

workers power

Summer 2007 • Price £1 / €1.50 Issue 317

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

After the coronation...

INSIDE:

- World economy heading for crisis?
- Break the blockade of Gaza!
- Protests at the G8
- Postal strike: where next?



TOPPLE BROWN!

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League for the
Fifth International

EDITORIAL

UNION RANK AND FILE MUST ORGANISE INDEPENDENTLY

One hundred and fifty thousand postal workers struck, paralysing Britain's mail collection and delivery network and shutting down 465 crown post offices, on Friday 29 June. Further strikes are likely in July. Earlier this year, 250,000 civil servants staged two one-day walkouts.

Teachers will also ballot for industrial action in September, as may local authority workers, while Unison has told its members in the NHS to prepare for national action. As in the ongoing strikes, the workers' grievances centre on Brown's 2 per cent pay limit (in reality a pay cut, as inflation is currently running at 4.8 per cent), job cuts, privatisation and the slashing of services.

The possibility of uniting the public sector disputes is clear. If the unions called all their members out together and stayed out until each sector had won; if they championed solidarity committees to draw in service user groups, anti-cuts campaigns and private sector unions; if they defied the anti-union laws that the employers would inevitably resort to; then we could deliver to Gordon Brown a "great, big clunking fist" of our own.

So why do these "ifs" sound like pie in the sky? Because of the record of those who lead our trade unions. Brown announced his 2 per cent public sector pay limit on 1 March. Yet four months later, only two unions have taken any action. Strike ballots and talk of joint action remain, for the most part, promises.

In fact, the pro-Labour union leaders are deliberately stringing out their ballots and strikes in order to avoid unity on the picket line. They put the smooth running of Gordon Brown's first 100 days in office way above the need to defend their own members' jobs, pay and conditions. It is only pressure from below – expressed in union conference after conference – that has forced Unison's Dave Prentis, Unite's Tony Woodley and teachers' leader Steve Sinnott of the NUT to go this far.

Fan club for left officials?

The problem is that the rank and file of the unions have no effective mechanism for keeping up this pressure, or of over-riding the officials, should they backslide or break their mandates. Two initiatives have been set up in the last 9 months to try and solve this problem: Organising for Fighting Unions, launched by Respect last November, and the National Shop Stewards Network, the brainchild of the RMT rail workers' union, whose founding conference takes place on 7 July.

The political groups most closely involved in these efforts are the Communist Party of Britain, Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party. All have a long track record of trade union activity. And all share a mistaken method of how to organise grassroots activists: primarily as

supporters of left wing officials.

The CPB, which influences leaders like Bob Crow of the RMT, believes that we need a new Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trade Unions, which regularly held conferences of up to 1,000 workplace reps in the 1970s. In 1972 it helped secure the release of the Pentonville Five – dockers imprisoned for leading unlawful strikes.

But the LCDTU only took up campaigns supported by "fiery" leaders, like Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones, and never crossed swords with these left Labour bureaucrats. This left rank and file militants defenceless against the 1974-79 Labour government's policy of pay cuts and the incorporation of the shop stewards into management structures, both of which Scanlon and Jones supported.

Post Worker often gives Billy Hayes a prominent column and never criticises him, despite the fact that his misleadership has led to tens of thousands of job cuts

The "Founding Basis" of the shop stewards' network says, "It would not encroach on the established organisation and recruitment activity or interfere in the internal affairs and elections of TUC affiliated trade unions or the functions of the TUC." The network would support official "campaigns and industrial disputes... existing workplace committees and trades councils", but no mention is made of initiating actions or organisations.

But what if the officials are refusing to launch campaigns and disputes, as is the case with the NHS crisis? What if new, dynamic organisations need to be founded, like solidarity groups or strike committees, to overcome the bureaucratic inertia of the officials? Why should a shop stewards' movement not campaign to oust rotten sell-out merchants in elections and replace them with class fighters?

These are not oversights or omissions by Bob Crow and the RMT executive. They are deliberate attempts to protect the officials – left as well as right wing – from "interference" from below. We urge delegates to the conference to repeal these clauses as a matter of urgency.

But what of self-proclaimed revolutionaries, like the Socialist Workers Party? Organising for Fighting Unions and the SWP-controlled *Post Worker* newspaper have a similar approach. Although delegates to the OFFU conference criticised union leaders for selling out on pensions, guest speaker PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka was never asked to account for his own role in calling off strikes and signing the divisive pensions framework agreement without balloting his members.

Post Worker often gives CWU general secretary Billy Hayes a prominent column and never criticises him, despite the fact that his misleadership has led to tens of thousands of job cuts in Royal Mail. Strangely for a so-called campaigning newspaper, *Post Worker* has never actually launched a campaign of its own.

The Socialist Party is even worse. It instructed its members on union executives to vote for the pensions sell-out and against putting the offer to a membership ballot. The hallmark of the SP's union work is that its radical opposition to the existing leadership fades whenever its members get to the top table. Once there, they dare not break rank with the other bureaucrats for fear of losing their positions. The caste spirit of the union bureaucracy is incredible: they have their disputes alright, but "never in front of the members".

Rank and file movement

What we need is a complete break with this tradition of cheerleading for the left wing officials. Bob Crow, Mark Serwotka, Billy Hayes and Matt Wrack of the FBU have all refused to break rank with the TUC right at crucial moments. We need a rank and file movement of all those shop stewards who really fight to defend their members and recruit to the union. We need to make unionisation drives and militant struggle central to attract the more radical layers of workers – the young, the less well paid, the migrants.

Of course a rank and file movement cannot be indifferent to who holds important positions in the union. Thus it should stand candidates in union elections on a clear programme for democratic reform and militant action.

The former means regular election of all union officials: all officials to be instantly recallable by a simple majority; all officials to be paid the average wage of the members; all disputes, strikes and negotiations to be under the democratic control of those in dispute through mass meetings and the election of strike committees. We will still need full time organisers, researchers and administrators, but we do not need a bureaucracy. It must be liquidated.

The latter means that the rank and file movement should not just support the officials when they call action, but prepare the membership to take action without and even against the leaders, should they fail to fight.

Fifth International

Journal of the League for the Fifth International £2 +3 \$5



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OUT NOW!

The summer issue of our journal, *Fifth International*, is now available. Since the appearance of the last issue of Fifth International in February events have continued to bear out the perspectives of our tendency; the world situation is one of mounting instability, caused both by attacks by the ruling class and stiffened resistance from those coming under attack. The third element of the situation is a severe crisis of leadership within the resistance movements.

In this South Asia special, Luke Cooper examines the background to the mass opposition to the regime of Pervez Musharraf, while Simon Hardy looks at the underlying reasons for the renewed war in Sri Lanka, and how a new strategy is needed if the Tamils are to win their freedom and link up with the workers of the majority community fighting back against neoliberalism.

There's plenty here also for those attending the anti-G8 protests. Martin Suchanek looks at how German imperialism is planning to take the lead in getting the project of an imperialist superstate back on the rails. Dave Stockton traces the mounting crisis of the anticapitalist movement and what measures are needed to overcome it.

We also publish extended reviews on Marta Harnecker's *Rebuilding the left*, a book on the Latin American movements and Sheila Cohen's *Ramparts of resistance*, which chronicles the ups and downs of the American and British trade unions. Shorter reviews of the anthology, *100 Years of Permanent Revolution: Results and Prospects*, and Timothy Cheek's *Living with Reform: China since 1989* are also included.

NEWS IN BRIEF

BOMBS IN GLASGOW AND LONDON

As we go to press, it appears that terrorist bomb attacks nearly succeeded in Glasgow and London. If the police are right and these were the acts of a jihadist cell, then, no matter the motive, they expose the reactionary nature of its strategy.

Airport workers, holidaymakers and nightclubbers would have been killed. Far from speeding the withdrawal of British troops, it would have given Gordon Brown popular backing to extend the occupations.

The attack will almost certainly see a rise in attacks on Muslims, both verbal and physical, thanks to the media's equation of terrorism with Islam. From *The Sun* to *The Guardian*, the spotlight fell on all British Muslims, although none of the detainees were British.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith wasted no time putting the policy of 28-day detention without trial back on the agenda. Again, this would target antiwar activists and ethnic minorities as the police trawled for information and intimidated opponents of Britain's wars.

Of course, a few bombs in Britain cannot compare to the daily carnage in Baghdad, Basra and Helmand (where a US bomb killed 25 Afghans just a week before). But individual terrorism is not the answer. Instead, we must redouble our efforts to get the troops out now, oppose all forms of Islamophobia and defend our civil liberties.

FLOOD: ACT OF GOD OR CAPITALISM?

June saw some of the worst floods in over a century. Seven died; 27,000 homes were flooded. Costs are running at over £1 billion and many are uninsured for such "acts of God".

And the floods are indeed God's judgment, according to Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle. "We are reaping the consequences of our moral degradation, as well as the environmental damage that we have caused."

If a deadly sin does lie behind the floods, however, it is avarice. A year ago Gordon Brown slashed the flood defences budget by £15 million. In deluged Yorkshire, six schemes have been postponed.

Once again behind a "natural disaster" lies not the imaginary hand of God but the blind rush for profit. A harsh judgment needs to be passed on this system: for God's sake, go and make way for something better - socialism.

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LABOUR PARTY

Brown turns to the right

Britain's most powerful union barons believe they have secured, in Gordon Brown, a more sympathetic leader than Tony Blair. But the new premier immediately appointed the former heads of the CBI and Metropolitan Police and Royal Navy as ministers and advisors. So who will Brown serve – the bosses or the workers? *Jeremy Dewar* asks the questions

The media dubbed it a coronation, and so it appeared. Labour's Manchester conference with a gigantic union jack as a backdrop was a regal, even an imperial affair. In the Commons, Gordon Brown praised Blair's achievements as "unprecedented, historic and enduring". The only intrusion of reality came from the shouts and chanting of demonstrators in Whitehall from Stop the War and Military Families against the War. These were clearly audible as Blair said his farewells and Brown his hellos outside Number 10.

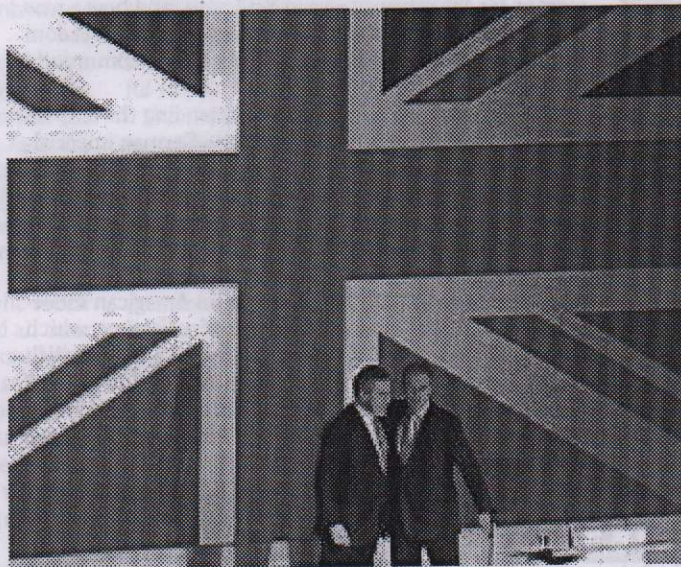
Brown took every occasion to hawk his sanctimonious Christian morality. He talked about his "moral compass", the values he learned from his father, a minister of the Kirk – "duty, honesty, hard work, family and respect for others." He solemnly pronounced that, as well as policies, the Labour Party "must have a soul".

You would never believe from the fulsome tributes that Blair has lost his party over five million voters between 1997 and 2005, lost Labour overall control of the Welsh Assembly, lost to the Scottish Nationalists in Holyrood, and lost 800 Labour councillors since 2005. Blair's war and occupation of Iraq are seen as morally repugnant by millions, Labour's decimation of public sector pensions, pay, jobs and services likewise.

For this reason, Brown and his team are obliged to present themselves as "new" and a force for "change" – i.e. as a break with Blair. This will be a problem however.

Brown's programme

Let's take Iraq as an example. Gordon Brown himself was silent on the war until pushed on the issue – though he bankrolled every penny for it. So will his premiership see a change of policy? The short answer is, no. The central objectives of seizing Iraqi oil and guarding access to the mineral



Gordon Brown and Tony Blair effect their handover in front of a giant Union Jack. Under Brown, "Britishness" will be a stick with which to beat antiwar Muslims and public sector strikers alike

wealth of the Middle East will remain sacrosanct. Some tactical changes, similar to those under debate in the US congress are, however, possible.

Britain has already started to confine its troops more and more to their barracks, and reduce their number. But in return Brown will continue to build up British forces in Afghanistan and prioritise the war against the Taliban-led coalition. He is also threatening military intervention in Darfur, under cover of humanitarian motives. The bottom line for Brown, as in other areas of policy, is that he will not deviate from the long-term strategic interests of British imperialism – its alliance with the USA.

Brown was quicker to hint at policy changes in the field of public services; indeed, it is here that union leaders hope to win concessions in order to fend off growing anger among public sector workers. In particular, Brown has earmarked housing, education and the NHS for urgent action.

There is, in theory at least, some difference in Brown's approach: "We must win the argument that the

ethic of public services, distinct from the operation of the market, is sufficiently powerful and can be modernised and come alive in this new generation to ensure that public services, with public money well spent, will deliver not only more equitably but more cost effectively than privatisation..." (from a speech to a Compass conference in 2004)

Thus, the announcements that his government will build 200,000 new affordable homes a year, that it will aim to increase funding for children in state education from £5,300 a year to £8,000, i.e. to match the private sector average, that NHS staff will be freed from some central targets and allowed to set their own priorities, have been seized upon by union leaders as a return to "old" Labour.

We should not be fooled however. Brown is not opposed to privatisation; he has given more money to private consortia and contractors than any other politician. By tying all new investment in schools, hospitals and infrastructure to the private finance initiative (PFI) he has poured money into the pock-

ets of the privateers and mortgaged public services to the hilt. Over the next 20 years, an incredible £150 billion will accrue to these fat cats, thanks to PFI.

Brown signed off 700 PFI projects during his first nine years as chancellor, and proposed another 200, worth £26 billion, in last year's budget. The cost to the NHS alone has been £45 billion and 28 per cent fewer beds. And trusts will continue to pay for these facilities for up to 30 years, after which time the buildings and land will revert to the private sector.

The private sector will also be handed the contracts for any house building programme, and those who can (ill) afford mortgages will be prioritised for their occupancy.

In addition, Brown has overseen contracting out of services and initiated over 100,000 job cuts in the civil service, and imposed a real pay cut on all public sector workers by limiting increases to 2 per cent, while inflation is officially running at 4.8 per cent, and nearer to 10 per cent for those on low income. If this is "old" Labour, then it is reminiscent of the last days of Jim Callaghan's government and the "winter of discontent" in 1978-79, not the dream world of Unite and Unison general secretaries, Tony Woodley and Dave Prentis.

In fact Brown has no room to expand public expenditure given his absolute refusal to tax the rich or big business. Indeed he plans to limit public sector spending growth to 2.8 per cent a year from 2008 onwards, down from 4.5 per cent during 2000-7. He may want to cap private sector provision in NHS treatments, but at the expense of cuts and privatisation elsewhere – and, even then, only if the market will bear it. His premiership will be marked by a war against public sector workers and services. Any concessions he makes will be done on the principle of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

We will have to fight tooth and

and snubs union leaders

nail against his administration for any real improvements. With the economy set to stagnate or contract in the near future, last year's 100,000 increase in the number of those living in poverty is likely to be just the start.

In his last budget, Brown cut corporate taxes by 2 per cent and doubled the rate for the lowest paid workers. On his last day at the Treasury, he slashed the budget for English hospitals by a third: £2 billion. These are the actions of a man determined to rule for the super-rich at the expense of the poor.

Paving the way for coalition

"A government of all the talents": this was the soundbite Brown chose to popularise his approach to office. Yet he conspicuously looked only to the ruling class for such "talent". Sir Digby Jones, former head of the bosses' union, the CBI, is the new minister for trade and investment; (retired) Admiral Sir Alan West minister for security; ex-Met chief Lord Stevens, advisor on international security; and Shriti Vadera, a former UBS Warburg banker and privatisation expert, junior minister in the Department of International Trade and Development.

Alan "you're fired" Sugar, Tesco's Terry Leahy and the heads of Vodafone, Rolls Royce and banks, HSBC and Standard Chartered will

also advise the government on the Business Council for Britain. Most provocatively for the unions, private equity asset strippers, like Damon Buffini, who sacked 4,000 AA workers, are also included. Even small businesses have complained that this is a government of and for big business only!

More to the point, amongst all these junior ministers, advisors and experts, there was not a single one from the trade unions! The "talent" Brown wants to incorporate is that used to screw the workers, not represent them.

All these appointments signal Gordon Brown's intention of distancing the Labour government still further from its working class base. But it is the ostentatious reaching out to the Liberal Democrats that most clearly defines his trajectory towards open coalition government. Lady Neuberger, Lord Lester and Shirley Williams have all taken up advisory posts. Brown even offered Paddy Ashdown the portfolio for Northern Ireland.

His contempt for his union backers was shown by the fact that as well as bringing in all these representatives of the bosses he announced the abolition of the union bloc vote on questions of Labour's programme. Although such votes (e.g. on foundation hospitals and tuition fees) were rou-

tinely ignored, the move takes Labour another step away from representing, however inadequately, the trade union leaders and, through them, the working class.

Where next?

Despite all of this, the union leaders, who have championed Gordon Brown for most of the past decade, will not willingly lead a fight against the government. They ceaselessly repeat the mantra that "Labour is the only game in town", that we will only let David Cameron and the Tories in, if we inflict a defeat on Brown.

Labour's links to the working class get weaker and weaker. Only half of the constituency membership (itself more than halved in numbers since 1997) and only 8 per cent of the affiliated members bothered to vote in the deputy leadership contest. The majority of working class voters no longer see Labour as "their" party in any positive sense – rather they see it as the lesser evil. But this too is a dangerous illusion. Brown and Cameron both present equally dangerous 'evils' to the working class.

Brown, with the assistance of the union leaders, can force through cuts in services and wages, if the rank and file of the unions let them get away with it, that demoralise and weaken the working class movement, cuts that under the Tories would lead to a mass revolt. Labour prime minister James Callaghan and chancellor Denis Healy did just this between 1976 and 1979 with the aid of the TUC and its "left" leaders. The result was that the union movement was weakened by collaboration with the government and the bosses and divided in its response to Thatcher in the 1980s, despite heroic battles by the steelworkers, the miners and the printers.

Swallowing attacks from Labour we would fight if they came from the Tories is a strategy tried before, with terrible consequences. A Labour government rules for the capitalist class quite as much as the Tories and not to fight it is to let our enemy win.

A political alternative

But the biggest problem we face today is the absence of a viable working class political alterna-



Workers need to strike hard against Brown's attacks

tive, a real working class party. This situation is thanks in part to the cowardice of the union leaders and their hopeless and hapless faith in Gordon but also to failed and flawed projects aimed at creating an alternative, like the Scottish Socialist Party and Respect.

The real issue is not, Brown or Cameron - which is the lesser evil, but how do we build up the fighting strength of the unions and create a fighting political party for the working class. A movement that can resist and defeat Brown can also see off Cameron too and pose a real alternative, the political power of the working class.

That's why we call on the union leaders and movements like Stop the War to fight every one of Brown's anti-working class measures. We fight for:

- Mass civil disobedience and strike action to get all the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now!
- For a public sector-wide all-out, indefinite strike to smash the 2 per cent real pay cut and defend services!
- For a mass unionisation drive and strike action to secure full citizenship rights for all migrants and an end to the racist immigration controls!

In the course of these battles, Workers Power will continue to urge militants to address the big question of what sort of party we need to replace Labour and how we can build it. We will continue to argue that only a mass revolutionary party will be able to overthrow the capitalist system that Gordon Brown and co. defend, and open the road to international socialism.

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

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POSTAL WORKERS

Strike by CWU shuts

By a CWU workplace rep

The strike on 29 June was a tremendous first step in the postal workers' struggle to defend jobs, wages and conditions. Industrial action for 24 hours shut down Royal Mail from the top to the bottom of the country, with Communication Workers Union claiming that over 95 per cent of its 130,000 members in the post took strike action.

Reports from every corner of the country show empty offices, strong picket lines, and workers angry at Royal Mail's plans and enthusiastic about the strike. Smaller offices were often just as solid as larger units that are known for their strength. Many part-timers, recruited as part of the last year's efficiency cuts, came out in support of the strike.

A scab force was reduced largely to managers, speeding around in vans trying to get rid of Special Delivery post, while Yorkies (wheeled containers) of mail sat piled up inside offices, many of which remained closed.

The strike was against Royal Mail's business plan, which dictates

- a 2.5 per cent pay "rise" (really a pay cut because inflation is running at nearly 5 per cent)
- 40,000 job cuts
- hiking up workloads and flooding offices with part-timers.

Despite media lies that the whole strike is about pay, with experts and editorials claiming postal workers are unrealistic or even greedy, on every picket line workers explained that they are fighting for their future, not just a few extra quid.

"It's not just about pay"

Royal Mail is reeling under competition. The postal market, opened in January 2006, has allowed companies like DHL and TNT to cherry-pick lucrative contracts to collect and sort the mail of big business customers – they have taken over 40 per cent of this sector in the last year alone. Meanwhile Royal Mail is legally obliged to maintain a daily delivery network to every address in Britain, which used to be subsidised by those major contracts.



Nine Elms picket line, south London

Voices from the picket line

Workers Power members and trade unionists, along with the socialist youth group Revolution held collections for postal workers and visited their picket lines. Here are some of the voices we heard.

Steve Reid from Newtown, Birmingham: **"It could take up to a week to get things back to normal. It's going to cause a huge amount of disruption; that's why we want the Royal Mail to get back to negotiations."**

Vic from Nine Elms, South West London: **"Why does the postal service need to make a profit, anyway? Of course, it's nice if it does and none of us wants an inefficient operation. But it's an essential service, above all else."**

A young Asian striker from Sheepscar, Leeds: **"We need to get all the public sector out, have a general strike for a day - that will wake Brown up."**

A striker from Moortown, Leeds; **"We need to get everyone out, an all out strike until this is resolved. We don't need to rely on the union to call for the action, but could organise it ourselves in the localities."**

That's posties' power for you!

Another problem is a huge, £5.6 billion pension fund deficit, created by the government taking the surpluses made by Royal Mail for over 20 years – up to £2.5 billion according to the CWU – and taking a "holiday" from paying into the pension fund.

In response to these pressures on profits, Royal Mail, led by Labour appointees Allan Leighton and Adam Crozier, aims to restructure by investing in automated mail sorting machines and shifting to a largely part-time and much reduced delivery workforce. Labour's axemen aim to turn Royal Mail into a profitable company ripe for privatisation.

But to do so they will have to defeat the union. Hence the strike is of strategic significance for both sides.

Real chance to win

Unfortunately our CWU leaders are calling for as little action as possible. General secretary Billy Hayes and his postal deputy Dave Ward announced after the strike that they wouldn't call another day of action for over a week, to provide "a window of opportunity for the company to come and negotiate seriously". With this procrastination, the earliest legal date for action will be at least eleven days after the initial strike – when Royal Mail has stated that it has no intention of changing its business plan! Let's call on our leaders to escalate the action. The strength of the 29 June strike shows that, if the union called all-out industrial action, it could break Royal Mail within days.

And we don't have to fight alone. Many reports around the country told of teachers, civil servants and others visiting picket lines to drop off collections and show solidarity. Public sector workers across the board are facing the same 2% real pay cut. Already the PCS civil service union has struck and union conferences of health workers, council employees, teachers and lecturers have all voted in favour of industrial action.

CWU leaders should call these other unions to an emergency council of war in order to win solidarity and co-ordinate our actions in a united public sector strike. By going directly to working class

down Royal Mail

users of public services – students, pensioners, NHS campaigns, etc. – we could build a mass, militant anti-privatisation movement. They should call on all CWU branches to build such solidarity committees by approaching other unions, anti-privatisation and anti-cuts campaigns, etc.

That way, we could not only win on pay and conditions, but deal a solid blow to Labour's free market policies, and start the fight to reverse privatisation in Royal Mail and other services.

Build from below

Strikes are schools for socialism and this one was no exception. There was debate on every picket line about the way forward to win and strong support for unity with other public sector unions. A minority of workers were beginning to question whether a long series of one-day strikes (the leadership's strategy) would be enough to win, with some supporting the idea of an all-out strike. We need to organise this minority, drawing in those emboldened and energised by the strike.

Let's organise mass meetings in the offices to

elect accountable strike committees to run the strike at local level. Alongside these, militant branches and the left wing Post worker network should call a national conference, so the more determined parts of the union can begin to demand a say in the running of the strike (see box).

Our aim should be a rank and file controlled strike, with a delegate-based national strike committee to run the strike and oversee all negotiations, drawn directly from local strike committees. Building an alternative strategy and leadership to that of Hayes and Ward, based on the direct democracy and militancy of the rank and file, is crucial to defeat Royal Mail's plans for good.

Our strike takes place at the start of Gordon Brown's new government, stuffed with big business leaders. You can bet he won't pay Royal Mail back the billions the government took for decades to finance tax cuts for the rich and

spend on wars, like the one in Iraq. Neither will he sack Leighton or Crozier. Disgust with Labour was widespread on picket lines and shows we need to provide not just an industrial response but a political response, by campaigning for the CWU and all the unions to stop supporting Labour and to use their political funds to campaign for and found a new working class party.

Where next?

In every office over the coming days, we need to prepare practically for the next strike, to make it hit even harder. Strike committees need to get the offices both shipshape for the next strike and vigilant against management harassment. Weak offices need support, and hardship funds need to be set up to keep the strike solid. Scabs need to be won over.

Collections in the high street and from the workplaces we deliver to – fire stations, schools, colleges, supermarkets, factories and offices

– are crucial to get financial support and start drawing together public sector solidarity committees.

Militant activists and branches should

bombard Wimbledon CWU HQ with letters or petitions, passed around the offices and calling on our leaders to escalate the action, unite with other public sector unions and stop funding Labour. Breaking the NEC's monopoly on strike strategy and pressuring it to step up the action is just as important as getting our own offices into fighting shape; indeed, they are complementary tasks.

The enthusiasm and determination of 29 June shows that postal workers are far from defeated. The union is not only intact, but in many cases has renewed its base from the part-timers absorbed since 2006. We can knock back Leighton, Crozier and their new puppet-master, Brown. Now is the time to advance further and finish the fight for our jobs, pay and industry with a decisive and victorious strike. Our future is in our hands – let's seize the day!

Organise mass meetings in the offices to elect accountable strike committees to run the strike

The left in the CWU

Today's situation is full of possibilities. The postal workers' strike could not only defeat the government and Royal Mail's restructuring plans, but detonate a counter-offensive that could rally the working class onto the streets against the new Brown government.

The alternative is an outright defeat – a disaster – or a rotten deal like last year's Efficiency Agreement, trading short term gains in pay and other minor concessions for cuts and the sapping of the union's strength. Such an agreement is what the CWU leadership is explicitly seeking. This would just see us in another battle in the coming years over the same issues, but in an ever weaker position.

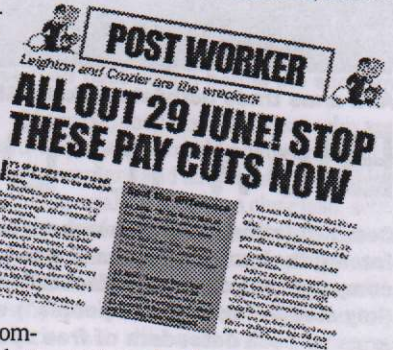
Unfortunately, so far there has been no organised opposition within the CWU to the leadership's strategy of efficiency agreements: neither from the Post worker newspaper, run by the Socialist Workers Party, nor from the "lefts" on the National Executive, such as the SWP's Jane Loftus, the Socialist Party's Bernard Broome and Gary Jones (both on the Telecoms side of the CWU) or Pete Keanlyside, who writes for the Alliance for Workers Liberty's paper.

In addition, none of these organisations or left leaders calls for all-out action, rank and file control of the strike or a rank and file movement in the CWU – not even Post worker, which as a paper with extensive contacts has never once called a conference or started a campaign.

They will argue that we have to stick with leaders, like Hayes, and mute our criticisms and differences, in order to use their influence to open doors for the left. In reality, this approach closes doors further down the line – an independent rank and file movement is never built: one that could transform the possibilities in a situation like the current one into a challenge for leadership. It is not too late, but it is an urgent task we

must begin to address now.

The best the SWP has done is call for strike committees in one leaflet – which is still a step forward from other "socialist" groups, such as the SP, AWL and Permanent Revolution. But these are confused with branch committees (often bureaucratic) and it is



not made clear that they should made up of delegates directly elected and recallable by workplace meetings.

A similar lack of clarity lies in its call for committees to unite public sector unions. Although the SWP deserves credit for setting these up, for instance in Leeds, they must represent the rank and file, not the left wing officials, if they are to develop and become capable of initiating action without and against the bureaucracy, when it becomes necessary.

Militant branches and offices – such as South West London, Paddington and the East End, Exeter, Plymouth and Bridgwater, Oxford and Wolverhampton, Stoke, Manvers and Belfast – along with Post Worker must use their influence and networks to call a conference primarily of delegates from workplaces and branches, but also open to all posties so that we can hammer out an alternative strategy to the CWU leadership.

Such a conference could not only debate how to escalate and win the strike, it could also agree to build a rank and file movement across the union and linked up with militants in other unions that can implement the strategy – even if the official leadership attempts to call off the strikes or sell us out.

FIGHTBACK



Anti-arms trade activists picket DSEi arms fair 2005 (Picture: Indymedia)

Blow to DSEi arms fair

Congratulations to NUJ members and staff at Reed Business Information for forcing their parent company Reed Elsevier to disinvest from Spearhead, the company that organises the DSEi arms fair. The media company Reed Elsevier (key slogan "valuing our people") was using Spearhead to facilitate the sell of arms to such defenders of free speech and journalists' rights as Russia and Colombia. Pressure by workers at the company throughout Europe and pickets by anti-arms trade activists of the London offices and the fair itself forced Reed Elsevier to announce the decision last month.

Teachers ballot for strike

By NUT rep, Birmingham

Teachers will be joining the rising tide of public sector militancy when they ballot for industrial action over pay in the autumn.

In May the national executive issued a call for an autumn strike ballot, although it rejected a call for one this term preferring no doubt to wait and see what other unions in the sector will do. It has now called on activists to convince their colleagues of the need for action in the run up to the ballot.

The ballot follows NUT conference at Easter unanimously backing a national executive motion calling for a strike ballot. Conference agreed to increase wages by £3,000 or 10 per cent, whichever is greater. The government's refusal to seek a review of teachers pay and the derisory pay rise of 2.5 per cent for September – which is in effect a pay cut – has angered teachers across the country.

Activists should waste no time in calling meetings to convince members to vote yes in the strike ballot and prepare for action. We must also put pressure on our fellow teachers in other unions to join us. NUT action always makes us stronger and grow more quickly!

A one-day strike would be a great start to a pay campaign, but the strategy of one-day

strikes over a period or, even worse, those who believe bringing out only strong schools in a guerrilla campaign, will not bring a victory for teachers. Instead, we need a campaign of rapidly escalating strike action up to and including an all-out indefinite strike.

Why is this a better strategy?

First, intermittent one day-strikes will demoralise the members, marching them up to the top of the hill only to be brought down again.

Second, rather than guerrilla campaigns, national action mobilises and involves the membership as a whole. National action must be our response to a national attack on our pay and conditions.

Third, all out action would also prompt a crisis for government as it would inspire other public sector workers to follow suit and challenge the pay freeze.

The postal strike offers an excellent opportunity for teachers to build solidarity with unions in struggle and to set up local committees to defend public services. We can also use such committees to force the union leaders to coordinate action nationally.

By voting yes to strike action in the autumn, teachers can join the public sector unions in a general offensive against Brown.

Israel boycott spreads

By Bernie McAdam

Events in Gaza and the Israeli attack against southern Lebanon last year have prompted several trade unions this year to raise the issues of Palestinian rights and the role of Israel. Unison conference has just overwhelmingly voted to support a boycott of Israel and the Palestinian right of return. The resolution states that "ending the occupation demands concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel including an economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott."

This follows the National Union of Journalists' decision at their Easter conference to support a "boycott of Israeli goods... led by trade unions and the TUC". In addition, the SIPTU in Ireland, the Ontario region of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and South Africa's COSATU also call for boycotts and sanctions. The Transport and General Workers' Union will be voting on a motion to boycott Israeli goods this month prompted by car workers in Birmingham.

The spectacle of a large-scale boycott has led to a ferocious backlash from the Zionist and pro-imperialist lobby. After the NUJ vote, the *Guardian's* Middle East's correspondent Ian Black and the *Times* attacked the motion, and some NUJ members at the BBC have started an e-mail petition calling for a ballot over the issue in an attempt to overturn the conference's democratic vote.

Many of the complaints in the NUJ have been about the need for journalists to be neutral when reporting. But there are already a code of practice that ensure this. In reality it is an attack on political trade unionism. But the employers have no such qualms about taking a political line. Every single one of Rupert Murdoch's 200 plus editors echo their boss's support for the war.

The University and College Union has decided to open up a debate to discuss a boycott of Israeli universities. General secretary Sally Hunt opposes the boycott and wants a referendum on the issue. That would maximise the influence of the pro-Israel media, which has already enlisted more than 100 MPs from all sides who have signed a parliamentary motion branding the UCU vote for a discussion as "repugnant".

This really does demonstrate the anti-democratic credentials of the pro-Zionist lobby. They are even opposed to a debate on the issue!

The task now is to ensure that the debate does take place and that it is used to raise understanding of the plight of the Palestinians throughout the union.

Why the pro-Israel backlash? Quite simply, a wide-ranging boycott would challenge imperialist policy in the Middle East. The interests of US imperialism alongside its UK partner are based on unconditional defence of Israel's gendarme role in the region. The defence of Israel's illegitimate occupation of Palestine is the cornerstone of this imperialist policy.

Israel, with blood on its hands from the ethnic cleansing of 4.6 million Palestinians, deserves the wrath of the organised working class. The boycotts should be supported. Indeed workers can do more than just boycott products. Workers should also organise action to stop the supply of goods to Israel, in particular military equipment. We urgently need a global economic and political boycott of Israel.

ANTIWAR

Break the blockade of Gaza

Gaza is under siege. *Dave Stockton* calls on the antiwar movement to deliver urgent solidarity

The USA, European Union and Israel are maintaining and intensifying a full-scale blockade of Gaza. The situation is getting harder for the 1.5 million inhabitants by the day. Two thirds already live below the poverty line. The United Nations estimates that they could start running out of flour, rice, oil and other essentials within weeks.

Veronique Taveau of Unicef said, "The blockade of crossing points has made bringing in aid almost impossible. Medical stocks are reaching the critical level." It is the duty of the antiwar, anticapitalist and labour movements to come to the aid of the people of Gaza.

The trade unions that support the Palestinians' struggle should raise funds to send aid and challenge the Israeli blockade. Even if a flotilla of ships, carrying medicines, foodstuffs and fuel, was refused harbour by Israeli navy, its message would be clear and loud:

"We represent the real international community - the global working class movement in solidarity with the oppressed people of the world - not the United Nations Security Council. We demand free passage."

Of course, direct action needs to be linked to a mass campaign. To force our governments to abandon support for this blockade will take mass action across Europe and North America. We can start with demonstrations on the 12 July, a day of action called by the Beirut Conference.

Stop the War fails Gaza

Britain's powerful antiwar movement should lead such calls for action. Workers Power has raised this formally with Stop the War Coalition but received no answer yet. Indeed, when I approached Chris Nineham, an officer of StWC and a leader of the Socialist Workers Party, before the demonstration in Manchester on 24 June, and asked him what the coalition was doing about Gaza, he replied, "Nothing". When pressed further, he complained, "Many people are confused over Gaza."

This simply will not do. It is the job of the antiwar movement to "unconfuse" people - as we did over the alleged "weapons of mass destruction" before the Iraq war.

This points to the false approach of the SWP to united fronts. Socialist Worker newspaper has come out clearly on the side of Gaza and Hamas against the Israeli/US/EU blockade. So why, given their enormous influence within StWC, and the likely sympathy of the Muslim community, is the SWP hesitant to get the movement to mobilise over Gaza? The truth is that they are afraid of divisions within StWC.

To speak plainly, it is not a question of people's confusion; it is the politics of the SWP's partners in StWC, the Communist Party of Britain. They side with Mahmoud Abbas and, therefore, would probably oppose breaking the Gaza blockade. The answer to these differences is not to hush them up but to confront the



Bridges are regularly targeted by Israel because their destruction harms the economy

false arguments behind them. If a part of our movement is siding with imperialism and Zionism, it is time to expose it.

Unity against imperialism

The SWP will say this is divisive. But unity of inaction is the unity of the graveyard. That only 2,500 people demonstrated in Manchester is a warning. An antiwar movement that remains silent on the major issue of the day - the assault on Hamas and the Palestinian resistance - will not only fail to grow, it will shrivel. The overwhelming majority of activists would not be confused about taking mass action to break the blockade of Gaza. What they are waiting for is leadership.

But the SWP leadership has consistently refused to raise anti-imperialist slogans inside StWC:

"Attempts to narrow the campaign, so that it adopted specifically anti-imperialist objectives... were rejected." (John Rees, *Imperialism and resistance*, p225)

Instead, Rees, Lindsey German and co. have sought unity with Liberal Democrats on a phased withdrawal from Iraq. They failed to alert activists to the fact that the Lib Dems wanted to send more troops to Afghanistan, i.e. that its "troops out" position was part of an imperialist policy to preserve army morale and bomb the Afghani people into submission.

Likewise, their call on Gordon Brown to change policy on Iraq may cause confusion and sow illusions in the Labour government. Brown is in fact likely to acknowledge failings in Iraq and implement a phased, partial withdrawal of British troops for the same reason as the Lib Dems. Brown could even use any good will arising from such action to launch an imperialist intervention into Darfur, albeit disguised in "humanitarian" clothing.

In short, by refusing to fight openly for anti-imperialist positions, the SWP has in fact steered StWC in the direction of supporting one wing of imperialism (Lib Dems, US Democrats) against another (Bush, Blair).

Of course, pacifists and others, who are not anti-imperialist, should not be excluded from the movement and activities. But, unless the anti-imperialists provide a clear lead, activists will be confused and potentially demobilised when the imperialists change policy in order to achieve their aims by another means. Which is why revolutionary communists continue to criticise their allies even while they remain in a united front with them.

Workers' aid for Gaza

We call for action to prevent Israel and its imperialist allies from crushing resistance in Gaza and imposing its "two state" solution. Since the cause of the Palestinians is a vital part of the worldwide struggle against imperialism, to let that happen would be a defeat for all of us. It must not happen.

The European and World Social Forums, the antiwar movement and trade unions around the world must demonstrate on the streets and take direct action against their own governments. We must launch an international campaign.

- Force our governments to end the siege of Gaza and send medical supplies, foodstuffs, fuel supplies, and materials to the infrastructure wrecked by Israeli bombardments;
- Organise the shipment of vital supplies directly to Gaza, demanding the unhindered right to deliver it and sending international observers to monitor the actions of Israel and PNA forces;
- Extend the growing trade union boycott of Israeli products and institutions through workers' action and mass civil disobedience;
- Recognise Hamas as the legitimate elected government.

WOMEN

Stop 'honour' killings

By Joy Macready

When police found the strangled body of Banaz Mahmod, a 20-year-old Kurdish woman, it was stuffed in a suitcase with a shoelace around her neck and buried in a pit in a Birmingham garden, 100 miles from her South London home. She was a victim of a so called "honour killing". Her crime? Fleeing an abusive arranged marriage and dating a man of her choice. Her father, uncle and a third man have been found guilty of her murder.

This is not an isolated incident. According to the United Nations Population Fund, 5,000 women a year die in honour killings worldwide.

- 1998: Rukhsana Naz, 19, was murdered by her mother and brother while seven months pregnant.
- 2003: Heshu Yones, 16, was stabbed to death by her father, for wearing make-up and having a Lebanese Christian boyfriend.
- 2005: Samaira Nazir, 25, was murdered by her brother for wanting to marry her Afghan boyfriend.

These are just some of the cases that have been prosecuted, but there are many more disappearances, which haven't been investigated or even reported. Police are now re-examining 2,000 deaths over the past 10 years to establish whether they involved honour killings.

"Honour" crimes also include abduction, imprisonment, physical and emotional abuse, forced abortions and rape. Some victims eventually commit suicide, like Nabeala Hussain, 23, who killed herself and her children by setting fire to their family car in Middlesbrough in 2003. The numbers of young Asian women in Britain between the ages of 16 and 24 who take their own lives is three times higher than the national average.

Why do these crimes occur? The British judge sentencing Heshu Yones' father said her killing was "a tragic story arising out of irreconcilable cultural differences between traditional Kurdish values and those of western society. The western bourgeois press



Banaz Mahmod – killed by her family for leaving an abusive marriage

blames Islamic practices, yet there is nothing in the Qu'ran that promotes such killings. The Crown Prosecution Service and the police are attempting to link "honour" violence in Britain to Islamist groups abroad in order to whip up more support for the "war on terror".

To understand honour killings, we must examine the role women play in under-developed capitalist societies, which still have remains of feudal or tribal social structures. In these countries, with large rural populations and a weak state, such as Nigeria, Pakistan or Bangladesh, and in terribly oppressed nations, like Kurdistan, pre-capitalist social relations enforce the law in place of the nation state. Under this structure, the family becomes more important and reinforces patriarchy.

Double oppression

It is the woman's role as wife, mother, daughter, carer, home-maker and occasionally as isolated piece-worker, confined to the family home, that means she is treated as a source of wealth, or as a tradable commodity. The patriarchal head of the family gains a material benefit, whether money and/or goods, from the exploitation and oppression of women.

Women are effectively treated as private property. Control over women's physical bodies, sexual behaviour and fertility is essential for the family to materially benefit – for example to marry into a wealthier family and ensure its lineage. Hence, honour and respect are tied closely to the economic well-being of the family.

As capitalism expands, it forces people to move from rural areas to the cities – either because they are kicked off their land, or because they need to search for work, or because of war. In this process bourgeois law does not immediately or totally replace tribal law.

In the rich metropolitan countries, such as Britain, and increasingly in developing countries, such as India, women have been brought into the workforce, which gives them more personal freedom. But they are not free. They are doubly exploited by the capitalist system: producing surplus value for the boss in the workplace, and performing essential unpaid labour in the home. This systematic oppression means that domestic violence also occurs in thoroughly western families.

These young women that defy their families are embracing the freedoms secured by the workers

and women's movements. They are trying to break the chains of domestic slavery imposed by the harsh conditions of capitalist development in the Third World: conditions their parents' generation has not yet broken from. We must defend their struggle.

No reliance on police

Banaz did not suffer in silence – on four occasions she told the police that her family was trying to kill her. She even listed the men she thought would try and kill her. However, instead of protecting her, the police dismissed her claims and even told her family!

In response to public criticism, the Association of Chief Police Officers claims it will ensure complaints of family violence are "taken seriously". Dedicated teams of senior prosecutors will be deployed in Britain's "honour killing hot spots" for one month in an effort to "boost conviction rates and give victims more protection". However, this will effectively target Muslim communities already under attack from anti-terror legislation.

The police failed Banaz, as they have failed millions of other women suffering from domestic violence. In doing so, they have proven their racist and sexist credentials. We cannot rely on them for protection.

We need to take action. We must organise ourselves in our communities as working class women. We must develop support networks using all of the resources at our disposal – especially women's groups, trade unions and political organisations – raising this issue at every level and convincing men that this is part of their struggle too. We must demand the government funds a network of safe houses, under the control of women themselves, for those, who wish to leave families and communities because their life is in danger.

The fight to end "honour" killings and domestic violence must also be linked to the fight for women's liberation and the overthrow of the imperialist system, which deliberately under-develops and super-exploits the third world, while systematically oppressing women in the rich countries. We need a worldwide working class women's movement that can help to lead and organise this work.

1917

The counter revolution strikes back...

The July Days

In the summer of 1917 the provisional government launched an offensive at the front. The workers of Petrograd, the soldiers of the city garrison and the Kronstadt sailors reacted with mass demonstrations. Should the movement try to overthrow the government? Many workers, soldiers and sailors said, yes. So too did a sizeable part of the Bolshevik Party. Yet Lenin and Trotsky argued against this. In the latest part of our series, *Dave Hughes* explains why

In the spring and early summer of 1917, it became more and more clear that the Provisional Government would not address any of Russia's crying needs. The war-weary soldiers' yearning for peace, the cry for bread from the workers of the cities, the peasants' calls for the aristocrats' land to be distributed to them – all were met with delay and diversion. The government made the continuation of the war its overriding priority. A government of the imperialist bourgeoisie, mortgaged to Anglo-French imperialism and with its own designs on the Turkish Empire and Eastern Europe, could not seriously contemplate a separate peace.

The Provisional Government headed by Prince Lvov united liberal aristocrats and landowners with manufacturers, bankers and merchants from the two main bourgeois parties – the Cadets led by Pavel Miliukov, and the more conservative Octobrists (Union of 17 October) led by Alexander Guchkov. These constituted the right wing majority of the government. Its left wing was represented by Alexander Kerensky, a member of the Trudovik (Toilers) Party, which was a radical peasant party in the post 1905 Dumas (parliaments).

Petrograd witnessed almost ceaseless demonstrations often swelling to half a million strong. Inflation soared and real wages fell. Unemployment increased rapidly. All these attacks drove the workers to strike, to march, and to create factory committees which took action to preserve jobs. The bourgeoisie's reaction was summed up by the Cadet daily *Rech*: "Russia is being turned into a kind of lunatic asylum."

The Menshevik leaders, who had, according to their long held political perspective, presented the bourgeoisie with control over "its" revolution, discovered that these gentlemen were not in the slightest bit grateful for it. Indeed almost from the outset they fomented economic chaos hoping to create the conditions for a restoration of "order". The Moscow industrialist Riabushinsky said: "The emaciated hand of hunger will seize the members of the different committees and soviets by the throat."

In the countryside peasant soviets began to spring up and – slowly at first – the peasants began to take things into their own hands. In March disorders were reported in 34 districts, in April 174, in May 236, in June 280 and in July 325. The landowners' manor houses went up in flames and the peasants began to occupy the lands robbed from them by the great Emancipation Swindle of 1861. The mir – the age-old village commune – took on a new life, and the rich peasants (kulaks), who had benefited

from Tsarist land reforms and left their mir, were often obliged to return. Rent ceased to be paid. The news of this turmoil reached the young peasant conscripts at the front and magnified the wave of desertions. The deserters returning to their villages were different men to the boys who had left. Through military training they had acquired technical skills and discipline. They had seen the brutality and incompetence of their upper class officers. They had lost their unreasoning faith in the priests. Some had read – or had read to them – the leaflets and papers of the Bolsheviks. As the year progressed this radicalising of the multi-millioned peasant masses went on apace.

The historic party of the peasantry, the Socialist Revolutionaries (or SRs), still held the overwhelming allegiance of the peasants but events were to begin undermining this too. In early May a governmental crisis erupted. The Soviet had, under mass pressure, issued an appeal for a peace "without annexations and indemnities" and had renounced imperialist war aims. Miliukov, in transmitting this declaration to the Allies, assured them that the government would "fully observe the obligations assumed towards our allies." Mass demonstrations of soldiers and workers erupted under the slogans "Down with the Provisional Government!" and "Guchkov, Miliukov, Resign!"

Clashes occurred with bourgeois demonstrators. General Kornilov, then commander of the Petrograd garrison, requested permission to fire on the anti-government demonstrators. This the government dared not do and the crisis was resolved only with Miliukov's resignation and the bringing into the government of another four "socialist ministers", including the SR leader Victor Chernov as Minister of Agriculture, and the promotion of Kerensky to the War Ministry. Chernov and the SRs were thus put in a position of having to hold back the peasantry on behalf of the landowners and capitalists. At an Allied military conference in January the Tsarist high command had rashly promised their Anglo-French paymasters a spring offensive against the Austrians in Galicia. The Allies had no expectation of a Russian victory but merely hoped that the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of half-trained and badly armed peasants would hold up the Central Powers and deflect them from an offensive on the Western Front. Kerensky was determined to carry out this inheritance from the Romanovs. The ruling class saw the offensive as an opportunity to restore order at the front, in Petrograd and in the other major cities.

1917

The seven million soldiers at the front greeted the news of the proposed offensive with apprehension. The huge Petrograd garrison, some 215,000 strong, heard it with overt hostility. The radicalisation of the soldiers was speeded up. In Petrograd the soldiers were represented in the Soviet. They had been guaranteed full civil rights when not on duty by the Petrograd Soviet's famous "Order Number One". Normal discipline had broken down and committees had to counter-sign every officer's order if it was to be carried out.

The Bolsheviks, whose struggle for workers' control was winning them ever stronger positions in the factories, now devoted a massive effort to increasing the party's position in the barracks and in the trenches.

On 31 March the Bolshevik Military Organisation was founded. A commission was appointed to direct its work. Its most prominent leaders were Nikolai Podvoisky and Vladimir Nevsky. Another key figure was the Kronstadt sailor Fyodor Raskolnikov. The Military Organisation published a popular daily paper from mid-April onwards with a circulation of over 50,000 – half in Petrograd, half at the front. It described the wretched conditions of soldiers' lives; printing hundreds of letters and resolutions from units the length and breadth of Russia, as well as agitating for the Bolsheviks' key slogans.

In early June as the preparations for the offensive began – including attempts to transfer weapons and men to the front from Petrograd – the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets convened in the capitol. It sat from 3 to 24 June. Of its 822 delegates with voting rights the SRs had 285, the Mensheviks 248 and the Bolsheviks 105. The rest belonged to smaller tendencies like the Mezhraintsy (Inter-districters or "United Social Democrats") led by Leon Trotsky and Anatoly Lunacharsky, who had ten delegates.

The right wing socialist and populist parties still had a very sizeable majority. The Bolsheviks stood out as the clearest anti-Provisional Government force. When Tsereteli, the most vigorous Menshevik leader (and a minister), addressed the congress, Lenin made perhaps the most prophetic heckle in history.

Tsereteli: "At the present moment there is no political party which would say: 'Give the power into our hands, go away, we will take your place.' There is no such party in Russia."

Lenin: (from his seat) "There is."

The response of the majority of the delegates was laughter. In the next month however the attitude of the leaders of the majority soviet parties was to change first to fear and then to hatred as the Bolsheviks experienced a surge in their influence and an upsurge in the

Tsereteli argued "At the present moment there is no political party which would say: 'Give the power into our hands.'" Lenin replied: "There is."



The Soviet demonstration on 18 June which marched under Bolshevik slogans

revolutionary workers and troops of Petrograd and the sailors of the northern fleet at Kronstadt and Helsingfors.

From early June Kerensky and the government were constantly trying to ship munitions, weaponry and units of the garrison to the front in preparation for the coming offensive. The All-Russian Soviet Congress on 8 June voted full support to Prince Lvov and the government, thereby effectively endorsing its plans for an offensive. The spontaneous pressure of the soldiers and sailors was for demonstrations against the renewed war and the attempts to disperse or disarm the revolutionary regiments who, with the workers, had made the February Revolution. The Bolshevik Military Organisation stood on the left of the Party. Podvoisky advocated a mass armed demonstration to act "as a battering ram that would effect a breach in the Congress". This proposal caused a sharp disagreement between the left wing of the party led by Lenin and the right led by Kamenev. Lenin wished to undermine – and if possible prevent – the new offensive with a massive anti-war demonstration whose central slogan would be the call to transfer all power to the soviets. This was designed to try and force the majority SR and Menshevik parties to break with the Provisional Government, with its Cadets and Octobrists, and take power. Hence the Bolsheviks supplementary slogan which made this clear: "Down with the ten capitalist ministers!"

Armed counter-revolutionaries

Kamenev and the right were opposed to a demonstration at all but if it were called they insisted it must be disarmed. The Military Organisation insisted this was impossible. The central area of Petrograd was the scene of mounting patriotic demonstrations by right wing bourgeois

forces. The officer cadet schools of the capital were nests of armed counter-revolutionaries that the Provisional Government protected.

The anti-semitic, proto-fascist Black Hundred organisation still existed in a scarcely underground form. Workers' and soldiers' demonstrations against the war and the government would undoubtedly be attacked. Lenin found himself opposed not only by Kamenev and the right, but even by Zinoviev, his closest co-thinker during the war, and by Krupskaya. Nevertheless a joint conference of the Central Committee, the Petrograd Committee and the Military Organisation bureau voted for a demonstration on 9 June.

The Bolsheviks were not the only force urging a demonstration. The Petrograd Anarchist-Communist Federation were agitating fiercely for an armed demonstration. But they posed as its immediate objective the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the destruction of the state and the installation of a Petrograd Commune.

Clashes between the anarchists and the troops loyal to the Provisional Government provided the pretext for the Soviet Congress passing a resolution banning all demonstrations. Faced with a ban voted for by all the workers' and peasants' parties except the Bolsheviks and the Mezhraintsy, the Central Committee conceded to the soviet legality of the ban and abandoned the demonstration. The Party and the Military Organisation, despite their anger at the ban and indeed their disagreement at the retreat, carried out the manoeuvre in a disciplined fashion.

Delighted at their "triumph" the Mensheviks over-reached themselves and proposed an official soviet demonstration on 18 June under the official slogans. This demonstration turned against its organ-

isers' intentions and the platforms of official soviet delegates from all over Russia were obliged to witness a massive parade almost totally under Bolshevik slogans. Maxim Gorky's paper *Novaya Zhizn* conceded that it "revealed the complete triumph of Bolshevism" amongst the Petrograd proletariat. Bewildered provincial soviet delegates said to Bolshevik demonstrators: "In Petrograd you are the power but not in the provinces, not at the front. Petrograd cannot go against the whole country." This was something that Lenin and the cooler heads on the left of the party realised. But in the Military Organisation the tremendous success of 18 June carried away what caution there was left. If April had seen the right of the Party nearly pull Bolshevism into the dead end of "defending the fatherland", July was to see the left almost pull the party into the ditch of adventurism and putschism. Lenin, Zinoviev, Sverdlov and Stalin were to be obliged to bloc with the right to hold back the far left of the Party. They were to be aided in this difficult task by Trotsky whose closeness to, and solidarity with, the Bolsheviks during the "July Days" was to seal his final and irrevocable rallying to Bolshevism.

By 19 June news of the offensive reached Petrograd further incensing the garrison. At first the news was of victories directed, as the offensive was, at war weary and demoralised Austrian troops in Galicia, many of whom belonged to the oppressed nations of the "fossil monarchy". Yet by 24 June the offensive ground to a halt and was followed by a massive German counter-attack on the northern front. By 3 July stories of the army's headlong retreat and disintegration began to filter back to the capital.

On 16 June an all-Russian conference of Bolshevik military organisations, with 107 delegates representing upwards of 30,000 members, met in Petrograd. It was the scene of repeated calls from rank and file delegates for the organisation of an immediate armed uprising. On 20 June the First Machine Gun Regiment was ordered to provide 500 machine guns and two thirds of its strength for transfer to the front. This regiment, made up largely of working class soldiers, was a stronghold of the Bolsheviks. It refused the orders and turned to other regiments for support. This increased calls within the Military Organisation for an insurrection. At the session of the Military Organisation conference that day Lenin came out sharply against such an idea:

"If we're now able to seize power, it is naive to think that we would be able to hold it. We have said more than once that the only possible form of revolutionary government was a soviet of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies. What is the exact weight of our fraction in the Soviet? Even in the Soviets of both capitals, not to speak of others, we are an insignificant minority."



4 July: counter-revolutionary snipers open fire on a workers demonstration

A cold shower

Lenin concluded: "The proletarian party must fight for influence within the Soviet." It must "patiently, explain" to the masses the errors and deception of the majority parties, "then they will come to the Bolsheviks." A participant later recalled that Lenin's speech was like a cold shower and was received with disappointment and even with dissatisfaction.

In the Military Organisation a majority opposed Lenin's position, as did a powerful faction of the Petrograd committee led by Latsis, Naumov and Stukov. Many of the people who had eagerly supported Lenin in April were now dismayed and began to pursue a divergent policy. *Pravda* and *Soldatskaya Pravda* carried on a different agitation. The former stressed the need for the immediate calling of elections to a constituent assembly and a mass campaign to win control of the Petrograd Soviet, whilst the latter carried articles which urged immediate action against the government.

On 3 July the Machine Gun Regiment planned a mass demonstration to the Congress of Soviets meeting in the Tauride Palace. Involved in this decision were the anarchists whose attitude was summed up by their spokesman Bleikhman:

"Overthrow the Provisional Government, not in order to turn power over to the bourgeois soviet, but to take it into your own hands."

The Bolshevik leaders Nevsky and Podvoisky, far from holding back the machine gunners, also urged them on but with a different objective. Their aim was to force the Soviet Congress to take the power.

"Into the streets! Move out!"

On 3 July a postal workers' strike gripped the capital. Machine gunners went to all the major regiments, factories and to

Kronstadt urging them to "come out". Some regiments flatly refused and proclaimed neutrality between the government and the insurgents. But the Moskovsky, the Finlandsky, Pavlovsky and Grenadier regiments agreed to take part in mass meetings. All the factories on the Vyborg side, 30,000 workers from the giant Putilov works and 10,000 Kronstadt sailors enthusiastically responded to the call. In Putilov the Bolshevik chair of the factory committee announced the vote with the cry "Down with the Provisional Government! Into the streets! Move out!"

By now the Bolshevik Central Committee became aware of what was going on. Lenin was temporarily across the border in Finland taking a brief rest when events began to move rapidly. The Central Committee came out against an armed demonstration and instructed party militants to oppose the demonstration. Latsis angrily replied "Again we must be fire hoses. How long will this last!"

But by now it was too late to put out the fire and in any case the majority of militants were quite carried away with the surging quasi-insurrectionary mood of the soldiers, sailors and workers. In general however the Bolshevik slogans "Down with the ten capitalist ministers!", "All power to the Soviets" and "Down with the offensive" massively predominated over the anarchist influenced ones. In Kshesinskaya's mansion, the Bolshevik headquarters, there was momentary confusion. The Military Organisation, the Petrograd Committee and the Central Committee met in joint session. Messengers rushed in reporting that barrack after barrack, factory after factory could not be restrained. It was obvious that the party must participate actively now and try to give the inflamed masses leader-

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ship. But what was to be the objective and how far the movement should still be reigned in? The answers to such questions were far from clear. The target of the demonstrations was to be the All-Russian Soviet Congress meeting in the Tauride Palace. Obviously the demand was for them to take power. But if they would not? What then? No one had a clear answer to this question.

Seventy thousand demonstrators filled the centre of the city. In the bourgeois quarters around the Nevsky they were fired on by rightist elements, Black Hundreds or officer cadets eager to provoke the soldiers. Despite this, led by military bands, they reached and encircled the Tauride Palace. Delegations entered and pressed their demands upon the majority soviet leaders, Chkheidze, Tsereteli and Chernov. They were intransigent. The congress passed a resolution "indignantly opposing all attempts to influence their will by force." Yet little force was being used beyond the huge numbers that filed past the palace and thunderously applauded speeches by Zinoviev, Trotsky and others.

The next day, 4 July, the demonstrations were far larger, reaching half a million or more. Significantly the numbers of soldiers were less and the proportion of workers much greater. Many regiments stayed in their barracks, refusing alike the calls of the Bolshevik agitators and the pleas for help of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Congress.

However at Kronstadt the sailors had commandeered several boats and soon 20,000 sailors and Kronstadt workers were disembarking along the Neva embankments. They marched en masse to Kshesinskaya's mansion to hear what the Bolshevik leaders had to say. Lenin had meanwhile hurried back from Finland. He was furious with the Military Organisation cadres. "You should be trashed for this!" he hissed as he stepped onto the balcony of the mansion to address the sailors.

The provocations against the demonstrators continued. On 4 July five were killed and 25 wounded. These treacherous attacks, plus the frustration of the refusal of the Menshevik and SR leaders to yield to their demands, led to ugly scenes outside the Tauride Palace. Victor Chernov was rescued from a crowd by Trotsky. Angry fist-shaking workers screamed at the terrified SR leader: "Take power when it's given to you, you son-of-a-bitch!"

Here was encapsulated the contradictions of mass consciousness at this stage of the revolution. The masses had lost confidence in the Menshevik and SR policies and slogans. They had firmly espoused the Bolshevik slogan of a soviet government but they had not yet lost their faith in the existing Soviet leaders,



Lenin in disguise during July

or rather, only through precisely this experience were the workers and soldiers shedding these illusions.

Despite the excitement of the anarchists and the optimism of many rank and file Bolsheviks, even in Petrograd the majority of soldiers and workers would not have supported a Bolshevik seizure of power against the Soviet. In Russia as a whole and at the front, a Bolshevik overthrow of the government and the dissolution of the Soviet Congress would have thrown the working class into confusion, pitting its more backward majority against its revolutionary vanguard and turning the overwhelming mass of the peasant soldiers against it.

The Bolsheviks and the Mezhraintsy thus had to act responsibly towards this mass upsurge of the workers and soldiers. Firstly Lenin and the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks – aided by Trotsky, Lunacharsky and other Interdistricters – tried to avoid a disorganised mass uprising that would undoubtedly be subject to provocations by the rightists and which could not in reality culminate in the overthrow of the government. When the masses refused to heed the party they put themselves at the head of the demonstrations, fighting to make sure that they were as disciplined, as well guarded and as restrained as possible.

Lastly they utilised the July upsurge to put the maximum pressure on the right wing Menshevik and SR leaders to take the power, thus carrying to its culmination this tactic and exposing their unwillingness to do this to the whole of Petrograd.

However the fomenting of the mass insurgency by the left of the Party was a serious tactical blunder and the Party was soon to suffer for it. Yet even the repression that followed only helped to further expose the Mensheviks and SRs as wretched tools of the counter-revolution. If the first response of a section of workers and the majority of soldiers was disillusionment and suspicion of the Bolsheviks (Had they tried to seize power? Were they put up to it by the Germans?), the second response to seeing Chernov, Tsereteli and co raining blows on the Bolsheviks in common with Kerensky, Mil-iukov and Kornilov was revulsion and indignation.

A counter-revolutionary orgy

The collapse of the July insurgency was as sudden as its upheaval. On the 4/5 July the Soviet Congress sat through the night delaying any definitive reply to any of the workers' demands. The worker and soldier demonstrators and delegations thinned and departed. Suddenly through the courtyard and corridors of the Tauride Palace the thunder of marching feet could be heard. Theodor Dan, a prominent Menshevik, mounted the rostrum in triumph to announce that "Troops loyal to the (Soviet) Central Executive Committee have arrived!"

To the accompaniment of a regimental band the majority delegates rose to bawl the Marseillaise, casting malicious and revengeful looks at the Bolsheviks, the Mezhraintsy and at Martov's "Menshevik Internationalists". Martov himself bitterly exclaimed: "A classic scene of the start of counter-revolution!" And so it was momentarily. On 5 and 6 July what a Menshevik witness described as a "counter-revolutionary orgy" reigned in central Petrograd. Workers and revolutionary soldiers were beaten up and thrown into the canals by Black Hundred gangs. The garrison commander seized the opportunity to disarm the Machine Gun Regiment and to send a force of cadets to smash Pravda's presses. Last of all the Bolshevik headquarters were seized and ransacked.

The Provisional Government had been able to win over some of the more backward regiments because of manufactured "evidence" that Lenin was a German spy, and that the Bolsheviks were being paid by the Germans to sabotage the offensive. Warrants were issued for the arrest of Lenin and Zinoviev. Other leaders like Kamenev were arrested. The party reeled under the hammer blows of counter-revolution.

WORLD ECONOMY

Foreshocks of a global economic earthquake?

The feverish stock market boom of recent years has seen capitalists carve themselves even greater wealth and led many of them to believe that globalisation has put off the reality of recession. Yet recent fluctuations in the stock market are beginning to spread nervousness through the financial system. *Richard Brenner* examines the underlying causes of instability. Importantly, what does it mean for the current economic boom?

The world financial system has entered a phase of instability that is beginning to panic the billionaire bankers. Many are asking if the orgy of speculation that has gripped stock markets in the USA, Britain and China is about to come to an abrupt end. Even the Bank for International Settlements – one of the world's most important financial institutions – has raised the spectre of a global depression at some time in the foreseeable future.

In June, the price of US government bonds fell sharply. This meant that investors were expecting higher interest rates and this caused the world's already jumpy stock markets to take fright. They plunged several times in June, each time staging recoveries that gave way to sharp selling of shares when more bad news emerged.

The root of this nervousness is the fear of a serious recession in the US, by far the world's biggest economy. Higher interest rates mean higher mortgage payments and deeper problems in the US housing market, where house prices are falling and repossession are rising. That threatens the high-risk mortgage lenders in the "Sub-Prime" market, and the billionaire "hedge funds" that have lent them money. There is also a threat to the parasitic private equity companies that borrow cheap and use the money to buy companies and then strip their assets while avoiding paying tax on their profits because of their debts.

Internationally, there is a risk to the so-called global "carry trade". This is a particularly parasitic form of finance that relies on borrowing huge sums of money where interest rates are low, in Japan primarily, investing it for a period of time where rates are higher and then repaying the original loan and pocketing the profits. With Japan's economy beginning to grow, interest rates there will rise and slash those profits.

The main reason for rising interest rates is the threat of inflation. For years, but especially since the collapse of the "dot-com" bubble at the end of the 90s, economic growth in the US has been financed by a combination of cheap credit and tax-breaks. Economists who warned that this would lead to inflation appeared to have been proved wrong, if anything, prices for consumer goods were falling. There were several factors causing this; real wages in the US were held down, firms shifted production to low wage areas or exploited cheap immigrant labour and new technologies lowered production costs. Perhaps the most important factor, however, was the emergence of China as a major industrial power. Cheap Chinese goods kept prices down and Chinese purchase of US Treasury bonds kept down interest rates. Now, however, the impact of these factors is declining, even that of China.

For nearly two decades, very low wages and substantial subsidies from the state ensured low prices for goods made in China. In sector after sector, the

"China price" undercut virtually all others. Production in China boomed and China was presented as a textbook example of all that was dynamic and good about capitalism. Its growth seemed to prove that capitalism provided a sustainable way out of poverty for developing nations and the world's poor. Today we are told that the Chinese economy is growing too fast, is in danger of overheating and that steps need to be taken to slow it down. So how is it that soaraway growth can suddenly become a problem? How can an economy be growing too fast?

The answer lies in the chaotic, unplanned nature of accumulation and development in a society based on private profit rather than the general good. The expansion of capitalism in China is a classic example of the chaotic and crisis-ridden nature of the capitalist system. The vast expansion of profit-driven production and capital accumulation in China has created a wild rush for the essential resources that fuel production, primarily energy and raw materials. As ever more capital chases limited resources, the price of these critical commodities naturally rises. In the crucial coastal cities of China, where the export-based industries are located, wages are also rising, particularly for skilled and semi-skilled workers.

The days of sweatshops employing armies of workers straight off the land are not entirely gone, but they are going. Because of the massive expansion of Chinese production, the "China price" is now the only price for many commodities. Capitalists in China are no longer competing with higher priced overseas rivals – they are more often competing with each other. Inevitably this means trying to increase market share by introducing technology that raises productivity. This itself requires more skilled labour but it also requires bigger capital investments.

Because all capitalists feel under the same pressure, this has led to a boom in heavy industry and massive investment in productive capacity. Although production volumes have risen, the costs of the investment have to be recouped in prices and the actual profits, which can only derive from human labour, are smaller in relation to the overall investment. So the rate of profit tends to fall and, although the employers accumulate huge masses of capital, it is increasingly difficult to invest it at the rates of return their shareholders and bank lenders demand. A crisis of over-accumulation has begun to develop.

In China today we can see many signs of this: over-capacity, especially in heavy industry, massive speculation in real estate, a huge growth of parasitism of every sort, and a surge towards the export of capital from China. Vast sums of money are searching for a quick return because less and less can be invested profitably in produc-

WORLD ECONOMY

tion. This hasn't stopped China "growing like mad", but this mad fizz – complete with stock market manias and sudden collapses in share prices – is a classic example of the last phase of a boom, before a crisis and a downturn or even a crash. In its recent report, the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) compared China's current situation to Japan before its slump in the early 1990s, or to southeast Asia before the crash of 1998. It said: "The Chinese economy seems to be demonstrating very similar, disquieting symptoms", including a bubble in credit, a boom in asset prices and massive investment into heavy industry.

China mania

Why else would the Chinese government be taking persistent, increasingly anxious measures to cool their economy? And yet these measures have failed to tame the irrational exuberance of the Chinese investor. Only a crisis will do that. And a crisis is inevitable in the period ahead. Fools who think China's boom can go on forever – or perhaps, as one group of wiseacres has suggested, until 2015, when all the rural workers will somehow be employed in urban factories – know nothing of the spatial economy of China, nothing of the unevenness of capitalist development, and nothing of the way that the over-accumulation of capital takes place in every industrial cycle.

China's rise has forced up global prices for energy, food and raw materials. This is undermining the deflationary factors that kept interest rates low. At the same time, China's decision to diversify investment away from Treasury bonds has also contributed to upward pressure on interest rates. Bankers and financiers are worried that interest rates are set to rise again in the US, just as they have been rising in the UK over the last year. Interest rates are the price of borrowing money, based on the lender's expectation of future profits to be drawn from the assets the borrower is putting up for the loan. When rates rise, that means the lenders – above all the most powerful banks and finance houses – anticipate depressed accumulation and lower profitability in the period ahead. They are calling their loans back in, faster.

The world's central banks are wrestling with a fundamental contradiction: to combat inflation they need to raise interest rates but if they do this could force the world into recession. A couple of years back the US Federal Reserve carried out a series of successive interest rate hikes but then panicked in the face of a possible recession last year. Many of the bosses' own economists think it was a mistake to stop further increases: the Bank for International Settlements called it "sow-



New York Stock Exchange, one of the centres of world finance capital

ing the seeds for more serious problems further ahead". They argue that, by holding rates down to stimulate investment and exports in the face of a massive balance of payments deficit (currently 6.5 percent of gross domestic product) the Fed was just storing up even greater trouble for the future.

Despite keeping interest rates down,

The root of this nervousness is the fear of a serious recession in the US, by far the world's biggest economy

economic growth in the US slowed to 0.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2007, its lowest growth rate since 2003. The big money people know that the deflationary impact of China's boom is declining. They know that interest rates will have to go up again, and again. House prices in the USA are already falling as prospective buyers desert the market. Millions of middle class and working class homeowners know they cannot risk extending their personal credit by remortgaging their homes, so consumer spending is down. In the "sub-prime" sector, millions more face eviction if rates rise any higher.

Growth in "new money forms"

Meanwhile, the speculative fever of the last years has seen mortgages being "repackaged" into new forms of money called Collateralised Debt Obligations, in which big tranches of mortgages owned by major lenders are themselves lent on to other capitalists or even used as means of payment. Last year saw a record issue of \$470bn of these. These classic examples of what the bosses call "sophisticated instrument" and what Karl

Marx called "insane forms" of capital, can now be seen to carry a deadly sting in their tails. The problems in the sub prime mortgage market do not just affect a handful of lenders who lend money to poor people. It is a mass of capital on which a huge amount of other lending and investment is based – and it is chronically overvalued and insecure.

Today, the face value of all this fictitious capital is much greater than the value of the real production that supposedly underlies it. It is only a matter of time before this comes to an end. The readjustment of these fake values to real values is what the capitalists call a credit crunch: Marxists call it the onset of a capitalist crisis.

"Sooner or later", the BIS says, "the cycle will turn and default rates will begin to rise." One leading financial consultant, Tim Lee of pi Economics, told the Financial Times on 25 June that the idea that the Federal Reserve will be able to bail out investors once again is "a failure to understand the unique nature of this global credit bubble and the consequences of its inevitable collapse." Unless inflation is allowed to rise sharply in Japan and America, he said, "global deflationary collapse will be inevitable once the credit bubble bursts."

One thing is clear: once the bosses wake up to the fact that a major devaluation of capital is inevitable, they will try to shift the burden away from themselves and onto others: other countries, other currencies and, above all, onto the working class.

For Marxists, the underlying cause both of the mad speculative fever we are seeing today and of the inevitable credit crunches and crises that brings these phases to an end lies in the deep contradictions at the heart of the bosses' profit system.

At a general, simplified, level, the problem can be seen in the whole way capitalists accumulate wealth. At the heart

of production lies the relationship between the capitalist and the worker. Capital is not an independent factor of production; in reality all the profit the capitalists earn stems from the worker's capacity to labour that the bosses buy for a delimited period of time and use to produce commodities. A worker receives in return not the value that he or she adds to goods or services in production, but roughly what it takes to stay alive, get back to work week after week, and bring up a new generation of workers. This money is the wage or salary. The difference between the two values – the value of reproducing labour capacity and the value of everything it creates, is surplus value: it is the source of profit and the capitalist pockets the lot.

As capitalists compete with one another they use various methods to boost profit: one is to raise productivity by introducing more advanced machinery. But over the years of any given industrial cycle, this creates unbalanced development. Because each capitalist is trying to outdo the other (and because of misleading price signals that arise from the operation of the credit system), the way capitalists raise labour productivity starts to undermine the very basis for profitable accumulation in the future. As we saw earlier in looking at the case of China, as living labour forms a reducing component of capital relative to technology and other factors, the rate of profit comes under downward pressure.

This eventually results in a crisis of overaccumulation: the incredible fact that under capitalism where billions languish in poverty, there is too much capital, too many commodities, too many workers employed and too much money. Of course, it isn't too much at all in terms of human need to satisfy – it is just more than can be applied profitably given the pressure on the rate of profit. When there is overaccumulation of capital, ultimately some capital must be destroyed (devalued) to restore the conditions of profitable accumulation.

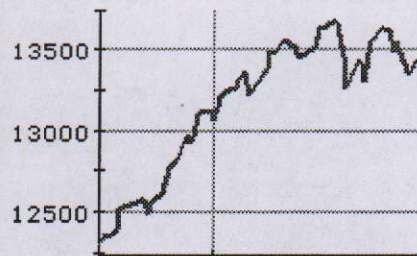
This tendency towards overaccumulation and breakdown can be offset by a range of measures like lower food prices, faster turnover times, expanded world trade and so on. But none of these factors can fend off overaccumulation forever.

At a more complex level, we have to take the credit system into account. As competition heats up in the expansionary phase of an industrial cycle (the 7-10 year cycles of stagnation, recovery, expansion, speculative fever, crisis, slump that characterise the entire history of capitalism), capitalists fuel their expansion ever more by reliance on loan capital, credit or investment in an equity stake in the business (share capital). Relying on a share of future profits deriving from future exploitation of the working class, the par-

Stock market volatility

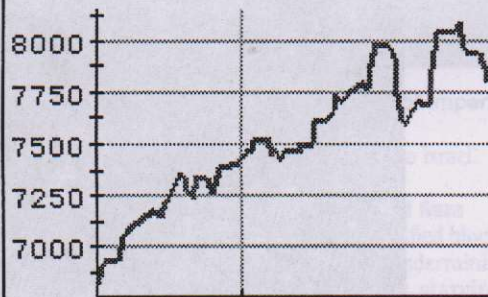
Graphs showing the volatility on, from the top, Dow Jones, Dax and FTSE stock markets since 1 May

Dow Jones



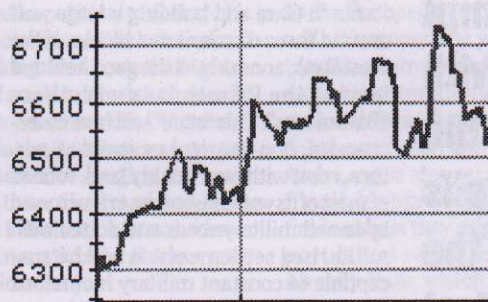
From 1 May to 1 July

Dax



From 1 May to 1 July

FTSE



From 1 May to 1 July

asitic capitalists of finance and credit develop ever more complex methods and instruments that increasingly detach themselves from the real underlying economic activity on which they are supposedly based.

This leads inexorably towards a credit crunch as overaccumulation brings a sudden adjustment, a fall back towards the actual values. There is a rush out of fictitious credit, loans, shares, bonds and strange "derivatives and instruments" towards the higher quality measures of value: money. The banks call their debts back in, crushing companies, bankrupting investors, throwing workers and

whole communities onto the scrapheap. Then, when asset values have fallen sufficiently, they start to buy them up again on the cheap, ready for the time when profitable accumulation resumes and the industrial cycle recommences its upward path again.

Finally, we need to take into account the real social, political, national and international situation in which these crises take place. When a crisis and devaluation strikes, the first thing the capitalist thinks is how he can make others pay the cost of devaluation. This means a real destruction of real capital in real places on the ground. The struggle then turns to the question of who is going to get it in the neck and where.

As investors and financiers dump funny money and turn to the real thing, attention will focus on the stability of the various national currencies. Each state will try to prop up its currency, if necessary at the expense of others. Today, in a period of heightened international tensions, with the dollar very weak because of the USA's historically vast trade deficit and external liabilities amounting to over \$4 trillion, there can be little doubt that a global crisis of devaluation would inflame international rivalries still further.

Global deflation?

Either the US and British capitalists could once again succeed in rebalancing the world economy by "switching" the crisis into another zone such as the Far East, or even China itself, or – more dramatically but perhaps more likely – the world could sink again into protectionism as the USA and the EU, in particular, try to manage the effects of a global deflationary collapse.

In short, the reason the world's bankers and financiers are so worried is that they sense the possibility of a large scale crisis – a crisis of globalisation. One that would destroy the myth that globalisation has brought us a wonderful new pattern of endless development and pitch the world into a new period of intense attacks on working class people and sharpening rivalries between the capitalist powers.

All the more reason for the working class to resist now. From the fight to defend public sector pay and jobs and to maintain public services, to the fight to defeat the occupations and war drives around the world, we must understand that we are not just fighting to stop the bosses running down our living standards today, but to prepare for a great offensive when the crisis comes, to turn our local, regional, industrial and national resistance into a globally organised struggle of the working class to overthrow this truly insane system and create a rational, democratically planned, future for humanity.

PALESTINE

Fatah leadership becomes a puppet of Zionism and US imperialism

The internal struggle amongst the Palestinians is a result of the plans of the imperialists in Washington and the Zionists in Tel Aviv to break up the Palestinian resistance movement, argues *Simon Hardy*

Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority, has declared a state of emergency and dismissed the three month old "unity government" of Prime Minister Ismail Haniya of Hamas. His action comes after the fighting in the Gaza Strip which killed 110 when Hamas militia fighters clashed with Fatah forces loyal to the president. When the preventative security building and the intelligence service headquarters in Gaza City finally fell to Hamas, the entire Gaza Strip was in its control.

Fatah forces retaliated against the defeat in Gaza by purging Hamas forces in parts of the West Bank. Captured Fatah fighters have been summarily shot in Gaza. So effectively the Palestinian territories have been divided with Hamas in control in Gaza and Fatah still holding the West Bank. Far from a two state solution, there is now a three state solution in place. The immediate response of world leaders in the EU, US and Israel was to congratulate Abbas and hand over millions of dollars in withheld tax revenue as a reward for "capturing" the West Bank from Hamas.

Israel and the international community had placed an embargo on the Palestinian government and worked to undermine it since the victory of Hamas in the elections in January 2006. Fatah was defeated by a landslide as the majority of the Palestinians rejected their corruption and backsliding on the national liberation struggle. Since then the Palestinians' suspicions have been confirmed as Fatah became an openly pro-imperialist wing of Palestinian politics and made friendly overtures to the Zionist occupiers in Israel.

Abbas has formed new a cabinet without Hamas, including ex-members of the World Bank and other technocrats in it as a further attempt to appease the Zionists. After seizing the West Bank and overthrowing the government, Abbas received a 15 minute phone call from George Bush thanking him for acting in the interests of the international community. In return Abbas promised to try to re-open peace talks with Israel with the view of achieving a two state "solution" to the Palestinian problem.

Israel is thus moving closer and clos-

The contempt with which the Israelis treat the West Bank and Gaza is proof that no two state solution can work



Young Palestinians celebrate the Hamas victory in the Gaza Strip

er to its ultimate goal of isolating the militants in Gaza and building a huge wall around three disconnected blocks of the West Bank, annexing all the good land and leaving the Palestinians with these "Bantustans". This "state" will be an overcrowded, non-contiguous series of cantons, most with poor quality land, robbed of most of its water resources, criss-crossed by Israeli military roads and dotted with militarised settlements. It will be susceptible to constant military incursions by the Israeli Defence Force. It will be economically unviable and reliant on international aid to eke out an existence.

A two state solution?

The breakdown of the Palestinian unity government and the turn towards open warfare between Hamas and Fatah is the natural result of the failed "two-state solution" in the only form Israel and its American sponsor will allow – isolated pockets hemmed in by the Apartheid Wall. The withdrawal from the Gaza Strip by Israel in 2005, ostensibly to allow the Palestinians more room for self-government, in fact has allowed the Israelis to use it as a lever to crack open the Palestinian resistance and turn it in on itself.

In short, this is a long term strategy to destroy the Palestinian people as a national community with any independent

political expression (a state). Why do the Zionists continue with this racist settler policy? Quite simply because the Jewish population, for all the US-sponsored and funded settlement, scarcely remains a majority in Palestine as a whole. The Palestinians still make up nearly half the population in the territory of Mandate Palestine. The Jewish population of Israel is 5.3 million and the Palestinians some 5.2 million (3.9 million on the West Bank and Gaza and 1.3 million within pre-1967 Israel). Then there are the 4.5 million Palestinian refugees in adjacent Arab states – Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The Zionist state can only survive by ensuring not only the displacement of these people but the continued, unceasing expropriation of their territory.

Immediately after Hamas won the January 2006 elections, it offered to form a broad coalition government with Fatah, under Abbas' presidency. But the US violently objected; Israel proclaimed any government with Hamas in it to be a terrorist regime. Israel went on to kidnap 64 Palestinian members of parliament including 8 cabinet ministers and 22 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. As usual the capture of a couple of Israel soldiers was made an international issue, but the disdain the Israelis

held the Palestinian government in was met with little comment. The US also supported Israel in blocking Palestinian tax revenues and cut all US aid. The European Union, the principal donor to the Palestinians, cut off \$600 million a year. Israel blocked the payment of more than \$50 million a year in customs duties it collects on behalf of the Palestinian occupied territories. The West knows full well that by cutting the economic aid to the Palestinian government they were leaving 140,000 employees without a salary to feed their families. Twenty-three per cent of the population are dependent on these salaries. The United Nations reported that 65 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza and 48 per cent of those the West Bank were already living below the poverty level. Yet a spokesman of the Israeli armed forces described the blockade as “putting the Palestinians on a diet”.

The complicity in supporting the carve-up of Palestine falls ultimately on the heads of the Fatah leaders. From the Oslo Accords onwards they accepted Israel’s “right to exist”, i.e. the legitimacy of its 1948 seizure of Palestinian lands and the ethnic cleansing of its inhabitants. They tacitly abandoned the six million Palestinians living as refugees with no way of returning to their homeland. Their sell out of the Intifada and corrupt misrule of the Palestinian territories eventually turned a majority of the Palestinian electorate against them and towards the radical Islamist group Hamas. The tension between the old order of Fatah, with its hands firmly on the security forces, and the newly elected government of Hamas presented an opportunity for the Zionists and the American and European imperialists to intervene to compromise Fatah even more and hopefully crush Hamas.

Certainly any fighting between the Palestinian forces plays into the hands of the US imperialists and their ally Israel, but who is to blame for this? The US has been training an elite group of Fatah security called Force 17 in “counter terrorism” and urban warfare, primarily aimed at “internal security”. They arranged for the transfer of fighters loyal to Abbas from the West Bank to Gaza via Egypt. Israel and the US’s clear aim was to foment a civil war in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, backing the “moderate” Fatah, hoping it would crush Hamas and any resistance. The Fatah leadership, after years of ruling Palestinian peo-



Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert: agents of imperialism

ple, faced disintegration without the sources of patronage and corruption which went with this power. Abbas and co will sell themselves to the highest bidder to get it back again. Who is the highest bidder? The answer is obvious.

The contempt with which the Israelis, backed up by US and the European Union, treat the fragile Palestinian political structures is proof that no two state solution can work. Alongside a powerful nuclear-armed Israel, in receipt of over \$3 billion a year from the US government plus huge donations from private sources of roughly the same amount, no disarmed and fragmented Palestinian state could survive as more than an outdoor concentration camp.

All the previous facts have not taken place in a vacuum; they have been preceded by almost six years of intensification of the conflict. About 4000 Palestinians have been murdered in attacks by the Israeli army (and illegal settlers). Israel has also taken approximately 10,000 prisoners, has destroyed 8,000 houses, has illegally confiscated 250,000 dunams (a dunam is equivalent to thousand square meters) of Palestinian land and has uprooted more than one million citrus and olive trees which the Palestinians’ livelihoods depend on. The fact that Ehud Olmert has released around 250 Fatah prisoners in late June as a thank you to Abbas again demonstrates that Israel sees the actions of Abbas as part of their wider plan to end the Palestinian

resistance to Israel.

Blockade of Gaza

The intensified blockade of Gaza is aimed at undermining Hamas support there, starving the population and terrorising it with incursions by tanks, armoured bulldozers and aerial attacks by Apache helicopters and F16s. The US, backed by the European Union, hopes this will either open the way for Abbas to retake control, aided by the “international community” (i.e. international “peacekeepers” from the European Union and maybe from Arab League stooges, like Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Egypt). In the final analysis they might even support Israel re-occupying Gaza. Already Italy, which sent a large force to Lebanon under the Prodi government, has said they are willing to play a similar role in Gaza.

Such an outcome would be a disaster for the Palestinian people and must be resisted all the way. And there are serious obstacles to this happening. Firstly is the undaunted heroism of the Palestinian people. Secondly it will be difficult, if not impossible, for Abbas to either invade Gaza or support an Israeli re-occupation. The European Union will not dare send in forces to conquer and occupy Gaza and it is highly unlikely that Israel would allow in forces from Arab regimes.

The international movement must overcome its present divisions – caused by large sections’ historic loyalty to Fatah – and openly and

clearly support the resistance in Gaza, led presently by Hamas.

This does not mean support for Hamas’ Islamist politics, but it does mean support for their armed resistance to Israel, and also Fatah where it acts as Israel’s stooge. But Palestinians clearly need to look beyond the politics of the bourgeois nationalists and the political Islamists. Neither has been able to organise a mass resistance right across the region against Israel and a struggle for a just solution to the land question and refugee problem. A working class party must be built, one that can unite workers and the poor of all nationalities, languages and religious communities, right across the region in a revolutionary struggle against Israel and its imperialist and Arab backers. To do this it must start from the position that no nationality, language or religious group will find itself either privileged or oppressed in the world we are struggling for. This is the essence of working class internationalism. Such a starting point is possible because although the working class supports every oppressed people’s struggle for liberation, it has no homeland and will have none until it takes power itself.

The racist Israeli settler state must be smashed and replaced with a workers’ state for Arabs, Jews, Muslims, Christians, etc. The Arab workers, as the majority in Palestine and the region, will undoubtedly lead this struggle, but in doing so they must seek at all times to promote and support class struggle within Israel itself, to turn the poor, the unemployed, the low paid Israeli workers against their own capitalists.

Class struggle can create a schism in the Zionist project, weakening its capacity to oppress, and undermining support for Zionism in the US and Europe. But in the end only the mass action of the Arab working class – in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, etc – can finally defeat it.

Today the burning task of the international movement in solidarity with Palestine is to break the blockade of Gaza, and oppose all attempts to invade it or to send an “international peacekeeping force”. Every union and working class political organisation worldwide should support the international day of action for Palestine called for 12 July.

For more on Palestine go to www.fifthinternational.org

G8 PROTESTS

Seven days that shook Germany

Martin Suchanek from Gruppe Arbeitermacht, the German section of the League for the Fifth International, describes the dramatic events in Rostock and Heiligendamm, explains the results of the anti-G8 protests and how the movement can strengthen itself for the future

According to Karl Marx, writing in the Communist Manifesto, the political progress made by a movement depends not so much on the “immediate results” of any particular confrontation, but rather on the degree to which consciousness, organisation and determination are raised. In Heiligendamm we were not able to stop the summit taking place or to disrupt it so much that it had to be abandoned, as has happened with previous summits. However, given the coastal location and the 17,000 police, troops and marines, as well as thousands of foreign security forces, that is hardly surprising.

Yet the success of the demonstrations, actions and blockades can be seen at many levels.

80,000 people took part in the main international demonstration on 2 June. This alone was a political victory. Almost more remarkable was that some 20,000 stayed for the rest of the week and took part in the actions organised in the three camps at Rostock, Reddelich and Wichmannsdorf.

Most of the actions and demonstrations not only targeted particular crimes of the G8 but the entire capitalist system that lies behind their policies. Of course this is still a long way from a scientific, Marxist analysis or a revolutionary strategy for the overthrow of the system, but there cannot be any doubt that the week of activities against the G8, as well as the persistent attacks by the state apparatus and the media against the protest movement, has done a great deal to clarify the real character of the bourgeois repressive apparatus and the functioning of both bourgeois democracy and the “progressive” media.

The demonstration on 2 June, and those against racism on 4 June and the antiwar actions provided important lessons about the real nature of the state and capital, certainly better insights than could have been gained from the hot air of the “counter summit” of the NGOs, Attac, the Left Party and other reformist forces.

Above all, the majority of activists realised that the police provocations on 2 June were a conscious attempt to divide the movement and to criminalise its activists and most militant sections. The state tried to force a wedge into the movement to separate the “reasonable” demonstrators who had “legitimate concerns” from the “hooligans”,

Most of the demos not only targeted the G8 but the entire capitalist system

“rioters” and “disrupters”. They wanted to present the whole protest as “terrorist” and to justify the searches of dozens of people’s homes, bookshops and information services that took place before the protest even began. The gutter press, in the form of the Bild newspaper, played a supporting role in this by suggesting in its headlines that the demonstrators wanted to see someone get killed. The Interior Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, and the deputy leader of the police, demanded “an end to the policy of de-escalation”.

This went to the heart of the matter. The great majority of demonstrators immediately understood what game Schäuble, the bourgeois press and the police leaders were playing. The top people from Attac and the Left Party rushed obediently to distance themselves and, in the case of Attac, even went so far as to call on people to report individuals to the police. Attac-Germany, referring to one incident during the police attack on the demonstration, condemned the “violent attack on two policemen and the pursuit of police officers by demonstrators”, characterising the defence of the demo as “irresponsible”, while accusing the police only of a “disproportionate” response.

Not surprisingly, both Attac and the Party of Democratic Socialism/Left Party were widely – and justifiably – discredited during the protests, especially among the more militant and youthful sections. Similarly, one speaker for the “Interventionist Left” and the Antifa, who also distanced himself from the “rioters”, was then forced to resign from his position. In the Rostock camp many people demanded that Attac should be thrown out of the camp.

All this meant that Attac’s plan to use the summit protest to rebuild the “network” had to be written off. The Left Party had to turn its attention to minimising the political damage to its image instead of using the actions against the summit as an advertising campaign for the imminent formal fusion between the PDS and the Electoral Alternative for Social Justice.

The campaign by the police leaders didn’t even work as planned amongst the general population. On the contrary, many workers, above all the unemployed, felt that the millions of euros spent on the security fence and the massive limitations on their own freedom of movement were an additional provocation in the face of

ongoing cuts in unemployment pay and pensions and the increase in VAT.

The high points of the actions were undoubtedly the demonstration on 2 June and the blockades on 6 and 7 June. On 2 June, thousands of people refused to be intimidated by the police and the state, and during the summit itself between 15 and 20,000 people peacefully blockaded the roads to Heiligendamm after they had outwitted the police roadblocks around the so-called “red zone”. While it is true that in the end the state decided to tolerate the blockades and not to attack them, they were, nonetheless, a political victory – a defeat for the police leadership who had previously made so much of how they would “secure the red zone”.

In all these respects, the demonstrations, blockades and other actions against the G8 summit were a big step forward for the anticapitalist movement both in Germany and internationally. The political success was also aided by the fact that the G8 summit itself achieved nothing of any significance. Nothing came of all the lying promises to “help Africa” or take action against global climate change.

While the G8 arrogantly regard themselves as some kind of world government that can decide over the needs and interests of whole continents, the contradictions and conflicts between the imperialist powers and blocks are growing in intensity.

Despite the cyclical upturn in the German and European economies, there are no signs of a rosy future for world capitalism. On the contrary, the competition for markets and geostrategic spheres of influence is sharpening and shows the potential explosiveness of the current world order should the US economy enter into a phase of recession and take the rest of the world economy with it.

In addition, in Germany it has become more and more clear that the cyclical upturn or the success of German exports go alongside a continual worsening of the living and working conditions of the great mass of the population. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern region, where the summit took place, the official unemployment rate is still more than 20 per cent. There, nobody believes the promises of an improvement in their own lives.

The reality of sharper competition between capitalist corporations and the imperialists is also an important reason for the failure of the divisive strategies



Members of the anti-imperialist block successfully defend themselves from police attack on the Saturday demonstration

the state and the media. The majority of the population see the G8 as an illegitimate institution, a gang of global thieves or, "at best", a useless waste of money. The resistance against the G8 was seen by a large part of the population as justified and in their own interests even to the extent of a quiet satisfaction among a minority that the Black Block was able, on occasion, to put the police to flight.

It was not only the government and the media who misinterpreted the feeling in the population. Even if most workers and youth, including the most advanced sections, are still a long way from a revolutionary opposition to capitalism and imperialism, it is nonetheless clear to most people that lobbying Bush, Merkel or Putin will not achieve anything – many have rejected the NGO's strategy.

A balance sheet of the Rostock mobilisations, however, would be incomplete if it did not also take stock of the weaknesses in the movement.

Without any doubt, one of the central problems was the absence of the organised trade union movement. The leadership of the DGB (the German TUC) spoke out against the demonstrations on 2 June because they preferred to concentrate on "conversations" with the government and the G8. Although the big trade unions, IG Metall (engineering) and ver.di (public services) which organise some 2.5 million members, as well as the trade union youth organisation, did support the call for the demonstration on 2 June, they only

organised a few thousand members to take part. What was clear was that mobilisations only took place as a result of local initiatives in the factories and public services. During the week participation by the trade unions dwindled.

Yet the summit took place at a time when important sectors of the working class were under attack. In Telecom, for example, there was a strike at the very time when the summit was meeting and ver.di could have mobilised strike action in the institutions that were necessary to maintain the summit itself, thereby creating a real bridge to the blockades and the struggle against capitalist globalisation.

The attitude of the DGB and the rest of the trade union apparatus, as well as the majority of the works' councils in the big corporations, shows how closely the trade unions are bound up with German capital and its state. They are actively opposed to the radicalisation of trade union struggles and are a major obstacle to uniting the radical youth and the working class in action.

This fundamental weakness, the gulf between the anticapitalist movement and the trade union organised working class, was made very clear just a matter of days after the G8 protests. First of all, there was very little trade union participation in the demonstrations against police repression after the G8 including a series of house searches in Berlin on 12 June. Secondly, the Telecom strike, involving one of the best organised firms within ver.di's sector, was sold out a few days after the summit with

the phasing out of 50,000 jobs, a wage cut of 6.5 per cent and a three hour increase in the working week.

Against this background, the mobilisations against the G8 in Rostock revealed very clearly the strategic tasks:

- organising the radical, anticapitalist youth into a political alternative to the reformist Left Party, Attac and, above all, to the trade union bureaucracy
- building a political opposition to the trade union bureaucracy in the factories and unions that can stop sellouts like the one at Telecom and ultimately create an alternative leadership to the reformist bureaucracy.

Politically, that means linking the rejection of the capitalist system, which was clear to be seen in the anti-G8 demonstrations, to a conscious struggle for socialist revolution. In this it is not only the SPD, the Left Party, the trade union bureaucracy or Attac that are an obstacle but also the Autonomie movement and its ideology.

Many young people are attracted to the militancy and radicalism of this movement, particularly because it appears to offer at least a symbolic defiance of the state as an alternative to reformism and the NGOs. Moreover, unlike the mass organisations which are controlled by massive bureaucracies, it offers a real degree of "self-determination". That is strengthened by the fact that the centrist organisations in Germany, above all, Linksruck, the sister organisation of the SWP, act as the fifth column of the parliamentary fraction of the Left Party and

the Socialist Alternative are seen, with some justification, as just a left variation of the Social Democracy.

In Rostock we were able to demonstrate the progress that has been made in building a militant class struggle wing of the movement. On 2 June, we marched together with the comrades of the Italian trade union, COBAS, in one demonstration block and on the next day organised a meeting with their leading representative, Piero Bernocchi. For some time, we have been working together closely with numerous organisations in the "Anti-G8 Alliance for a Revolutionary Perspective" and the "Anti-imperialist and Antifascist Action Alliance against the G8" which included organisations such as ATIK, the New Democratic Youth, ILPS, AGIF and Young Struggle. Together with these comrades, and thousands of others, we have defended the demonstrations on 2 and 4 June, and organised action against police attacks.

Everybody who lived through these days in Rostock knows that something quite out of the ordinary has happened. We have experienced days not only of capitalist attack but also of determined resistance, days of solidarity and collaboration among the anti-imperialist and anticapitalist forces. They can't break our resistance! We will go forward together in the struggle for another world. It is now more clear than ever: no future without socialism! No socialism without revolution! No revolution without a party! Forward in struggle for the Fifth International!

NIGERIAN GENERAL STRIKE

General strike rocks Nigerian president's first months

While the main parties have done their deals with the Nigerian president over the stolen election in May, the workers have yet again come to the forefront of the struggle against poverty and corruption. *Keith Spencer* reports

“The deal can be seen as a victory for the unions but not a total one,” said the BBC’s correspondent in Lagos about the recent general strike that rocked two month old Umaru Yar’Adua’s presidency. The four-day general strike started on 20 June and won widespread support throughout the country.

The unions were protesting against a rise in the price of fuel from 65 naira (about 25p) to 75 naira a litre, the privatisation of two refineries, a doubling of VAT from 5 per cent, and in favour of a demand for a 15 per cent wage increase for government employees. The measures provoking the protests were passed a couple of months ago by outgoing president Olusegun Obasanjo as a goodbye gift and it was left to his protégé Yar’Adua to carry them out.

The strike was called by the mainly blue-collar Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), and joined by the other trade union centre the Trade Union Congress (mainly white-collar unions).

The whole country was brought to a standstill – all commercial and industrial activity in Lagos was closed and the sea and air ports were badly hit; the strike in the south west, home of president Obasanjo, was solid; in the federal capital Abuja most of the government offices were closed; and in the delta region much of the oil production was stopped. The vice president saw his own state, Bayelsa, come to a standstill as the NLC organised demonstrations denouncing his policies. Bob Onuchukwu, head of the Nigerian Importers Association, said the strike had stopped all economic and business activities.

The workers were supported by the labour and civil society organisations (Lascos), which played a role in organising the strikes by pulling together union activists, NGOs, civil and ethnic organisations. They closed down towns and



cities, picketed petrol stations, sent out scouts against the police and army, and organised demonstrations throughout Nigeria. In the space of four days the unions won everything with the exception of the fuel price rise, which now stands at 70 naira a litre.

They achieved this in the face of intimidation: police arrested 50 strikers in Enugu state and the government threatened to send in the army and police to smash up strikers’ barricades nationally. Meanwhile, the head of the country’s public services, Yayale Ahmed, threatened to withhold pay from workers who didn’t turn up for work on Monday.

But despite the bravery and militancy of millions of workers, the eighth general strike in seven years could, like its predecessors, have achieved much more.

The union leaders again failed to carry out a fight to finish with Yar’Adua. NLC President, Abdulwahed Omar, said on Saturday 23 May that he was worried about the hardship and that “there is a good possibility that we may reconsider our position – if the government decides to come down to a reasonable level.” He went on to say that the unions did not want to be seen to be too rigid but the “government had to act in a positive manner too.”

But it is the bosses that cause hardship, not the workers. The

workers have opposed every oil price rise but the hardship continues because western multinationals and Nigerian capitalists need prices to rise to make their operations more profitable.

Meanwhile, the bourgeois politicians who promised mass action over Yar’Adua’s stolen election were nowhere to be seen. All their noises about bringing society onto the streets for a Ukrainian style revolution have amounted to just that – noise.

The real opposition is the working class and its supporters among the masses. During the general strike, activists should have argued for strike committees in every work place to organise pickets, etc. They could have formed a rank and file movement in the unions to wrest control of the strike out of the hands of the bureaucracy. The strike committees could have joined up with the Lascos and become embryonic organs of power for the workers and masses. They already organised picketing and should have gone further to organise the defence of demonstrations and pickets against state attacks. Activists should have argued for the Lascos and strike committees to set up a national network of activists to control and defend the strike until all of its demands were met in full – but also to go further and challenge the rule of the fraudulently elected president.

Now that the strike is over,

activists must fight for the creation of a workers’ party to fight for the interests of the workers and poor, counter the influence of the compromisers and reformists, and ensure that in the coming years that a general strike can become an opportunity for the workers and poor to take power.

A campaign for a workers’ party must be launched among the unions and in the Lascos. Such a party must involve the widest possible layers of workers, youth and poor in a discussion of strategy, in which revolutionaries must advance a programme that can link the demands around the stolen elections and poverty and transference of wealth to those of a workers’ state, won through revolution.

We believe a workers’ party should fight for:

- A living wage, jobs for all. Free education and health care;
- Give the land to the peasants. Expropriate the big landowners without compensation;
- For democratic rights for national minorities and ethnic groups – for a constituent assembly, a new constitution and the right of minorities to secede if they choose;
- Against communal violence; separation of church and state;
- Against corruption – open the books to workers investigation;
- For nationalisation of the oil industry and big companies without compensation. Put under workers control
- For a workers militia to defend the masses against the army, police and ‘private security’ of the oil firms and big companies
- Repudiate Nigeria’s foreign debt
- For a democratic plan to organise the economy for need not greed
- For a workers and poor farmers government.

If you agree join us in the fight.

For more on Nigeria go to www.fifthinternational.org

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.

CONTACT

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International

Workers Power
BCM 7750
London
WC1N 3XX

020 7708 0224

workerspower@
btopenworld.com

ON THE WEB

www.workerspower.com
www.fifthinternational.com

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Workers Power GB blog
URL: http://workerspower.org.uk/wordpress/

Thronedatus strikes by CWU streets down post
The postal strike yesterday shut down Royal Mail from top to bottom of the country in a series of postal workers' protests. The CWU postal union has claimed that over 10 per cent of its 120,000 members in the east took part in strike action. The strike started at 7am Saturday 30 June but could strike postal customers by day.

Voices from the CWU picketlines
Workers Power members and trade unionists, along with youth from the Socialist Youth Group Revolution, have been doing call-ins for the postal workers and calling picket lines in solidarity. Here are some responses from the picketlines and voices from striking postal workers themselves as they claim the strike is doing what they need next steps are. Send in your reports to workerspower@btopenworld.com.

All out in Wilt
London: CWU picket on 29 June 2007
The strike action starting on 29 June will be the first national postal strike in eleven years. Royal Mail and Post Office workers will be striking together. If we all strike united and effectively action we can win. We can defeat the attack on our wages, jobs and conditions.

WorkersPower.com provides news and analysis of the British class struggle. It has dedicated union pages and allows visitors to view selected articles, thematically, such as antiwar or antiracist. Our online archive contains issues of our monthly organ, stretching back to 2003. Website visitors can also sign up for the regular British newswire email. An international newswire is also available from the League's website (see left).

• www.workerspower.com •

League for the Fifth International

USA and Israel behind Fatah coup
18 June 2007
To illustrate the human situation in Gaza as a result of the 12 year occupation, which is a political job, with the aim of the US, Israel and their agents who have been making a permanent and violent case for the democratic choice of the Palestinian people.

Rastafarian demonstration pictures
June 2007
Here are pictures from our last contingent with Revolution and COMBAT marching through Rastafarian in the Shetland, demonstrating on June 2nd.

Protest against the mass arrests in Pakistan
14 June 2007
We protest in the strongest terms against the mass arrests of supporters of the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan. In particular we protest at the arrest and sentencing to three months detention of Farooq Tariq, General Secretary of the Labour Party of Pakistan, PML-N.

South Africa: forward to an indefinite general strike!
13 June 2007
On Thursday, South Africa was marked by a one day general strike called by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Dave Shabane argues that for the workers' class consciousness in the African National Congress (ANC) and that South African workers need their own party, not the puppet boss, Nicky.

Brazil's dream of a "new American century" finally extinguished in Heligenland?
11 June 2007
The 50 centavo produced the men couldn't simply surrender but also showed the serious nature of the tensions and conflicts between the great powers. Dave

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India: rising tide of struggles

By Kuldip Bajwa

India's headlong rush to open up its economy to foreign capital and exploitation by multinational corporations is meeting increasing militant resistance from workers and peasants, Dalits and indigenous peoples.

A Maoist inspired two-day strike and economic blockade in parts of Eastern India last month culminated in rail lines and freight trains being blown up and the burning down of a train station, severely disrupting train services to parts of North Eastern India.

The action was called in the wake of the government's decision to approve another 24 Special Economic Zones (SEZ's) bringing the total agreed over the past two years to 111.

SEZ's allow companies to acquire huge tracts of rural land to convert into giant industrial parks where they are exempt from many local taxes, labour laws and red tape.

A further 100 SEZ's are earmarked for approval before the end of 2007 and many more are in the pipeline which will bring the total up to nearly 500. These enterprise zones are set to displace millions of poor farmers and peasants as the Indian government strives to emulate Chinese growth rates, where similar zones have led to an explosion of new mega cities or enormous expansion to existing ones, seemingly overnight.

In the largest of these proposed developments, in the Western coastal state of Maharashtra 45,000 farmers will be uprooted as Reliance Industries takes over 2,140 hectares of what was previously fertile farmland and salt flats.

India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described SEZ's as "an idea whose time has come". His Congress led UPA led coalition government which is supported in central government by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) is keen to step up the pace of industrialisation in a country where 600 million people still live on farms.

Despite posting growth rates of up to 9% and its new image of a burgeoning high-tech industry, buzzing call centres and glittering malls, 260 million of India's 1.1 billion population are living on less than a dollar a day and over half its population remain unable to read or write.

Congress's surprise win in the 2004 general election was largely attributed to a huge swing vote in rural areas, backlash against the ruling BJP's agenda of privatisation and other economic reforms that failed to bring prosperity to millions of peasants and

the rural poor. However, in the three years since taking power, as well as the SEZ's, the Congress led coalition have sold off state assets, allowing private control over community resources – water, biodiversity, forests, seeds, agriculture markets, and mineral resources.

The agricultural sector, for so long the bedrock of the Indian economy is being particularly squeezed by reforms that favour contract farming which in turn favour large private companies leaving little room for subsistence farmers. Some World Bank estimates suggest more than 400 million Indians will be compelled to move to urban areas over the next period.

Whilst much of the coverage we see of India in the age of globalisation focuses on the emerging middle classes it is the new rural migrants and rural and urban poor who have rattled the politicians. In the May state

Despite the willingness to struggle of the Indian workers, a unified working class party that can lead them is absent

elections in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous and politically influential state, Congress and the other main political parties, committed to the neo-liberal agenda fared badly. A landslide victory was won by the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), traditionally seen as the party for Dalits and poor communities. Dalits are literally the "suppressed" strata outside and at the bottom of the traditional Hindu caste system.

Struggles against specific SEZ's have taken place around the country, the most widely reported being against the infamous proposed chemical plant in Nandigram, West Bengal where thousands of local villagers and farmers fought to defend their land against state government backed troops leading to at least 14 deaths. The incident drew widespread condemnation from around India and helped to galvanise opponents of the SEZ schemes.

Nandigram drew particular attention because the attacks on the villagers were backed by the CPI (M), which has ruled West Bengal for thirty years. Their Left Front coal-

ition is fully supportive of the SEZ programme and plans to press ahead with at least five other schemes in the state. In 2002 West Bengal also outlawed strikes in information technology and information technology-enabled industries in a bid to reassure potential investors.

The pressure of globalisation has also been felt by other sectors in India. Riots in Rajasthan earlier this year were sparked by members of the Nomadic Gujjar tribe campaigning for official recognition to qualify them for quotas under India's affirmative action programme. They have argued that this is the only way that members of their 15 million strong tribe, who live right across northern India, can gain access to government jobs as well as places in state-supported schools and colleges.

This summer ground staff at state-owned Indian Airlines have been on strike to defend jobs following plans to merge with the national carrier Air India in the face of growing competition from private airlines and reduced market share. In the CPI (M) affiliated trade union CITU has called for a one-day strike in August among workers in unorganised sectors to demand legislative protection and social security.

Despite the willingness to struggle of the Indian working class, peasants and the poor a unified working class party that can lead and unite their struggles is absent.

The CPI (M) is increasingly discredited in its heartland of West Bengal and it remains to be seen if it can win back the support of millions to whom it has been exposed following the events at Nandigram.

The Maoists in contrast have grown in influence through active involvement in many of the anti-SEZ campaigns but do not offer a strategy focused on the leadership of the urban working class. They retain the confusion typical of Stalinism whereby prior to the decisive revolution against capital, some form of governmental collaboration with an exploiting class (a "national", "anti-imperialist" or "democratic" bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie) dictates the delay of socialist tasks for a whole historic stage. The result of this can be seen in Nepal, where instead of taking power at the head of the workers, peasants and youth the Maoists have entered a coalition with the King still in place.

The uprisings against the SEZ's around the country offer the opportunity to build a mass campaign against neo-liberal reform and globalisation. To succeed it will need a revolutionary strategy that can unite all those in struggle, a new working class party armed with a revolutionary programme needs to be built by the most conscious militants.