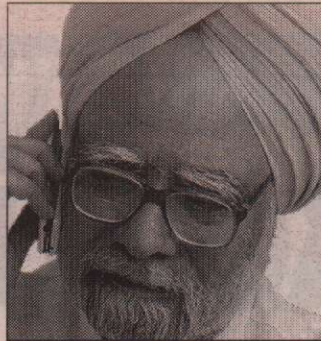


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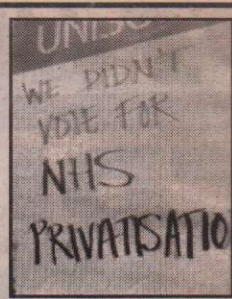


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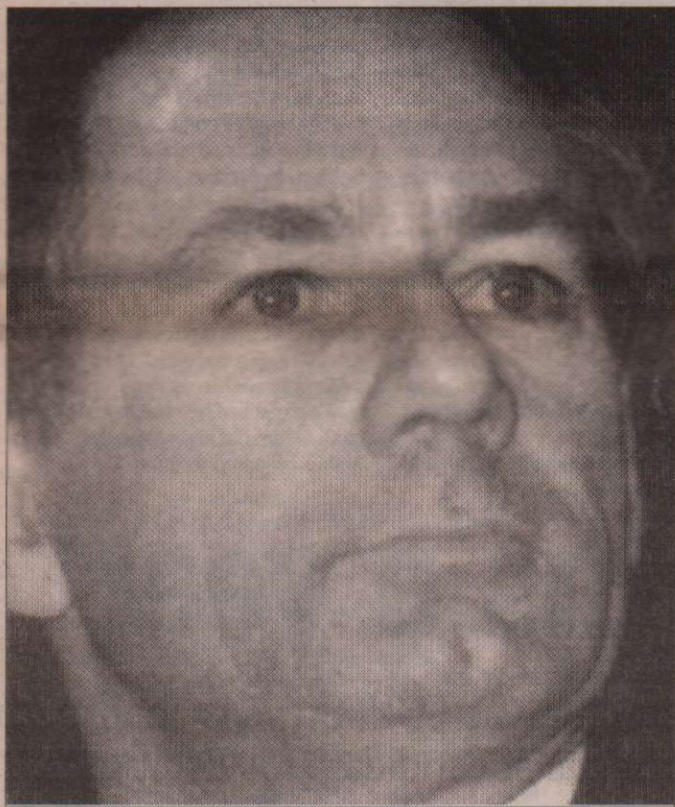


workers power 5

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British section of the League for the Fifth International

WAR CRIMINALS



Hoon



Blair



Straw

MAKE THEM PAY

TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ NOW!

FBU strike: time to stand up for stand down time

The bosses say that a key element of "modernising" the fire brigades is that firefighters give up their "stand down" time. Stand down time is that period - from midnight to 7.00am - when lazy firefighters get money for snoozing away on the job. Get rid of this, said the bosses, or we hold back this year's 3.5 per cent pay rise.

The bosses' determination to get rid of stand down time is a clear illustration of what the long-running pay dispute is about. They are out to smash the FBU. They want to replace all national agreements with local ones. They want to cut jobs, close stations, end hard-won conditions, impose dictatorial management and make fewer firefighters work twice as hard. And Labour is backing them to the hilt in this. Indeed it was Labour who came up with this "modernisation" programme.

Stand down time is far from being the slumber party the bosses and gutter press make out - Richard Jenkins from Cardiff died last month fighting a fire during his stand down time.

Firefighters work a 15-hour shift. On a night shift, for seven of those hours (leaving them working an 8 hour day) between midnight and 7am they stand down from duties not connected with fighting fires (principally fire prevention work).

Is this because they all want to sleep? No. Quite simply, the schools, the old people's homes, many of the workplaces and public buildings in which they would normally carry out such activities are closed between midnight and 7.00am and there is not a lot that a firefighter can do about that.

Yet one of the bosses, Christina Jepps -



a prominent Liberal Democrat in case anyone was thinking of casting a protest vote for these fakers - announced: "The authorities cannot condone the retention of this [stand down time] as a national condition."

The FBU negotiators rightly broke off talks at this point (early May 2004) and announced their "fury and disgust" in a union bulletin that went to every member. Gilchrist called for a national strike ballot.

That action was needed soon became very clear. The bosses chose a fire station in Salford to plunge the dagger into the workers. Nine firefighters from blue watch turned

By Mark Hoskisson

up for work as normal on 18 May. Instead of getting down to work they were greeted by two senior officers armed with a document marked "strictly confidential". The document read: "I am available to work and prepared to undertake all of the duties associated with my post as directed by my line manager."

The officers then demanded that the nine men all sign the document. No previous agreement mattered. No training for "duties" needed to be given (the anti-terrorism vehi-

cle the men were asked to drive requires specialist training that the men had not been given). Nothing counted except the will, the whim, the bullying and the barking of the boss. Do as you're told or you are out.

Other watches at the Salford station were given the same ultimatum and all of the firefighters at the station were suspended. A building just down the road was gutted by fire during their suspension, something the bosses were prepared to let happen. The Manchester chief officer, Barry Dixon, boasted: "This is a small handful of firefighters, we will see it through."

A growing wave of solidarity action with

Salford by FBU members from Strathclyde to Cornwall proved Dixon was talking bullshit. However, rather than build on this, the FBU leadership announced: "We have made it clear that we cannot and do not call upon members to take any industrial action."

Fortunately, the FBU does not equal its leaders - members continue to take action in solidarity with Salford. After all, as Salford firefighter Dave Allsey said: "our only crime is that we want to defend our jobs". Pity Andy Gilchrist doesn't know how to do this. He has come up with another deal that gives the bosses all they want.

His only sop to the members is that a ballot for action in Manchester will go ahead. But it is clear that what happened in Salford has implications for every FBU member in the country. It is a national issue and it requires a national strike.

FBU members, like those in Grassroots FBU, have no time to lose. They need to campaign to reject the latest deal on the grounds that the last two years show what is really at stake. The FBU is fighting for its future.

The recalled conference on 15 June must sanction all unofficial action in support of Salford, in defiance of the anti-union laws. It must set a date for a national strike and convene mass meetings at every station on the Monday following the conference at which votes should be taken on a show of hands. And it must make the action all out, indefinite, and controlled by the rank and file. This could stop the bosses' onslaught within weeks.

Gilchrist had his chance and blew it. Time to blow him out and replace him with a leadership prepared to fight.

'Class struggle is 12 months a year'

Workers Power interviewed sacked firefighter Steve Godward about the situation in the FBU. Steve is chair of the Grassroots FBU a rank and file group. He is also standing as an Independent Socialist candidate for Erdington

Workers Power: Steve, you were victimised during the last FBU action, what is happening to your appeal?

Steve Godward: The appeal is going to the High Court for a judicial review. I'm asking the High Court to overturn the unlawful action of the West Midlands Fire Service in not reinstating me after John Prescott gave me my job back. In six to eight weeks I will be in the High Court. Management are also taking Prescott's decision to a judicial review, so we should meet on the same day at the High Court!

WP: Are you pleased with the support your union has given you to date?

SG: Union, yes. Union leadership, no. Union has been magnificent, comrades all around the country especially through the 30K Fire Forum site, which is an amazing tool of dissent in the FBU. But, as for Gilchrist, he has deserted myself and the other five victimised firefighters. The six of us asked for a meeting with him at conference, but he was too busy. Our campaign should not just be a legal one but a political campaign because the management are using our victimisation to victimise every other firefighter in the country.

WP: Are there any rank and file revolts or initiatives within the union?

SG: There is Grassroots FBU, of which

I am the current chair, and we are the thorn in Gilchrist's side. He announced at the executive before Conference in May that he has set up a team to investigate us so a witch-hunt is ongoing at present. Grassroots however is building constantly, putting out bulletins, really getting organised.

WP: Conference coming up?

SG: Conference has been recalled for 15 June, there will be a Grassroots meeting and we'll probably invite Gilchrist to attend and so he can witch-hunt us in person!

WP: Any Grassroots Conference?

SG: Not at present. After Conference we will probably reach out to other unions, other left groups in trade unions. Why reinvent the wheel? Let's learn how others are doing, learn from mistakes and maybe in the future we should be looking at a renegade TUC where all the lefts within the unions get together and see what we want as a way forward to a workers party built in the class and the trade union movement with grassroots democracy at the core of it.

WP: You've stood as a Socialist Alliance candidate in previous elections in Erdington, why are you now standing as an Independent Socialist?

SG: Well there were two options, to stand as Respect or not stand at all. My feelings about Respect are quite clear: it's a cross-

class populist front. I believe my politics to be secular. I work with anyone from any religion. I support any individual's right to their religious beliefs. However, when you get any type of religion involved in politics as a main thrust, I find that unacceptable.

We in the North Birmingham Socialist Alliance applied as a branch to stand an Independent Socialist candidate. However, because of the unconstitutional March conference decision to suspend the Socialist Alliance from standing in local elections, we were forced as a branch to stand independently. The comrades at the hustings asked if I would stand.

WP: What about the nature of your campaign?

SG: Grassroots, grassroots... we're not dictating down to the class, we're not giving them slogans thought up in committees, we need dialogue with our community. At the stalls it's been bread and butter issues like housing, education and employment, a lack of them in the area that has been raised. The idea is to build the campaign and see what the class is after and then, obviously, we introduce socialism into it. To say - have you thought about why we haven't got enough hospitals and see the billions spent on war in Iraq, or talk about asylum seekers and refugees and how this

area has a massive Irish community - these economic refugees built this area. Or asylum seekers - well if I was in Colombia working at the Coca Cola plant then maybe I would have to leg it out. People can relate to that as an individual, the camel's eyelid starts to come up. We need to be engaging and talking to the class rather than talk down to them.

Another critical reason for standing is that Erdington has a BNP candidate standing for the first time. We are also surrounded in three areas by a strong fascist presence, with Kingstanding being a nest for many years for both the BNP and NF. I felt it was outrageous that SWP and Socialist Resistance were deserting the working class by not putting an alternative to capitalism or fascism in the local elections - be it on their heads!

WP: Workers Power is supporting your campaign as you clearly are a class struggle candidate, but how do you see elections in the wider class struggle?

SG: Class struggle is 12 months a year. Elections are like a performance indicator to see if your message is getting through, to see if socialism is an acceptable word. Around this area it is not a dirty word: people know what I stand for, that we are socialists. Elections are a means to an end.

WP: WP feels that the war in Iraq is a crucial issue in the elections, what's your position and how key is Iraq in your campaign?

SG: My position on the war is, troops out straight away and hand over sovereignty to the people of Iraq. People of Iraq should choose their own leadership and not have it imposed as puppets of Bush and Blair. As for the campaign, the war has not been spoken about by very many people in the High Street or on the doorstep. That does not mean we shouldn't link it to the issues people talk to us about.

WP: How would you view the initiative from sacked Liverpool dockers for building a campaign for a new workers party?

SG: It's one of my regrets that being so busy with the election campaign I haven't been able to attend the Liverpool meetings, in particular at the start of a new initiative, though I'm on the steering group of that campaign from Grassroots FBU.

I want to get involved and to ensure that it's democratic, accountable and transparent. What I found in the Socialist Alliance with some of the sects I've had to work with is that dishonesty is the order of the day and transparency is not there at all because all decisions have been taken behind closed doors.

workers power editorial

Build a mass anti-occupation movement

The US and British occupation of Iraq has entered a new phase.

George Bush and Tony Blair may be talking about handing sovereignty to the Iraqis, of withdrawing their troops. But this is mere electioneering, posturing designed to deceive. On the ground they are entrenching their control of the economy, imposing a puppet regime, augmenting their battalions.

And, from their point of view, they have no choice.

To withdraw would leave a key country in the hands of a deeply anti-western population. No pro-US government could put the lid back on this armed Pandora's box. To retreat now would signal to the rest of the world that the mighty US Army can be beaten, that the shackles of third world debt and WTO rules can be broken.

But neither can they win. Fallujah and, now, Najaf show that neither heavily-armed Marines nor beret-wearing Brits can patrol the cities and towns of Iraq with impunity. Every attempt at a crackdown produces fresh freedom fighters and unites the opposing factions into a national liberation force.

A change at the top - John Kerry and Gordon Brown being the only alternatives - may become a by-product of this struggle, but it will not unpick the knot at the centre of the problem. As one former general said, "It's quagmire".

Indeed, every day, every week, it looks more like Vietnam. Vice-President Dick Cheney has even started to prepare for the re-introduction of the draft in America. Now that would make the returning coffins and bodybags a political issue.

All this has had an enormous impact on the anti-war movement.

On 15 February 2003, millions marched to stop a war that had not yet started. As soon as the "shock and awe" offensive began, those influenced by the Liberal Democrats and the Daily Mirror stopped the stopping. Now that are settling into a period of long-term occupation, more divisions are emerging.

When the likes of Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein start touting "solutions" involving a United Nations occupation, led by the armies of Turkey, Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia, you know that we have to re-build the anti-war movement as an explicitly anti-imperialist movement.

The poor turn-out for the 22 May emergency demonstration in London, called by the Stop the

War Coalition, should set alarm bells ringing. StWC can no longer rely on mass rallies and demonstrations to keep the movement together and on the streets. It needs to diversify its tactics and deepen its political message.

- Focus on the army. The US anti-war movement is fighting legal battles on behalf of soldiers who refuse to obey illegal orders in Iraq. Disrupting the lines of command in the occupation forces and promoting dissenting voices among the veterans can be powerful tools.

- Workers to the fore. Twin union branches with Iraqi unions, provide financial and material support, enter into a political dialogue with Iraqi workers. They are the future of a secular, socialist Iraq.

- Bring in the youth. As with the Vietnam war, youth are the natural leaders of the anti-imperialist movement. Twin schools and colleges over the internet. Organise teach-ins and walk-outs whenever the occupiers commit particularly striking atrocities.

Above all, we need to revive and democratise the anti-war movement. George Galloway and the Socialist Workers Party have made an opportunistic and wasteful turn to electoralism, even blocking support for the resistance in order to keep the mosques on board. On the contrary, we need to sharpen our political analysis and build a movement on the streets, in the schools and at the workplace.

For a new workers party

Elsewhere in this issue, Terry Teague and Steve Godward argue for a new workers party that listens to ordinary workers, and embodies their needs and demands in its policies and programme. We agree with this.

Indeed, a new workers party should organise such consultation on a mass scale. We need - not a few selected focus groups like New Labour or the other bosses' parties - but well-prepared public meetings in every working class area, every council estate, and every migrant community.

The trade unions and their activists - whether they support a new workers party or remain tied to Labour - should begin this task now. A real workers' audit, carried out on such a scale, will reveal the real level of economic, social and environmental deprivation ordinary people suffer in New Labour Britain. At the same time we need to make an audit of the wealth of the rich, of the banks and corporations, exposing the swindle of "business secrecy" where this systematically hides their

ill-gotten gains.

It is certain that the hugely inequitable distribution of wealth will be revealed by such an exercise: one that cannot simply be rectified by Working Families Tax Credits, or even by locally based socialist councillors and MPs.

Such a mobilisation to discover our needs - and the resources that really exist to meet them - could be a launchpad for local struggles to demand a solution to these needs. It could build organisations in every housing estate and worker's district, bringing new hope that a different society is possible, stamping out the despair of racism, uprooting the fascists. A new workers party could give a national lead and co-ordination to these struggles and could thus draw tens, then hundreds of thousands into its ranks.

Of course, a new workers party will fight elections. But it will not trim its policies to those that will get it a big vote or many seats today. If we do that we will only repeat the dead-end of Old Labour, that is... New Labour.

No. We must start from what the working class as a whole really needs. We will then have to lay hands on the plunder that the exploiters have accumulated from generations of workers. To do this we will have to build a party that fights for power - real power not the parliamentary puppet show put on by the billionaires and bankers, by civil service mandarins, generals and the police chiefs.

If we combine listening to what working people really need with a fight to get it that involves mobilising the millions in direct action - not a "vote for us to do it for you" approach - then we can change the face of Britain and the world.

No anti-capitalism please, we're British

The London European Social Forum is just four months away.

This paper has long championed the ESF. It is a tremendous opportunity to combine the very best methods of struggle, policies and organisational initiatives from across the continent and the world. In an era of globalisation and imperialist war, this internationalism is of vital importance if we are to win even local struggles against privatisation, racism and cuts.

Previous ESFs - in Florence and Paris - drew 50,000 activists to them and had a galvanising effect on labour and progressive politics in the

country where they took place. This was inevitable as the bulk of the participants came naturally, from the host countries.

But there's the rub.

After six months preparation, the ESF has only 67 British affiliates. True, this figure includes eight national trade unions, but there are only a couple of trades councils and a couple of dozen union branches and regions that have signed up to the event. There has been just one handbill produced to publicise the ESF, and the official website is still only hosting "temporary" pages. At this stage last year, the Paris committee had over 1,000 affiliates.

More alarmingly, very few local social forum or mobilising committees yet exist and these are still in a weak, embryonic stage. Globalise Resistance, the Socialist Workers Party's umbrella group for the movement, held its annual conference last month: fewer than 150 attended. In fact everyone knows it is a paint and pasteboard facade of an anti-capitalist movement. There is nothing behind it beyond a dwindling band of SWP activists.

Yes, the SWP promises it will make another of its famous "turns" - towards building for the ESF - after the elections. But we have consistently warned the SWP that you can't simply turn these united fronts on and off like a tap. Disillusion and mistrust set in.

We have campaigned for, and welcome the involvement of the unions, the TUC and the Labour Party - or at least its left wing. The bureaucrats that run these organisations ignored the anti-capitalist movement until very recently. Worse they opposed it and condemned its militant actions. Even Ken Livingstone called on the police to make pre-emptive arrests of May Day protesters in 2001; the cops duly obliged and penned children, pregnant women and diabetics in Oxford Circus for up to eight hours.

Now Ken and co. have changed their tune. Good. But we must insist that these Johnny-come-latelies are not allowed to blunt and dull the cutting edge of our movement. The anti-capitalist movement is a fighting force or it is nothing. Its radical, revolutionary wing must not be silenced. The ESF must publicise all self-organised events taking place in October, even those - like the Youth Assembly - that the union and Labour chiefs disagree with.

What does all this mean? It means that the ESF will be a political battle zone this year. If the Dave Prentises and Ken Livingstones get their way, it will smooth the path to Gordon Brown's premiership and provide policies to - at best - slow the pace of globalisation. But, if we can rally the forces through local campaigning and political preparation, it can start to build a network of fighting organisations and politically arm it with the ideas that can uproot capitalism itself.

Manufacturing jobs crisis: bureaucrats' words no substitute for action

British manufacturing is in crisis - the first three months of 2004 saw a drop of 101,000 jobs compared to the same period in 2003. The once-mighty industrial heartland of the Midlands has taken some of the toughest blows. So it is timely that three of the TUC's four largest unions - Amicus, GMB and the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) - called a march and rally in Birmingham to "Fight back for manufacturing" on 22nd April.

But for 8,000 workers in Ford's Solihull Land Rover plant, time could be running out. They have been given an ultimatum to agree a "road map" to increased competitiveness within eight weeks - or face withdrawal of investment and closure. The knock-on effect would jeopardise up to 70,000 jobs in related industries.

In Ford's eyes, the Land Rover plant compares poorly with Jaguar, its Merseyside fellow-subsidary at Halewood. It is a comparison with which the Land Rover workers might agree, but for different reasons - at

by Lynn Chambers

the time of their pay dispute earlier this year, they lagged behind their fellow-workers in Jaguar by £20 per week. But that dispute, which saw Amicus, the GMB and T&G bring their members out on two 24-hour strikes, was not just about pay but also about the very points at issue in the latest crisis: the introduction of "flexible" working practices to increase competitiveness.

The "fight back" event organised by the three unions saw eight hundred workers turn out for a short march and rally through the heart of Birmingham's yuppie regeneration zone. Unfortunately, the only organised presence from the rest of the labour movement was a lively contingent of Euro Packaging strikers and banners from two local Trades Councils.

At the rally, Derek Simpson (Amicus), Tony Woodley (T&G) and Debbie Coulter (GMB) were effusive in praising New

Euro Packaging: low-paid workers strike back

The Euro Packaging workers who joined the "big three" unions' Birmingham event are currently in dispute over a number of issues - pay, working hours and redundancies. Added to that is overt union-bashing: the company is targeting union reps in their 80 planned redundancies, and have let it be known that the remaining 100-odd employees would increase their job security by leaving their union, the Graphical, Paper & Media Union (GPMU).

The mainly Urdu-speaking staff have had enough of building up an annual company turnover of £200 million in sweatshop conditions. For a minimum-wage hourly rate of £4.50, they have been forced to work over 80 hours per week without overtime or shift pay.

After four weeks where the strikes were held two days a week, the workers have now escalated their action to an indefinite all-out strike starting on Monday 31 May. They have received backing from other local unions and trades councils, and good support from people passing the picket line.

• Messages of solidarity and donations c/o: GPMU, 9 William Street North, Birmingham.

Labour's record in government of saving and creating manufacturing jobs, before expressing regret that Labour's actions had been too little, too late.

Woodley commanded somewhat greater

enthusiasm with his denunciation of greedy corporations and a clear call for the repeal of all anti-union laws. But he also called on New Labour to follow the example of the US bosses and their government in impos-

ing selective import controls to save jobs.

This is to accept the bosses' lie that jobs or working conditions can only be protected by competing with workers in other countries. General Motors (GM) workers across Europe gave a different answer in January 2001, when they struck in solidarity against GM's plan to close down the Luton Vauxhall plant. Woodley shunned that answer then as now, selling out the Luton workers when he negotiated a deal with GM to close down the plant.

Instead of bureaucratic talk and chauvinistic protectionism, we need a new - international - workers party. A party that can lead workers' resistance across borders to the bosses' attacks on pay and conditions. A party that can lead the fight for rank and file control of unions to stop bureaucratic sell-outs. A party that can lead the struggle to get rid of the whole capitalist system which treats the livelihood and dignity of working people as mere sacrifices on the altar of profit.

Will the Labour left make their bid?

Last year, the big union chiefs threatened to defeat Tony Blair at the Labour Party conference over the issue of the invasion of Iraq. In the end they settled for the "victory" of defeating the government's policy of top-up fees for college students on the conference floor... only to see Charles Clarke introduce the bill the following month. Blair has never been challenged over the war on Iraq nor on the subsequent occupation, killings and torture. Despite this sorry record, the union leaders and left MPs are making noises again. A lot has happened in the past six months. Will their renewed challenge to the Blairites fare any better this time? Certain things have changed.

Tony Blair is no longer seen as a sure fire election winner. His uncritical support for George Bush's losing war in Iraq, for privatisation and "modernisation" (cuts) have put him into the rogues' gallery of Labour leaders. A crash in the Labour vote on 10 June may turn him into an outright electoral liability, one who can, and may well be, pushed aside.

Secondly, a number of unions – those that have been on the receiving end of Blair's anti-union words and deeds – are questioning their affiliation altogether or demanding the right to support other parties that actually support their members rights rather than attack them.

- The rail workers union the RMT has been disaffiliated by the party's national executive following the decision by its Scottish branches to affiliate to the Scottish Socialist Party.
- The firefighters' union the FBU's executive committee favours disaffiliation after a union-busting campaign against it and a motion to do just that will be discussed at its recalled annual conference on 15 June.
- Some of the Scottish branches of the postal workers' union the CWU have also voted to switch their affiliation to the Scottish Socialist Party. Even the union's

By **Jeremy Dewar**

Labour-loyal leader, Billy Hayes, is to speak at the Green Party conference and has said that the Greens have "the most to offer trade unions today".

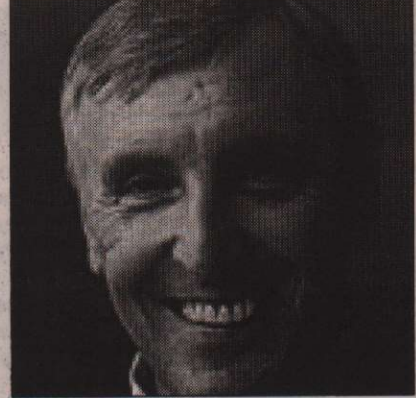
Closely linked to this is the continuing slide in the party's membership. The last published figures (pre-Iraq) revealed that membership numbers had slumped from more than 400,000 to under 250,000. There are now widely believed to be fewer than 200,000 Labour members, the lowest figure in living memory.

The leaders of the big four unions and leading Party figures like Peter Hain have been ringing the alarm bells all month about voter-apathy.

Derek Simpson (Amicus), Kevin Curran (GMB), Dave Prentis of Unison and Tony Woodley of the TGWU, belong to Catalyst, a pressure group within the Labour Party, which will develop policy proposals and campaign for personnel changes at the top of the party. No one can join Catalyst; it is a club for bureaucrats designed to usher in Gordon Brown with the minimum of disruption.

The *Observer* quoted one union source saying, "We would welcome Gordon Brown taking over" while another spokesperson said: "We need the right manifesto or the fact is that GMB activists will not be working for the party in the heartlands areas".

But what would a Gordon Brown government look like? The *New Statesman*, which is backing the campaign to get Brown into Number 10 before the general election, is in favour of a Brown-Cook-Straw leadership. Yet the magazine, which has close links to the centre-left of the party, has to admit: "Mr Brown, to be sure, is also a moderniser and also holds views – about privatisation and flexible labour markets, for example – that will be unpalatable to



Tony Woodley, Derek Simpson and Dave Prentis: key figures in the Catalyst group

many on the left. But these are incidental." Incidental to the journalists of the *New Statesman*, but hardly to millions of low-paid, casualised workers!

On the question of the war, we are told that Brown would not have "acquiesced so quickly" to Bush's invasion and occupation; he would have held out longer for a second UN resolution. Some proof for this? In any case, Jack Straw has proved to be an unswerving servant of Anglo-American imperialism in the Foreign Office – and he's part of this supposed "dream-ticket"!

To the left of the Catalyst group and the Brownites is the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). Launched last year, it is finally holding its first conference on 3 July, where policies will be debated and voted on. It has the backing of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and Labour Briefing, the party's left activist network. Headed by Mick Rix, former head of train drivers' union Aslef, the LRC also has support from branch and regional leaders in the RMT, CWU, FBU and Unison.

Unlike Catalyst, at least the LRC is holding a policy-making conference. But there are good reasons to be cautious about the LRC. First, its left leaders are, well, not that left. Alan Simpson MP, for example, advo-

cates a United Nations-led occupation of Iraq (with such democratic countries as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria in charge) and only a "phased withdrawal" of US and British troops. That is, under no circumstances should there be a vacuum, in which the Iraqi people might take power for themselves.

Second, the LRC shares a basic premise with the Catalyst group: that the outcome of any changeover must at all costs be an "electable" Labour Party – and electable for these people means appealing to 'middle England' not to the workers. What these people do not realise is that electoral cretinism – what gets in the manifesto is what will get us elected – is the basic reason why all their hopes for a radical manifesto repeatedly come to nothing.

The LRC activists who have stuck in the party may dislike Brown and Straw, but they will tolerate them in order to keep the party together and keep out the Tories. In fact, such a superficial change of leadership will only secure a further five years of imperialist strutting on the world stage, neoliberal attacks at home and racist divide and rule tactics, at the end of which the Tories will finally drive Labour into the wilderness again.

But there is another way forward. The LRC could launch a real fight for radical demands – against privatisations, for the re-nationalisation of the railways, airports etc, for the immediate withdrawal from Iraq, the ending of tuition fees and the restoring of grants – just for starters. This unity in action against the Government's policies could be developed in the workplaces and on the streets.

The LRC should also fight for these policies in the Labour Party, of course. OK they think they can get a manifesto for a radical third term. Well go right ahead and fight for it openly. Only don't back off at the first rebuff from Brown and Prescott and the inevitable cries not to rock the electoral boat.

Joint action for pro-working class policies, despite our differences, can only strengthen the left as a whole. But we predict the LRC leaders will fail miserably to win their radical manifesto. If we are right, we will say to their activists, draw the logical conclusion. New Labour is dead as a dodo for winning even the basic reforms workers need today. Join us in building a new mass workers party. Debate and discuss with us our view that we need a party which will go to the roots of all our problems – capitalism – and rip it up.

Terry Teague, one of the sacked Liverpool dockers, explains why activists in the North West are breaking from Labour

How the campaign for a new mass working class party was started

The involvement of the Liverpool Dockers comes from the large number of political and trade union groups that use the Casa (the dockers' building) and which constantly raise the issue of the lack of political representation for the labour and trade union movement, to the point where there is a real sense of despair and frustration that we no longer have a political voice.

So when Tony Mulhern and John Kennedy and others from the Liverpool 47 surcharged councillors approached us to ask if we could jointly analyse the question of who, in today's society, represents the political views of the working class we were only too ready to agree. What followed was a series of joint meetings at which the following issues were discussed.

Firstly we knew that there had already been plenty of debate on the subject of a new party, with some excellent conferences, rallies and meetings organised by the traditional left-wing parties and groups like Reclaim the Labour Party, Left Unity and

Respect. But we wanted to start something on a more local grassroots level with a broader base, that is trade unions, community, ethnic and student groups.

Secondly we said that we didn't want to re-run the struggles of the dockers or the 47 councillors. As just and correct as those fights were, they are now in the past. The biggest problem that we as a class face now is what is happening today and what is going to happen in the future. Instead of looking back, we agreed to utilise the organisational skills and political endeavour that went into the campaigns of the dockers and the Liverpool 47 by leading off the debate on the issue of a new party.

We also had some discussion on comparing what has happened in the past regarding the landmark campaigns organised by the labour and trade union movement to what is happening today.

For example: during the 1950s Suez crisis; the 1960s CND and the Vietnam War; the 1970s big industrial disputes against the Government's economic policies (wage

restraint); the 1980s Right to Work campaigns and the miners' dispute; the 1990's anti-poll tax campaign and the Liverpool dockers dispute etc.

There was always a limited mechanism for working people to air their grievances either through the branch structures of the trade union movement or the political structures of the constituency Labour Party. While you could argue that these procedures were far from perfect, an issue that gained mass and popular support at the national level of the trade union movement or reached the floor of the Labour Party conference was usually acted on, albeit in a watered down fashion.

None of that happens now, you only have to look at the massive turn-out for the anti-war rallies. The magnificent coalition that was built from that movement brought together trade unions, CLPs, all the socialist parties, along with ethnic and community groups to form a mass opposition to war. But who, on a political basis, spoke for them?

It certainly wasn't the Tories and never will be as they will always put profit before peace and human suffering. The Lib Dems skirted with the idea of becoming the voice of the people but quickly ducked for cover when the media barons turned on them. And what about the Labour Party which is supported by millions opposed to war? Did they take any notice of the people's voice? No!

The same can be said for tuition fees, privatisation, the anti-union Laws, pensions, and so on. This Labour government takes no notice of the feelings, views or wishes of the working class man or woman and, because of that, millions of people are left disenfranchised.

We also had some discussion on the role of our trade union leaders, especially the new ones. You could say that our union leaders still have a direct input into the leadership of New Labour and its policies, but you could also argue that this is only lip-service for the millions of pounds that the trade union movement gives to the Labour Party.

In truth Blair and his government jump to the tune of the right-wing press like the *Sun* or the establishment of self-interest groups like the Countryside Alliance or the fuel protesters but will do little or nothing when millions of ordinary men, women and children demand change.

So the intention of the campaign is to start a positive debate on the political representation of the labour and trade union movement. We accept that this will lead to arguments in terms of the best way forward, i.e. do you fight from within to reclaim the Labour Party or is that idea now well and truly over and, if so, what are the alternatives? If you, like the Liverpool dockers and the Liverpool 47, believe that the only credible option is to try and create a new party that will represent the needs and aspirations of working class men, women and children like our forefathers had to do more than 100 years ago, then we ask you to seriously consider joining up to the Campaign For a Mass Party of the Working Class.

Bolton campaign sparks NUT national ballot

Dear comrades,

The NUT campaign sub-committee has just agreed to ballot NUT members in the autumn term. This is a step forward and partial victory for the Bolton campaign against attacks on teachers' and local government pensions and conditions. But we mustn't for a moment let up the pressure. It's all the more imperative for NUT members up and down the country to organise meetings for action, to convene joint meetings with Unison against replacing teachers (in the first instance during absence) with poorly paid 'cover managers' and to campaign for the decisive all-out action needed to defeat the government on these proposals.

We must also ensure that the Executive do not rescind their decision as soon as activists take off the pressure. There is massive anger amongst the workforce about these attacks, which amount to a substantial pay cut.

Doug McAvoy has written to Bolton NUT with following nugget: "I advised the Executive that it was important not to put in jeopardy the joint campaign by the public sector unions through the NUT alone seeking to instigate a ballot of members for industrial action. I suggested a better approach would be to seek the support of the public sector unions for industrial action and to merge the campaign with that on private sector pensions and to urge the TUC to call a day of action involving the whole workforce." Weasel words indeed! Under the pretence of arguing for a general strike - what? Do nothing! Strangely, the RMT have taken a different line. Does Doug say they are putting the pensions campaign in jeopardy?

It's imperative now to get ready to organise action. Crucially, we must be getting the members ready to accept the idea of unofficial action. But imagine if we could get teachers and other council workers taking wildcat strike action as well as firefighters! We could then bring in postal workers (try stopping them!), rail workers - perhaps, Doug'll get the general strike after all! We could link it with opposition to the war and for a militant fight

against the fascist BNP and the racist police. Perhaps, not only would Blair go but we could begin to build a real fighting workers party fighting for socialism - the only long term solution to capitalism's crises of wars and continual attacks on workers here and abroad.

Bolton NUT and Unison have organised a public meeting for June 16th 7.30pm at Bolton Town Hall and have organised coaches for June 19th TUC pensions rally.

Yours
Jason Travis
Bolton NUT Divisional Committee

WE REPLY

The protection of pension rights is emerging as a key factor in struggles over pay and conditions. The RMT, Unison and the NUT have all taken, or are threatening, industrial action over the erosion of existing pension rights and the denial of provision to a new generation of workers. On Saturday 19 June, the TUC is holding a major rally in London to highlight the issues over workers' occupational pensions and the state pension.

We call for

- The restoration of the link between state pension and earnings
 - The universal provision of final salary occupational pension schemes for those in work
 - The nationalisation of the pension funds under rank and file trade union control and their removal from the stock markets and the hands of the speculators; pensions to be funded by taxing the assets of the rich and the corporations, and guaranteed by the state
 - A minimum level of pension equal to two-thirds of national average earnings, increasing annually in line with earnings
- "Pay Up for Pensions" - TUC National Rally**
London 19 June
Starts 12.00 Embankment Ends 14.00 Trafalgar Square, with rally

Left gains ground in PCS elections

Dear comrades,

PCS Democracy and Left Unity, two activist groupings in the union, have consolidated their grip ahead of the National Conference in June. They both retained a majority on the National Executive Committee in the recent elections. They also retained the Presidency as well as taking the full time Assistant General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary posts.

Worryingly only 14 per cent of members voted. This is despite PCS having gained about 20,000 members in the past six months. While it is positive that the right wing Moderate group has been kept out of positions of power, the leadership must now take forward the campaign on pay which has stalled. The 2003 pay deal has not been satisfactorily concluded and many tens of thousands of members are now getting their annual appraisals.

In the case of the Department of Work and Pensions, many of the marks will have been pre-allocated in the unfair and discriminatory quota system. Some principled managers (usually PCS activists) who have refused to implement this system found themselves suspended. With PCS reluctant to pay their wages, it has been left to sympathetic fellow

trade unionists to raise money for them from donations.

The Government is also pressing ahead with its "Efficiency Review", taking the axe to parts of the civil service. The DWP will lose 30,000, 10,500 will go from the merger of Inland Revenue and Customs & Excise, 1,460 will go from the Department for Education and Skills and DTI expect to lose one quarter of staff. On top of all of this, each department will have 2.5 per cent cut from their running costs next year, which will mean even more job cuts.

Since the last strike, there has been little information on what to do next. Each department's Group Executive Committee has been left to work out the next step. Instead of letting each department's Group Executive Committee decide on strategy autonomously, the union should now link all the struggles together: last year's pay, this year's pay, job cuts, relocation, discriminatory appraisal systems.

If each department takes forward its own individual struggle, management will find it easier to push through its cuts and keep civil servants on derisory rates of pay.
Yours in solidarity
Darren Keighley,
PCS member



New branch in Leeds

Dear comrades,

Workers Power has set up a new branch in Leeds. The success of our work in west Yorkshire is a result of the hard work of the comrades there, who have been carrying out active anti fascist work, helped establish Leeds Social forum, been building Revolution (an independent socialist youth group) and holding reading groups reading Marxist classics. We now hope to be able to grow in West Yorkshire and take a lead in not only fighting the fascist menace that exists there and threatens our communities but in raising the call for a new workers party as part of a Fifth International!

As the level of class struggle in Britain grows and the rupture with Labour grows in the working class, we expect even more workers and youth to look for a real, socialist alternative, for a group that fights for working class politics.

Yours
Simon Hardy

www.fifthinternational.org

A Message to Londoners
from your Mayoral
Candidate
Frank Maloney



Don't let the politicians pick our pockets -
reduce our Council Tax

Homes for London families -
not more illegal asylum seekers

I will work for Londoners - NO ONE ELSE!

www.maloney4mayor.co.uk

UKIP's racist campaign

Dear Workers Power,

Last week I went to a Stop the War hustings in South London. One of the candidates present was from the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). I was shocked when I read the front cover of Frank Maloney's (UKIP candidate for London mayor) election manifesto. It called for homes for Londoners and not for illegal asylum seekers.

The UKIP speaker was challenged about this and despite his attempts to defend it everyone at the meeting could clearly see it as a racist policy. After the meeting I went away and read the whole London manifesto to see what they are saying as I'd never looked at anything by the UKIP in detail before, thinking they were just a bunch of anti-European cranks.

Their main policies are around Europe and immigration. While the UKIP are not a Nazi party like the BNP it is clearly exploiting the most reactionary and racist sentiments at large.

On Europe it claims all the problems Britain is experiencing are caused by Brussels. This is just playing to the little Englander mentality. Working class people in Britain and Europe are facing similar attacks from Brussels but more importantly from their respective national governments. The solution is therefore not Britain becoming independent (it already is) or to withdraw from Europe but for the working class in Europe to unite its struggles against the attacks we are facing on pensions and welfare provisions.

If the UKIP do reasonably well on June 10th it should be a wake up call to the left. Not only do we urgently need to fight against the racist, anti-asylum seeker campaign, but socialists need to address the anti-European nationalism and instead argue for workers unity across Europe.

Revolutionary greetings
Chris West
South London

Respect's election ally's reactionary politics

Dear comrades,

Respect is urging support for the Peoples Justice Party (PJP) in the council elections in Birmingham. The PJP which currently has two councillors is standing 17 candidates (all the seats are up for election this year).

The PJP grew out of Justice for Kashmir, formed originally to campaign for Kashmiri self-determination. In the last five years it has taken up inner city concerns, being rightly critical of the Labour run City Council's concentration on prestige projects. It has also attracted left Labour figures like Raghbir Ahsan who have been forced out of Labour's ranks.

But there are problems with the PJP. While gaining local working class votes, especially from the Kashmiri community, it remains a cross class organisation with local business figures involved. And despite the fact that it is critical of Labour over the war - and says it is against privatisation - the two PJP councillors have supported Labour in two crucial votes in the hung council in the last few months. One allowed Labour to push through its budget and

council tax rise, the other let through a huge PFI project for highway improvements! On a 57 votes to 55 basis, the PJP's councillors tipped the balance on the crucial 4th February vote.

A more recent scandal was a PJP leaflet attacking the Liberal Democrats for supporting gay and lesbian rights. This leaflet has now been "withdrawn". Respect supporters say they are engaged in a dialogue with the PJP and that the PJP are moving to the left. That's as may be - but there is still no clear statement on the Respect website about either the PJP or the local Respect candidates' attitude to gay rights.

This demonstrates how the project of Respect involves the junking of crucial political questions such as social oppression of lesbians and gays, abortion rights and immigration controls. At the heart of this is the fact that the whole project was not based on the working class. For the working class these are not side issues but crucial to the fight for the liberation of all working class people.

Yours
Lesley Day
Birmingham

Front cover of UKIP election leaflet for London Mayor

Kebba Jobe: another black man dies in police custody

By GR McColl

Just weeks after a BBC documentary revealed the horrific final moments of Christopher Alder's life, literally stripped of his dignity and gasping for air on the floor of a Hull police station, another black man has died in police custody. This time the victim was arrested – and possibly killed – by police in north London.

Kebba "Dobo" Jobe was an apparently healthy 42-year-old man, originally from Gambia, but a long-time resident of London and more recently Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, where he lived near his ex-wife and their seven-year-old daughter. On a brilliantly sunny Saturday afternoon in mid-May, Dobo, as he was known to friends, stood near north London's Camden lock in the midst of the crowded market, when a plain clothes police officer allegedly approached him as part of a sting operation, or "test purchase" in police parlance.

What exactly happened over the course of the next few minutes is a matter of dispute between the "official" account and eyewitnesses. What is beyond dispute, though, is that within a few minutes Dobo was on the ground struggling for breath and that

within a few hours doctors at the Royal Free Hospital had pronounced him dead.

An initial autopsy had indicated that the immediate cause of death was asphyxiation as a result of a plastic bag containing an unspecified "herbal substance" being lodged in his throat, though there was visible bruising and swelling on his face.

Eyewitnesses told a local newspaper journalist that an officer had thrown Dobo "to the floor. He could not move". Another witness said: "It was obvious that Dobo was having difficulty breathing. We pleaded with the officer to get off of him but he ignored us."

This is yet another tragedy for Dobo's family and friends lies as his cousin, Ibrahim Sey, died in police custody seven years ago after being sprayed with CS gas by cops in Ilford. An inquest jury in that case eventually returned a verdict of unlawful killing, but there have never been any criminal charges lodged against the officers responsible for his death.

Two years after Ibrahima's death, Dobo had faced the threat of deportation, despite being married to a British citizen and having a then three-year-old child. A campaign, spearheaded by the Unison branch at the School of Oriental and African Studies, helped secure his right to remain.

Family members and friends have launched a campaign in the hope of finding out what really happened to Dobo and to push for a public inquiry into his death. Needless to say, they have little if any confidence in the so-called Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), which is "managing" an investigation run by officers from the Essex force. The failure of the police to make any serious effort to elicit eyewitness accounts of the afternoon's events – despite repeated requests to post incident boards near Camden lock – has fuelled the family's mistrust of any investigation under the auspices of the IPCC.

A spontaneous protest developed outside the Kentish Town police station on the Saturday afternoon of Dobo's death as the news spread among local African residents. The following evening some 150 people gath-



Kebba Jobe

ered, including stallholders from Camden market, to mount another angry but peaceful demonstration. Several hundred joined a march on 22 May.

Whatever the precise details surrounding Dobo's death, he was clearly a victim of the "war on drugs" and, in particular, the police harassment of suspected small-

time cannabis dealers. While an IPCC spokesperson has sought to deny that racism enters into the case because a black officer was apparently involved in the attempt to arrest Dobo, the whole incident reflects the Met's hated "racial profiling" policy.

Despite the supposed relaxation of laws against the possession and use of cannabis, police in Camden had been engaged over the 24 hours before Dobo's death in an aggressive crackdown that amounts to a thinly disguised campaign to criminalise the local Black population.

Past experience of such cases suggest that campaigners have a long, bitter fight ahead in their quest for honest answers and justice – what they already recognise is that New Labour and the IPCC won't deliver either. The pledge from Ken Livingstone and other mayoral candidates to put still more cops on the streets is no reason to feel safer in the capital.

● The Justice for Dobo Campaign has called for nightly vigils at Kentish Town police station, Holmes Road, London NW5 from 6-8pm. For more information, please call 07951 596048 or 07949 158 898.

Black Sisters: chipping away for 25 years

Rachel Hosford reviews *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers*, Zed Books, £14.95

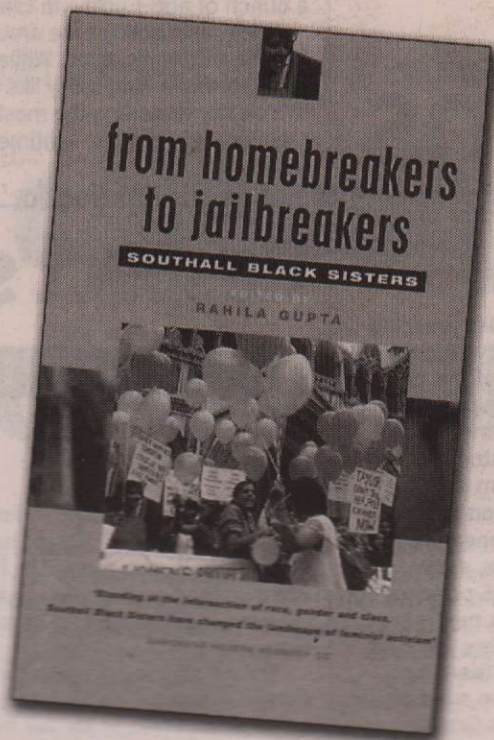
"Sometimes I think of us as women who live on the back streets of Southall, partially hidden from the thoroughfares, chipping away at the status quo... This is symptomatic of the wider black women's movement – except that we all seem to be chipping away alone, with no collective battle plan."

Over the past 25 years, Southall Black Sisters (SBS) has become synonymous with black feminist activism in Britain. The survival of SBS (founded in 1979) is a phenomenon in itself. From second wave feminism to a "vacuum" of feminist politics, through multiculturalism, increasingly restrictive asylum policies, and various Home Office attempts at co-option, SBS has spent 25 years "chipping away at the status quo". But what insights does *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers* offer into where Southall Black Sisters – and the wider black women's movement – might go from here?

SBS provides practical support and advice to women, mostly in west London's South Asian communities, faced with domestic violence, racial harassment and difficulties with immigration controls. The organisation's most publicised success came in 1992 with the release from prison of Kiranjit Ahluwalia, who had been jailed for killing her husband after suffering years of brutal abuse.

From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers, written by SBS staff, contains many detailed and very readable accounts of both individual cases and legal or social trends that have affected the organisation's work. Chapters cover domestic violence and the provision of refuge for victims of violence, forced marriage, mental illness, immigration, black women and policing, religious identity, religious fundamentalism, and the losses and gains to be made by forging campaigning alliances. All chapters give an insight into work at the "slippery intersection" between race and gender, in a quarter century that has seen dramatic shifts in the popular conception of both.

The book also offers a fascinating insight into the character of this unusual group, and its continuing survival and adaptation to a changing political climate. The dedication of the core SBS team and its notable achievements, despite very limited resources, make it a unique organisation – but as SBS themselves rightly suggest, they are also unique because everyone else has disappeared. The voluntary sector has made a turn to apo-



litical service provision. "The mantle of leadership of British Asian feminists... appears to have fallen on SBS by default" (p 279) comments Hannana Siddiqui.

The organisation emerged towards the end of a period of political activity in the black and South Asian population across much of Britain, and especially in west London. In 1976-77 Asian women were to the fore in the bitter and ultimately unsuccessful struggle for union recognition at the Grunwick's film processing factory, while both African-Caribbean and Asian populations fought the rise of the National Front, culminating in the Southall uprising of 1981, sparked by a fascist gig at a local pub. This was a time of growing politicisation and self-confidence within the South Asian population, combined with an increasing recognition in some quarters that there were unique aspects to the oppression

of Asian women.

Many of the women who created and have since sustained SBS have had direct experience of either violent relationships or extreme repression within "traditional" family structures. They have been courageous opponents of male chauvinism and misogyny, often proving a thorn in the side of "community leaders". In an informal survey carried out for the purposes of the book, Anita Johal receives mixed opinions on SBS's work, but the view of one maahli at a local mosque, that "the black sisters are violent... they are rough and they want to fight you" is probably not too unusual.

SBS have been to the fore in opposing the rise of religious fundamentalisms whether Islamic, Hindu or Christian, and Rahila Gupta expresses concern that the fight against Islamophobia has led members of the Stop the War Coalition to endorse Islam and so to even "further squeeze the public secular spaces". SBS have consistently attempted to reject "cultural relativism" at the same time as refusing to concede an inch to racist stereotyping of South Asian men. Their principled stands are noteworthy – especially when contrasted to some of the concessions that the Respect Coalition has been prepared to make in recent months.

But the book also reveals the inadequacies of the competing ideological approaches that cover this political territory. Gupta notes that their political alliances are limited by the failure of white feminists to address racism or imperialism, and by an increasing "division along religious lines" among black women. SBS could not, with their client group, have adopted a single-issue focus, and there is some evidence that their practice is informed by a concept of class as well as race and gender.

At one level, the emergence of SBS was also an indication of the failure of the left in Britain to develop and act on an adequate analysis of social oppression, both in terms of race, ethnicity and gender. But can SBS itself offer a way forward to a movement against social oppression?

This is something the book touches on but does not fully explore. In her introductory chapter, Rahila Gupta notes the declining involvement of young women with feminist women's groups, and suggests that activity around women's issues has been "professionalised" and, in turn, depoliticised the women's movement. This may

be true, but the recent politicisation of young women – most notably in the anti-war movement – does not seem to be taking the form of a turn to feminism.

Neither is SBS reaching out to find and draw in new layers of activists. *From Homebreakers to Jailbreakers* is clearly written for an audience that is already won to SBS's understanding of race and gender. Siddiqui and Patel, for example, refer to women's violence as a "direct challenge to patriarchy", but don't elaborate on their concept of patriarchy, how it informs their practice, or whether the concept leads to the conclusion that the "chipping away" at male oppression will ever be finished. Similarly on race, "of course," says Gupta, "racism is not about individual attitudes but about institutionalised racism". But there is no accompanying analysis of the roots of racism and no clear indication of how to wage a successful struggle against it.

Perhaps this lack of interest in recruiting new forces to a re-politicised women's movement reflects SBS's feeling that the arena of political struggle has moved "from the streets to the courts". Pragna Patel begins her chapter on "Shifting Terrains" by stating that "we live in age in which the law has become, it appears, the main arena for our struggle for freedom, equality and justice". As she noted in a *Guardian* interview in July 2000: "We were used to oppositional politics under Thatcher and Major. With Blair, there's a feeling that we should seize the moment and see if we can have a positive influence on the institutions."

But if SBS has been lured by the siren song of reformism – even when it comes from New Labour – it has not entirely succumbed to it either, as illustrated by Siddiqui's resignation from a Home Office panel on forced marriages that was prepared to promote mediation between women and their violent husbands. Although SBS have built campaigns around individual cases, when Gupta comments on the anti-capitalist movement and the "new generation of activists that has taken on a bigger battle" it is with detached interest rather than with a view to using their invaluable experience to inform this new generation.

This book is well worth reading. But, in the spirit of the SBS themselves, it should inform the development of a future working class women's movement, rather than simply record the – considerable – achievements of a previous generation.

workers power 5

DON'T VOTE LABOUR IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

"There is a danger that right across Britain some Labour supporters will stay at home or vote for another party because they are disenchanted with the government for one reason or another. It could be the war or some other issue. We do have fears about turnout" Peter Hain, Labour Leader of the House of Commons



DOWN WITH BLAIR AND HIS CAPITALIST POLICIES

"We need the right manifesto or the fact is that GMB activists will not be working for the party in the heartland areas. We have reached a watershed and it is getting more and more difficult to justify relations with the party to the members" Spokesperson, GMB general trade union

UNIONS, WORKERS, YOUTH: LET'S FORM A NEW WORKERS PARTY



New Labour is the party of war and profiteering, led by George Bush's second in command - and millions are starting to realise it.

Tony Blair led Britain into the invasion and occupation of Iraq to strengthen and uphold the world's only superpower, the USA. He hopes to get a slice of the pie for British Petroleum and the big banks and corporations of the City. Blair is willing to spill blood for oil. This includes not only the blood of dozens of young British soldiers but also thousands of Iraqis. Tens of thousands of civilians as well as soldiers died in the invasion. Thousands more have died since.

Billions of pounds denied to hospitals, schools, public transport and firefighters' pay are being squandered by Blair (and Brown) on this war to seize a poor country's oil reserves, privatise its services and industries, and provide a base for dominating and dividing the Arab world. This war strengthens privatisers - often the same corporate raiders that are privatising our services. If we strengthen these sharks by supporting them abroad we are just making a heavier rod for our own back. If we support those fighting to liberate their own country we weaken our own bosses and exploiters.

No wonder so many commentators and parties - including leading figures in the Labour Government itself - have called this year's Euro elections a referendum on Tony Blair and his bloody Iraq war.

Good. Let's use the Euro elections to bring down Blair. Don't vote Labour - write Troops Out Of Iraq on your ballot paper.

"From what I have been told by our members, regrettably it does seem that our people will not be motivated to go out and campaign. They believe that a Labour government is not worth fighting for" Derek Simpson, leader Amicus trade union

In this election the war dominates all other issues. If Blair does better than expected the press will take it as a vote of confidence in his war policy. If he suffers a catastrophic defeat then they will put it down to one thing - the war. The Tories or the weird UK Independence Party might try to make out this election is about the European Constitution, but everyone knows it's not.

The European Parliament is a weak, near powerless body. The European Union is ruled by meetings of the heads of national governments held every six months and by the European Commission. Little of importance happens in the parliament, which is why most voters either do not bother with the Euro elections, or use them as a referendum on the ruling government.

A catastrophic slump in Labour's vote can put the skids under Blair. He is worried sick that working class Labour voters and party members who overwhelmingly opposed the war and marched against it will use the European elections to signal their opposition.

Many Labour Party members are furious at Blair's crawling to Bush. Blair arrogantly denied Labour Party members the right to decide on whether to go to war or not. He bribed, threatened and forced unwilling Labour MPs to back the war. If Labour's vote drops like stone in these elections, everyone will see it as a vote

against the war and the world's Number Two Warmonger, the man responsible for the slaughter that's carrying on every day in Iraq.

Build a New Workers' Party

There are many middle-class parties posing as alternatives to Labour and standing as "anti-war candidates". They are not real options. The Liberal Democrats are a party of business which supported the war as soon as it began and refuses to call for the troops to be withdrawn. The new group Respect claims to represent the anti-war movement at the polls, but in reality is a coalition of convenience between George Galloway and the Socialist Workers Party, who are standing on a non-socialist platform that will not help create a lasting or working class alternative to Labour. As for the Greens, this middle class outfit opposed the firefighters when they struck for higher pay and refuses to call for immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

The answer is not to give our support to middle class do-gooders but to create a party of our own, a new working class party so we can recover the voice that Labour has taken away.

Working class people, trade unionists and activists faced the same problem 100 years ago. They didn't sit on their hands and do nothing, and they didn't vote for middle class parties. Through

their unions and by campaigning on the streets they set about organising an independent workers party, which became the Labour Party.

Today we need to start again - and this time can get it right. Unions still organise seven million workers in Britain and union members are sick of paying for Blair. With the RMT transport union expelled from Labour and gearing up for its first national strike for ten years, with the firefighters' FBU also taking wildcat strike action and openly discussing disaffiliating from Labour, with the Scottish post workers in the CWU supporting the Scottish Socialist Party in defiance of Labour threats, and with tens of thousands of anti-war and anti-capitalist activists looking for an alternative, there is an army of people waiting to join the ranks of a real workers party.

Let's use this election campaign to go to workplaces, estates, shopping centres and put the case for building a new workers party. Except this time, we want a party that really fights for the workers and not one that goes cap in hand to the bosses for the next 100 years. We need a party that will use direct action to overthrow capitalism because we don't want any more unjust wars, any more racism, any more cuts and privatisation. Instead, we want a world owned and run democratically by working people - we want socialism.

**PUNISH BLAIR ● For illegal war ● For torture and occupation
● For privatisation and sell-offs ● For putting profit before people**

Working class a new Worker

The British National Party is trying to make a breakthrough on 10 June. It is standing in council elections across the country and for every constituency in the European elections.

The BNP pretends to be a "normal" democratic right-wing party. In reality the entire leadership of the BNP are committed fascists, Nazis who want to throw black people and Asians out of Britain, who would ban homosexuality and mixed race relationships, who would smash trade unions and all democratic rights.

Despite its strident claims to be a party of "the white working class", in reality the BNP's economic policies are targeted at the middle classes. That's why the BNP calls for support for small businesses, lower taxes on the "quite well-off", breaking up the supermarket monopolies to benefit small shopkeepers, cutting fuel bills and speed cameras, helping farmers and so on.

Of course, they do try to appeal to working class people, especially those who have been neglected by the labour movement, by the union leaderships, by labour councillors and by MPs. They target low-paid white workers, and jobless youth on deprived council estates. They then try to incite them against asylum seekers, against the working class movement, against the trade unions, against socialism and against international working class solidarity.

We propose a three-point action plan to stop the BNP

A workers' united front against fascism

The entire working class movement – the unions, local Labour parties, workers, socialists and youth – should come together to answer the BNP's lies, hold massive rallies and carnivals, distribute exposures of the BNP's true ideas and confront BNP canvassers.

The current initiative, Unite, contains many of these working class forces, but ties them up with Tories, bishops, sporting and

ment needs a public campaign to set up an AntiFascist Defence Association, to train people in exercising our democratic and legal right to self-defence, to ensure that any illegal fascist attacks can be repelled quickly and so vigorously that they are not repeated.

Direct action

There are hundreds of thousands of people with good reason to hate the BNP. Let's put out an appeal to them to organise direct action – occupations, protests, street events, civil disobedience – to deny the fascists any platform for their views. Disrupt their meetings, rallies and canvassings. Postal workers are refusing to deliver BNP election hate mail. Excellent. They should be given active solidarity if they are victimised by management as a result.

What about voting Labour to stop the BNP? Unite's propaganda implies that voters should vote for any other party except the BNP as a way of blocking them getting seats. But this is a major mistake to make. Whatever electoral advance the BNP makes, this only records the rise of the fascism. It is not an independent factor. Of course gaining council seats and European MEPs will be a material factor, aiding them in spreading their filth. But the idea that any old party is better than them is the "lesser evil" argument that the German reformist labour movement used against Hitler. They supported conservatives and right-wing reactionaries to block the way to the Nazis. But this meant not putting forward a radical positive alternative, something that could give hope to the people drifting towards the fascists.

In fact, parties such as the Tories, the Liberals, New Labour and the millionaire newspapers who support them have paved the way for the fascists by their anti-asylum and immigration hysteria.

New Labour is responsible for deepening the conditions in which fascist parties like the BNP can grow. They attack work-

ing people, deepen social inequality, and at the same time spread lies about asylum seekers and migrants. They make the anti-refugee and anti-Muslim

propaganda of the BNP sound like nothing more than a sharper form of commonplace racist arguments spread by the papers every day, which ministers like David Blunkett do nothing to challenge and even in part accept.

If we just try to "unite all antifascists" by rallying to Labour whenever the BNP stand, we'll never be able to rally the hundreds of thousands of former Labour supporters – who are sick of Blair's warmongering and sucking up to the capitalists – into a new working class alternative.

That is why we think that in the European elections – despite the threat of the BNP winning a seat – this would be a mistake. By punishing Blair for the war and withholding Labour votes in the European elections, we have a big chance to weaken him and to embolden the forces that could form a new workers party in the months and years ahead. Right now that is the highest priority.

Without a new workers party, the BNP will continue to appear as the only force that really opposes the New Labour establishment. The BNP will then try to direct that discontent away from the capitalist system and against the working class instead.

A workers party would appeal to the whole working class – all parties, unions and organisations – to act together to crush the BNP. And it would go further and remove the very conditions in which fascism can grow, by channelling disillusion with Blair into a real fight for working class interests: against war, against privatisation, and against the capitalist profit system itself.

As an independent working class organisation, Workers Power campaigns for the following policies against capitalism and war. We fight for the urgent formation of a new mass Workers Party as an alternative to Blair's New Labour. We propose that a new party should adopt these policies as part of its Manifesto.

Against Blair's war – against imperialism

The Tories, Liberal Democrats and Greens are all trying to take advantage of Blair's bloody mess in Iraq. But the Tories supported the war – and the Lib Dems opposed it in words only, until the fighting started. Like all the rest they "backed our boys" – in fact sending them to face death and terrible mental and physical injuries. Even the Greens, who say they are antiwar, support British troops staying in Iraq, doing Bush and Blair's dirty work until the warmongers are ready to hand over to a government tame enough to do their bidding.

Workers Power demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from Iraq and overseas. Unlike Respect, which is not a socialist party, we link this to other demands that challenge the links between war and the system that causes it: capitalism.

- Abolish secret diplomacy – publish secret treaties and deals
- Nationalise the arms industries under working class control, with no compensation
- Abolish the sinister spies, liars and assassins of MI5 and MI6
- Not a penny, not a person for the defence of this system. Self-defence should be carried out by the working people themselves under their own democratic control



Against privatisation – for workers' control

The massive votes for New Labour in 1997 and 2001 were votes against the Tories' sell off of the railways and water and against private companies undermining the NHS and our education system. But Blair trampled on the wishes of millions. Globalisation means a worldwide policy of sell-offs to multimillionaire parasites – so that's what Blair has given us. Safety standards, quality, accessibility, workers' contracts, pensions and rights ... all have suffered as a result.

Like Respect, we stand for an end to privatisation and for public services to be brought back into public ownership. But unlike Respect, which is not a socialist organisation, we believe that publicly owned services and enterprises should be run not like the old bureaucratic nationalised industries but under the control of the working class, of the employees and consumers themselves. This workers' control would be completely different from the old capitalist style nationalisation, because working people could then coordinate in a plan to produce for public need, not private greed. What's

more, unlike Old Labour's nationalisations, we wouldn't spend years generously paying off the former owners with millions in compensation payments. We wouldn't give the former owners a penny, because they've compensated themselves quite enough out of the public pocket over the years.

For socialist planning

Why stop at renationalising the privatised utilities when billions upon billions pass through the banks, finance houses, insurance companies and building societies every day – billions produced by working people but monopolised by a tiny class of super-rich financiers?

We would take all of these private financial corporations into state hands and merge them into a single bank, to account for the values available to us and to help plan and direct investment and development.

In that way we could start to create a democratically planned economy – one in which the majority of the people participated in making decisions about what should be produced, where and by whom, allocating resources rationally according to a democratic plan. That's called socialism. It is in the immediate interests of working class people who do not make profits out of the current system of private ownership. But it is not in the immediate interests of small scale property owners, which is why middle class parties like the Greens and Respect only call for some services to be publicly owned, and never call for large scale nationalisations under working class control or a democratically planned economy.

Tax the rich

The council tax and the lower rates of income tax should be scrapped and replaced by a tax on unearned wealth, higher income tax for the very rich and much higher corporate taxes, to fund spending on health, education and the environment. Socialists also argue that the books of companies and rich individuals should be opened to public inspection to prevent tax evasion, and that their property should be confiscated if they try to defraud the public. That would bring in billions more each year to help eradicate poverty.

Pensions

The current pensions laws allow companies to loot our retirement provision. They can close final salary schemes and replace them with poor money purchase schemes at a whim. When companies are sold our pension rights are not legally guaranteed by the new owners. It's a disgrace.

The poverty state pension should be massively raised and linked to average earnings – workers' pensions should be fixed at final salary and paid for life. None should ever be less than the minimum wage.

How can we do this? The giant pension funds should be owned by the public and guaranteed by the state – administered by the workers ourselves and corporations taxed to provide the shortfall.

The minimum wage

The introduction of the minimum wage is one of New Labour's few achievements. It is currently below the European Decency Threshold though – it should therefore be raised from Gordon

The BNP

cultural figures, and other establishment types. If you really want an alliance with former Thatcher right-hand man Teddy Taylor this means sticking strictly to "peaceful and legal" actions, i.e. not confronting the BNP canvassers, not picketing their public meetings, not blockading any demonstrations they call.

In short the policy of Unite obstructs mobilising the working class to take effective action. It does not even defend our democratic rights when Blunkett and local police chiefs take them away from us. Just look at the response of Unite to the police ban on its recent anti-BNP carnival in Manchester.

Instead of holding a mass defiance of the racist police's ban that protects the Nazis, they gave in and decided to hold it in Liverpool instead.

Antifascist defence association

Whenever the BNP and fascism grows, violent attacks are never far behind. The BNP use votes to locate supporters – then turn them into fighting groups to terrorise black and Asian people, antifascist activists, trade unionists and the left.

In the early 1990s racial attacks skyrocketed in the Isle of Dogs where the BNP won a councillor and around its HQ in Welling, south east London. Today, fascists run a website carrying photos and addresses of antifascists and activists, preparing for brutal attacks.

Let's not wait for the inevitable moment when the BNP moves to the next stage of its plan. The whole working class move-

s policies for rs Party

Brown's miserly level to £8 an hour immediately. Young workers should not be exempted from its full protection. This is a disgraceful piece of discrimination that allows super-exploitation of young workers by unscrupulous bosses. Any companies that pay less than the minimum wage should be nationalised and their bosses forced to pay punitive damages.

Immigrant workers and refugees

Britain is not "overcrowded" In fact even the bosses realise that there are acute labour shortages in industry and the social services. The anti-immigrant and asylum seeker mania - whipped up by the Mail, the Sun, the Express - is racist and nothing more. Yes, working people in Britain do face shortages, poor quality provision and queues in the social services, in social housing, in education and employment. But these are the fault of capitalism run amok, of governments which refuse to meet social need and tax the rich, of billions wasted on war and high-tech armaments to defend the investments of the billionaires.

Likewise the number of those seeking asylum is really very small, in comparison to the wars and economic devastation "our" armies and multinational corporations have wreaked in the countries from which they come, in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, in Iraq. The least we can do is to make the victims of British imperialism welcome in Britain. Therefore unlike Respect which dares not go beyond empty promises to "oppose discrimination based on race" or "opposition to the European Union's 'Fortress Europe' policies" we say abolish all the terrible restrictions on the right to asylum, abolish all immigration controls, restore immigrants social rights and give them full civil rights, including the right to vote.



Education, health and housing

New Labour's so-called Public Private Partnerships are softening up our schools, hospitals and housing estates for privatisation. Profiteering companies come in and get long-term deals in return for money. They will be paid back in spades over the decades ahead - or they will take our services themselves if the government decides it can't pay them back out of taxpayers' money.

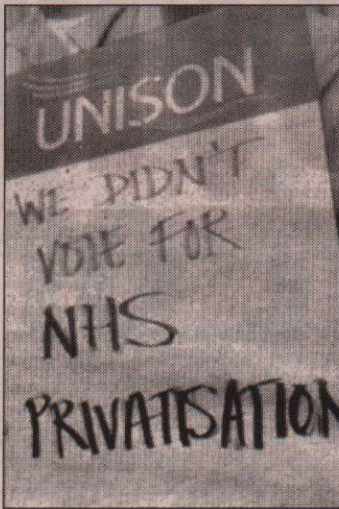
This is privatisation by stealth, all these deals should be cancelled. Improvements in services, new schools and hospitals, new affordable homes and infrastructure schemes, should be funded from central taxation. How? By taxing the billionaires and the super-rich and by confiscating the mega profits of the city and the big private corporations. That way we will see the fruits of all our work in sustained improvements in education, public health and socially owned housing instead of the market-madness we see today - tuition fees, 'trusts', internal markets, soaring house prices.

The European Union

The EU is a club of capitalist states that are coming together to try to form a new superpower to rival the USA. The answer to this is not to try and cling to Great Britain or "little England", which is just a much an exploiters' state as the rest of the EU. It is to fight alongside the working class of Italy, Spain, Germany and France - where millions are already opposing war and privatisation - for a Europe of the workers, not a Europe of the capitalists.

That is why, unlike Respect, Workers Power does not say no to the Euro. We don't care if our money has a picture of the Queen on it or not, or whether it is managed by an unelected central bank in the City of London or in Frankfurt. We want to abolish undemocratic constitutions of every type, so we not only oppose the new European Constitution; we also oppose the unwritten British Constitution and stand for the abolition of the monarchy.

Instead we should elect a democratic Constituent Assembly across the whole of Europe, that can fight for a Socialist United States of Europe in which the working class of the whole continent would have the power, not bureaucrats in Brussels or the mandarins of Westminster.



KEEP LABOUR ON THE HOOK IN COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Euro elections will not decide the fate of your local school or your council tax, but the local elections might.

Councils in many boroughs, cities and towns - including many Labour councils - have cut services, hiked rent and council taxes, sold off or transferred to private hands local services and housing stock. Some have attacked local workforces, even attempting to derecognise unions.

We should all support local trade union branches and anti-cuts campaigns where they stand their own candidates on a democratically agreed set of policies.

Unfortunately in the thousands of council seats up for grabs on 10 June only a handful of wards will see such candidates. Elsewhere the Greens, LibDems and RESPECT are not an alternative for working class people.

There are also shifts happening inside Labour because of Blair's anti-working class policies. The anger at them in the unions and our communities, and the mass anti-war movement, have all created pressure within the Labour Party, forcing Blair to openly talk about stepping down if he is shown to be a liability. Already some councillors have resigned in disgust -

even more would if there was a new workers party to join. Most importantly, besides disaffiliation moves in the RMT, CWU and FBU, the four big unions Amicus, Unison, GMB and TGWU (all with many local authority members, and in total about 80% of Labour's union affiliated membership) have just thrown down the gauntlet to Blair, demanding Labour adopts their policies, or face mass disaffiliation. This is an historic rupture in the usually solid union support for Labour.

Like the Euro elections we can use the local council elections to hit Blair too, but in a different way. Here by actually voting Labour we can keep piling pressure on the Labour Party, keeping them exposed to the scrutiny of office and raising demands on them to act in working class interests by blocking local cuts and privatisation. This will allow us to create an even greater crisis for the Blairites at the party's grassroots, while putting to the test the promises of the trade union leaders and councillors.

In that way we can maximise the tensions between Labour and its working class supporters at local level too, while campaigning for a programme of action in the interests of working class people.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

A society that renounces imperialism

- Immediate withdrawal of British troops from Iraq
- Troops out of Ireland now
- No arms or support for repressive regimes
- Not a penny or a person to defend this unjust system

A society that puts need before greed

- No more privatisation and 'PFI'
- Free quality education and healthcare for all
- A massive building programme of social housing
- Freeze rents, scrap council tax and mortgage interest
- No top up fees or graduate tax. Grants for students.

A more equal society

- Tax the rich, not the poor
- £15,000 minimum wage for all
- Benefits set at minimum wage
- Pensions linked to earnings

A more just society

- Restore civil liberties removed by Labour
- Repeal all anti-trade union laws
- Action against discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or age
- Purge racists from the police
- Not a police force and army loyal to Queen and Empire but a self-defence force of and for the people
- Full citizenship rights for asylum seekers

A society that backs global development

- Cancel Third World Debt
- Down with the IMF, World Bank, WTO - instruments of global poverty
- End business secrecy and patents
- Massive reductions in carbon emissions to fight climate change
- Freedom of movement - end immigration controls

A more productive, fairer society

- Maximum 35 hour week with no loss of pay
- Nationalise transport, banks, utilities and major corporations - no compensation
- All enterprises under democratic control of workers and consumers
- No transfer of jobs to cheap labour zones - level up pay and conditions
- A democratic plan of production and distribution to match resources to needs

A society of real freedom for women

- Free abortion on demand
- Free nurseries
- Enforce equal pay and end all discrimination

A society that empowers the many

- Abolish the monarchy and the House of Lords
- Proportional representation
- Votes at 16
- Scrap the EU's dictatorial Commission and Council of Ministers - for a democratic European Constituent Assembly
- Nationalise press and media under democratic control
- A working class government based on People's Assemblies.

However, even if all 659 MPs were elected on this programme they would face sabotage and repression by the capitalists and their state. Lasting change cannot be carried through parliament but through action on the streets. That is why, especially during an election campaign, we say openly to our fellow workers - only a revolution can solve the miseries caused by capitalism.

As the 30 June handover looms, we say

End the occupation!

Troops out of Iraq now!

Every justification Bush and Blair have given for their war in Iraq has been exposed as a pack of lies.

We were told that Saddam was responsible for 11 September, and yet no links with Al Qa'ida have been established. A year on since the invasion and not an ounce of evidence of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction has been discovered. Then we were told that this was a war of liberation from the evil dictatorship of Saddam, a war in which 11 000 civilians and 15 000 Iraqi troops have been sacrificed for "democracy". How hollow that claim now seems after the images of torture that have dominated the news in the past two months.

The idea that the brutality meted out to Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib jail was a product of a few wayward and inexperienced soldiers has also been exposed as a cover up. As US Congress members sat through 1,800 slides and three hours of video evidence of sexual assault and disgusting acts of dehumanisation by US soldiers, they knew they weren't dealing with a few "bad apples".

Torture

In the US, journalists like Michael Hirsh of Newsweek have documented the role of Bush, Rumsfeld and attorney general Ashcroft, who signed off a secret system of detention and interrogation aimed at side-stepping the Geneva convention so that they could torture terrorist suspects. The techniques established in Guantanamo Bay were exported to Abu Ghraib jail in Baghdad. The general in charge of the Guantanamo Bay camp, Geoffrey Miller, was sent to Abu Ghraib in September 2003 to brief general Janice Karpinski. While she has been sacrificed in the initial stages of investigation, the ultimate responsibility lies with Bush and Rumsfeld.

This is what occupation looks like: torture, human rights abuses, the gunning down of innocent civilians like 8 year old Hana Matrud, and the bombing of wedding parties. How else can US and British generals convince soldiers to open fire and murder demonstrators, to sexually assault prisoners with chemical light sticks and force them to masturbate in front of grinning military police unless they have been told that these people are sub-human?

These sick and tragic events have blown a hole in the argument that this is about democracy. Now the world has seen the ugly face of US imperialism.

Bush is desperate to convince the world that the transfer of "sovereignty" to an Iraqi interim government on 30 June will deliver peace and stability to the country. He stated in his address last month that: "I sent American troops to Iraq to defend our security, not to stay as an occupying power. I sent American troops to Iraq to make its people free, not to make them American."

This is double speak of the first order by Bush.

30 June - business as usual

There will be no elections. The government will be appointed and will comprise of many of the existing members of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), that has turned a blind eye to torture under US occupation.

By Kirstie Paton

Corruption and nepotism are rife – eight of the ministers appointed are relatives of IGC members. The IGC has allied itself with the occupation and its role over the last year has been to shield occupation forces, not to defend its own people. Its chosen prime minister, Iyad Allawi, worked for the CIA and MI6 during his 40 year exile, and was responsible for the infamous and untrue claim that chemical weapons could be launched within "45 minutes" which formed the basis for Britain invading Iraq.

The US will retain ultimate political power in Iraq. The new US ambassador, John Negroponte, will have a staff of 3,000; clearly they have no intention of packing up and leaving. Negroponte was responsible for the setting up of the Contras, a paramilitary force whose aim was to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua in the 1980s.

The troops will remain. There are currently 138,000 US troops and 8,900 British troops in Iraq and, despite Blair's talk of "sovereignty", he has agreed to send in 800 marines and is due to send up to 3,000 British troops after the elections on 10 June. And there can be no "transfer" of power as long as US and British troops remain in Iraq.

The fact that the United Nations has signed up to this occupation deal proves they are impotent to stop the American and British forces. Even some of the lefts calls for the UN to intervene would only see Turkish, Iranian, Syrian and Saudi troops replace the western imperialists. All these countries have long track records of murdering and repressing their own populations, with many the same minorities as exist in Iraq taking the brunt.

Sale of the century

Behind the scenes the US government has been overseeing the full scale asset stripping and privatisation of the Iraq economy. The scale is staggering. *The Economist* described the situation as a "capitalist dream, the kind of wish list that foreign investors and donor agencies dream of". Bush has signed decrees that include:

- Some of the lowest income and corporate taxes in the world, at 15 per cent
- The elimination of tariffs
- The privatisation of 220 companies
- The right for foreign investors to own, invest and repatriate profits in any sector of the economy except natural resources (of the 115 identified projects for Iraqi reconstruction only 22 will be awarded to Iraqi companies).

These decrees are outside the remit of international law and go beyond even World Bank guidelines.

And who has benefited? Certainly not the Iraqi people. Since their so called liberation the number of Iraqis with access to fresh water has fallen from 60 per cent to 50 per cent. The beneficiaries from Bush's intervention have been US based multinationals: Bechtel, awarded \$3 billion worth of contracts to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure; General Electric, guaranteed \$450 million to rebuild power stations destroyed by US



Picture of torture at Abu Ghraib prison

- Full democratic elections now!
- End the occupation - troops out now!
- Victory to the Iraqi resistance!

bombs; and of course Halliburton, whose Vice Chairman, Dick Cheney, is also Bush's Vice President. Handy!

The corruption goes deeper than just government officials awarding contracts to themselves – the latest scandal revealed that Kellogg Brown and Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton, overcharged the US army in the region of \$61 million for oil supplies and \$16 million for food supplies. When Bush asked for \$87 billion last September from US tax payers to fund the reconstruction we can now see where the money was going – straight into the hands of US capitalists.

These thieves and liars are robbing the Iraqi people with one hand and murdering them with the other. Even the oil revenues are being held, not in Baghdad, but in the Federal Bank, New York and 15 per cent is being siphoned off to pay for the war!

While the US and British plunder Iraq's resources, 70 per cent of Iraqis are unemployed. Why can't they employ Iraqis? Because in the words of KBR who supply food to the US army "they might poison the troops".

Growing resistance

This says it all. An army of occupation cannot reconstruct Iraq – because it knows that the people of Iraq will do everything in their power to drive them out of their

country.

There has been a significant turn in the war in the last two months. The heroic resistance that is growing day by day has thrown Bush's plans off course. First, the marines were forced to retreat when the people of Fallujah fought back. They may try and claim that the insurgency is being led by foreign terrorists but you only have to see the growing number of fighters to know that this is yet another lie.

Of course, the militias across Iraq are based on ethnic divisions. The Peshwara in the Kurdish north, Moqtada Sadr's troops based among the Shi'a of the South and the various Sunni militias like the Fallujah Brigade are all organised on religious and ethnic lines. These divisions reflect the divisions that existed under British and Ba'athist rule, divisions which were encouraged by both regimes in order to divide and rule the region.

But the past few months has seen a growth in unity amongst those resisting. Witness the response of the Shi'a in the Badr district of Baghdad who delivered solidarity to Fallujah (a city with a Sunni majority).

Despite the fact that the US are demanding the militias in Fallujah hand over their weaponry, the resistance has rightly refused and the US are still not in a position to exercise their will for fear that the mili-

tary conflict will escalate.

A year on and the Iraqi people have seen through the lies. In a recent poll in Baghdad 88 per cent said they saw the US as occupiers, not liberators; 50 per cent said they wanted US troops out now. There has been a surge in support for leaders such as Sadr, whose resistance in Najaf and Nasiriyah (where the Italians were recently forced to abandon their base) is yet another signal that the US are in trouble.

Bush's worst nightmare is beginning to unfold – with more than 800 US soldiers dead so far. Of course this is nothing compared to the losses in the Vietnam war but they are desperate to avoid a protracted uprising that drags ever more soldiers into the conflict.

The fact is, however, that they cannot afford to withdraw – to do so would be an enormous military and political blow to their interests in the Middle East and worldwide.

That is why the Iraqi people must step up the resistance now. Bush is becoming more unpopular by the week; 61 per cent of Americans say that they disapprove of Bush's handling of the war. In an election year, this could become a factor in events.

Even the multinationals are feeling the pressure. Last week General Electric and Siemens suspended operations as supply lines were threatened by the escalation of the conflict.

Iraqi workers must lead the way

The fledgling but growing trade union movement of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions must begin to take centre stage. The oil workers in the Al Dawra Refinery, the railworkers of Fallujah, Baghdad and Najaf and the dockers in Basra must take the lead in co-ordinating mass actions against the occupation and building solidarity with the resistance fighters under siege. By taking up the issues of unemployment, privatisation, women's rights and Kurdish self-determination, the trade unions could play a crucial role in uniting the struggles of the Iraqi people into a powerful movement for liberation.

Unless these progressive and secular forces actively support the military resistance against occupation then Islamic forces such as Sadr's Mahdi army will mislead the resistance into the dead end of an Islamic state.

The war in Iraq is the key issue in the world today. A victory for the Iraqi people against the world's most powerful nation would act as a beacon of resistance across the Middle East, whose people have suffered at the hands of dictators funded and supported by the West.

It would deal a mighty blow to the neoliberal policies of privatisation and cuts in Britain and America. It would help make the Project for a New American Century – the plan for global domination by the hawks in Washington – a dead letter. Instead, it would give birth to a new project for the 21st century – the fight to end oppression and exploitation.

That is why every anti-war activist must take confidence from the resistance in Iraq and build an international movement of solidarity with our Iraqi brothers and sisters.

American torture

The torture carried out at Abu Ghraib jail was called "un-American" by George Bush and company, writes Keith Spencer. The beatings, fear, sexual humiliations, and deaths have been laid at the door of a few rogue elements and a breakdown in discipline.

However, we should nail this lie that torture is an aberration carried out by a few bad men and women. The US security forces and military have pursued torture as a policy since at least the 1960s and have actively trained other states in its use.

In July 1963, the CIA produced the Kubark manual, which outlines how to use coercive and non-coercive methods to break a prisoner. It includes advice such as that, when choosing a room, "the electric current should be known in advance, so that transformers and other modifying devices will be on hand if needed."

Chapter 9 lists the main methods of coercive interrogation: arrest, detention, sensory deprivation, isolation, pain and fear. Fear is a key weapon: "The threat of coercion usually weakens or destroys resistance more effectively than coercion itself. The threat to inflict pain, for example, can trigger fears more damaging than the immediate sensation of pain." Methods include detention "in a cell which has no light"; "an environment still more subject to control, such as water-tank or iron lung, is even more effective."

Also in the 1960s, the US army produced several manuals through its Project X, which drew on its experience in Vietnam, and was used mainly with US allies in South America.

The CIA's secret Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual (1983) drew on Kubark and the Project X manuals, creating an even more developed torture manual.

The CIA trained the Honduran military in the 1980s. The abuses of the Hondurans led to a US House of Senate investigation in 1988. As a result of the investigation, the phrase "While we do not stress the use of coercive techniques, we do want to make you aware of them" was changed to "while we deplore the use of coercive techniques, we do want to make you aware of them so that you may avoid them." Obviously they don't deplore them enough.

Throughout the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan was president, Project X distributed more than 1,000 copies of these manuals for use in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru, and used it at the School of the Americas (a US military training school in Georgia) between 1987 and 1991.

Human rights abuses were carried out by people trained in these torture methods including, in November 1989, the massacre of six Jesuit priests, their co-worker and her teenage daughter in El Salvador. A US Congressional Task Force reported that those responsible were trained by the US Army. This prompted, in March 1992, the then Secretary of Defence Richard Cheney (now vice president) to investigate their use. The report found that five of the seven manuals it looked at "contained language and statements in violation of legal, regulatory or policy prohibitions" and recommended they be recalled. The report was stamped: "SECDEF [Cheney] HAS SEEN." So Cheney was aware that the US was carrying out illegal interrogations back then. He ordered "corrective action" and the destruction of manuals.

However, far from being "an innocent", Cheney's complicity in these manuals came to light in 1991 when Major Victor Tise, who helped run the training, was recorded on the telephone giving a history of the project's work with Latin American torturers. Tise said that the manuals had been forwarded to the Department of Defense (Cheney's fiefdom) for clearance "and came back approved but unchanged".

There are regular demonstrations at the School of the Americas calling for the closure of the camp or for the teaching of torture to stop. The demonstrations may succeed. But torture is not just carried out by ill-disciplined raw recruits. When the US and UK fight imperialist wars one of the weapons they will use is torture, just as it has been used in Vietnam, Ireland and now Iraq.

• More at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/

Colombian oil workers battle privatisations

The US has been pouring dollars into Colombia in order to support President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's pursuit of "business-friendly policies" at the expense of the workers and peasants. *Pablo Rodriguez* reports on the workers' resistance

Ever since its formation as a clandestine union in 1922, the Unión Sindical Obrera (USO) has been at the forefront of the Colombian workers' struggle against imperialist exploitation and the multi-national oil companies. In the process many of its militants have been assassinated (79 since 1988), thousands have been jailed and sacked. Currently the USO has engaged in perhaps its most significant and important battle – over the privatisation of the national oil company, Ecopetrol.

Colombia's President Álvaro Uribe Vélez has been in power almost two years, overseeing the implementation of sweeping programmes of privatisations and cuts in public services. His Presidency has seen an increase in state and paramilitary violence that has gone hand in hand with the criminalisation of social protest in Colombia. A staunch believer in the free market imposed by violence, Uribe has actively encouraged multi-national intervention and exploitation of the country's human and natural resources and is a fervent supporter of ALCA (the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas).

"Plan Patriota" (formerly Plan Colombia), a military agreement with the United States, has made Colombia the third largest recipient of US military aid. Far-right illegal paramilitary groups have colluded with the state forces in murder, torture and disappearances aimed at putting down protest movements and any opposition to government policies.

The result has been the displacement of hundreds of thousands of the rural and urban poor. In the rural areas of Arauca and Bolívar for example, far away from the eyes of the world, the army and paramilitaries have long been clearing the population out of the way for oil explo-

ration. Indeed Uribe began his term in office by giving sweeping new judicial powers to the army and police and declaring martial law in several Colombian departments. These were of great strategic economic interest to the country's largest foreign investors, Repsol, BP, Occidental, Monsanto and Shell.

Following the privatisation of the electricity grids, telephone industry, Social Security and large parts of the Education and Health systems, Uribe has turned his eye upon the jewel in Colombia's crown – the oil industry. But he cannot continue the process of selling off Colombia's oil resources without getting rid of Ecopetrol and its associated infrastructure. Currently, Ecopetrol and the foreign oil companies are bound by "Contracts of Association" which, while guaranteeing huge profits for the foreign oil companies, also ensure that some revenue is channelled back into the Colombian economy.

Gift wrapped

Uribe's plan is to cancel the existing contracts and replace them with "Concessionary Contracts" which effectively present Ecopetrol and the Colombian oil market gift-wrapped to the multi-nationals with no guaranteed return for Colombia's economy.

The main obstacle to Uribe's plans has been the resistance of the USO workers. As the central union federation (the CUT) states, the USO action is the flag bearer for the "condemnation of...the process of negotiation for the Free Trade Agreement that will bring ruin to this country as it did in Mexico." For some 18 months USO leaders had been involved in fruitless negotiations with the government and the pro-privatisation directors of Ecopetrol. Meanwhile,

the government prepared for a strike by introducing draconian anti-union laws and curtailing labour rights.

Finally, on 22 April, the union had had enough and installations and refineries in Colombia's oil capital, the city of Barrancabermeja, went on strike. The strike was immediately declared illegal by the government on the grounds that the USO provided an "essential service that cannot be suspended".

Sacking strikers

This declaration of illegality allowed the government to fire striking workers. Within a week of the start of the strike many workers including the USO leaders were sacked. The Ecopetrol director, Isaac Yanovich, then refused to come to the negotiating table saying that to discuss the resolution of the strike and Colombia's future oil policy with sacked workers was unconstitutional. The army and police were called in to guard the Ecopetrol installations.

However the government underestimated both the oil worker's determination (95 per cent of USO workers are on strike) and the national and international solidarity that the oil workers have received, especially from the social movements and local assemblies. Particularly encouraging has been the co-ordination between the USO and the recently established Barrancabermeja Social Forum that culminated in a "Bring Barrancabermeja to a Standstill" day of action on 5 May. Subsequently, in a massive show of solidarity against the neoliberal politics of the Uribe government, an Anti-Free Trade Agreement National Day of Action was called. This involved a 24 hour general strike on the 18th May with huge mobilisations in cities all over Colombia, including a large march in

Cartagena where Free Trade Agreement negotiations were taking place. The day of action was particularly important as it was the first significant collective mass mobilisation and strike action to be taken by workers across all sectors, one where the USO was openly supported and its struggle championed as a cause for protest.

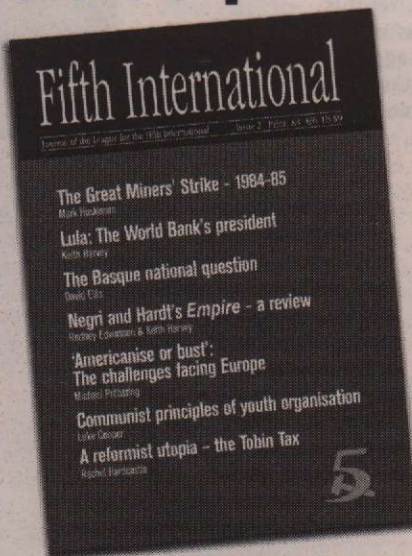
The USO workers have followed up this wave of protest with a General Assembly on 22nd May and have declared their, "unbreakable decision to continue the strike until the non-privatisation...is guaranteed together with the rights of the workers and the Union." This comes on the back of a significant victory: the reinstatement of their sacked comrades.

Undoubtedly the scale of national protest will have influenced the government's decision, and the strike must now spread to, and unite with, other sectors of the increasingly radicalised Colombian workforce.

Already teachers, education and health workers have participated on marches and many unions have called independent strikes in recent months. So far the Colombian government has been able to isolate and divide these stoppages. Only if the workers can unite their struggles into a general strike, and defend their organisations from attack through the formation of self-defence groups, can they force the government to back down. Such a victory would cripple the Uribe government and destroy its neo-liberal agenda. It would open up the possibility of getting rid of this government and replacing it with one committed to defending the interest of the urban and rural workers and using the resources of Colombia for their benefit, not for those of the imperialists.

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Last month India was stunned by the shock defeat of the ruling Hindu nationalists – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – in its general election. Just a few days later it was further rocked by the decision of Congress Party leader, Sonia Gandhi, to refuse to become prime minister, in the face of anti-democratic and chauvinist protests against her Italian origins by the BJP. **Julian Scholefield** argues that shocks don't always make waves

Indian elections: shock result, same policies

As the dust has begun to settle on the election, it is becoming clearer by the day that the new governing Congress-led coalition represents no real alternative to the BJP for the Indian masses. India's newly sworn-in prime minister, Manmohan Singh, has held out hope for India's poor by declaring that his first priority is to "wage the battle against poverty" and bring a "human element" to economic reforms. He has talked of not selling off any more of India's stake in the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, or GAIL India (gas distributor) – two of the most precious of the Indian state's "nine gems". Privatisation of loss-making firms will be "decided on a case by case basis". In addition, Singh claims that his new government will keep state-run banks in state hands and spending on education will be increased to 6 per cent of GDP.

Liberalisation

Yet these radical-sounding pledges are just words. In deeds, this was the very same Manmohan Singh who, as a former governor with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and as Congress finance minister in 1991, was the architect of India's biggest ever neoliberal deregulation programme. From 1996 until now, BJP-led coalition governments have merely continued with this globalisation agenda. Indeed, it wasn't Sonia Gandhi's inner voice, but the sound of alarm bells ringing at India's money markets, that caused her to balk at becoming prime minister.

When it became clear that Congress had won the election, the Mumbai stock market fell by 11 per cent, costing investors two trillion rupees (£25 billion), and was only reassured when Singh stepped into the breach. On the news of his appointment and a promise to increase India's already soaring economic growth rate from 8 to 10 per cent, shares bounced back, recording an 8 per cent increase – the second largest ever one day rise.

This arch neoliberal knows that this target can only be achieved through implementing a programme of ever more ruthless liberalisation, cuts in subsidies and continued deregulation and privatisation of state industries. Only measures like this will stand a chance of encouraging the vital foreign investment necessary for transforming the Indian economy to the point where it can come close to achieving the mega-growth rates of its rival giant neighbour, China.

To this end, the Indian bourgeoisie would prefer a government led by Manmohan Singh to that of the defeated BJP-led coalition, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Despite its boasts of a "shining" India, the BJP and its leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, were reluctant marketisers, while Singh is considered to be the genuine article. The NDA government's privatisation programme was restricted to selling off only the most profitable bits of certain state companies.

Rural poor

Yet despite this, as the general election approached, large sections of the Indian ruling class and foreign investors still saw the BJP as their best bet. Furthermore, all the election pundits strongly tipped the NDA to win. But no one took into account the plight of India's rural poor. The BJP's "India Shining" campaign had little resonance with the two-thirds of India's 670 million voters who live in the countryside.

The BJP now admits that this was an error. After spending \$20 million on adverts on all TV channels and a glossy full-colour poster campaign, BJP former deputy premier LK Advani now admits that the campaign hurt the BJP. "In retrospect, it seems that the fruits of development did not equitably reach all sections of our society," he said.

India's rural population suffered during the drought-ridden bad years that preceded the last monsoon, which itself helped trigger India's current boom. Many rural villagers have seen little improvement in their roads, electricity and water supply. Failing crops and low prices led to a spate of suicides by farmers weighed down by unpayable debts.

The disillusionment of India's rural population, together with the fact that one quarter of Indians still live in severe poverty, led to an unusually low 55 per cent turnout. Coupled with this, the BJP's virulent Hindu chauvinism only served to further alienate the mass of Muslims from them. Their self-congratulatory rhetoric backfired on them in the countryside and attempts to change tack in favour of emphasising stability and continuity couldn't, in the end, stave off electoral defeat.

Congress Party and its allies

Yet the Congress Party's victory, with only 27 per cent of the national vote, by no means represents an overwhelming endorsement from Indian workers and peasants. The Congress coalition, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), with 36 per cent, managed only the same share of votes as the BJP's National Democratic Alliance. Yet, this gave the UPA 220 seats in the Indian parliament, as against the 185 for the NDA.

As a result, the UPA minority government will depend heavily on the support of its allies in the Left Front, itself strengthened by its best ever result, winning 59 seats. The principal constituent of this grouping is the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which alone achieved 43 seats. The CPI(M) has refused to join the UPA coalition. Instead, they prefer to offer "outside support" to the new government. This may allow the CPI(M) the ability to pick and choose that government policies it wants to support and could have the effect of curbing, or at least slowing down the Congress Party's marketisation and privatisation drive.

But, if their record in state government is anything to go by, Manmohan Singh should have little to fear from the CPI(M). It may be a communist party in name but,

as the bosses' house journal, *The Economist*, says: "They should be judged by what they do, not what they say". This is as good a motto for Marxists as it is for the bourgeoisie, particularly when applied to the CPI(M). In the Indian provinces these so-called communists have embraced wholesale privatisation. The state government in West Bengal has been controlled by the CPI(M) since 1977. There, 15 state-owned enterprises have been sold off, and IT companies have been designated as "strategic", which means that their workers are banned from striking!

Despite their stated differences with Congress on economic policy, and their newfound ability to "pull the plug" on the new government, the CPI(M) may be persuaded to toe the Congress Party's neoliberal line. Their provincial interests could be used to gain their support for privatisations in return for some of the spoils being invested in the CPI(M)'s local strongholds.

Whatever happens, the masses of India have been given fair warning that this Congress-led coalition government will put the strategic interests of the Indian capitalists first. The CPI(M) has also shown that they cannot be relied upon to uphold the interests of workers and poor peasants and, when in a position of power and influence, will do the opposite.

Secularism

Even so, in this election, millions of ordinary Indians turned away from the BJP. Not least, because of its obnoxious record of whipping up Hindu chauvinist hatred against India's Muslim population. Many will remember the massacre of 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat, a state governed by the BJP, in 2002. No action was ever taken against Narendra Modi, the BJP's then chief minister, who was complicit in doing nothing to prevent the pogrom.

Consequently, Indians still look to the Congress Party as upholders of secularism, committed to uniting Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs across the whole country. Yet this belief is not borne out by Congress' record in power. Indeed, it was 20 years ago, in 1984, that Indira Gandhi, the then Congress prime minister, sent troops into the Punjab to ransack the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, and bloodily put down a Sikh uprising calling for an independent Sikh state of Khalistan. Similarly in Kashmir, in the name of Indian unity, Congress governments have consistently ignored calls for self-determination. Instead, they have gone to war with Pakistan over control of the region and have turned Indian-controlled Kashmir into a police state, viciously putting down insurgent movements fighting for Kashmiri free-

dom. Even in this election, the Congress Party offered no clear alternative to the Hindu fundamentalism of the BJP. In the state of Gujarat, they felt so confident of the Muslim vote that Congress fielded very few actual Muslim candidates. This has led to accusations against them of being the "BJP's B-team".

Utopian policies

Neither does the Congress Party fare any better by its claim to stand up for the interests of India's poor. Today, 320 million Indians still live below the poverty line, almost as many as the entire population of India in 1947. The reality, since independence, is that Congress has only ruled in the interests of the Indian capitalist class. Even in this, its attempts to develop India into a world power commensurate with its huge population have all failed, for two reasons.

First, because of the retarding effects of British colonial rule, India's bourgeoisie has always remained relatively small. This has stunted the growth of Indian capitalism and partly explains why one powerful bourgeois family – the Nehru-Gandhis – has dominated the past 60 or so years of India's history. Second, the measures adopted to compensate for this backwardness have been inadequate to break India's economic subordination to western imperialism. State investment in, and nationalisation of key sectors of the economy was the Congress Party's response to this, rather than their pursuit of some socialist ideal. This approach was initiated by the first

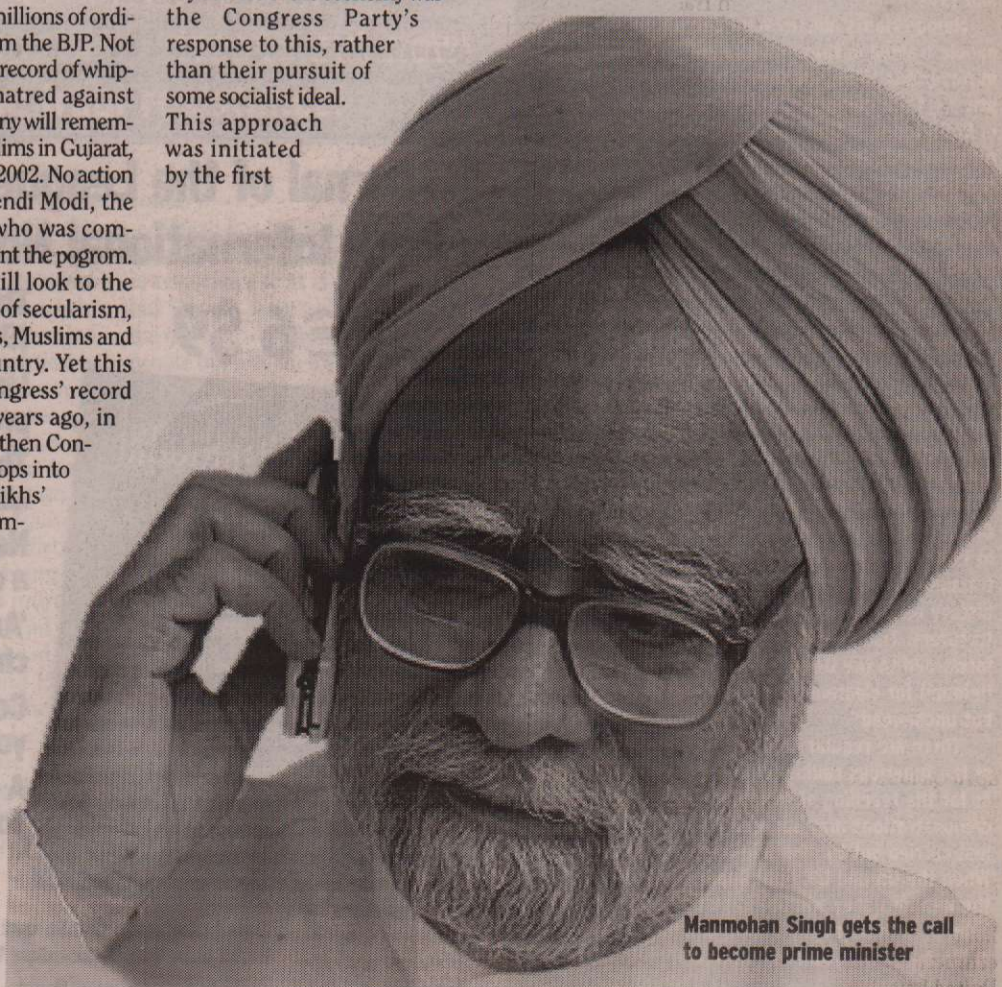
Congress Party government of Jawaharlal Nehru and continued by his daughter Indira Gandhi in the 1960s and 1970s, but it was always going to be utopian as it was insufficient to allow the economy to make that qualitative leap forward.

By the 1980s even Indira Gandhi's last government could no longer afford the level of state support necessary to keep the Indian economy going. She began the switch towards deregulation and opening up the economy to market forces and foreign investment. All subsequent governments have gone further down this path.

Revolutionary alternative

And this road can only lead to a massive increase in the rate of exploitation of Indian workers and peasants. One look to their neighbours in China shows that this is the necessary price for economic growth under modern globalised capitalism.

The only realistic alternative for the Indian masses is to fight now to build a party that can lead them to the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system that breeds super-exploitation, starvation levels of poverty and communal hatred. The only counter to the threat of continued imperialist domination of the region is the fight for a socialist federation of the entire Indian sub-continent.



Manmohan Singh gets the call to become prime minister

Stop the slaughter! For international workers' solidarity with the Palestinians!

This is Endgame for the Intifada. In Rafah, the Israelis are proving their overwhelming might and power by demolishing homes at will, slaughtering civilians and trying to crush all spirit of resistance and hope. The Sharon government is initiating a phased plan to withdraw settlers from the Gaza strip, but they plan on maintaining complete control of the airspace, ports and the Egypt boarder crossings. The remaining Palestinians will live in a giant open-air prison, their guards the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). This is the 'two state solution' in practice. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and Yasser Arafat can only offer meek and unheeded cries for help to the UN.

Within the remit of Operation: Rainbow, not only houses, but shops and amenities – indeed, any building and structure within the targeted area – are being bulldozed by the Israelis. What we are witnessing is ethnic cleansing. The message is being sent to the Palestinians, "do not resist, do not demonstrate, do not fight back, otherwise everyone will be targeted".

The Rafah operation has resulted in the deaths of 56 Palestinians, including eight shot dead while they demonstrated against the destruction. Age is no barrier to quali-

By Simon Hardy

fyng as a "terrorist" – by 20 May, 10 children had been killed and 50 injured. Around 2,066 Palestinian have been made homeless in just one week, and over 450 injured, according to the Red Cross.

The effect of the operation on Palestinian children should be condemned by every worker and progressive thinker around the world. A Red Cross report stated that "two of the victims were three-year-old children; one of whom died from a heart attack due to extreme fear and the other one was killed by an Israeli sniper". The high level of deaths among youth and children show that the Israelis are deliberately targeting them; many of the 10 dead so far have been killed whilst at home. Disgustingly, the IDF tried to blame Palestinian fighters, saying they had photos of them killing two young teenagers; as yet they have not released these photos.

The Israeli army wants to isolate and smash any resistance. If the Palestinians have a funeral they open fire on it; if they stage a demonstration, they open fire on it. A one-sided war is being waged in a manner so vicious that even the US – which nor-

mally vetoes any condemnation of Israel – merely abstained in the UN vote of condemnation.

Why are the Israelis in Rafah?

The Israelis originally stated that the operation was to clear 600 homes along the border (a buffer zone between Egypt and Palestine). They then said they were moving in to look for tunnels that the Palestinians might be using to smuggle guns into the Gaza strip. In his plans for Gaza – originally the Gaza Plan, now watered down to the Gradual Disengagement Plan – Sharon is under pressure from two different sources. On the one hand, Bush and company want to finally put an end to the Palestine problem. But Sharon's blueprint for the withdrawal of all Israeli settlers from the region is being held up by splits in the ruling Likud party and in the cabinet.

The US ruling class is well aware that the actions of the Israeli state are fuelling the rise of political Islam and extremist groups willing to carry out attacks on the imperialists and their foreign interests. Giving the Palestinians back Gaza may seem like a generous gesture of peace by the Israeli government, but it is actually part of a calcu-

lated move to wipe out Palestinian resistance. Sharon has gambled on sacrificing the settlers in Gaza in order to keep the West Bank settlements. Numerically, the settlers in Gaza are only 7,500 strong whereas there are 250,000 in the West Bank. Sacrificing the few for the good of the many sounds like common sense for the imperialists. However, the hard right of Likud – including disgraced ex-premier Benjamin Netanyahu – believe that the Gaza settlements should stay. They want the phased cleansing of the Palestinians from Gaza, not the withdrawal of Israeli settlers.

While a mere 11 out of a cabinet of 23 back Sharon's plan, opinion polls show strong public support for it within Israel. The Israeli peace movement organised a 150,000-strong demonstration in Tel Aviv on 15 May calling for an immediate withdrawal from Gaza and the resumption of peace talks. The cracks in the Israeli state are growing, slowly, but surely.

Arafat's impotence

Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian National Authority and the Fateh party, cannot hope to stop these war crimes. He has played the imperialists' game for too long, especially when he sold out the first

Palestinian Intifada with the Oslo Accords in 1992. The Palestinian militants are living in the shadow of that historic defeat, their leaders refusing to wage a revolutionary war against the Israeli state.

Now all that Arafat can do is refer back to the road map already abandoned by the Israelis and plead with them to begin renegotiations. This attitude drives the radical youth and fighters into the reactionary arms of Hamas, an organisation that offers a real struggle against Israel – the struggle to create an Islamic state in Palestine. This is no solution at all!

Workers and youth must be clear on the message that has to be sent out from across the world. The violence in Palestine is caused by the occupation; therefore, we must fight to end the occupation. But we must also fight for support for the Palestinians in their struggle against the Israeli state. Israeli workers should organise to condemn the attacks in Rafah, to send delegations there and act to stop the slaughter.

Only joint mass action by the Palestinian and Israeli workers can stop the Israeli state's attacks and clear a path not to a confessional two-state solution but towards a secular, socialist state for both Jewish and Arab workers.

Spain: don't let the PSOE off the hook

The Spanish electorate must keep up pressure on the socialists elected to government, argues *Keith Harvey*

The elections result in Spain in March, which swept the PSOE under José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to power and brushed aside José Aznar's PP in the polls, sent shockwaves through the international establishment. The new Spanish government carried out its promise and withdrew all Spanish troops from Iraq, losing the coalition a valuable ally in Europe and useful resources in the Middle East.

Early in 2003, the Pact of the Azores was signed by Bush, Blair and the Spanish president Aznar. These three figures were at the heart of the "coalition of the willing" that invaded Iraq a couple of months later. Aznar pledged Spain's support for Bush even though 90 per cent of Spain was explicitly opposed to the war. No country put more people onto the streets on 15 February 2003 than Spain in a bid to avert the invasion and occupation.

Aznar paid the price on 14 March this year when the workers and anti-war youth combined to throw him and his Popular Party (PP) government out of power after eight years.

The victory of the PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) comes despite its terrible policies and the lack of belief in its ability to deliver progressive change. Its weak leadership failed to offer effective support or launch a campaign around the PP's privatisation drive and attacks on the workers and youth in the 1990s. It was only the bombings in Madrid and the backfired attempt by the PP to blame ETA and cover up Al Qa'ida's involvement that made PSOE an attractive proposition to the electorate. The Spanish workers voted for PSOE simply because they were outraged at Aznar's pro-Bush policies, lies and deceit.

The PSOE increased its vote by 3.11 million, winning enough seats to form a government with informal backing from the United Left (IU) and Catalan left repub-



Zapatero: Mass movement forced him to honour pledge to pull Spanish troops out of Iraq

licans. PSOE did not earn these votes for any radical stance in opposition or resolute exposure of the PP during the days after 11 March. Indeed, Zapatero had joined with Aznar in condemning ETA and had refused to articulate the growing sense of outrage against the PP.

The left reformists in the Stalinist-led IU had also disgraced themselves, announcing in response to the bombings: "[T]he best response is unity of the democrats without allowing the slightest division... The IU gives its complete support to the government and offers its aid and co-operation."

The Spanish masses showed their maturity in brushing aside these craven pleadings. Such was the power of the mass movement that brought Zapatero to power that almost his first announcement was to confirm that all Spain's 1,700 troops would be withdrawn. He even accelerated the timetable, hoping that by a swift exit PSOE could receive a huge boost at the 10 June European elections.

PSOE's legislative priorities are heavily accented towards educational reform, as well as gender and gay rights; this is for public consumption and an appeal to the secular urban professional classes. But the key cabinet posts have gone to right-wing heavyweights, committed to the neo-liberal agenda. Fiscal rectitude has been confirmed as have all the PP-appointed CEOs in the privatised industries.

However, Zapatero will find it difficult to "do a Schröder", that is pocket the antiwar vote and proceed to implement a harsh neo-liberal programme. The anti-capitalist movement that put him there has few illusions in PSOE; they will take to the streets in their millions should he go onto the offensive. Zapatero could well prioritise doing a deal with the Basque and Catalan nationalists and pursuing re-alignment of foreign policy, treading water on the rest of the domestic front. If the workers and youth can bring down Aznar, they can bring down the PSOE as well.

Force the government to reverse PP's legacy

The two PP governments (1996-2004) deepened and broadened the previous PSOE government's attacks on education provision, labour rights, welfare benefits and privatisation as well as massively ratcheted up the reactionary attacks on the Basque national movement. With PSOE silent and in crisis it fell to the PSOE-inclined UGT and the IU-inclined CCOO trade union federations to lead the resistance to the attacks. As in France the unions only organise low double-digit percentage of wage workers, and these mainly in the public sector and enjoying more security of employment contracts.

The national bureaucracy of the UGT and CCOO either did nothing (e.g. the attacks on migrant workers in 1999), gave platonic support (e.g. education sector struggles), or worse (e.g. privatisation of state industry), colluded in the main attacks on the working class by PP. At first both federations' leaderships hoped the PP rule would be a short interlude and placed all their energy in backing an IU-PSOE coalition slate for the 2000 elections.

Only when the second-term PP government came for them in 2003, as Aznar sought a major dilution of labour rights for contracted workers (i.e. the union bureaucracy's social base), did the UGT/CCOO bureaucracy rouse itself and actually repelled the attack with a general strike in the July of that year.

It is the youth that were the vanguard of opposition to the domestic attacks of the PP and its foreign policy. This generation of youth, politicised by the Aznar years, left cold by PSOE and yet not weighed down by the defeats Aznar inflicted upon the older "post-Franco generation", has been in the vanguard of the European anti-war and anti-capitalist movement since 1999. They have put hundreds of thousands onto the streets to defend secondary and higher education from PP attacks (1999-2001). It is due to their efforts that the Spanish troops have left Iraq.

It is they who must take the offensive and press the Zapatero government to reverse the attacks of the last eight years:

- Kick all US bases out of Spain; Spain out of Nato and out of Afghanistan
- Self-determination for the Basques! Lift the ban on Herri Batasuna. Free all political prisoners
- Repeal all PP laws on education, all the anti-labour laws. Restore all welfare and unemployment benefits. Re-nationalise without compensation all privatised industries and services.

Trotsky's fight for a

Workers Power's series on the history of the revolutionary Internationals now brings us to the Fourth International. *Dave Stockton* looks at Trotsky's struggle in the years 1929-1935 to rebuild the movement in the aftermath of the German disaster

Immediately a problem arises if we compare the Fourth International to the previous three Internationals. Its continuity with the other three Internationals is both controversial and contested. Mass workers' organisations still accept the first three Internationals' validity. The Fourth International's necessity and validity is denied by these mass forces, the Socialist and Labour parties and the official Communist parties.

In other words, the Fourth International never became a mass International like the others. This article sets out to vindicate and demonstrate its validity and were its achievements.

In the last article in this series we saw how the Third International degenerated and failed in the historic task it had set itself, i.e. to lead revolutions. In Germany (1923), Britain (1926), China (1926-28) its bungled important revolutionary opportunities. In Russia a powerful privileged bureaucracy took over the world's first workers state. It crushed the last elements of proletarian democracy in the soviets, the trade unions and the party. It expelled and exiled the key leaders who represented the living continuity with Lenin's methods and programme.

It extended this bureaucratic dictatorship to the whole Comintern, expelling and purging an entire generation of leaders. Only the Left Opposition, grouped around Trotsky, was able to both resist and analyse this process, and develop a programme to combat this degeneration and elaborate tactics for the working class movement worldwide.

Victor Serge aptly named this decade "midnight in the century" because of the defeats that the working class suffered (Germany 1933, Spain 1939), because of the horrors of the great purges in the USSR and the fact that it led on to a war in which six million Jews perished in the holocaust, with a similar number of Poles, and more than 20 million Soviet citizens.

The pressures weighing down on a small nucleus of revolutionaries, no more than 5,000 to 6,000 strong, are unimaginable today. The generation that endured and survived them has now largely passed away. But it is to them that we owe the survival of the tactics, the methods of work, the experience of struggle and above all the programme which we can use to rebuild the International today.

When Trotsky was expelled from the USSR in February 1929, he settled in Prinkipo, a small island close to Istanbul. There, despite the distance from most of his co-thinkers, he set about rallying together Left Oppositionists around the world into an international tendency. His writings – *The Permanent Revolution*, *The Stalin School of Falsification*, *My Life*, *The History of the Russian Revolution* – explained the struggles in Russia and the Communist International to a worldwide audience and a new generation.

Clearly expelling Trotsky from the USSR was the worst mistake Stalin ever made, one which he tried to remedy by assassination attempts which finally succeeded on 20 August 1940. Meanwhile, Trotsky had just over 10 years to perform what he called the most important work of his life – alone, except for a thinning group of survivors from his own generation and a small band of young revolutionaries. His task was explain to the latter the programme and experience of his own generation.

The only co-thinkers allowed to leave Russia with him were his companion, Natalia Sedova, and his 23-year-old son Leon Sedov. Sedov was to become an important figure in the International Left Opposition, who regarded themselves as a faction of the Communist International, albeit an expelled one.

From Prinkipo, Trotsky kept up a barrage of criticism of the Communist International's post-1928 poli-

cy, the so-called "Third Period". This sectarian and adventurist policy of refusing to apply the united front tactic to the Social Democracy, of splitting the trade unions by forming "red unions", of the characterising the reformists as "social fascists" had terrible negative consequences right around the world. But it was most fatal when applied to the class struggle in Germany.

Germany was in a deep and intensifying revolutionary crisis. It also had a huge labour movement. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) had just over one million members. It was the leading force in the Second International. The Communist Party (KPD) had, in 1932, 300,000 members: it was the largest party of the Communist International outside of the USSR. Together the two parties could muster 10 to 13 million votes.

By 1931 there were more than four million unemployed in Germany. The figure would rise to more than six million by 1933. Millions of small savers, farmers and business people were ruined by the crisis. These classes, normally a conservative prop of the existing order, became desperate and looked for a radical solution, either from the Left or the Right.

Germany was the key to the international situation. A successful revolution would smash German fascism, end the isolation of the Soviet Union and thus fatally undermine the Stalinist bureaucracy there and in the Communist International. A defeat for the German workers on the other hand would mean a fascist counterrevolution, worse even than in Italy. Trotsky warned: Worker communists, you are hundreds of thousands, millions; you cannot leave for anyplace; there are not enough passports for you. Should fascism come to power, it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank. Your salvation lies in merciless struggle. And only a fighting unity with the Social Democratic workers can bring victory. Make haste, worker communists, you have very little time left!

On the eve of Hitler's conquest of power in Germany, Trotsky hoped that, as the disastrous failings of Stalinism were revealed, so divisions would open within the Communist Parties and the International itself and the fight against Stalin would break out in its ranks, perhaps in time to avoid the final tragedy in Germany.

Trotsky warned that Stalin's policies might destroy the International itself: "The victory of fascism in Germany and the smashing of the German proletariat would hardly allow the Comintern to survive the consequences of its disastrous policies."

These lines were written in January 1933. Within two months the crushing of the German working class had become a reality, as total as it was undeniable.

The policies of the Stalinist KPD had led the most powerful working class movement in the world to humiliating and demoralising defeat. Humiliating because there was no centrally organised resistance to the Nazi takeover. Demoralising because this was a surrender without a fight on the part of the workers' leaders.

The collapse and destruction of the KPD posed one last chance to the Comintern. Either it could launch a radical examination of how and why such a disaster could have happened throughout the world movement, or it could insist that everything had been done correctly. The Comintern leaders chose the latter course, and virtually no one in the world's communist parties dared to say a word against it.

Trotsky drew from this one inescapable conclusion: "An organisation which was not roused by the thunder of fascism and which submits docilely to such outrageous acts of the bureaucracy demonstrates thereby that it is dead and that nothing can ever revive it."

On July 15 1933, Trotsky wrote an article to sum up these lessons and point the way ahead for the move-



Fascists besiege German Communist Party's headquarters. It was the refusal of the Comintern to recognise the failure of their policy to stop the Nazis that led Trotsky to call for a new, Fourth International

ment. Its title could not have been plainer: "It is necessary to build communist parties and an International anew."

A new, Fourth International

After the Second International betrayed the workers' movement by supporting the bourgeoisie's war of slaughter in 1914, Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Russia, backed by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany and a handful of internationalists from other countries, declared it a "stinking corpse" and began the task of organising a new, Third International.

Did Hitler's successful ascent to power and the KPD's collapse mean that the Third International had now reached its 4 August – the date of the Second International's betrayal of international socialism? Trotsky argued that this was indeed the case.

Of course there was a difference. The Second International had betrayed the working class by supporting a war. The KPD had not deliberately sought to bring Hitler to power. Rather, by obstructing the workers united front against fascism it had made this easy.

Of course the reformist SPD was fully and equally responsible but the KPD was supposed to be a revolutionary party. The Comintern was founded to provide revolutionary leadership in just such periods of deep social crisis. Thus the KPD not only failed, it had betrayed the German workers by this failure. Thus 1933 represented the definitive collapse of the Comintern just as much as 1914 did for the Second International. Each proved its complete incapacity for the historic tasks it had set itself and its irremediability. A new International was needed.

Such an International would have to continue the politics of each of the first three Internationals in their healthy revolutionary periods, but at the same time it would have to declare openly that both the Second and Third Internationals had abandoned the path to socialism. It would have to indicate that no political com-

promise was possible, no "organic unity" between the old and new internationalists would do, as some militants of both bodies suggested. Likewise there could be no retreat from the Leninist international democratic centralism of the Comintern towards decentralised, nationally-based half-reformist and half-revolutionary parties. This was a false solution suggested by both left sectarians and centrists who blamed Leninism for the disaster, not Stalinism.

After a short period considering the options, Trotsky and the Left Opposition decided upon the one name that summed this up: the Fourth International.

The Bloc of Four

But Trotsky could not simply proclaim that such an International to exist already. Like Marx, Engels, Lenin and Luxemburg, he set out to rally the forces needed to found a new International. The International Left Opposition (ILO) had fewer than 6,000 members worldwide.

The ILO conference in February 1933 had representatives from eleven countries: most of them in Europe. The Soviet and Italian sections were organisations in exile, and most of the German leaders would be forced into exile by Hitler's victory. The Opposition in the Soviet Union was either in the isolated camps of Siberia or deep underground. The Greek and Spanish sections were the largest, each having more than a 1,000 members, but were not close politically to Trotsky and were to leave the ranks of the ILO over the next few years.

The other sections, like the French and the Americans, had a few hundred apiece, and many sections, like the British, were only in the dozens. Most of the sections were unable to publish even a regular weekly paper. The poverty of the movement was intense, so much so that another international conference could not be held till 1936.

However Trotsky and his co-thinkers decided that new forces could be won to this historic project. The

new international

Comintern was in a catatonic state for over a year after its defeat in Germany, but a range of other workers parties, including some of the Social Democratic parties, were galvanised by the events. Worker militants around the world asked themselves how they could avoid the fate of the SPD and the KPD. Left wings began to develop in these parties, demanding a united front against fascism and an accounting for the disaster.

For two years there was ferment and leftward movement outside the ranks of the Comintern. The fight for the Fourth International had to be taken into this ferment. That way far greater forces, even mass forces, might be won for the new International.

In 1933 the ILO changed its name to the International Communist League (ICL), and committed itself to "the regrouping of the revolutionary forces of the world working class" under the banner of a new International. In particular, Trotsky and the ICL focused on three important parties: the SAP of Germany, and the RSP and OSP of Holland.

After much discussion the three parties signed a joint declaration with the ICL on 26 August 1933: the Declaration of Four. It stated that capitalism was in a deep crisis that could only be solved by revolution and working class power. It rejected the main errors of Stalinism – the theory of socialism in one country and the bureaucratic regime in the Comintern and the USSR, as well as the disastrous social fascism theory.

It also rejected the parliamentary cretinism of the Second International, and insisted on the need to defend the USSR and the gains of the Russian revolution, despite the crimes of Stalin.

It culminated in the clear call for a new, Fourth International, and committed the four groups to developing a draft programme, a critique of the other major trends in the working class movement, and to give clear tactical answers to the questions facing the working class in the fight for revolution.

The SAP, RSP and OSP were all members of the London Bureau, a loose collection of parties, initiated that year by the Independent Labour Party (ILP), that had little common political agreement. On the left of the London Bureau stood the RSP of Holland, which was close to the ICL on all main issues. In the centre was the Swedish Communist Party and ILP of Britain, some of whose members Trotsky hoped to influence and win over. On the right was the Norwegian Labour Party.

Trotsky wanted the SAP to present the Declaration of Four to the conference of the London Bureau in August 1933. But the SAP began to backtrack for fear of alienating the Norwegian Labour Party. This was the only party in the London Bureau that had any mass influence. But its politics were completely reformist.

Increasingly the SAP leader Jakob Walcher began to resist Trotsky's insistence that the SAP should break with the Norwegian party: the time was not ripe; it would be sectarian to do so yet, he said. The SAP thus stumbled at the first hurdle – and refused to choose between their rich and powerful reformist allies and the poor and isolated revolutionaries of the ICL.

By early 1934 it was clear to Trotsky that the SAP was becoming a barrier to building the Fourth International. He argued that groups such as the SAP were centrist: they were unstable parties, vacillating between reformism and revolutionary communism.

Centrists sometimes can swing far to the left under the pressure of an upsurge in the class struggle. But in times of downturn they would swing back to the right. Unless, that is, determined revolutionary forces can intercept them and win them to a revolutionary programme and method of operating in the class struggle.

Typical of centrism was the refusal to state the truth openly to the working class, a tendency to avoid clear lines of demarcation within the workers' movement and to try to gloss over real differences. Centrist refuses to commit itself to a clear programme for the working class, instead waiting for "history", the "objective process" or "spontaneity" to solve problems that can only be solved by revolutionaries themselves.

The whole tactic of the Bloc of Four was a necessary step towards the Fourth International. It succeeded in winning the RSP and part of the OSP to the ICL. But the SAP reversed its leftward development and settled down in the London Bureau. This "open space" for centrism and left reformism became a serious obstacle to the building of the Fourth International. Groups and



Saint Palais 1933, Left to right: Rudolf Klement, Trotsky, Yvan Craipeau, Jeanne Martin, Sara Weber and Jean Van Heijenort.

"The task of the League – whether it remains independent or joins one of the parties of the united front – demands imperiously an explanation to the workers as frank, as clear and as honest as the seriousness of the situation and the tasks flowing from it require." Leon Trotsky

individuals moving leftwards from the Second and Third Internationals got stuck there. In addition half-hearted elements from the ICL also holed up in the London Bureau where no body would criticise them.

From 1934 onwards, Trotsky turned his attention to the events that were shaking France to its foundations, and developed new tactics to take forward the fight for the Fourth International.

The French Turn

A revolutionary programme was essential. Without it no party could claim to be revolutionary. But a programme alone was not enough. Academics and do-nothings might content themselves with having the right answers. Revolutionaries want to put them into practice: "to weld together the correct ideas with the mass labour movement."

In France the hundred or so members of the ICL were isolated. The Stalinists subjected them to such persecution – beatings, slander as social fascists etc. – that it was difficult to get their message across.

Whereas the problem had previously been the refusal of the main workers' parties to form a united front, now the problem lay in the illusions held by millions of workers in the opportunist "united front" proposed by Maurice Thorez of the CP and Léon Blum of the Socialists (SFIO). The voice of the Trotskyists may have been clear – but it was being drowned out.

Without at all diluting the principles or programme of genuine communism, Trotsky now proposed a bold new tactic for the French revolutionaries: to join the Socialist Party and fight within it for revolutionary ideas.

Join the Socialist Party? But this is treason, reformism, Menshevism! You just proclaimed the need for the Fourth International but now you propose re-joining the Second. This was how many supporters of Trotsky, reasoned at the time.

Every one of these criticisms was wide of the mark. As a faction within the Comintern, the Opposition would have developed and grown in contact with the mass working class movement. The Stalinist apparatus, with its bureaucratic bans, had made this a practical impossibility.

This gave them a strong side – an attachment to revolutionary theory and principles – but it had a weak side as well: a tendency to observe the working class movement from the sidelines.

The joint meeting of the French Communist and Socialist parties of July 1934 had been greeted by the mass of the workers with tremendous enthusiasm. The danger was that the masses would be hypnotised by the

mere fact of the united front, and that the policies of the Socialist and Communist Party leaders would go unchallenged.

The League had to find its way into the united front. The way into the Communist party was totally blocked. But what of the SFIO? Here was a party of 120,000 members. The rise of fascism in Germany had pushed many of its worker members to the left. Its pro-capitalist right wing had split away in 1933; its left wing had invited militant socialists back into the party. They gave tendencies the right to organise and to publish and sell their own papers. They had a vibrant and left wing youth movement.

Trotsky urged the section to enter the Socialist Party to fight inside it for revolutionary ideas. There would be no watering down of its ideas, nor its call for a Fourth International: indeed this call could now be heard by hundreds of thousands, not hundreds. Also, given the mounting danger of fascism in France, it was possible to get a greater hearing for the correct policies than it had been possible to do in Germany.

"A fighting organisation is necessary; steered battalions are necessary; instructors and officers are necessary. It is necessary to disarm the enemy, to sweep him off the streets, to terrorise him. The task of the League – whether it remains independent or joins one of the parties of the united front – demands imperiously an explanation to the workers as frank, as clear and as honest as the seriousness of the situation and the tasks flowing from it require."

This was no collapse into reformism. The entry of the Communist League into the Socialist Party was to be a revolutionary act.

Entryism in practice

On 29 August 1934, the Communist League was dissolved and its members began to join the SFIO. They established themselves as a legal faction, the Bolshevik-Leninist Group (GBL).

The GBL quickly made progress inside the SFIO, proving the value of Trotsky's tactic. Armed with a programme far clearer than the rest of the left, the GBL's membership rose to 300 by the summer of 1935. The campaign for a workers' militia had a real effect on the left-wing of the party, which set up the TPPS (Always Ready For Service).

The TPPS defended working class meetings from fascist attacks, and engaged in actions to drive the fascists from the streets. Membership of a mass party gave the GBL more contacts in the trade union movement and brought more workers towards Trotskyism. By June

1935, the GBL got substantial numbers of votes for its proposals at the national conference of the party.

In the youth movement of the SFIO, the GBL were most successful. Their paper, *Revolution*, sold 80,000 copies per issue. The SFIO youth leader in the Paris region, Fred Zeller, and his supporters joined the Trotskyists. But the entry into the SFIO could not last forever. The Socialist Party leadership under Léon Blum had joined the Popular Front with the Stalinists and the bourgeois Radical Party.

Stalin declared to the right-wing foreign minister Pierre Laval that he both understood and approved the decision of the French bourgeoisie to rearm in the face of the threat from Hitler. Thus in one bound the Communist International "voted war credits" for French imperialism and its colonies – just as long as it was ally of the USSR. The degeneration of the Comintern was complete. The necessity of a Fourth International was thrown into even sharper relief.

As Europe slid ever closer towards a second imperialist war, the parties of the Popular Front were preparing to form a government that could build up the army and hold back the struggles of the workers. The presence in the SFIO of a strong Trotskyist wing was intolerable. For the GBL was campaigning against the murder of the workers and the youth that such a government would involve, and would side with the workers against the Popular Front regime. The Stalinists were ferociously demanding the expulsion of the Bolshevik-Leninists from the SFIO as a condition for further union.

The reformists struck out first against the revolutionary youth. At the end of July 1935 they expelled 13 leading members of the SFIO youth, many of them Trotskyists. Just a few days later the workers of the port towns of Brest and Toulon launched mass strikes and rose up against the police. The upsurge in the class struggle that was to lead to the great fact occupation one year later had begun.

Trotsky realised that these events meant that the work of the GBL inside the SFIO must come to a quick end. The leaders were determined to expel the Trotskyists. The only way to remain in the party would be to water down or abandon the message of revolution. And that was unacceptable.

"When you continue to hang on to an organisation that can no longer tolerate proletarian revolutionaries in its midst, you become of necessity the wretched tool of reformism, patriotism and capitalism."

Trotsky advocated a bold counter-offensive by the GBL, attacking the party leaders and preparing to launch an independent party to address the revolutionary workers directly.

Trotsky summed up the lessons of the French Turn in his article "Lessons of the SFIO Entry":

"Entry into a reformist or centrist party in its does not include a long perspective. It is only a tactic which, under certain conditions, can be limited to an episode... what is necessary, especially in the light of the French experience, is to free ourselves of illusions in time; to recognise the bureaucracy's decisive attack against the left wing, and defend ourselves from it, not by making concessions, adapting, or playing hide-and-seek, but by a revolutionary offensive."

The French turn had to some degree pre-occupied the forces of the ICL from international campaigning for the Fourth International but it had strengthened their roots in the working class. Indeed the two years since the call was issued had been ones of settling accounts with the centrist currents in and around the London Bureau, who did not have the programme or foundation to fight courageously for the Fourth International. The turn to the right by the Comintern and to the Left by the Socialist International seemed to solve all their problems at one stroke.

After all, there was now "unity" against fascism and harmony between the Stalinists and the social democrats (based on an agreement not to criticise one another). For a centrist this was surely heaven itself. Everything else could be left to history to solve. Unfortunately history was about to deal this philistine utopia a cruel blow. In fact three cruel blows in the shape of the French Popular front government, the civil war in Spain and, most brutal and unexpected of all, the Moscow Trials of 1936-8.

We will look at this period in the next instalment of the series.

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British section of the League for the Fifth International

SMASH THE BNP!

According to Nick Griffin, the British National Party's leader, the BNP is not a Nazi party. They don't even hate all Muslims. Just the fundamentalists. They're not against all asylum seekers. Just the ones who come here. He's even convinced his family. On their European election leaflet Griffin's daughter claims "My dad's not a racist".

How times change. In 1998 Griffin was found guilty of inciting race hatred for denying that the Holocaust ever took place. He earned a two-year suspended prison sentence. As the editor of *The Rune*, an anti-Semitic quarterly, he announced that the BNP would target schoolchildren with Holocaust denial propaganda.

Following the election of a BNP councillor, he explained:

"The electors of Millwall did not back a post-modernist Rightist Party, but what they perceived to be a strong, disciplined organisation with the ability to back up its slogan Defend Rights for Whites with well-directed boots and fists. When the crunch comes, power is the product of force and will, not of rational debate".

Don't be fooled. The BNP remains a fascist party to the core.

According to the BNP's 2001 general election manifesto, "native Britons", who they claim can only be white, would be given priority in the job market. "Non-whites" would become second class citizens.

Any black person who commits a crime would also be thrown out of the country, even those who were born here. Mixed race relationships would be outlawed.

Privately, the BNP leaders continue to air their real political views. "All black people will be repatriated, even if they were born here," Nick Griffin told Wales on Sunday in 1996. "We must preserve the white race, because it has been responsible for all the good things in civilisation." From the enslavement of 75 million Africans to the murder of six million Jews perhaps?

According to party number two, Tony Lecomber, who in 1985 was sent to prison for trying to blow up the offices of a rival organisation, the preservation of the white race can be done only through a eugenics programme. Some superior race if it can only survive by selective breeding!

The BNP supported ethnic cleansing in the Kosovan crisis. "The Serbs' real crime isn't the harshness with which they have expelled so many of the Albanian Muslims

who having become the majority in the Kosovar heart of Serbia by a mixture of immigration, a high birth rate, and low level ethnic cleansing of the native Serbs... No! The real crime in the eyes of the powerful advocates of a multi-racial New World Order is for any people to demand the right to preserve their own identity and freedom."

Of course, in their drive for votes, the BNP realises it needs to cut out the more repulsive elements of their politics - like overt racism and street thuggery. Instead they have turned to the "new" racism of the likes of Blunkett and Howard. It is quite respectable, according to these gentlemen to condemn multiculturalism, to spread the view that British identity is under threat if immigrants speak their own languages at home. In fact it is just the same old racism that dares not speak its name.

The BNP target the weakest and most marginalised sections of our community - Muslims, the asylum seekers, the real victims of the war on terror, and the victims of capitalist globalisation - in order to build up their core fascist organisation.

Wherever BNP campaigning results in electoral success, racist attacks and murders rise. In 1993, it secured a council by-election victory in the Tower Hamlets ward of Millwall. In the three months after the election, racial incidents rose by 300 per cent.

In 1991, the BNP newspaper gloated after several BNP supporters stabbed an African immigrant at London Bridge station. The victim had his "kidney surgically removed". No longer officially sponsored by the BNP, this freelance fascist street activity nevertheless lays the basis for future organised fascist gangs to be systematically directed at the working class organisations, black people, Asians and lesbians and gays. Because fascists aren't just nasty racists, they are a party of a civil war against the working class and oppressed.

The BNP's leadership consists of a roll call of British fascism: fascists who have proved what they really think, not by a few careless racist words, but by their racist deeds.

● Former National Organiser Richard Edmonds was convicted for his part in a vicious bottle attack on a mixed race couple in a pub in East London 1993

● BNP supporter Stuart Kerr was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for firebombing an Asian shop in Chichester, Sussex

● The BNP organiser for Waltham For-

est, Alan Gould, was convicted of racially abusing people in a pub in 2000

● Former BNP member David Copeland was sentenced to six life sentences after planting bombs in London. He wanted to start a race war.

It is this fascist core which defines the character of the BNP. Their turn to elections is strictly subordinate to their long term goal of building a fully fledged British Nazi Party and it is this understanding of the real nature of the BNP which defines our tactics towards them.

The BNP will never be defeated at the polls alone.

They are an undemocratic party who must be denied democratic rights. They want to follow the lead of the French fascist and recent guest to Britain of the BNP, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Le Pen took the Front National from 270 members in 1980 to 2.2 million votes in the Euro elections of 1984 and 19 per cent of the vote in the last presidential elections.

We must deny the fascists any platform from which to propagate their views as the anti-fascists of Manchester did when

they chucked out Le Pen and his fascist mates Griffin and co. last month.

Far from condemning the protest, as the Unite pokesperson did, this is the way forward in Britain. It shows that we're not going to take the growth of the fascists lying down. Fine, we want to stop the Nazis at the polls too. A single fascist vote is one to many. But any increase in fascist vote will be undermined on the streets - so long as our side is given confidence and direction.

The Respect coalition - through focusing on change through parliament, through claiming that it is in elections that we win political representation - has not only derailed the anti-war movement, but the anti-fascist movement as well.

Through following its example and the need for respectable allies, Unite has so far seriously undermined the fight against the BNP in Britain. Militant anti-fascism isn't respectable. But it will win the support of the working class, and black and Asian people. It will provide them with a focus and direction. It will renew hope and determination. It will smash the BNP.

How to - and how not to - beat the BNP

In a move that should be condemned by the whole labour movement, Greater Manchester Police have banned the North West TUC backed anti-fascist anti-racist Unity festival.

The event had been due to take place on 30th May in the open air in the Castlefield Arena of Manchester. But, the week before, the police put in an objection. Without any consultation on whether to defy this ban, the organisers found another venue, this time indoors. However, the police - who protect, rather than ban the BNP's racist Red, White and Blue festival - banned the indoor event too!

The festival has now been moved to Liverpool, again with no consultation. No attempts to defy the ban are being planned.

The anti fascist movement should demand that the festival go ahead, we should organise it in defiance of the ban, issue a call to get as large a turnout as possible, especially from the trade unions and youth. If all the venues refuse us, we should organise a street party, anti-capitalist style. Then, with proper

stewarding, we should go ahead - on our terms, not the police's!

Backing down every time the police ban our marches and gatherings only plays into the BNP's hands, demoralising our own ranks, while encouraging racist thugs everywhere to think we're cowed by the police.

Post workers in the CWU union, however, have provided a far more effective example of anti-fascism.

Faced with the task of delivering the BNP's filthy electoral addresses to every door in Britain, activists have defied the anti-union laws, risked suspension and refused to touch them.

CWU members have been citing the Conscience Clause in their contract, which allows them to refuse to handle material which is against their principles.

We urge all postal workers to join this action. And if management suspend a single activist for carrying out their working class duty, they should launch the kind of wildcat strikes that have shut down the Royal Mail many a time in the last few years.

ANSWERING THE ASYLUM LIES

Workers Power has produced a leaflet that is aimed at answering some of the racist lies that Blair, Blunkett, the media and the BNP use to try and divide us. If you believed what you read in the press then asylum seekers would be to blame for pretty much everything that is going wrong in the UK today! This is to divert attention from the real causes of under funded services, sky high council tax and a lack of council housing - government policies and the capitalist system.

We believe it is important to arm anti-racist militants with the facts they need to answer some of the lies.

This leaflet is for the use of the movement. If you want to order some copies then get in touch with us. You can order leaflets to distribute from: You Are Being Lied to..., BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX

200 leaflets (£13), 500 leaflets (£30), 1000 leaflets (£60)

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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.

Take the next step and join Workers Power. Phone us on 020 7820 1363 or e mail us at workerspower@btpopenworld.com

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