

# workers power

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

## NOT ONE DAY MORE FOR BLAIR'S BLOODY WAR



Killed every day  
500 Iraqi civilians  
3 US/UK troops  
59 Iraqi forces

### DEMONSTRATE

24 FEBRUARY  
12 noon  
HYDE PARK  
LONDON



**DEFEAT BUSH BLAIR OFFENSIVE!**

**INSIDE THIS 24 PAGE SPECIAL**

- PCS strike against cuts and low pay
- February 1917: when Russia exploded
- Bolivia: revolutionary commune set up!



League for the  
Fifth International

## EDITORIAL

## Blair's corruption crisis...

## A class issue

The arrest in January of two key Labour figures has put the heat on Tony Blair. For the past nine months, police have been investigating a loans scandal that threatens to see corruption disgrace the Labour Party.

In July 2006, a report revealed several loans had been made to the Labour party by various businessmen who had gone on to be nominated for peerages. Under a 1925 law, it is illegal to buy peerages, or to offer them as reward for donations to political parties, and the investigation centres around whether that law has been broken.

So far, the police have arrested four Labour Party members, none of whom have been charged, but all of whom are close to Blair and at the ideological core of New Labour. They include Lord Levy, a millionaire and head of the fundraising unit that squeezed several capitalists for fat cheques to Labour.

Importantly, two major donors, Sir Christopher Evans and Des Smith, who is one of the pioneers of the government's city academy scheme, and Downing Street's director of government relations, Ruth Turner, have also been arrested and questioned by police. Turner was accused of perverting the course of justice, which indicates that a cover up may be going on at the highest level of government.

It might be hard to prove that the peerages were rewards for the loans (Labour will claim it is just a co-incidence that all the donors who paid more than £1 million were given peerages) but the tangled web of lies that Labour figures may have to tell to escape any prosecutions could lead to the downfall of several people.

Another crucial question is the nature of the loans themselves. All loans must be given at a commercial rate of interest (on the high street that is around 11 per cent), and paid back. Otherwise, they are donations and all significant donations must be declared to the public. Many of the loans were given at a 6.25 per cent rate, well below most commercial loan rates. The Labour Party is also



## WHAT WE SAY

- No to state funding of parties
- Trade unions – stop funding New Labour
- Use union political funds for a new workers' party

in debt to the tune of £27 million, so it is unclear when these loans could ever be paid back.

What is more likely is that they were given with no expectation of being paid back, and the rich Labour supporters who donated the money were rewarded with letters next to their names, a fur-trimmed collar and a place on the benches in the upper House.

The twilight of the previous Tory government was marred by sleaze. The rampant graft and corruption of the John Major years was a powerful point of attack for the New Labour spin machine. Cash-for-questions, perjury, imprisonment, selling council housing to Tory voters, providing lucrative jobs to friends on quangos all pointed to a political party that had been in power for so long that its leaders had formed an ever more remote and isolated elite.

"Teflon Tony" has been through his share of scandals, but remained

untarnished at the centre of the New Labour empire. But the "loans for peerages" scandal shows that corruption and sleaze exist at the heart of our political system. All political parties that serve the rich will become as corrupt as the capitalists whose system they defend.

## LABOUR AND CLASS

Labour will now turn to its working class base in the trade unions to help bail it out. The trade unions should refuse. If Labour wants to take money from the rich and powerful, like Lord Sainsbury, then it should rely on them totally, and the unions should not give them a penny.

Some New Labour ideologues agree with the Tory proposal to cap all political donations at £50,000, although some politicians like Straw said this should be resisted. This is unashamedly aimed at preventing the unions from funding political parties.

While we call on the unions to

stop funding Labour, such a restriction would be thoroughly anti-working class, because it would stop workers collectively mounting any political challenge to the bosses' parties through the unions political funds, built up by millions of small donations.

Meanwhile, the bosses could easily agree to use their bloated salaries and bonuses, their dividends and unearned wealth to each give just under the £50,000 limit and maintain their chosen party of exploitation and war.

What the debate opens up, however, is the question of who pays for Labour and who influences policy? In short, is Labour value for the workers' money? Trade union leaders say that keeping the link is crucial, that it gives them the government's ear. But this has increasingly been exposed as untrue: Blair answers to the rich and powerful, not the ordinary worker.

Others have started to take up the call for parties to be funded by the state from general taxation, as in some other countries. Indeed, this looks like being the central recommendation in Sir Hayden Phillips' report into party funding.

This would be a huge step backwards, making parties dependent not on securing a class base in society, but on the apparatus of government itself. The answer to Labour's crawling to the rich is not to do away with class-based politics, but for the working class movement once again to take the road of establishing a party of our own.

Just as we should not rely on the police to punish Blair and his cronies for corruption, but him from office ourselves, so too, we should not wait for the state to break the unions' link with the pro-imperialist Labour Party – we should force the union leaders to break it.

A new workers' party, founded by a democratic conference of trade unions, campaigning and socialist groups, could draw its funds entirely from workers and cut all ties to the capitalist class.

That way, the millions could genuinely organise not to help individual careerists join the club of millionaires, but to dispossess the millionaires for good.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## OPUS DEI 1

Former Secretary of State for Education Ruth Kelly, has taken her child out of his state primary and put him in a private school. Her excuse is he suffers from dyslexia. What about the thousands of working class children, for whom private school fees are not an option? She claims state schools have a poor record helping dyslexic children. Pity she didn't notice this when she was in charge of them. Then again, maybe she was too busy handing them over to religious charities...

## OPUS DEI 2

Having made a mess of education, Kelly is now Minister for Women and Equality. It is hard to imagine a worse appointment.

Kelly is a member of the Catholic Opus Dei sect, which is staunchly anti-gay, anti-abortion and anti-contraceptives. This has led her to defend the right of Catholic adoption agencies to discriminate against lesbian and gay couples.

We fully defend the right of Kelly to wear the spiked garter that Opus Dei gives its followers, and of Christians to believe homosexuality is a sin. But they should be barred from oppressing gays, women and children under the guise of providing social services.

## HARD LABOUR

John Reid was on the ropes as we went to press. Apparently he wrote to judges asking them not to send too many people to prison because of jail overcrowding.

But why are so many people in jail in the first place? Because a string of Labour Home Secretaries - Reid included - have been fishing for "law and order" votes by bringing in mandatory jail terms for minor offences.

The head of the Youth Justice Board, Professor Rod Morgan, resigned after denouncing Government targets that are "swamping" courts and prisons with minor offenders - especially children and young people.

The total prison population in England and Wales reached 79,731 in January. And there are 80,114 places in total across the system. But look who's inside.

- Schizophrenia sufferers: 8,000
- Non-payers of fines: 2,000 a year
- Heroin-addicted prostitutes: 1,000
- Users or sellers of soft drugs: 10,000

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## WOMEN

# Legalisation essential for protection of sex workers

The murder of five prostitutes in Ipswich in December once again reveals the precarious position of sex workers in class society, write *Rebecca Anderson* and *John Bowden*

**T**ania Nicol, the second of five Ipswich murder victims, had been missing for 39 days before her body was discovered. She was 19. Her mother had reported her missing on 1 November, but the police only deemed the inquiry of any significance once they found Gemma Adams' body.

What does this tell us? As far as the police are concerned, investigating the random murder of one prostitute seems barely worth the paper work. It takes several in close proximity, quick succession, and killed by a similar method to wake them up.

Statistics prove that prostitutes lives are valued less than anyone else's; only a third of prostitute murders are solved. Yet at least 60 prostitutes were murdered between 1992 and 2002, and many more reported missing.

Poverty, oppression of young people at home, sexism and the criminalisation of drug users all contribute to pushing women into the sex industry – and keeping them there. The illegality of sex workers leaves them open to attacks.

A 2002 Channel 4 documentary found that 73 per cent of the prostitutes interviewed had been assaulted by a client in the past two months. Most had been attacked more than once in that time. Almost half said that men became violent when asked for payment; a quarter had been threatened or stabbed; 8 per cent had been threatened with a gun.

Most of the women who enter the sex industry do so out of economic necessity. A prostitute interviewed on Radio Four's *Today* programme said that she had children to look after and didn't want to work for poverty wages in a supermarket. Others become prostitutes to escape from abuse or violence at home.

## LABOUR ATTACKS PROSTITUTES

Although prostitution in the UK is not illegal, it is illegal for someone who isn't a prostitute to live off money earned from prostitution such as a pimp, or a landlord of a brothel. In 2001, the Labour government passed laws criminalising kerb-crawling, forcing prostitution out of the city centres and into industrial estates to avoid arrest. Working on industrial estates is much more dangerous than in the city centre, where there is better lighting and more people around.

Last year Labour talked about "helping women to leave the sex industry". But the policies used on the ground are ones of harassment and repression. For example, the police in Ipswich started issuing Asbos to criminalise sex workers shortly before the murders took place. Labour's review of prostitution laws rejected



Demonstrators after the Ipswich murders: "We don't need protection, we need a revolution!"

the creation of decriminalised zones in non-residential areas, where lighting and security would be provided. Instead, it opted to allow groups of three women to run brothels. But many women that work on the streets do not have access to a brothel, or may not be able to leave a pimp.

Some prostitutes can work in safer conditions in the more-tolerated saunas and escort agencies, but for the vast majority of street prostitutes the new legislation has just made life more dangerous.

Decriminalised areas in Holland have greatly improved the safety of sex workers. Prostitutes working in Amsterdam are 15 times less likely to be murdered than those in Britain.

Workers Power fights for prostitution to be legalised under the control of the sex workers themselves. All prostitutes should have the right, like other workers, to organise themselves in a union to give them more control over their working environment, health and safety, conditions, rates of pay, and so on. This includes organising women that are smuggled into the country used as sex workers. All trafficked women should be granted full citizenship now.

Fewer women would simply "go missing" if the industry was organised and controlled by prostitutes themselves. A lot of people advocate the Swedish model of criminalising the men that use prostitutes, but the enforcement of the laws would still involve police interference and would drive prostitution even more dangerous areas.

## PROSTITUTION AND CAPITALISM

Prostitution is an industry in which women are defined entirely by their sex, and where the alienation and oppression of capitalism is worsened by the violence that sex workers suffer. The precarious position of prostitutes leaves them open to attack. The deaths of the five prostitutes in

Ipswich and the charging of a pig farmer with the murder of 26 women in Vancouver are just two examples.

The working class must do all it can to fight for the legalisation of prostitution, and support organisations, like the International Union of Sex Workers, which is fighting for safer conditions and freedom from police harassment.

Prostitution requires the sex worker to "turn off" during sexual acts. By turning the provision of sexual gratification into a commodity, the sex trade is deeply bound up with the objectification of women's sexuality. Yet in recognising the alienating character of prostitution, communists have nothing in common with the views of religious bigots, who contrast prostitution with the "holy institution" of marriage. To Marxists, prostitution is the inevitable complement to marriage, which also treats women's sexuality as an object to be owned. Both are forms of the economic and sexual subordination of women to men.

Only when the capitalist property system has been overthrown will it be possible for the oppression of women in the family to be finally overcome. The socialisation of all domestic labour will bring with it a withering away of the nuclear family as an economic unit and will – at last – allow human beings to interact sexually in freedom. Both prostitution and marriage will be replaced by the freely made and freely dissolved union of individuals.

Until then, we must fight to legalise the sex trade, enable sex workers to control their own industry, and fight to destroy the social conditions that condemn so many young working class women to seek a such living.

As the women who marched last month in Ipswich's Reclaim the Night demonstration chanted: "We don't need protection, we need a revolution!"

## IRELAND

# Sinn Fein conference votes to support the police

By Bernie McAdam

Sinn Fein held an Extraordinary Congress – or *Ard Fheis* – on 28 January, at which a motion was passed, with a big majority in favour, supporting the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the criminal justice system in the six counties. Sinn Fein's leadership, including its president Gerry Adams, have replaced their party's boycott of the police and with a policy of co-operation. It marks a further betrayal of the struggle of the Catholic population of the north for equality and a united Ireland.

The Congress comes less than a week after the release of an official report from the ombudsman confirming that the police collaborated with Loyalist paramilitary death squads.

The police protected loyalist informants, who they knew were committing a string of sectarian murders, at least 10, probably 15, in the 1990s. Evidence of police collusion in drug dealing and the bombing of a Sinn Fein office is also revealed in the report. Special branch handlers even "babysat" the killers during police interviews to stop them incriminating themselves.

The report revealed that this collusion continued right up to 2003, long after the IRA had enacted a ceasefire and started to hand over its weapons. But perhaps this is not so surprising when one bears in mind that while the number of Catholics in the police force increased from 8 per cent to 21 per cent in recent years, the top brass is the same as it was during the troubles.

## STILL A SECTARIAN STATE

Adams' response to criticism of his new course from within republican ranks was to suggest that these sectarian killings were all in the past and now we have "new safeguards". He says republicans will be able to use the Policing Partnership Boards to ensure impartiality. This, he claims, will lead eventually to a united Ireland.

However, the British government's response to the report reveals the terrible limitations of Adams' approach. The British Secretary for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, remains in command. His immediate response to the report was to rule out a public inquiry on the grounds that £200 million had already been spent on the Bloody Sunday inquiry. The ombudsman has also been refused the right to investigate MI5, which is clearly up to its neck in the web of deceit and murder.

How can Police Boards change all this? Certainly, questions can be asked and grievances aired, but PSNI operations will remain outside the Boards' control. Therefore, the police and security services will still be Unionist dominated; they will still have a monopoly on violence;



Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness: architects of sell-out to British imperialism

their role will still be determined the British government.

In reality, Adams and fellow leader, Martin McGuinness, want to get into government alongside Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists. The British and Irish governments demanded Sinn Fein support for the police force as a condition for power sharing. That Sinn Fein's leaders are prepared to do this shows that they are no longer opposed to British imperialism and the sectarian state.

## UNIONIST VETO

The roots of this latest sell-out lie in the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. This took shape when Sinn Fein and the IRA sued for peace in the 1990s after the shortcomings of a purely military campaign became evident. Instead of taking the struggle to a higher plane and seeking to mobilise working class action on an all-Ireland basis against repression, Sinn Fein chose a parliamentarist and electoralist path.

The Northern Ireland state cannot be taken over and used for the purpose of introducing a non-sectarian and equal society. The six county state is inherently sectarian; its *raison d'être* is to preserve Protestant supremacy over Catholics and the union with Britain that guarantees it.

The northern state was artificially carved out of Ireland at the end of the Irish war of independence. The retreating British state armed the Protestant minority, who formed a majority in only six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster in the north-east, and organised them to create "a Protestant state for a Protestant people", as James Craig, the first prime minister

of Northern Ireland, infamously declared.

The Protestant opposition to a united Ireland is based on defending a series of privileges over the Catholic population in the spheres of jobs, housing, education and, to underpin it all, the police. Although, the 1998 agreement has got rid of some of the worst excesses of this discrimination, sectarianism is as alive as ever. The Unionist veto over the future of the state remains; hence their ability to drag their heels and extract concession after concession from Sinn Fein.

## FROM DISSENT TO POWER

Within Sinn Fein, the youth wing Ogra Shinn Fein urged delegates to the *Ard Fheis* to vote against the motion. More than 400 people attended a public meeting in Derry called to oppose the policy. But despite their opposition they have already said that they will stick with Sinn Fein.

However, Ogra Shinn Fein's alternative proposal of a municipal and non-political police force was a utopian pipe dream in the fight for a united, socialist Ireland. Their new police force would still serve the imperialists. It can never be free of politics; it is part of the capitalist state.

The task facing socialists in Northern Ireland is to smash that state, and replace it with a workers' republic based on workers' councils and a workers' militia. By linking the fight against sectarianism and discrimination to the struggle for improvements in working class people's pay, housing and conditions, dissident republicans and socialists can begin to break up the cross-class unionist bloc and win Protestant workers to a common struggle against the sectarian state and for a workers' republic of Ireland.

## TRANSPORT POLICY

## Labour fuels climate chaos

By Joy Macready

Within a moment of Environment Secretary David Miliband calling on everyone to do their bit in combating climate change by changing their lifestyles, Tony Blair told the nation that he was not going to forgo his luxury vacations, and questioned the impact of UK-only climate action. What a blatant example of Labour's hypocrisy.

Blair claims to be at the forefront of fighting climate change, but is not willing to take any real action that will slow down, let alone reverse the effects of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Only when the media started to point this out, did Downing Street jump in to say that Blair planned to offset emissions from his holiday flights.

However, neither carbon offsetting (see box below) nor individual lifestyle changes will halt climate change. A huge proportion of greenhouse gas emissions stems from industrial burning of carbon fuels and of course reliance on the private car and aircraft for mass transportation.

But, while Environment Minister Ian Pearson called Ryanair the "irresponsible face of capitalism", the Labour government quietly gave the go ahead for airport expansion. Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander is committed to a third runway at Heathrow airport and another at Stansted. Overall, the capacity of Britain's airports is set to double by 2030 – with a massive increase in greenhouse gases.

Alexander said that, while aviation should meet its climate change costs and should limit pollution, "We must ensure that the UK has the airport capacity it needs to enhance its economic performance." So again, on cue, Labour places the greed of capitalism above the needs of people.

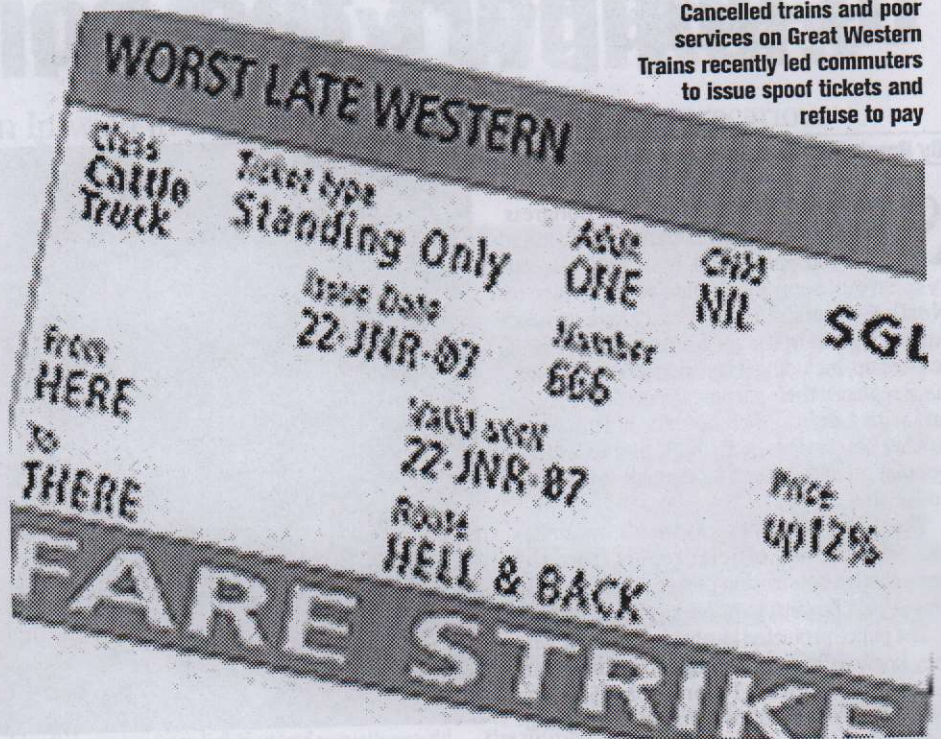
There is some controversy over how much aviation contributes to greenhouse gases. Last year's Stern report on climate change suggested it accounted for only 1.6 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. But this excludes the high-altitude release of other harmful gases. The total impact of aviation on the climate could be up to four times Stern's estimate. Either way, if Labour's plans succeed, its impact on the environment will worsen.

## TAXING THE WRONG PEOPLE

Brown's pre-budget report tried to give Labour a green tinge, but ended up washing it out. Certainly, he doubled air passenger duty from £5 to £10 on short haul flights, and up to £80 extra for longer journeys. He also increased duty on petrol by 1.25 per cent. But environmentalists and tax experts agree that neither measure is enough to discourage people from flying.

Even Nicholas Stern, a former chief economist at the World Bank, thinks tax increases would have to amount to 1 per cent of GDP to change people's spending patterns and curb carbon emissions; Labour's "green" taxes come to £1 billion, less than 0.1 per cent of GDP.

Despite its claims, Labour's proposals would



Cancelled trains and poor services on Great Western Trains recently led commuters to issue spoof tickets and refuse to pay

not even steady global warming. Far from leading the world in cutting back emissions, the UK's have risen for the past three years.

Moreover, schemes like taxing gas-guzzling cars, or "pay-as-you-drive" charges, push the burden of climate change onto the individual consumer. As a kind of flat rate tax, these schemes inevitably hit the poor hardest.

## INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The government fails to link the environment crisis to the whole issue of how we can plan a rational transport system for the 21st century. Workers Power fights for just such a plan, starting with the nationalisation of transport by rail, road and air, without compensation to the owners. Crucially, we fight for public transport workers' and users' control over the system, deciding what combination of planes, trains, trams, buses and ferries is needed.

The market is incapable of doing this. It is a crazy world when a flight from London to Manchester is cheaper than the train. Despite trains causing 85 per cent less pollution than planes, it is more profitable for train bosses to punish those wanting to travel by rail than put more trains on to meet demand. Rail fares shot up by 7.3 per cent – twice the rate of inflation – last month, deterring people from travelling by train.

By taking the railways back into public ownership, we will also be able to redirect shareholders' profits into investment into even cleaner trains.

We must apply the same method to all aspects of public transport – for example, renationalising the buses under workers' control. Under pri-

vatation, most bus services were cut back, forcing ever more people to drive cars.

A planned, good quality and free transport system, funded by taxing the rich and the private companies' profits, is the only way that we will shift from reliance on the private motor car and airplanes. Fundamentally, that is the only way we are also going to combat climate change – by seizing control of production from the capitalists and running society for ourselves.

## Carbon offsetting

David Miliband says carbon offsetting "isn't the answer to climate change" but pushes it because "some emissions can't or won't be avoided". But what does the term mean?

Basically you pay a bit extra, such as £10 on a short haul flight, when you choose a product that pollutes, and the money goes towards planting a tree or buying energy efficient light bulbs for use in developing countries.

Carbon offsetting does not reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or expunge environmental damage in any way. Leaving aside the scheme's unaccountability – where does the money go, who monitors it, who decides what projects are worthy? – it is yet another attempt to use the market to substitute for democratic planning.

As jet setter Tony Blair's actions at the top of this page reveal, the rich will simply pay to burn the planet. Why should we all pay the environmental cost of their irresponsibility? Instead, we should restrict their right to pollute, and subject them to the democratic control of the majority.

## CIVIL LIBERTIES

# Authoritarian New Labour

The Serious Crime Bill is the latest in Labour's long battle to take away democratic rights and freedoms. *Kuldip Bajwa* surveys the government's creeping authoritarianism

The Serious Crime Bill will overturn the data protection principle that personal information provided to a government department for one purpose should not be used for another. Now, it will be shared amongst public and private sector bodies. It will give authorities the power to search records on several databases to collect and match wide-ranging details.

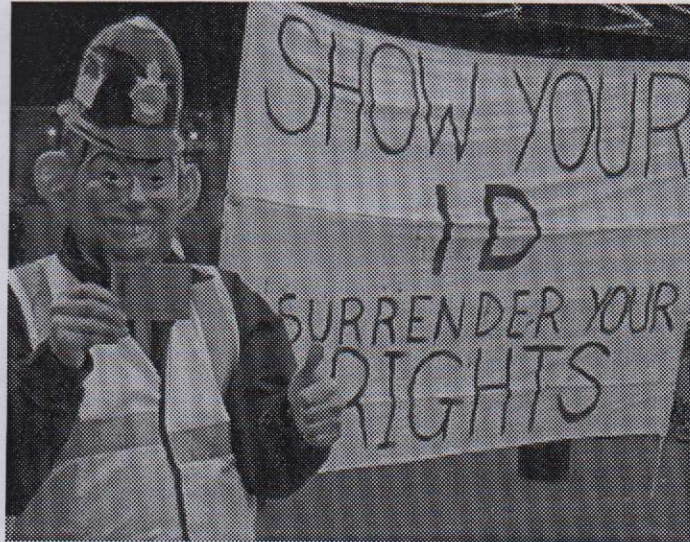
Whilst supposedly introduced to combat fraud, the new powers will inevitably be used for "fishing expeditions" against anyone the state considers worthy of its watchful eye. The Home Secretary has reserved himself the right to extend the scope of the law in future to cover different types of offence and to include more data sources.

The Bill is part of a package of new draconian legislation announced in last year's Queen's Speech, which pledged to put anti-terrorism and security at the centre of Blair's final parliamentary programme. Although no definite measures were announced, it is expected that a second Terrorism Bill or substantial amendments to the first will be unveiled in the coming months.

Measures that can be expected include

- Giving the police the power to hold terrorist suspects for up to ninety days without charge - a proposal the government lost in Parliament in 2005 and had to settle for extending maximum detention to 'just' twenty eight days
- A ban on burning of flags or effigies and the covering of faces at protests
- The admittance of phone tapping and other intercepted evidence in terror trials
- Further attacks on the (already limited) right to trial by jury and the removal of the "double jeopardy" rule, which protects a suspect from being trying twice for the same offence.

These new plans come on top of the revised Terrorism Act, introduced last year, which allows the government to ban organisations, which



Protest against the introduction of ID cards last year: we need a mass movement and direct action to defend civil liberties

they consider "glorify terrorism", and the 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Act, which legalised the indefinite detention of nine foreign nationals at Belmarsh Prison and gave the state similar powers of house arrest over British citizens.

Indeed, such attacks on democratic rights have been a feature of Labour's regime since it came to power in 1997. Seven anti-terrorist laws have been introduced. Add to this the law and order legislation it has brought in, then the total number of repressive pieces of Labour laws comes to some sixteen.

These include anti-social behaviour laws, which have done away with the presumption of innocence, and permitted hearsay evidence to be valid in courtrooms. Anti-Social Behaviour Orders can be issued against people who have not broken the law; but, if they breach the ASBOs' conditions, they can end up with a five year prison term.

Labour has developed a reputation for riding roughshod over parliament - and deservedly so. They have brought in a number of laws, which strengthen the powers of government ministers and weaken the ability of parliament to hold them to account.

For instance, under legislation passed in 2004, ministers may call a state of emergency, giving

them the power to amend or suspend acts of parliament for up to thirty days - without having to get the consent of Parliament. The Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill attempted to go even further, by allowing ministers to amend, replace, or repeal existing legislation. In an act of self-preservation, the House of Lords voted down this power.

## Democracy and the state

Socialists do not for a moment have any illusions in British democracy. On the contrary, we know the police, judiciary and top civil servants make up a permanent and unelected force, which will defend the interests of the rich - and their private property - whenever it is threatened by the masses. However, at the same time, we recognise it is vital to defend democratic rights and freedoms won over



Another brick in Labour's wall

generations.

In doing so, we are defending the very existence of the workers' movement and its ability to wage the class struggle. Indeed, the fight for democratic rights is part of that struggle. After all, Labour has used the new powers of the state to wage the class struggle against our movement. For example, some 400 protesters were arrested at the Labour Party conference in 2005 under section 44 of the 2000 Terrorism Act.

With this in mind, the introduction of ID cards, now scheduled for 2009, should be sounding alarm bells for all trade unionists and anticapitalists.

While, defending our rights, we must also demand the removal of all restrictions placed on the working class movement: for the right to strike and organise effective action in trade unions; for freedom of speech, of assembly, to publish and broadcast. We demand the removal of all undemocratic institutions and powers - monarchies, second chambers, unelected judges, and emergency powers.

The attacks on civil liberties go hand in hand with attacks on our living standards and services: sweeping job cuts in the civil service; wholesale closure of hospital departments; hiving off of state schools and council housing. It is the opposition these policies spark that demands a state with ever greater powers of coercion.

So far each of Labour's draconian attacks on civil rights has faced some limited resistance, but not one has been defeated. We need a mass movement, fighting on the streets against this new authoritarianism. This can be built if the anti-war, anti-privatisation and antiracist movements recognise the fight for civil liberties is vital to realising their own demands. Indeed, it is only by taking militant action - strikes, blockades, occupations, etc. - that these struggles can move from resistance to victory.

The state repression such action will inevitably provoke makes it all the more important to fight for our civil rights now - as a central component of the class struggle.

**NHS FIGHTBACK**

# Why is there a crisis in the NHS?

The government claims that massive cuts are needed to make the health service service more efficient. *Mark Booth* looks at the facts behind the spin

**T**he NHS is staggering from crisis to crisis. Twenty thousand jobs may have to go this year just to bring deficits back in line. Massive cuts which are forcing hospitals, wards and surgeries to shut, and operations to be cancelled. NHS trusts are postponing operations until April, after the start of the new financial year so that the costs don't appear in this year's accounts! This trick won't solve the problem, only add to next year's woes.

Why is the NHS going from bad to worse, if the government has put in an extra £27 billion since coming to power in 1997? The problem is that much of the money has been wasted on reorienting health to the market and, through privatisation, gone towards shareholders' profits.

**PFI or bust**

The government only allows new hospitals to be built by private companies under the Private Finance Initiative. As former Health Secretary Alan Milburn once said, "it's PFI or bust".

But the NHS has to lease the

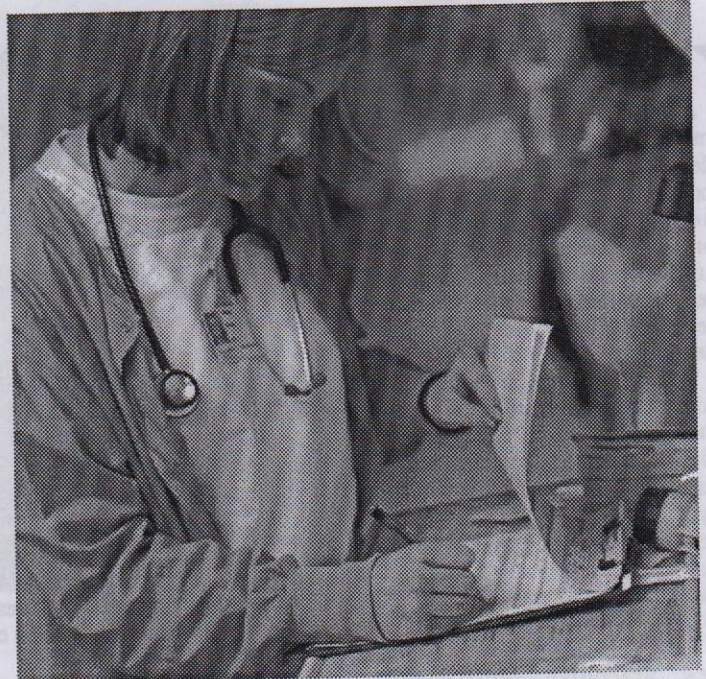
buildings back at extortionate rates on 30-40 year contracts. It is now paying £107 million a year in "rent" to the private contractors. This is set to rise to £510 million as more PFI schemes are completed.

Also, every £200 million spent on these contracts results in the loss of 1,000 doctors and nurses, because PFI hospitals contain up to 28 per cent fewer beds than the ones they replaced.

Another market scheme is Payment by Results. This system forces hospitals to compete with each other. Many go into the red. How does it work? And is it efficient?

Operations are farmed out to private treatment centres in lots of 50,000 to 100,000, at a price guaranteed to make a profit. They get paid, whether or not they even do all the operations allotted to them. NHS hospitals get neither of these guarantees. The operations that go private are relatively easy and profitable. The NHS is left running non-profitable services, such as Accident and Emergency, and taking on the more high risk, high cost cases.

As a last twist of the knife, Labour has spent £500 million on financial



management consultants in the last two years alone.

Despite all this, the health inspectorate revealed in October that private sector healthcare is no better in quality than the NHS. But this is not what the counter-reforms are about.

Labour wants to open public services to big business, to create new areas of profitability in a period where such opportunities are slim.

It isn't ideology or stupidity; it's profit.

**What's the solution?**

There is plenty of money to pay for a top-class NHS, able to meet all the needs of the working-class, and provide thousands more jobs. Raise corporate taxes, which, under Gordon Brown, have sunk to their lowest rate ever. Labour has spent £5 billion occupying Iraq and another billion on Afghanistan. Get the troops out and pay off NHS deficits!

We need to fight to stop and reverse the cuts, and "nationalise all that has been privatised" as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela put it. However, the NHS has always relied on massively overpriced medicines; its services have always fallen short.

We need to nationalise the private sector and pharmaceutical giants, and place them under the democratic control of councils of health workers, patients and the communities who depend on them. They should determine NHS priorities and plan the provision of healthcare. Only by taking control of the NHS, can we plan for the healthcare needs of today and of generations to come.

## Manchester strikers lead the way... left fails to follow

By **Jeremy Dewar**

**A**t the Keep Our NHS Public conference in January, Manchester Mental Health Trust workers, who have voted by 92% to go on strike against cuts and privatisation, spoke forcefully about the benefits of striking. Branch member Karen Reissmann told the conference "The local papers are giving us much more room now to explain the issues." Workers Power delegates agreed; if you want to raise awareness, you need to raise the stakes.

Unfortunately, the conference did no such thing. Rather than campaign for a wave of strikes and occupations across the NHS, conference decided (by default: the chair refused to take any votes!) to limit itself to supporting more local demonstrations, and an Early Day Motion in parliament (EDM 655) calling for a moratorium on NHS cuts. It elected no accountable national leadership for the campaign.

The main debate was over whether to call a national demonstration on 3 March, or to build for local protests, called by the TUC. Socialist Party members supported a national demo in defiance of the union leaders who have sabotaged action so far – just as we had to do (successfully) in the anti-poll tax struggle. Unfortunately, others, including the Socialist

Workers Party, said this was impossible.

By contrast, SWP members focused on the EDM that Labour left MP John McDonnell is putting to parliament. But the EDM has no legal status, and only calls for a temporary halt to the cuts, pending an inquiry. While it could split Labour's ranks and embarrass the government, a previous EDM calling for an inquiry into the Iraq war showed the vast majority of Labour MPs are likely to back the government on the flimsy excuse that they do not want to vote with the Tories.

Anyway, far more important is health workers mounting a struggle around which others can mobilise support. The whole issue of the EDM, is in fact an evasion of what is really needed: a strike wave and occupations across the NHS, controlled by health-workers and local users, which could pile real pressure on the union leaders to support a national walk-out and really bring Labour's attack on the NHS crashing down.

Get messages of support to the Manchester Mental Health Trust Unison branch  
email [karen@reissmann.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:karen@reissmann.fsnet.co.uk)  
visit [www.stopthecuts.co.nr](http://www.stopthecuts.co.nr)  
phone 07977-986 179





## CIVIL SERVICE STRIKE

# For an all-out indefinite strike under rank and file control

Civil servants have taken a one-day national strike to defend jobs and services. But, asks Jeremy Dewar, is the PCS left leadership ready and able to organise the all-out, indefinite strike needed to win?

The one-day civil service strike has hit government departments from Inverness to Cornwall, from tax collection to military spending. The ballot for action was won with more than 60,000 voting for strike action: a 62 per cent majority, making this one of the most solid ballot results civil servants have ever delivered, a tremendous start to the campaign.

Civil servants have put up with job losses, service cuts, and contracting out to the private sector. More than 50,000 jobs have been cut since 2004 when Gordon Brown announced 104,000 job cuts across the service. All departments have been told to plan 20 per cent job cuts over the next four years – on top of the 104,000!

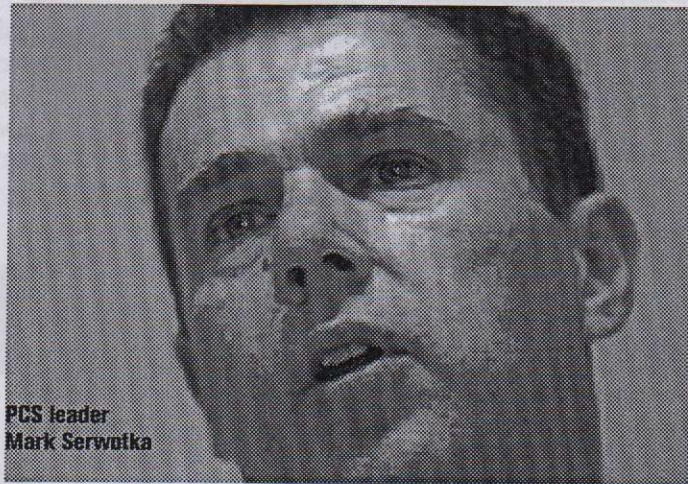
Finally, there's the issue of pay. With the rate of inflation running at an 11 year high of 4.4 per cent (Retail Price Index) and interest rates at 5.25 per cent, Brown demands civil service pay awards of less than...2 per cent, i.e. a pay cut.

In the long history of civil service trade unionism, there can't have been a more all-encompassing set of grievances for a national strike. So, what should civil servants be demanding, and how can they win.

With £5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on war in Iraq, £1 billion on Afghanistan and up to £76 billion on Trident's nuclear weapon deterrent, the government has loads of money. If it needs more, it can tax the fat cats, who've made millions from privatisation.

We should demand an end to all privatisations and cuts, that all outsourced services are immediately brought back in-house with no compensation. Staffing levels should revert to what they were before November 2004.

Those services that are directed towards workers and ordinary people – benefits offices and Job Centres, pensions and self-assessment tax returns, driving agency and passports – should involve representatives of users in drawing up budgets to improve services to meet needs.



PCS leader  
Mark Serwotka

One third of PCS members earn less than £14,000 a year. We demand an immediate pay rise to end the disgrace of low pay in the civil service and establish a service minimum of £16,380 a year, two-thirds the average wage.

### Striking to win

The PCS regional meetings that are being held this month need to discuss the next stage of the dispute. Workers Power believes that to win we need an all-out, indefinite national strike.

Some argue that members will not support this. But this is a circular argument: members don't support it yet, because the leadership hasn't campaigned for it; the leadership doesn't campaign for it, because the membership doesn't already support it.

Now is the time to win the argument for indefinite strike action. We should use the momentum of the campaign to hold meetings and pass resolutions in every branch, region and group to demand the union calls such a strike and set a date.

The danger is that the campaign continues with one day strikes and work to rules (which is already being proposed), while more jobs are cut or outsourced, and members sacrifice more pay – but management doesn't budge because they are not being confronted with

the prospect of not knowing when the workforce is coming back.

Rank and file PCS members, organised in workplaces, must take the lead in winning this position and then delivering the action in the workplace. If we can do this, then we can win.

### Rank and file control

Mark Serwotka and the PCS national executive are one of the most militant union leaderships in Britain today. But at crucial times, they have failed to take the necessary action.

The last national strike was in 5 November 2000; we are now paying the price for Serwotka failing to follow it up with more decisive action. The long-running pay dispute in the Department of Works and Pensions, led by Socialist Party members, petered out in defeat. This proves that rank and file members cannot rely even on left-wing leaders, they must organise to control the strike themselves. Job cuts have continued in the civil service.

Every office should elect a strike committee with representatives from the most militant sections, including part-time and temporary staff. Regionally and in each department, office reps should be elected to link up and co-ordinate action and keep the momentum going after 31 January.

These regional and departmental strike committees should control all negotiations, and determine future action. Crucially, the members themselves should be the only ones empowered to accept deals, or call off action.

However, if the PCS is to be a union that truly represents and fights for its members then the members must control the union. We need a rank and file movement that fights for all union officials to be on the average wage and subject to full accountability. Even Mark Serwotka, who doesn't take his full wage, is still on more than most of his members (some militants claim he takes home £5,000 a month). All full-time officials should be recallable. If they make a decision or do a deal above their members heads, then they should be replaced – immediately.

Transforming the unions means building a rank and file movement that does more than just elect left wing leaders, as Left Unity organises to do. It means replacing the system of unaccountable officials – who refuse to allow democratic control of disputes and, at crucial moments, lose their nerve, or end up selling their members out – with workers' democracy.

Also the PCS should join up with other campaigns in defence of public services. The NHS is facing a similar set of attacks, involving redundancies, cuts, closures and the outsourcing of work to private treatment centres. Local government workers face renewed attacks on pensions, pay cuts and downgrading of jobs. Postal workers and firefighters are threatened with cuts. In every town and city, the PCS should set up or encourage Public Services Not Private Profit committees.

An all-out, indefinite, national strike could set the benchmark for all those fighting similar cuts across the public sector, and raise the prospect of reversing the whole neoliberal course that Labour, Tories and Lib-Dems are set on.

## BIG BROTHER

# Evict racist media hypocrites

*Celebrity Big Brother* sparked a national debate about racism. Luke Cooper looks at the machinations behind the scenes and criticises the tepid “antiracism” of the state and media

The media and publicity storm around the racist bullying on Channel 4's *Celebrity Big Brother* gripped the nation last month. Politicians queued up to slam events in the BB house, while more than 40,000 complaints flooded into the Ofcom regulator and Channel 4. But still the programme makers denied that the controversial comments were racist and refused to intervene during the savage arguments.

For the moment at least, the dust seems to have settled on the row that erupted on *Celebrity Big Brother* in mid-January. The racist treatment of Shilpa Shetty, a major Bollywood star, by Jade Goody (herself a “celebrity” thanks only to her previous appearance on *Big Brother* in 2002), S Club 7 singer Jo O'Meara and model Danielle Lloyd led to Carphone Warehouse withdrawing its sponsorship of the show. It also created a diplomatic incident during Gordon Brown's visit to India.

Nastiness, bullying and cut-throat competition are nothing new to *Big Brother*. Producers always provoke conflicts amongst the “housemates” and whip up the public for and against particular characters. The infamous “Nasty Nick” from the first series, who attempted to discuss evictions with housemates and play a game of divide and rule, set the trend for future series. However, *Celebrity Big Brother* blew up a full-scale political hurricane.

There can be no doubt that the bullying and abuse levelled at Shetty was racist. It included referring to her as “Shilpa Poppadom” and a series of derisory remarks about Indian culture. Lloyd went as far as to say “she should fuck off home – she can't even speak English properly”. Comments like these will be all too familiar to millions of Black and Asian people across Britain – go to any town or metropolitan centre on a Saturday night and you will come across it.

The incident has forced widespread public recognition that racist ideas and values persist in modern Britain. Normally, the tabloids greet any complaints about such racism with the cry

that “this is political correctness gone mad” and taunts that the complainants “can't take a joke”. This time, sensing the public mood, they rounded on the racist bullies.

The storm of reaction to the comments shows that there has been a shift in popular values since the first waves of Black and Asian immigration in the 1950s. But it is hard not to be astonished by the gross hypocrisy of today's new “antiracists” in government and the press.

The frontline hypocrites are New Labour. Blair, Brown and Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell rushed on to condemn both the racist comments and Channel 4 for screening them. Jowell called it “racism masquerading as entertainment”.

True. But these “antiracists” are the same people who since 1997 have whipped up a vicious campaign against asylum seekers, and more recently have targeted Muslims and challenged the freedom of



Jade Goody

rhetic against Muslims and asylum seekers, Labour hopes to shift the blame for social disrepair

***Big Brother* plays to the disorientation and desperation of ordinary people. It offers a rags-to-riches escape in return for exposing your personality, with all its weaknesses, to be pulled to pieces for entertainment**

Muslim women to wear Islamic dress. A number of ministers have talked of the need for ethnic minorities to “integrate” into “British” culture, and New Labour has introduced a citizenship test for new immigrants.

These policies have flowed from other aspects of Labour's programme, especially a highly aggressive foreign policy, the so-called “war on terror”. In stoking up the

and crisis away from government policy makers and onto ethnic groups already pushed to the fringes of British society.

Labour has found a great cheerleader for these policies in the *Sun*, which attacks Labour for not going far enough, for being “soft” on Muslims and asylum seekers. But now, in both the media and the state, many racists suddenly want to stand behind the antiracist banner. This is

what makes the more subtle, sophisticated and socially acceptable racism of Murdoch and Blair so dangerous – it feeds hard, explicit and often violent racism at the base of society. It is no coincidence that since Labour has adopted a racist stance on issues like immigration, the British National Party has grown.

The question of class has also come to the fore in this crisis. Indeed, much of the backlash against Goody has centred on her class background. Channel 4 has argued that what was involved was a “clash of class cultures” rather than racism. Implicit in such claims is the idea that, because of Goody's working class background, such comments were inevitable. In fact this ignores the fact that just as bad or worse racist comments were made by Danielle Lloyd – a bank manager's daughter from a thoroughly middle class background.

The whole format of *Big Brother* plays to the disorientation and desperation of ordinary people in class society. It offers a rags-to-riches escape route in return for turning your exposed personality, with all its weaknesses, into a commodity to be pulled to pieces for entertainment. *Big Brother* has always billed itself as a ruthless and cruel sociological experiment: one which purports to tell us something about the society in which we live.

Whilst this claim is bogus, *Celebrity Big Brother 2007*, quite against the intentions of its promoters, has done just this. It has revealed the gross hypocrisy of the attitudes of the political establishment to contemporary racism, affirmed the ruthless capacity of the capitalist media to pick up and chew out its “stars” and above all has revealed the simple fact that the poison of racism is prevalent in Britain today.

In such a context, building a fighting movement against the racism of the media, political establishment and far right is absolutely vital. This movement must, if it is not to let the term “anti-racism” become meaningless, point to the racist policies and actions of the state at every turn, while fighting for no platform for violent racists like the BNP.



## RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917 – LESSONS FOR TODAY

This year sees the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. With the downfall of the USSR in 1991 many people, including even some on the left, argued that the epoch of the Russian Revolution was closed and that the experience in Russia was wholly or largely negative. More recently people in the anticapitalist movement have unfavourably contrasted the “undemocratic or bureaucratic” revolutions of the twentieth century with the need for a revolution of the twenty-first century, which is somehow completely different.

We disagree. As we aim to show in this series of articles, the Russian revolution was the first and the only time that the working class has succeeded in taking state power into the hands of its own democratic bodies - the soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants' deputies - and in holding power, despite bitter civil war.

The 1917 revolution remains the model for the

revolutions of the twenty-first century too. Its significance and its lessons are not invalidated by subsequent events - including the bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution under Josef Stalin. Today, as events in Latin America show, we face a growing number of revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations. A crucial part of this generation's preparation must be to learn those lessons from 1917 anew.

During 2007 Workers Power will be carrying a series of articles on the key turning points of the revolution. We start at the beginning with the February Revolution. Dave Stocking looks at this great working class upheaval which swept away the three hundred year-old Romanov dynasty in little more than a week, broke the discipline of the largest army in Europe and created a dense network of workers, soldiers and peasants' councils or soviets across the vast Tsarist empire.

# February 1917: The Tsar falls

In 1917 Russia still used the old Julian calendar and so was 13 days behind most other countries which used the Gregorian calendar we use today. That is why the great events which are called the February Revolution took place between 8-15 March in our calendar. Under the old-style Russian Calendar 23 February to 1 March. But Russia was not simply 13 days behind central and Western Europe. In terms of its political regime it was any thing from fifty to a hundred years behind.

A prolonged revolutionary upheaval in 1905-07, led by the workers and supported by peasant uprisings and mutinies in the fleet and the army, had forced Tsar Nicholas II to introduce some of the formal institutions of a constitutional democracy, notably a parliament called the State Duma. But in reality he still exercised many of the powers of an absolute monarch, a system known as autocracy.

Whilst liberal and conservative parties were now allowed, revolutionaries and trade unionists were harassed, arrested at will, their



Tsar Nicholas II, last of the Romanovs

newspapers censored or closed down. Jews and other oppressed nationalities were subjected to pogroms (massacres).

A vast secret police network, the Okhrana, was the only up-to-date

feature of the Russian state and it spied on all oppositionists. It was responsible for the publication in 1903 of the notorious anti-semitic forgery, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Tsar himself

personally sponsored a forerunner of fascism, the Black Hundreds. Its ideology centred on anti-semitism. Nicholas II and his wife the German-born Tsarina Alexandra were themselves pathological anti-semites as their private correspondence reveals. They personally encouraged pogroms. They ordered bloody repression against the workers, most famously on 9 January 1905, the original Bloody Sunday, when hundreds of unarmed workers and their children were shot down in the streets and squares around the Winter Palace in St Petersburg (renamed Petrograd in 1914).

In 1914 the Russian empire, by now allied with France which was its main source of the huge loans keeping its creaking system afloat, entered the First World War against Germany and Austria-Hungary. France had high hopes that the Tsar's huge peasant army, “the Russian steamroller”, would crush the German armies in the east, enabling it to break through in the west.

It was not to be. After a few early successes, the Tsarist armies were

## RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917 – LESSONS FOR TODAY

defeated in disastrous battles and rolled back through the Empire's western borderland, suffering huge casualties. The Tsar, who in mid-1915 assumed formal command, was directly embroiled in the disaster. His government fell into the hands of a court camarilla around his wife and her "spiritual advisor", the drunken half-crazed monk Grigori Rasputin. They changed the government at will and removed many of the more competent generals, adding to the chaos and disrupting the war effort.

By late 1916 the Russian army had lost between 1.6 and 1.8 million soldiers, with an additional two million prisoners of war and one million missing out of the 14 million it had mobilized since 1914. The front was on the point of collapse.

Even the ruling class of landowning aristocrats now craved regime change. In mid-December 1916, conspirators

they have to regain my confidence," the royal moron replied.

With reactionary conservatives and moderate liberals alike plotting against him, with even his wartime imperialist allies in open collusion with them, Nicholas' entire regime was headed for collapse.

The first condition of a revolution is that the ruling class is unable to go on ruling in the old way. This condition was met in full. The other condition is that the exploited classes are unwilling to be ruled in the old way. That was about to be fulfilled too.

### Revolution

The Russian working class was only a small minority of the population of the vast Empire but it was powerfully concentrated in a few major cities, the twin capitals Petrograd and Moscow.

Wartime production had led to a substantial increase in the number of fac-

centre of heavy industry, to the New Lerner works, the Nobel plant, the Russian Renault factory and finally the Erikson mills. Their numbers began to swell as workers, men and women, from all over the city left their jobs to protest. By ten o'clock, 20,000 were marching. Before noon, numbers had swelled to more than 50,000.

The next day the demonstration grew even bigger, reached more than 214,000 workers from more than 2,000 factories and enterprises. By now they were shouting not only for bread but an end to the war and occasionally the overthrow of the autocracy. The Vyborg workers marched towards the centre of Petrograd, finally coming to a halt at the wide Neva river. The bridges were blocked by Cossacks and soldiers. The people, however, walked across the solidly frozen ice. The Cossacks and the soldiers did not move.

The third day of the revolution proved the decisive day. Attention now focused on what the city's garrison would do. The exact number of troops in Petrograd at this point is unknown; figures of between 220,000 and 466,000 men are given. In addition there were the hated police (3,500 men) and the Cossack cavalry (3,200). What would they do? The final and decisive factor in the success of a revolution was about to come into play: the morale of the soldiers. How would they respond, faced with workers willing to die? Would they obey officers, ordering them to kill people, who might be their fathers and brothers, their sisters, wives, girlfriends and mothers?

The marchers' columns were by now more frequently led by members of the revolutionary parties: particularly the Bolshevik Party, plus Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. They did not and could not act as a centralised leadership of the whole movement. Repression and illegality made this impossible. The average Bolshevik, for example, was able to undertake only around three months of underground activity before being arrested.

Who were these revolutionaries? Most of them were very young, with an average age of 16-17. Many joined the party between the ages of 13 and 15. A larger number of the main leaders had been active in the 1905 revolution, but even these were only in their late twenties or early thirties.

Lenin and the principal leaders of the Bolshevik Party were all in exile, either in Western Europe or in distant Siberia. Lenin was not able to return from exile to Petrograd until 3 (16) April, in the famous "sealed train" provided by the German authorities for the Swiss socialist exiles of all parties. Other leaders, like Lev Kamenev, Yakov Sverdlov and Josef Stalin, arrived from Siberia in mid-March.

**On 21 February, the Putilov management locked out a section of their workers, provoking a strike. The workers demonstrated and other factories came out in their support. Scuffles and protests also took place outside bakers' shops, when supplies ran out. The next day, 22 February (March 8 in Western Europe) was International Working Class Women's Day. Early in the morning thousands of women were on the streets.**

led by Prince Yusopov and Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, assassinated Rasputin. The entire extended royal family— apart from the Tsar himself and his wife— warmly congratulated the blue blooded terrorists.

At the same time the Russian bourgeoisie— the capitalist class— was also plotting "regime change". They still heartily supported the war because they wanted to seize the choicest parts of the German and Ottoman empires and share in the spoils of Allied victory. In this sense the Russian capitalist class, backward and weak as it was, was nevertheless an imperialist bourgeoisie. The dominant bourgeois political parties in the Duma were the Octobrists— conservative liberals who supported the Tsar's deceitful constitution of 1905— and the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats). They passed resolutions calling for a ministry answerable to the Duma. Their leaders were, respectively, Alexander Guchkov and Pavel Milyukov.

The French and British backed the bourgeois and aristocratic opposition to the Tsar and Tsarina and their court clique. Buchanan, the British ambassador, told the Tsar at the end of 1916 that he needed to regain the confidence of his people. "Don't you mean

tory workers in the two capitals: from 242,600 in Petrograd in 1914 to 391,800 in 1917. In Moscow their numbers grew from 153,223 to 205,919. The giant Putilov works in Petrograd alone had 30,000 workers by 1917, making it the largest factory in the world.

In Petrograd and Moscow people were starving. Women queued for hours, starting at two in the morning, to bring home barely enough bread for their family to survive on. The winter of 1916-17 was a desperately cold one; temperatures fell to minus -40°C. Meanwhile the rich and the war profiteers lived a life of ostentatious luxury.

The revolution began with a lockout and strike at the Putilov works. On 21 February, the Putilov management locked out a section of their workers, provoking a strike. The workers demonstrated and other factories came out in their support. Scuffles and protests also took place outside bakers' shops, when supplies ran out. The next day, 22 February (8 March in Western Europe) was International Working Class Women's Day. Early in the morning thousands of women were on the streets. Textile workers spearheaded their ranks.

Well over 7,000 left their looms. Chanting "Bread!" they marched through Petrograd's Vyborg district, the city's main

## RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917 – LESSONS FOR TODAY

The most senior leader in Petrograd was the metalworker Alexander Shlyapnikov. He alone was in any sort of regular correspondence with Lenin and the party leadership abroad. Together with Petr Zalutskii and Vyacheslav Molotov, he formed the national leadership of the Bolshevik Party.

Perhaps half the party membership was concentrated in the Vyborg district, a huge concentration of metal working factories and textile mills. In Vyborg a district committee made up of Vasily Kayurov, Ivan Chugurin and Dmitry Pavlov led the local Bolshevik Party. They were to become the de facto leadership in the coming days.

The total number of Bolsheviks in Petrograd at the onset of the February revolution was just 2,000. They had organised party nuclei in the key factories: around 75-80 in the Old Lessner factory, some 30 in the Russo-Baltic and Izhorsky shipyards and smaller groups in other factories. In the giant Putilov works, with its 30,000 employees, there were 150 Bolsheviks. These party cadres were influential leaders but not yet recognised spokespersons of mass factory organisations—indeed such organisations did not yet exist.

Initially the Bolshevik leadership in Petrograd had been working towards an escalation of strikes and mass demonstrations, with a timetable stretching from 9 January, the anniversary of Bloody Sunday 1905, to May Day; the latter was to serve as the signal for an armed uprising. But first the lockout and strike at the Putilov works on 22 February and then the huge response to the demonstration on International Women's Day upset these plans. Kayurov and the Vyborg committee had actually initiated the call for the International Women's Day march. Vyborg was the main centre of the textile mills. But they did not foresee and initially did not want this mobilisation to continue on the following days. Kayurov records in his memoirs his indignation with the women strikers for not carrying out the instructions of the party. He feared it would lead to premature clashes with the troops.

Kayurov recalled how he had spoken at a meeting of women workers:

"I explained the meaning of 'Women's Day' and of the women's movement in general, and when I had to talk about the present moment I endeavoured first and

foremost to urge the women to refrain from any partial demonstrations and to act only on the instructions of the party committee." But the women workers were in no mood to wait for instructions. Kayurov recalls that later he learned with "astonishment" and "indignation" that the women had totally ignored his advice. "I was angered by the behaviour of the strikers," he wrote. "The previous evening I had called on the working women to show restraint and discipline – and now, out of the blue, there was this strike."

Leon Trotsky, in his epic *History of the Russian Revolution*, remarks that at a certain point in a revolution the masses suddenly move into action, and the rising quantity of their exasperation undergoes a qualitative transformation. Of course they need and they find courageous, determined leaders, initiators of action, new ones as well as old militants from past struggles. But for this qualitative change to occur they do not always need a highly structured organisation and prepared plan. Thus, at a certain conjuncture, the masses move far faster than even the best revolutionary leadership.

Nonetheless, by the 25 February the Bolsheviks realised that they had a full-blown revolution on their hands. Still they were unable, for logistical and perhaps also for political reasons to issue a leaflet until 27 February.

Sunday 26 February was the most worrying day. The troops obeyed orders to fire on demonstrators and many workers were killed. Police raids resulted in the arrest of many revolutionary leaders; Shlyapnikov escaped by the skin of his teeth but was completely isolated. Kayurov and the Vyborg organisation, however, remained intact. The Vyborg district committee now became, de facto, the Bolshevik leadership in Petrograd, and thus responsible for the party's tactics in the crucial days of the February revolution. At that moment, they feared that the movement had been defeated.

But on the next morning – 27 February – Kayurov and the Vyborg fighting detachment led a daring raid on an arsenal, removed its stocks of rifles and mounted an attack on the prisons holding the revolutionaries, setting them free. They then went on to launch attacks on the police stations. At the same time Shlyapnikov's plans too came to fruition. This was the



Petrograd soviet in March 1917

day the troops in Petrograd decisively came over to the side of the revolution.

Various memoirs, both from Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, make it clear that across the city members of the Bolshevik Party were in the thick of the fighting, playing a leading role in winning over the troops, seizing arms, forming detachments in the factories, and helping organise and give slogans to the mass demonstrations.

The loyalty of the soldiers now hung in the balance; as usual in mutinies it was the non-commissioned officers who took the lead. That night in the Volynsky regiment, Sergeant Kirpichnikov addressed his fellow soldiers:

"Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and even brides are begging for bread. Will we strike them down? Have you seen the blood which runs in the streets? I propose that we do not march tomorrow." The entire regiment vowed they would not fire on the people. Following their lead, that day more than 66,000 soldiers joined the side of the revolution.

The Volynsky was soon joined by the Pavlovsky, Litovsky and Preobrazhensky guards' regiments. Under Bolshevik leadership the central arsenal of the Petrograd garrison was broken into – 40,000

rifles and 30,000 revolvers were distributed. When the guards' regiments marched out of their barracks, their regimental bands struck up the republican marching song of the bourgeois revolution, the Marseillaise. At this point everybody realized that the Tsar was finished... apart from the Tsar himself.

Nicholas' ministers panicked. They resigned en masse and fled. It was left to the chairman of the parliament, the Duma, Mikhail Rodzianko, a member of the Octobrist Party, to telegram Nicholas, pleading with him to do something before it was too late. Nicholas' response was typically myopic and cretinous. He told his Court Minister Frederiks: "Again that fatbellied Rodzianko has written me a lot of nonsense, which I won't even bother to answer."

Nicholas finally decided to return to the capital, believing that somehow his imperial presence would restore order. En route to Petrograd, his train was stopped by revolutionary railworkers, who simply told the Tsar of All the Russias that he would not be allowed to return to the capital. The train tried another line but was stopped again. The workers vetoed his every move. The Tsar's diary records the pathetic end to his reign and his dynasty:

# RUSSIAN REVOLUTION 1917 – LESSONS FOR TODAY

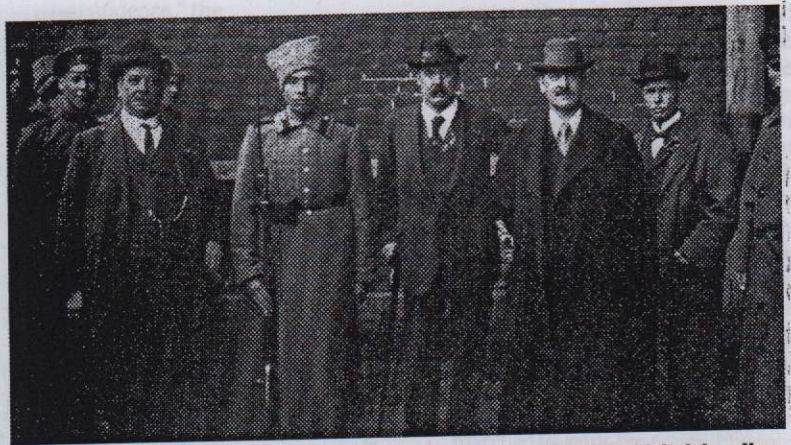
“Ruzsky came in the morning and read me his long telephone conversation with Rodzianko. In his words, the situation in Petrograd is such, that at present a ministry from the Duma is powerless to do anything, because they are opposed by the Social Democratic Party in the guise of the worker’s committee (i.e. the soviet of workers and soldier deputies – ed.) My abdication is necessary. Ruzsky communicated his conversation to headquarters, and Alexe’ev to all the commanders-in-chief. By about 2.30 answers had arrived from all. The crux of the matter is that it is necessary to take this step, for the sake of Russia’s salvation and of maintaining calm in the army at the front. I agreed...”

One of Nicholas’ last moves had been to suspend the Duma. It had been thrown into a frenzy of indecision. If they defied the Tsar, not only might they one day feel his wrath, but, even worse, their defiance might encourage the revolt of the masses. That was the last thing the liberal bourgeoisie wanted to happen. Indeed they had actually pleaded for the Tsar to restore order, that is, for the troops to fire on the workers. Here was no revolutionary bourgeoisie such as the Mensheviks dreamed of, but a thoroughly counter-revolutionary one, such as Lenin and Trotsky had long insisted on.

## The soviet

Only on 1 March (14 March) when it became clear that the Tsar’s ministers had fled, the garrison was completely on the side of the revolution, and the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks had summoned the factories of the capital to elect delegates and send them to the Tauride Place to reconstitute the Petrograd Soviet, did Rodzianko, Milyukov and co. finally decide that since they could not stop the revolution they had to lead it. Thus did the provisional government come into existence – not to lead a revolution but to abort it.

On 27 February the revolutionary movement triumphed on the streets. In these vital days the Bolshevik fighters stood at the head of the movement, not alone but in larger numbers than the Mensheviks, the Socialist Revolutionaries or the Mezhrayontsi (a grouping, strong in Vyborg, standing between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks and favouring a reunification of the old Russian Social Democratic Labour Party). But victory brought a sudden and rapid change in the leadership of the movement. The Menshevik leaders, who had been freed from prison, did not rush to take part in the fighting but rather to the Tauride Palace where the Duma was sitting.



Sgt. Kirpichnikov (centre), leader of the mutiny in the Volynski regiment, with British delegation

**The soviets spread across the vast Russian empire with amazing speed and took effective power because the soldiers obeyed them, as did the armed workers’ militias**

There they began to make arrangements for calling the first session of a Petrograd soviet, a council of workers deputies, the institution that had led the revolution in the city in 1905.

Now that the fighting and dangers were over thousands of people from the intelligentsia and professional classes flooded into the ranks of the “revolutionaries”. Such was the Menshevik Nikolai Sukhanov, who attended the first session of the soviet on the evening of the 27th and who became a member of its Executive Committee. Another was Alexander Kerensky, a lawyer close to the populist SR’s Party, who was to become the soviet’s vice-chairman.

The first evening meeting of the Petrograd soviet gathered some 250 workers’ delegates. But delegates from the regimental barracks that had risen in revolt soon joined them. It was decided to make the soviet into a “council of workers’ and soldiers’ deputies”. The meeting also issued its famous “Order No. 1”, which directed all the soldiers to obey exclusively its orders.

A situation of dual power was established. On one side was the soviet which had the allegiance of the revolutionary worker and soldier masses. The soviets spread across the vast Russian empire with amazing speed and took effective power because the soldiers obeyed them, as did the armed workers’ militias. Everywhere the local soviet’s approval was needed for supplies or troops to move.

But on the other hand the majority of delegates within the soviets turned out not to be Bolsheviks but either Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries or non-party people. The Mensheviks led the soviets into a position not of taking state power into their own hands, but of supporting the new bourgeois provisional government.

This was headed by a liberal aristocrat, Prince Lvov, a member of the Cadets. Its leading figures were Paul Milyukov of the Cadets and Alexander Guchkov of the Octobrists. Both were determined to carry

on with the imperialist war and, if possible to save the Romanov dynasty by finding a liberal member of it to head a constitutional monarchy. But the most dynamic force in the provisional government was the petit bourgeois radical lawyer Alexander Kerensky. He too was determined to carry on the imperialist war “until final victory”.

In short the programme of the Duma meant that the demands for which the masses had fought and died – bread, an end to the war, the end of Tsarism – would be ignored or compromised out of existence. Once again the counter-revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie was on display. But the determination of the Mensheviks that the revolution was a bourgeois revolution and that therefore power had to be handed to representatives of the capitalist class, meant that the bosses were to receive the fruits of the revolution as a free gift.

When the focus of events moved off the streets and into the Tauride palace, the Bolsheviks immediately lost the initiative and the leadership of the movement. This was due in part to their own uncertainty as to what to do when it came to the question of government. Should they critically support the provisional government? All the instincts of the Petrograd fighters said no. But at the same time they had no clear slogan as to who should form a government or what to do to install it.

In future articles in this series, we will show that Lenin had already come up with the answer to this conundrum – that the soviet must take the power as a workers’ government and begin the transition to socialism. We shall also show that this took several weeks of inner party struggle to achieve. The Bolshevik Party was not the monolithic forces that either its anarchist and Labourite detractors or its Stalinist worshipers claim. At this time it had the internal democracy needed to make this correction – one vital to enable it to take the power in October 1917.

## VENEZUELA

# Hugo Chávez and the revolution in Venezuela

The President of Venezuela has declared himself a revolutionary, a Trotskyist, and someone who intends to create socialism in the next few years. Is he? asks *Dave Stockton*

Venezuela has entered a radical, new phase. In December, after his landslide election victory, Hugo Chavez told the vast celebrating crowds: "We're heading toward socialism and nothing and no one can prevent it." This declaration of revolutionary intent is an important step forward, and will no doubt be seen by the Venezuelan workers and poorest as a step in the right direction. That Venezuela is ripe for a revolution is not in question, the debate now centres around who will lead it, and how can it happen?

## Chávez and Trotskyism

At his Presidential Inauguration on January 10 Chávez said, "I'm very much of Trotsky's line, the permanent revolution." Elsewhere Chávez jocularly reported that when he was calling José Ramón Rivero González, to offer him the post of Minister of Labour and Social Security:

"... he says to me, 'President... I am a Trotskyist'. I said to him, 'Good, what's the problem? I too am a Trotskyist! I am of the line of Trotsky, of permanent revolution.'"

Nationalisation, a socialist republic of Venezuela, a united mass socialist party, Trotsky's line of Permanent Revolution - what is the reality behind these pledges?

Chávez is certainly the most radical leader of a state today. He is however not unique in the history either of Latin America or the rest of the world. In the 1945-1980 period figures like him were plentiful: Nasser, Nyerere, Sukarno, Ortega. What makes him stand out today is twenty years of neoliberalism and privatisation during which such figures were declared hopeless dinosaurs. But Trotskyists should not forget the critique they have made of such figures based on the proof of decades of experience of such regimes.

True, Chávez has the support of masses and has earned the bitter hatred of the Venezuelan bourgeoisie, who have several times tried to oust him by means legal and illegal. Yet the state still has a



capitalist army with its officer corps and high command. It still defends private property. Were the oil price to plummet, the reforms be forced to stop, the economy sink into chaos, Chávez popularity to fall, then a coup or a successful assassination could remove him, or he could slow or even reverse his reforms.

He called for an "explosion of communal power", with much more power given to the recently created communal councils composed of 200-400 families and \$5 billion to be spent on this project in 2007. He envisages these councils progressively replacing the existing state structure. What is needed, said Chávez, is to "dismantle the bourgeois state" because all states "were born to prevent revolutions."

So far no measures have been taken to abolish or disarm the police, or for the creation of democratic councils in the army, which would veto the power of the generals. The 'Bolivarian state' is under the control of its President not the working class. The municipal councils that Chávez proposes lack the class independence of soviet-type bodies and they are not the source of the state power but a "participatory" and subordinate creation of it.

As for the nationalisations all of those carried out so far have involved

full compensation to the former owners, not expropriation. That is why they have been on a relatively small scale. Chávez has pledged that future nationalisations will be similarly compensated, this is a sign that, despite the rhetoric the 'Bolivarian revolution' remains reformist at heart. This type of nationalisation will only reach at best a form of bureaucratic state capitalism, not open the road to Socialism. To do this the rich must be expropriated without compensation, and the industries run by the workers themselves.

## Planning

However the crucial question of the market remains unanswered. Workplaces that have been taken over and run under workers control must still sell their goods on the market, which means that the anarchy of distribution still remains. The market mechanism must be removed and replaced with economic planning of the society. This could only happen if the forces that exist to protect capitalist property rights, the police, are smashed and authority put in the hands of a workers militia. Chávez has not taken this important step, the workers must do it themselves. No healthy workers state has ever been created without a workers revolution taking these measures.

## A new united party

At a meeting of campaign workers to celebrate his successful re-election held on December 18, Chávez called on his supporters to dissolve all their existing parties and to form a new United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

The coalition of parties who currently support Chávez range from his own Movement for a Fifth Republic (MVR) which obtained 41.7% of the total votes to more than twenty smaller parties, including the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV), which made up the rest of Chávez's total of 62.9% support in the December 3rd election.

Chávez claimed the sheer number of parties that currently support his government are an obstacle to the creation of "21st century socialism" and added: "The parties that want to maintain their existence can maintain it, on their own; but of course they will have to leave my government." He directly addressed the network of election teams built to support his presidential campaign, telling them that they not the "alphabet soup" of parties would be the bedrock organs of the new party.

To allay any fears he stated that "This United Socialist Party will of course be the most democratic party in Venezuelan history... it'll be opened up for discussion, across the board."

## A revolutionary party

Chávista supporters will dominate any party that Chávez sets up. However if the "democracy" Chávez promises in the PSUV creates a public debate over its programme, strategy and structure, then of course revolutionaries should take part in the debate.

Above all what is needed in Venezuela today is revolutionary party, which fights for working class independence from the Chávez regime, the formation of democratic workers, peasants and soldiers councils and the break up of the Venezuelan state in a genuine socialist revolution. Only such a party can fully realise the great revolutionary potential in the present situation.

## BOLIVIA

# Masses drive out governor – work

A commune in Cochabamba has forced the governor to flee and elected a “people’s prefect” to replace him. A similar uprising in El Alto is gaining momentum. *Keith Spencer* argues that the Bolivian revolution is approaching a critical moment

The latest confrontation began in December when president Evo Morales encouraged popular mobilisations in support of a major land reform bill which the right-wing minority in the constituent assembly was using the veto powers, conceded to it last year, to obstruct. At the same time the right is demanding autonomy for Santa Cruz, and its surrounding provinces, the location of much of the country’s oil and gas reserves as well as its agriculturally productive lands. The manoeuvre is designed to put Bolivia’s economic wealth out of the reach of the central government and any programme to redistribute the country’s oil income or its land to the impoverished masses.

Bolivia’s capitalists – big businessmen and landowners – have organised counter-demonstrations to defeat the government. The conflicts in the constituent assembly between right and left, which included fights and walkouts, have now spilled onto the streets in major battles. Caught between the two mobilisations, Evo Morales and his party the MAS are vainly trying to rein in the workers and peasants, hoping to placate the ruling class and isolate the more radical sectors.

## The Struggle in Cochabamba

The new Cochabamba commune shows striking similarities to the struggle of the people of Oaxaca in Mexico, who last year took over their city, ousted the corrupt governor Ortiz, and fought the Mexican police and army for six months. Despite eventually going down to defeat, Oaxaca stands as an inspiration to the masses of Latin America.

In December the rightwing governor of Cochabamba department (province), Manfred Reyes Villa, called for a referendum on autonomy for Bolivia’s provinces and voiced his support for independence for Santa Cruz. Against this hated figure tens of thousands of workers and peasants took to the streets throughout December and into January.

On 8 January in the central plaza riot police and street gangs attacked, killing two protesters. On 11 January Reyes called out his supporters, including the rightwing and fascist “Youth for Democracy”, to confront protestors. The result was a battle with more than 200

wounded, another two dead, as the Youth for Democracy attacked anyone with brown skin. Yet by the end of the battle, despite suffering heavy casualties, the masses retained control of the square and had beaten off Reyes’ supporters – Reyes himself fled the city for Santa Cruz.

The MAS was hardly jubilant in response to the defeat of the right. Minister of Social Movements, Alfredo Rada, said: “The leaders have been overtaken

**The ruling class hopes that by creating large-scale provocations with the popular movement they will be able to force the army to ‘intervene’ – and smash the popular movement**

and they have lost control of the ranks.” The next day the Workers Union of Cochabamba province called a *cabildo abierto*, a popular assembly, to demand the resignation of Reyes in return for an end to the blockades of the city. Some delegates called for Reyes to be hung “just like Saddam Hussein”.

On the 16 January a second assembly elected a people’s prefect (governor) and handed power to MAS-dominated council in the departmental government. However, the response of these newly empowered councillors was to flee, claiming the mass assembly forced them into the role of an alternative government. One MAS councillor, Diaz Estrada, explained: “We were attacked and forced to convene a session to elect a new governor. The councillors explained that this was illegal but there were threats of lynchings and we were forced to install a new prefect.” In response the mass assembly elected a new departmental government with delegates from 15 organisations.

The MAS had hoped the popular protests would give it leverage to negotiate against the right, instead they had run wildly out of control – the masses had driven the governor from office and organised their own government. Now, the MAS and Morales called for “reflection”, a constitutional solution and brought forward a bill that enabled recall referendums after two years for elected officials.

One MAS MP, Antonio Paredo Leigue, warned of an impending confrontation with the right and rumours of a coup but in the next breath warned against

“extreme positions that appear to contribute to the plans of the right”. MAS vice president Garcia Linera went further and claimed that Reyes was still the rightful governor despite having to admit that 80,000 and 100,000 people attended the popular assembly!

The people of Cochabamba are not alone. In the huge shantytown of El-Alto outside the capital La Paz, the regional workers federation (COR) and the FEJUVE, a soviet-like body of delegates from neighbourhoods across El Alto, have called for mass demonstrations in support of Cochabamba and for the ousting of their own right-wing governor Jose Luis Paredas Munoz. A 17 January meeting demanded resignation of departmental councillors who do not comply with their demands; taking over the municipal buildings in La Paz, including the property of Paredas; and for a fight to the finish with the Oligarchs.

The mineworkers union (FSTMB) supports the masses of Cochabamba and El-Alto, and their leader Roberto Chavez is critical of the MAS and its constant concessions to the right – stating it is “not really a government of the workers”. Miners have had to campaign for Morales to call for the nationalisation of the mines, which he has finally done, but their appalling working conditions remain mostly unchanged.

Meanwhile, the MAS disowned the El-Alto actions, with Minister Rada saying that the people should “look for a legal solution to their demands”. The MAS hope that by attacking the left they will appease the right and deter a coup attempt. This could not be further from the truth. The right will only be emboldened by attacks on the left and bring nearer the day when the Bolivian ruling class and their fascist supporters launch a bloody coup against the MAS, Morales and the masses.

## The right on the offensive

But before the Bolivian ruling class can launch such a coup they have to break the confidence and forward march of the workers and peasants. They have to pressure Morales to attack the supporters of the land reform and the use of the petrol and gas revenues to pay for major reforms. That is what they are doing now and Morales is falling for their ploy. In December they launched aggressive protests against Morales’ land reform.



# Workers and peasants form commune



which threatens to redistribute 77,000 square miles of unused or illegally obtained land and for regional autonomy.

In most regions the protest calls were met by indifference or much larger counter-demonstrations. However, in the Santa Cruz region the mobilisations were significant and the fascistic Crucesista Youth Movement (a white, rich organisation of men armed with weapons) were used to intimidate and attack the indigenous supporters of Morales and leaders of workers and peasant organisations. There are also reports in Spanish newspapers that mercenaries have been hired to attack peasants taking over land, which again must be seen by the masses as a declaration of intent from the bosses.

The Bush government has shown its support by making Phillip Goldberg the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia. Goldberg learned his trade in Bosnia and Kosovo and is said to be friends with Reyes. "It's not by chance that this gentleman has been moved from Kosovo to Bolivia," one Santa Cruz academic said.

The ruling class has combined provocations on the streets with its "legal" face in parliament – obstructing the workings of the Senate (upper house) and the Constitutional Assembly set up by Morales. It has demanded a legal review of the MAS reforms to the hydrocarbons (oil and gas) industry and the land reforms and threatened to gridlock parliament if it is not met.

The aim of the ruling class could not be clearer. They hope that by creating large scale provocations and confrontation with the popular movement they will be able to force the army to 'intervene' to defend law and order – and smash the popular movement.

## Morales and the Bolivian Revolution

January saw Morales celebrate one year as president. He marked it by announcing further reforms such as nationalisation of the mines, reforms to pensions and education, more taxes on foreign companies in the gas and oil industry and closer ties with Chavez's radical regime in Venezuela.

Morales stated that: "We (the government) don't report to the international monetary fund nor the world bank. We report to the Bolivian people." However, at the same time he sacked seven cabinet ministers who had been attacked by the right, notably the Catholic Church, including for failing to curb unrest.

In the past year, Morales has carried out a partial nationalisation of the gas and oil industry, introduced limited land reform, brought in free health care and literacy programmes, promised to takeover of the mines and redistribute wealth. All of these have involved mobilisations of workers, peasants and indigenous peoples to back the reforms – as Morales and the MAS are well aware they need to force the hand of the rich and protect against a coup.

Morales recently met with "The Red Ponchos", an armed peasants group, urging them along with the army to "defend the unity of Bolivia". However, the army is not under the control of the masses – it remains an instrument of the wealthy. Only when the rank and file soldiers are won to the side of the masses, remove their reactionary commanders and officers and join with a mass militia of workers and peasants will the danger of a bloody coup be removed.

Workers and peasants must demand of Morales weapons to fight the right. They must also demand an end to con-

**Morales says his party, the MAS, serves the people but his vacillations undermine popular mobilisations**

ciliation and for the MAS government and Morales to carry out its full programme. Where it refuses or backtracks the masses must organise themselves to take over land, occupy factories and mines and defend their towns and cities against the hired thugs of the ruling class.

The revolutionary situation in Bolivia faces a moment of decision – to go forward to smash the resistance of the right and install workers and peasants power right across the country or retreat in confusion as a result of Morales retreats and betrayals. If the latter happens then the ruling class will intensify its attacks. The ruling class must be prevented from gathering the strength to inflict a decisive defeat on the popular movement – leading on to a military or fascist coup.

In all this Morales and the MAS play a dangerous game – trying to both maintain the support of Bolivian capital and the popular movement. Roberto Chavez of the FSTMB is right – this is not a workers and peasants government. Such a government is exactly what is needed, one based directly on the democratic organs and armed militias of the workers and poor peasants.

The trade unions and the landless peasants organisations must break with the MAS and form a revolutionary party, involved in the struggles of the masses and rooted in their organisations. This must be a party that fights to expropriate the big landowners and capitalists and establish a democratic plan to eradicate poverty. On several occasions over the past period, the workers organisations, such as the FSTMB and the COB, have discussed the need for a revolutionary party – now is the time to create it.

- Support the commune of Cochabamba! For communes in El-Alto and other cities and towns, linked across Bolivia in a democratic Congress.
- Arm the workers and peasants against fascist and police attacks. For soldiers councils to elect their officers, and help arm the people.
- Set up soviet type bodies such as the El-Alto FEJUVE, which has proved it can lead struggles against the capitalists, to force the MAS to carry out its promises or take the initiative without it.
- The CA must be forced to give full rights to indigenous peoples, complete the re-nationalisation of the mines and multinationals and distribute land to the peasants.
- For a workers and peasants government.

**For more on Bolivia go to [www.fifthinternational.org/](http://www.fifthinternational.org/)**

## BANGLADESH

# Only the working class can sweep away corruption

Riots in Dhaka have postponed the elections, but *Simon Hardy* argues that the working class needs a revolutionary party to break the domination of the two capitalist parties

Over the last few months Bangladesh has experienced serious political unrest, with a nationwide general strike culminating in a huge street blockade of the capital Dhaka. This was organised by the opposition coalition led by the Awami League. The aim was to force the postponement of the forthcoming elections, a new electoral register, and the appointment of a new electoral commission. The Awami League's main rival the Bangladeshi National Party, which had been in power from 2001 to 2006, counter-mobilised, leading to widespread disorder.

The state's response was to declare a state of emergency and unleash the police and the paramilitary Rapid Action Battalion. All public protest was met with rubber bullets, tear gas and arrests. But the mobilisations and disorder went on. Eventually the interim government caved in and agreed to postpone the elections and draft a new electoral role.

This climbdown was a major victory for the Awami League. It achieved all of its demands and is now well placed for the elections. But this struggle was not so much a struggle for democracy as an attempt to manipulate the elections through an extra-parliamentary show of strength.

Under the constitution, each government at the end of its time in office must hand over to a "neutral" interim administration, whose task is to oversee the elections and update the electoral register. This usually provokes a period of opposition protests, as the incumbents try to pack these bodies with undercover supporters.

Two major parties dominate Bangladesh politics. The Bangladesh National Party – or BNP – is a right wing party, supported by big business, and traditional Islamic forces. It was founded by prominent military figures before transforming itself into a civilian party. Both the US and the



hegemonic regional power, India, support the BNP. It has also attracted several militant Islamist organisations to its side, some of which have been accused of provoking and organising political and religious violence against rivals and the Hindu minority.

The Awami League is also a bourgeois party, but its mass base is drawn from sections of the Bangladeshi working class and the poorer peasants. It passes for a left-wing, secular organisation, with reformist policies. It promises to alleviate conditions for the poor. However, it does not deliver. Its corruption in office between 1997 and 2001 saw it rapidly lose popular support. Then it used repressive measures and thuggery against its opponents. Bangladeshi journalists were brutally attacked for criticising Awami League politicians. In 2001 it suffered a landslide election defeat.

The Awami League has used its years in opposition to rebuild its relationship with the masses. If returned to power, however, there is little likelihood it will behave any differently to the way it did in the 1990s.

As long as the Awami League retains its hold on the masses, this cycle will continue to turn: corruption of the new government, followed by disillusionment of the

masses, followed by populist mobilisations by the opposition, bringing the government to near-collapse, again. The army is then called in to maintain "order" on the streets. The workers and peasants of Bangladesh need to break out of this cycle.

The working class must come onto the political scene as an independently organised force, if the ongoing poverty and economic misery of the majority is to be reversed. The Workers Party of Bangladesh and the Communist Party of Bangladesh not only have a deep rooted Islamophobic political approach, which alienates Muslims workers in Bangladesh, they also play second fiddle to the Awami League, subordinating the struggle for socialism to a parliamentary electoral alliance and popular front government.

Only a revolutionary party can rally the forces in Bangladesh that will be able to fight against poverty and the international policies of the imperialists, which further immiserate the masses. Workers, farmers and youth have no interest in preserving the capitalist system in Bangladesh and the continued power games of the existing parties. They should organise to build a new revolutionary party, one that fights for the interests of the poorest

and most oppressed sections in Bangladesh, not for the personal ambitions of one family of politicians against another.

A new political organisation armed with a bold political programme and based on directly accountable leaders developed from the masses' struggle, could not only clear out the old corrupt elites, but also smash the inherently corrupt political structures they rest on. Armed with a revolutionary action programme a new party could lead the workers and toiling masses to resolving the woes of the crisis-ridden Bangladesh economy in their own interests once and for all, by tackling the capitalist system that causes these crises. Such a programme must also break the country's subordination to imperialism, declare war on the big landowners and call the rural poor to an agrarian revolution.

It must deal with the crisis of the country's "bourgeois democracy" by calling for a sovereign constituent assembly to sweep away the corrupt alternation between the left and right wings of the bourgeoisie. The workers and peasants should insist such an assembly strips the big landowners and capitalists of their property, and launches a massive programme of public works aimed at creating a modern infrastructure - drainage and flood defence, electrification, housing, school and hospital building.

The heroic struggles of the dockers, and the women workers in the textile industry, in particular, indicate that the working class can and will fight. The main problem is a crisis of the leadership at a trade union and political level. The trade unions need independence of all capitalist parties, and the working class needs to build a new, revolutionary party. Any such party should immediately set out to find co-thinkers in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, to establish with them a common organisation to fight for a socialist federation of the sub-continent.

## MIDDLE EAST

# Palestine slides into civil war

The past two months have seen the worst Palestinian in-fighting for decades. The attempted assassination of Prime Minister Ismail Haniya and the spate of attacks on members of Fateh and Hamas, argues *Simon Hardy*, mark a dangerous turn

With dozens dead and hundreds injured, recent clashes between Fateh and Hamas have threatened to escalate into civil war. Security forces loyal to Fateh have fought with Hamas militias and special operation units that patrol much of the Gaza Strip against a backdrop of appalling social conditions. The quality of life in Gaza has dropped dramatically since the West imposed sanctions after the election of Hamas.

The US and EU claims this is in response to Hamas refusing to disarm its militia and not recognising right of the Israeli state to exist. In reality it exposes the hypocrisy of the imperialists, who claim to want to spread democracy in the Middle East, but in reality only if the people elect leaders the US and EU approve of.

## FATEH LEADERS' BETRAYAL OF THE PALESTINIANS

Fateh's leaders have sold out the Palestinian struggle. Instead of aiming to lead a militant mass movement against the Israeli occupation, they have opted to share power with it. They plot against Hamas in order to remove them as an obstacle to continuing the so-called peace process. Playing the old game of divide and rule, the US and Israel are using Fateh as a proxy to defeat Hamas.

Israel's plan to dismantle the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising, becomes clearer as the months go by. It will allow a Palestinian statelet in Gaza and what is left of the West Bank. It will be surrounded by Israeli forces, which will maintain complete military control of the region. Within this statelet there will be a Fateh-dominated government, with security forces armed and trained by the US, Israel and the conservative Arab states.

The talks between Fateh and Hamas to form a unity government in 2006 failed, mainly due US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice's pressure on Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to terminate the discussions. The internecine conflict in the Gaza



Strip began shortly afterwards. Masked gunmen started to attack first Fateh, then Hamas members and leaders. Neither side claimed responsibility, but quickly blamed each other, resulting in armed clashes and demonstrations by each faction.

US military advisors have been nurturing a Palestinian praetorian guard named Force 17, training it in street fighting and counter-terrorism. It is ready to be deployed, not against the Israeli army, which currently exercises its right to kill Palestinian children at will, but against fellow Palestinians. Last week the US agreed to give \$80 million to the Fateh-led security forces, a move clearly designed to buy their services and to use them in this "war on terror".

Not all Fateh leaders and members support this course of action. However, Israel will use every trick in the book to divide the Palestinian resistance fighters. The question is; who benefits from these anonymous killings?

Hamas is trying to move towards respectable constitutional politics.

Its position is precarious enough without an assassination programme against its rivals. Fateh also has much to lose. Hamas' star is rising; people supported it against Fateh in the elections because they saw the old administration and government as corrupt and self-serving. Even if Fateh defeated Hamas militarily, it would be left with little support amongst the wider population.

The Israelis of course have everything to gain. It is not unheard of for Mossad and Shin Bet agents to carry out political assassinations. But the more immediate question is: what support do the Zionists have within the Palestinian government and state apparatus itself?

## THUG-IN-CHIEF

For the Palestinians the rot starts at the top. Mohammed Dahlan, currently head of Gaza's security forces, is an enforcer for the imperialists. He was leader of Fateh's youth movement in the 1980s, and came to the attention of the West as one of the strongest advocates of the Oslo accords. After they were

signed, Arafat sent him to Gaza to head up a new security force to enforce the sell-out, by targeting and attacking organisations like Hamas. He now enjoys all the trappings of any corrupt bureaucrat in power: expensive cars, bodyguards, plush hotel rooms and shady business interests.

Dahlan's security services are implicated in human rights abuses, and he was once regarded as the man that Israel could rely on to take over, if Arafat could not be contained. Arafat's death in 2004 and the subsequent election of Abbas have increased his importance.

Hamas believe Dahlan was behind the attempted assassination of Prime Minister Haniya in December, and is planning a bid for power. If he were to succeed and persecute Palestinian militants in the aftermath, then it would signal a further demobilisation of the Palestinians' national liberation struggle.

## FREEDOM FOR PALESTINE!

The in-fighting plays straight into the hands of the Zionists, dividing the Palestinians and distracting world attention from their suffering.

Equally forgotten are the six million Palestinian refugees, many living and dying in refugee camps in the surrounding Arab states. They justly claim the right to return home to the land that was stolen from them by the Zionists, but any two state solution leaves them with nowhere to go. What is clear is that Fateh cannot lead the Palestinians in a struggle for their liberation. The current situation is the logical conclusion of their refusal to fight for what is necessary, not just what US imperialism will allow.

The Palestinian struggle is suffering from an acute crisis of leadership. The corruption of Fateh's leading faction has led it to offer its services to Israel and her imperialist backers. Hamas' Islamism has also led it down the cul de sac of reformism, desperate for an illusory, peaceful stage of development in a Palestinian statelet. The Palestinians need to create a new leadership, a mass revolutionary workers' party, in order to fight its way out of this impasse.

## MIDDLE EAST

# Iraq: American 'surge' will end in disaster

Twenty-one thousand extra US troops will fail to conquer Iraq, writes *Jeremy Dewar*. This "one last push" is dividing politicians on both sides of the Atlantic and creating space for the antiwar movement to grow

Last November George W Bush received a thumping rejection of his war on Iraq in the mid-term elections. In January he sent 21,500 more troops into battle. This is what democracy looks like.

This new policy - a "surge", or "one last push" - enjoys support of just 36 per cent of Americans. Bush own approval rating is only 33 per cent, the third lowest in history. But Bush remains president and commander-in-chief. He even sacked his leading generals in Iraq - George Casey and John Abizaid - because they disagreed with the troop increase.

## One last push

Four thousand marines will go to Anbar province to quell the Sunniled resistance, but the majority will be directed to a third attempt to control the capital. Their mission will be to disarm the militias, which currently rule Baghdad. To do this, US generals have come up with a seven-point plan

1. Seal off districts
2. Move in and disarm the militia
3. Set up posts in districts
4. Put up checkpoints, restrict civilian movements, issue ID cards
5. Draw up census of inhabitants
6. Create jobs programme
7. Expand operation to neighbouring area

Up to now US forces have seized towns or districts and moved on. Resistance fighters simply reappeared once the occupiers had gone. The new plan is designed to prevent that.

It has two main flaws. First, there are insufficient troops to take control of Baghdad, a city of six million people. Second, it is relies on the Iraqi police and army leading the fighting. But the police and army are totally unreliable.

In fact, the US will have to

take the lead, and that means indiscriminate artillery fire into densely populated areas and the cutting off electricity and water supplies, which happened in the Battle for Haifa Street. For every insurgent killed, two more will be recruited.

The US is targeting Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. In January it claimed to have captured 16 commanders, including a "senior death squad leader" (though this has been denied). Six hundred Mahdi Army members await trial. But the US will not succeed.

The Mahdi Army is estimated to be 100,000 strong, with 60,000 adherents in Sadr City alone. Its soldiers will almost certainly hide their weapons and uniforms before the US soldiers get near them. But the Mahdi Army defends the Shia community from the US and sectarian Sunni killers, despite its reactionary imposition of sharia law, ensuring it has massive support.

## Out of control

The surge is also destabilising the region. Within hours of Bush proclaiming that "we'll interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks", US soldiers raided Iranian government offices in Irbil, confiscating computers and arresting officials. Further and more serious conflicts could arise, as Iraqi Shia look to Iran for military and financial support against the occupation.

Meanwhile, Turkey claiming that PKK guerillas had infiltrated a refugee camp in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, and called on US troops to raid it. When they did, neither weapons nor explosives were found.

Turkey, a US ally, is keen to stop the oil city of Kirkuk voting to become part of the semi-autonomous Kurdish region later this year because it fears an eco-



nomic viable Kurdish state on its border. Its Parliament even debated invading Iraq last month (Turkey massed 250,000 troops on the border in July). Given 30,000 people have perished in Turkey's repressive war against the Kurds, this is no idle threat.

At the same time, the US is training and financing Fatah's armed wing in an attempt to foment civil war in Palestine, and waging a war by proxy in Somalia (see pages 19 and 21). Unable to conquer the Middle East in the short term, Washington is stirring it up, so that imperialism can, at a later stage, assert its will.

## Thieves fall out

All this has opened up serious divisions within the US/UK coalition. Margaret Beckett wants British soldiers to hand control of Basra to the Iraqi police in the spring, reduce troop numbers by 3,000 in the summer, and vacate the UK army base in Shaibah, south of Basra. This runs completely counter to the US surge. But British generals, not to mention Labour's electoral base, are demanding it.

Bush has also lost control of the Congress and Senate. Even worse, senior - and until now pro-war - Republicans have defected. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted down Bush's plan, and Edward Kennedy has drafted a bill requiring him to get Congress approval. Most damaging of all,

Republican hawk John Warner is pushing the Senate to pass the most critical statement yet on the war.

## One last push

It is vital that we seize on the war-mongers' difficulties. Beckett, Kennedy and Warner are not anti-imperialists. They merely want imperialism to achieve its ends by other means, not even, necessarily, less violent means. That is why, in the end, they will not inflict a damaging defeat on their armed forces.

The working class and oppressed people around the world, on the other hand, have a direct interest in the defeat of the US and British armies: so they cannot be redeployed in Afghanistan; so head off an attack on Iran, so everyone fighting neoliberalism - from Texas to Taiwan - is encouraged.

On 27 January, tens of thousands marched across the USA; on 24 February, a river of protesters will flow through London; in March, many other demos are planned. These mobilisations must form the basis for direct action to force the imperialists to immediately withdraw their troops.

Disrupt the supply of weapons and troops. Encourage rank and file soldiers to disobey illegal and immoral orders. Mount political strikes and student walkouts against the war. Turn the imperialist war into a class war to abolish the capitalist system that breeds conflict between nations.

## AFRICA

# US and Ethiopia – out of Somalia!

At the end of last year, Ethiopian tanks rolled onto the streets of Mogadishu. *Simon Hardy* makes the connection between this and the USA's quest for global domination

The US air strikes on Somalia on Tuesday 9 January represented an escalation of the imperialist warmongers' penetration of Eastern Africa. They had recently strongly supported, if not instigated the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December, which drove the Islamist forces from Mogadishu. Now they have decided to harass the fallback positions and line of retreat of the United Islamic Courts (UIC).

UIC forces are still resisting the US backed Transitional Federal Government and the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism. The latter was set up by warlords and businessmen to "preserve order" in collusion with the CIA, which has been funding it to the tune of \$150,000 a month. What has provoked this major US intervention?

The immediate cause was the collapse of transitional government and the ignominious defeat of the Alliance at the hands of the Islamist in June 2006. The UIC continued to hold power in Mogadishu and much of Somalia until 24 December 2006. Then up to 15,000 Ethiopian troops invaded, after being given the green light to do so by the US state department.

## Ethiopian gendarme

Ethiopia has one of the largest armed forces in Africa with around 200,000 soldiers. It has been strongly funded, equipped and trained by the USA since 1994. The US and its European allies are training it as a regional gendarme to guard the interests of imperialism in the impoverished region.

The UIC was easily driven out of Mogadishu. However, they have now turned to a guerrilla war to carry on the struggle against the government, the Ethiopian military, the US air force and military advisors. The US has sent several ships, including the US aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower, to the coast of Somalia, to carry out what it calls anti-terror operations.

The media will portray this as "just another" African war, using racist insinuations that it is the fault of Africans themselves that

they live in perpetual conflict. Socialists must point out that the real cause of so much of fighting is the division of the continent by the colonialist west into states and protectorates. The Somali people were subject to invasion, occupation and control by the French, British and Italians. In every decade since then more interventions have followed.

## Al-Qa'ida fantasy

The USA has sought to justify its actions within the framework of anti-terrorism and, since 2001, as part of its war on terror. It claims that the UIC has links to Al-Qa'ida: in particular to an Al-Qa'ida cell responsible for the 1998 attacks on US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, which killed over 250 people and wounded thousands of others. The UIC has vigorously denied this.

Before you just think, "they would, wouldn't they?" – this denial is backed up by former US ambassador and special envoy to Somalia, Dan Simpson: "The idea that Mogadishu is a nest of al-Qa'ida adherents is a fantasy sold to the United States by clever Somali warlords, always adept at working scams to get money for arms." The claims that the US AC-130 gun ships are taking out al-Qa'ida operatives, in other words, is a cynical lie. In fact dozens of civilians have been killed.

The UIC is in fact a military and

political coalition of various Islamic courts, each court with a militia attached to it, responsible for administering justice and implementing the sharia law. The declared political aim of the organisation is to restore order in the conflict-ridden nation.

However, no serious commentators regarded the entire UIC as militant jihadists on the Bin Laden or Iranian model. It was the uniting of these militias into a national organisation that might be able to challenge the transitional government that started the chain of events leading to the Ethiopian invasion.

## Armed globalisation

The US backed take-over is, of course, closely related to the war on terror. Not, of course, to a real global conflict with a sinister terrorist network, but to a war to ensure a new American century, to establish an empire, which is the armoured fist of globalisation.

That is why the US has taken such a keen interest in the situation in Somalia. Still smarting from defeat that Hezbollah inflicted on its Middle East gendarme, Israel, in Lebanon, and plotting the next major strike against the Iran, it sees defeating the Somali UIC as a proxy blow at Iran and Hezbollah. This is, as the Pentagon puts it, "the long war".

To impose the rule of US finance capital, a string of American air and

naval bases, strategically placed across the continents, are poised to intimidate all potentially rebellious countries. They are ready for the use of regional task forces to carry out punitive raids as well as more long-term occupations.

In late 2002 the USA stationed the 1,800-strong "Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa" in one such strategic centre at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti. It also hosts large French air and ground forces and a German naval base. The US gives more aid to Djibouti than to any other country in sub-Saharan Africa.

The working class movement worldwide must condemn the intervention of the US and its Ethiopian allies in Somalia. The Somali government is simply a US puppet. Undoubtedly, the people of Somalia will rise in resistance to this occupation of their country. This is a just struggle for national freedom. We must support resistance to it unconditionally, even if this comes from UIC Islamists or "tribal warlords".

We must do so despite the fact that their political and social programme would be a reactionary, blind alley for Somalis. The real progressive solution is for the Somali working class and rural and urban poor, to unite in a revolutionary communist party. But such a party can only be built through the struggle to expel imperialism and its agents from the country.



Islamist fighters in Somalia

## AUSTRIA

# New coalition government is a betrayal by social democracy

The return of the Social Democratic Party to government has led to demonstrations and confrontations with its own supporters. *Michael Pröbsting* reports

In January the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) agreed to form a new government. In itself this is nothing surprising. Most people expected it and similar coalitions have governed Austria for most of the post-war period.

But then something very unusual happened. In the days before the inauguration there was a public outcry against the programme of the new government. On the day of the inauguration itself several thousand gathered at Ballhausplatz, outside the official residence of the chancellor and the president, and heckled the new ministers crossing the square.

Of course we couldn't stop the inauguration but the whole country felt that an opposition to this ruling class government was already forming on the streets. Opinion polls showed that never before had a new government so little popular confidence. A week later 4,000 students took to the streets of Vienna, Graz and Linz to protest against the decision to maintain university fees.

What caused these surprising events? First and foremost the open and shameless betrayal by the leadership of the SPÖ of all its election pledges. They won the elections (in fact they lost votes, but fewer than the open bourgeois party, the ÖVP, which lost 8% of their votes) thanks to their promise to repeal the worst attacks on social welfare, public services and education over the last six years. Most explicitly they promised to abolish university fees, to cancel the contract to buy expensive, new warplanes, and to increase pensions and social welfare.

But it rapidly became clear that the SPÖ had not fulfilled a single one of these promises. The new government's programme is nakedly the continuation of that of the former right wing government. Former finance minister, Karl-Heinz Grasser, expressed his total satisfaction with the new government: "This programme is



Youth on the march to defend free education

excellent because it is the continuation of the Wende". The expression Wende (turn) is mediaspeak means neoliberalism.

To add insult to injury the SPÖ leadership also agreed to hand over all the most important ministries to the conservative party: the Finance, Economy and Labour, Interior, and Foreign Ministries. The "winners" of the election turned out to be the losers of the coalition negotiations - big time.

These events have enormously discredited Social Democracy and its leader Dr Alfred Gusenbauer. The most popular slogan at the demonstrations was the old communist slogan "Wer hat uns verraten? Sozialdemokraten" ("Who has betrayed us? Social Democrats"), now chanted by members of the social democratic members! Workers and, particularly, youth outside and inside the party have risen up against the party leadership.

All this happens against the background the SPÖ adapting, more and more, to the neoliberal model of capitalism. Symbolically the last two chairmen of the party went on to become chief executives in multinational corporations. The influence of the trade unions have been

reduced and, since 1990, the party has lost half its membership.

## Where next?

But the January Days have ended now without concrete results. The reason for this is a twofold crisis of leadership: in the trade unions, and in the party's youth and student organisations. On one hand the trade union bureaucracy - closely linked to the SPÖ - hopes for a more prominent role in policy making after the dog days of exclusion during the past six years of right wing government. At its recent congress in January it suppressed all criticism and hailed the new government.

The union bureaucracy itself is massively discredited among its membership since it scandalously lost the unions' entire financial reserves, including its strike funds, thanks to the financial speculation of its bank. This had now had to be sold off to a US hedge fund called Cerberus, headed by George Bush's former finance minister!

On the other hand the official leadership of the university students and youth (mostly Social Democratic and Green Party youth organisations) has no interest in building a mass protest movement

- demonstrations, strikes and occupations - involving their members together with workers in the trade unions. The Social Democratic youth leaders prefer to build a left wing inside the party to get more posts in the future, while the university student union tops only want to use the protests to gain votes in the May elections to the student parliament.

ArbeiterInnenstandpunkt, the Austrian section of the League for the Fifth International, and Revolution, the socialist youth group, have been at the heart of the protest movement. Our well-organised and militant contingent got massive publicity in the bourgeois media. (For pictures look at our home page [www.arbeiterinnenstandpunkt.net](http://www.arbeiterinnenstandpunkt.net).) We sold more than 130 papers and made a number of new contacts.

Revolution published an Open Letter to the Social Democratic youth, calling for the independence of the youth organisations from the party (see [www.revolution-austria.at](http://www.revolution-austria.at)). We argued for unity between university students, school students and workers, and in favour of joint demonstrations, strikes and occupations. The time has now come to call for a new party of the workers and youth, and to agitate for concrete steps to build it.

The January Days have opened a new political phase in Austria. The neoliberalisation of the SPÖ has now been demonstrated for all to see, and provoked mass demonstrations. Though the first cycle of protests seems to be over, it is clear that this will be a weak and discredited government from the very beginning.

Combined with this, there are clear signs that the militant left wing of Social Democracy, especially its youth, can be broken from the party and won to the project of building a new workers' party. The coming months and years are sure to provide plenty of opportunities for revolutionaries to fight alongside these activists, and others outside the SPÖ's ranks and help them to complete their break with reformism and win them to revolutionary socialism.

# WHAT WE STAND FOR

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

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

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

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

We fight racism and national oppres-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)

## ★ Fighting Fund ★

Over the last month our Fighting Fund has grown to £465. Thanks go to the Leeds branch for raising £60 from donations and takings at and festive social, £30 from a cake sale. London branch also celebrated the season with supporters, collecting £17 in a raffle.

Thanks also to a comrade who donated £17.50 from a car boot sale.

Now that the winter break is over Workers Power activists and supporters are getting stuck into campaigns to defeat the Labour government's attacks on the NHS, and occupations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Ireland. This is the year

Bomber Blair leaves Downing Street - let's make his departure a swift and unplanned exit. Revolution, the socialist youth organisation is organising a conference in February, which Workers Power is helping to build. One of the guest speakers is a member of the L51 in Germany who will be speaking on the anti-G8 mobilisations there over the summer. The League will be mobilising activists from across the continent to protest, so we urge all our readers to donate to the fighting fund and help us get as big a mobilisation as possible (and also come yourselves!).

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## Marxism, nationalisation and expropriation

By Richard Brenner

Communists fight for the nationalisation of the major corporations. This means expropriating (taking away the property of) the banks, finance companies, landowners and the key industries, including transport, energy, food, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, construction, media, telecommunications and armaments ("defence").

In place of private ownership of these enterprises in a chaotic and unequal market system, we want a democratic plan of production, in which all resources of the world, including human labour, are allocated rationally according to the will of the people. Then we will really be able to produce for human need, not greed. In this way poverty and exploitation can be abolished, and a sustainable economy created to minimise the impact of climate change.

So, if these key enterprises are to be taken from private hands and subjected to democratic control, who will own them? In the legal sense there is only one alternative to private ownership – and that is public ownership. These corporations will have to be owned by the state.

Here it is essential to distinguish the type of state ownership that communists want from the types of nationalisation that have happened under capitalist governments in the past. This was well explained by Leon Trotsky in his *Transitional Programme* of 1938, in which he set out the differences between communist policy and, what he called, "the muddleheaded reformist slogan of 'nationalisation'".

For Trotsky, expropriation was distinct from nationalisation. First, it absolutely rejects giving compensation to the bosses. Second, socialists should call for workers' control over state owned industries. He warned the people against reformist or populist leaders who, "giving lip service to nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital". He emphasised the importance of the masses of working class people relying on their own strength, not the promises of their leaders. Finally, he linked up the question of expropriating industry to the need for the working class to seize political power and to create a state of our own – a state completely different from the capitalist state.

In short, Trotsky made it clear that communists demand nationalisation under workers' control without compensation. Crucially, this must be linked with the fight for workers' revolution and a democratically

planned economy. We raise this demand not only for all the major corporations, but also wherever employers claims their business is failing and that they need to sack workers or cut their pay.

For years the very question of nationalisation seemed miles away from reality. After all, globalisation has seen capitalist governments around the world not nationalising private property, but the opposite. They have been privatising state property, opening up crucial services and resources, like water, health and education to the dictates of profit and corporate greed.

Yet nationalisation has now come back onto the agenda. In the West, privatisation of services, like healthcare and railways, has become deeply unpopular, as hundreds of

### In short, Trotsky made it clear that communists demand nationalisation under workers' control without compensation

thousands see just how chaotic and inefficient it can be to run basic services for profit instead of for people. And for the first time in years, a government has taken power – in Venezuela – and actually proposes not to privatise, but to nationalise major industries and farms, taking them into state ownership.

Whenever workers have resisted privatisation, as in the wave of protests against sell offs, cuts and PFI privatisation rip-offs in the NHS, the capitalists reply by pointing to two things: the "high cost" of public services which "lose millions every week", and the widespread inefficiency in many, if not all state-owned enterprises.

The first argument is a fraud – it treats funds invested in public services as if they are simply being thrown away simply because no private profit is made on them. This is described by the capitalist press and politicians as losing money, regardless of the social need to which it responds. Then, when governments try to force state owned enterprises to turn a profit by competing with privately owned businesses, they have to – surprise, surprise – cut costs, hold down wages, slash services and so on.

As for inefficiency, it is certainly true that capitalist states tend to run public enterprises very badly indeed. But the way to tackle this is not to sell everything off to big business. It is to place management and control in the hands of democratic committees of the workers and users themselves – the very people who have a direct interest in making sure everything runs as smoothly as possible.

When capitalist governments carry out nationalisations, they do so for one or more of the following three reasons

- To rescue a business that cannot be allowed to collapse for "national reasons" – this is why the Conservative government of Edward Heath nationalised Rolls Royce in the early 1970s
- Under huge pressure from the mass of the working class, as a concession to the workers and a way of retaining overall control – this is what happened in western Europe at the end of the second world war, resulting in the creation of the welfare state, including the NHS in Britain
- When a semi-colonial capitalist country – like the Egypt of General Nasser in the 1950s or Venezuela under Hugo Chávez today – tries to develop its economy independently, and to free itself from the pressure of the big imperialist powers, like the USA and Britain.

In these situations, communists do not simply stand on the sidelines criticising. We support nationalisation, but always point out the limitations of what the capitalist governments are doing, and always press forward demands in the interests of the working class and a socialist transformation of society.

So, in the case of the NHS, we oppose privatisation and call for the scrapping of PFI, the abolition of the so-called internal market and the nationalisation of all private healthcare. But that's not all. We insist that there must be no compensation for the bosses and we demand control and management of the NHS – not by armies of clip-board carrying bureaucrats on huge salaries, but by elected committees of healthcare workers and local communities. Likewise, in Venezuela we support nationalisation but also fight for workers and peasants' control.

Above all, communists always link the fight for expropriation of particular industries with the need to expropriate the capitalist class as a whole. Because, as Leon Trotsky put it, state ownership will produce favourable results "only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the toilers".