each imperialist military victory is not only a setback for the third world, it also cements the alliance of bosses and workers at home. It turns arch-enemies of the working class such as Churchill into national heroes. It helps persuade militant workers such as the firefighters to call off action in time of war at the very time they should be stepping it up.

In the week of the DSEi there will be many actions against the arms trade. Protests are being co-ordinated by Disarm DSEi and include a counter conference and direct action to disrupt the arms fair.

It is important that these protests are lively and successful. But they also need to be a step in building the alliance of workers and anti-capitalists with the aim of taking arms production and distribution into our own hands. Without this overriding strategy, direct action (however militant) cannot end the arms trade, or even seriously hamper it. We don't want to still be protesting at DSEi 2033, so join us in the struggle for revolutionary socialism.

MARXISM v PACIFISM

Marxists are not pacifists. When an imperialist nation attacks a poor nation, we recognise the right of that nation to fight back. When striking workers are attacked by paramilitary gangs or the state, we support their right to defend themselves by any means necessary.

Nevertheless, we want to see a peaceful world. That is why we oppose the so-called free market - capitalism. The fact is that the past hundred years have been the bloodiest in human history. Why?

Because it has been the age of imperialism: the age when capitalism had to go global, in search of raw materials, cheap labour and new markets. This is what led to the global turf wars of World War I and World War II as well as naked wars of conquest such as the recent Iraq war. It also led to nations such as Somalia becoming destabilised and impoverished, spawning civil conflict.

There will be no peace without justice and there is no point in being anti-war, or anti-militarist, without being anti-imperialist. That means

The arms industry: what we argue for

- Throw open the books - expose the business secrets of the arms dealers.
- Confiscate the profits made from arms deals.
- Nationalise all arms manufacture under democratic workers control.
- Switch production from unnecessary armaments to useful public works.
- Re-employ all armaments workers or pay wage-equivalent benefits.
- Not a man, a woman or a penny for the military machine.
- Dissolve all imperialist-dominated military alliances, including Nato.
- Expose and publish all secret treaties (e.g. with Saddam during Iran-Iraq war).



Sharon's peace: bodies on the streets

Victory to the intifada!

On 8 August Israeli soldiers fired an anti-tank missile at a building in the Askar refugee camp in Nablus, setting off several explosions.

Their targets were Fayez Assader and Khamis Abu Salem, both leading members of Hamas and both killed in the blast. But for good measure, Israeli troops then opened fire on people throwing stones at them, killing a 20-year-old man, while another bystander died from the effects of tear gas sprayed by soldiers. Eight families were made homeless by the attack.

In typically brutal fashion, Israel had broken the ceasefire and wrecked the "roadmap". Hamas responded immediately with the statement, "We call on all cells to answer this crime and teach the enemy the right lesson" and on 19 August with a suicide bomb which killed 21 passengers on a Jerusalem bus.

From Israel's side the ceasefire was always a sham, only agreed to under US pressure. It released only a few hundred (rather than the promised thousands) Palestinians detained without trial - and most of these were due to be released or convicted of criminal rather than political offences. While the Israelis withdrew from around Bethlehem they continued to exert an iron grip on most West Bank towns, making daily life insufferable.

After the start of the ceasefire, Israeli soldiers and settlers killed 17 people (including 7 children), wounded 437 (including 88 children), arrested 593 people, confiscated 4,457 acres of land for Jewish settlements, bulldozed 987 acres of farmland, destroyed 12,462 trees and destroyed or damaged 253 houses.

Since 10 August Sharon has declared "every Hamas member" a legitimate target for assassination and the IDF made 10 rocket attacks in 10 days killing several militants and wounding many more.

The ceasefire had been brokered by the PLO leadership - especially by Marwan Barghouti, a key Fatah leader in jail - and agreed to in order to allow the new Palestinian prime minister Mahmoud Abbas time to extract meaningful concessions from Israel's government after nearly three years of the second intifada (uprising).



Palestinian youths surround a car that was destroyed during an Israeli rocket attack in the Jebaliya refugee camp north of Gaza City Tuesday Aug. 26 2003. An Israeli helicopter fired three missiles at the car, killing a bystander and wounding at least 26.

Abbas also needed the ceasefire as part of the PNA's obligations contained in the so-called "road map" for a settlement between the Palestinians and Israel. The "road map" aims to grant the former a meaningful sovereign state and the latter secure borders recognised by the Palestinians and the Arab states.

But right from the start Ariel Sharon's government continued to "consolidate" the existing Jewish settlements and to build its "security" fence (the Apartheid Wall) deep into Palestinian territory.

Sharon also lobbied President George Bush to put more pressure on Abbas to go beyond a ceasefire and use PNA forces to crush Hamas. Only then, Sharon maintained, would Israel contemplate doing more to relieve the suffering of the Palestinians under its rule.

However, Abbas told Bush that if the pro-US Palestinian leadership tried to crush Hamas while Israel was still attacking Palestinians and doing

nothing to halt their settlement programme, it would merely spark a civil war. And the moderates within the PLO and Fatah would probably be the chief victims.

For a while during the ceasefire US foreign policy had the superficial appearance of seeking to bring both sides together in a reasonable settlement, and Bush even mildly rebuked Sharon's "security wall".

Bush even hinted that further US loan guarantees to Israel of up to \$9bn (without which Israel could not hope to raise money on the capital and bond markets to finance its reactionary military and expansionist plans) could be withdrawn. He urged Sharon to build his wall only on the existing Green Line border between Israel and the West Bank - itself illegally established after Israel occupied the latter in the 1967 war.

Sharon has refused to agree to any such undertakings. The high profile removal of a few small illegal settlement "outposts" in July were

meant to assuage international opinion, but most were quickly re-established after the cameras left and, anyway, the "consolidation" of the large existing settlements continues apace - all financed with US-backed money.

Washington's policy is neither pro-Palestinian nor "even-handed". The USA has always backed Israel - and armed it well - to prevent one or more Arab states in the region becoming capable of harming US corporate interests in the region, especially access to oil supplies.

But Washington's own interests do not completely coincide with Israel's in that Bush needs strategic stability in the Middle East, not perpetual conflict. Radical Islamic opposition to US imperialism (including that of al-Qaida) is in part fuelled by the oppression of the Palestinians by Israel.

Getting Israel to agree to stop stealing ever more Palestinian land is crucial if the moderate Palestinian leadership is ever to persuade the

mass of the people to settle for the truncated, tiny "state" that Washington and Israel have in mind for them.

But a majority in Sharon's cabinet do not see it this way. They would like Israel to stay in the West Bank and possibly Gaza and "invite" the millions of Palestinians to move to Egypt and Jordan.

These Zionists think Israel is too small and must expand its borders and that there can be no security from Palestinian militancy while millions of them live aggrieved next to Israel. They do not care one jot that they and their state committed an historic crime in 1947-48 by expelling the Palestinian people from their homes and land to establish their reactionary state on another people's territory.

The "moderate" Zionists in the Israeli government believe that with a 200 mile long security fence, together with a military presence that protects all the key Jewish settlements, a Palestinian "state" may be no threat. Indeed, the state that Washington and Tel Aviv have in mind has no sovereignty over its borders, airspace or coast, has no army or weapons capable of resisting Israel, nor possesses a continuous territory between its major population centres. It is easy to see why many Zionists can come to terms with the prospect of such a "state".

Now the ceasefire is dead the US administration has abandoned its pretence at even-handedness. They have again attacked Arafat as the main "enemy of peace". They have demanded that the PNA and Abbas do more to dismantle Hamas. The US administration has moved to freeze the finances of several charities it claims are supporting Hamas.

We salute the intifada as it approaches its third anniversary. We call on the global anti-war movement to campaign to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank with as much vigour as it opposed Bush and Blair's war against Iraq.

On 27 September an international day of action will take place in protest against the US/UK occupation of Iraq and Israel's occupation of Palestine. If we build a solidarity movement for the intifada as big as the anti-war movement of last winter we can force Israel out of the West Bank.

Get active, stay active, join

workers power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence, in Asia at Hyderabad and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the LFI, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New World Party of Socialist

Revolution - the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

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