

# workers power

revolution  
against  
global  
capitalism

British section of the League for the Fifth International

## SWP and the united front



Richard Brenner looks at the application of the united front by the UK's biggest far-left group the Socialist Workers Party in the Stop the War Coalition and other campaigns | page 10

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On the evening of Sunday 22nd June on the Caia Park housing estate in Wrexham, a white man threw a brick through the window of an Iraqi Kurdish refugee called Hoshman. As we go to press, Hoshman is fighting for his life in hospital with massive head injuries. If he dies he will be the fifth refugee murdered by racists since January 2001.

Three days later in Walthamstow, East London, a middle-aged Asian man Awais Alam was out doing his shopping. As he left a shop two racists started taunting him. When he answered back they knocked him to the ground and kicked him till he lost consciousness. He later died in hospital, leaving three orphaned children.

Meanwhile, six British soldiers were gunned down in southern Iraq by an angry crowd who saw them as brutal and intrusive occupiers. The press screamed in huge headlines that this was murder.

What unites all three incidents is that they are all the result of a series of calculated lies.

Tony Blair, David Blunkett and the rest of the Labour government have scapegoated refugees and immigrants. The right-wing tabloids run never-ending headlines of soft-touch Britain and bogus asylum seekers.

Yet, asylum seekers are among the poorest and most vulnerable people in Britain today. Most of them are fleeing the war zones and dictatorships created by British military and foreign policy or British arms manufacturers. Others are desperate to escape the effects of economies in freefall again thanks to British, US and EU maintained debt mountains, unfair trade rules and austerity dictated by the IMF.

These lies target anyone in Britain who is not white or speaks with a foreign accent. Any black or Asian person complaining about a racist boss or cop or is accused of being "difficult" or "on the make". Suspicion that black and Asian Britons get better treatment and enjoy more resources is systematically maintained - despite the fact that the opposite is the truth.

And the lies continue abroad. We were told that the six military policemen shot dead in Iraq were "unprovoked" killings by the "enemies of peace". Later it emerged that British officers had ordered soldiers to conduct intrusive house searches and shoot unarmed demonstrators. Far from the gunmen being Saddam loyalists, they were victims of Saddam who simply want the British army to leave.

This is of course on top of the even bigger lie that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction, weapons that have never been found. If this threat did not really exist, why were British soldiers' lives endangered and lost? For oil profits and fat reconstruction contracts: that is why.

Many will ask, "But if they are lying to us... why?"

To divide and rule.

The last thing the fat cat bosses, government ministers and press barons want is a united working class. That's why they lie to us, to keep us divided.

The mass anti-war movement showed the way forward. There is another Britain to the one painted by the Sun, Mail and Express. One where the vast majority are starting to unite in action against the tiny handful of exploiters and murderers who control the world.

This summer, let's get out onto every housing estate, into every workplace and build that unity.

# Combat the lies they use to divide

Asylum seekers, racism  
and lies - pages 8 & 9

# Unison: leadership defends labour link

The national conference of Unison was an opportunity for the leadership to sound off against warmonger Blair and his attacks on the public sector. But it was left to the members to turn words into action, reports *G R McColl*

Unison's leaders and full-time officials celebrated their 10th anniversary conference in style. Not only did they bask in glorious sunshine, but they wined and dined in some of the poshest hotels on the south coast. Further, they gave a virtuoso performance to swindle the union's largely low-paid 1.3m members at this, one of the few formally democratic openings for them.

Analysing how they did it is not only interesting, but also compulsory if we are to learn lessons for future years – and to see whether there are any chinks in the bureaucracy's armour we can explore.

Conference is, first and foremost, a time to rally the troops. It's like May Day and Christmas rolled into one, where the bosses are denounced and ministers taken to task.

In his annual address to the conference, General Secretary Dave Prentis said that he was "tired of a brave new world of public services where profit is king and markets and competition rule".

Prentis reiterated his opposition to the war against Iraq and called for Iraq to "be returned to the Iraqi people – not next year, not next month, but now."

He explicitly threatened some form of co-ordinated strike action within the public sector, though his words in this regard were wilfully vague and the attacks were very much focused on Tony Blair's government rather than the Labour Party as such. Still, the speech seemed to capture the mood of a clear majority of delegates. And this was exactly the point. These speeches were designed to show that Prentis and the leadership are on the side of the class struggle angels without tying them down to anything specific. This was particularly important because they had to fend off a left challenge to Unison's links with New Labour.

This set piece debate arose from a review of the union's two political funds, which did little more than rename the Affiliated Political Fund as "Unison Labour link". Prentis accused those who opposed the rubber-stamping of the review of being "a tiny polit-

ically motivated minority". In particular, he scored some points through openly attacking the Socialist Party's position of simple disaffiliation from Labour and the creation of a "third fund". One Welsh delegate waggishly branded this the "lost deposit fund".

In the meantime, some delegates from the East Midlands unilaterally withdrew a second motion regarding the political fund without the slightest reference to the rest of their delegation. This bureaucratic manoeuvre killed off the possibility of a debate around the simplest and most progressive amendment on offer – proposing the creation of a single political fund. The masterstroke also curtailed debate around a second amendment which would have allowed union funding for council and parliamentary candidates on the basis of their support for key Unison policies rather than their endorsement by New Labour.

But the general secretary's left talking also assisted him in his effort to sell the notion of "reclaiming our party". Not only did Prentis speak of working closely with the other three of the "big four" union tops – Amicus' Derek Simpson, Tony Woodley of the T&G and the GMB's Kevin Curran. He even promised a new relationship with the Socialist Campaign Group, the closest thing to a coherent opposition to Blairism in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Many Unison members will be left scratching their heads after all these manoeuvres. What does it all mean? Will Unison provide more of a challenge to Blair or less?

In one way, this sense of confusion is intended: the last thing Prentis and company want is rank and file members sticking their noses into the leadership's business. But will Unison pass the acid test inside today's Labour Party as a result? Will it defend George Galloway?

No. An emergency motion supporting George Galloway against the witch-hunt was excluded from the agenda. Outgoing president, Nancy Coull, and the union's other representative on Labour's national executive, Maggie Jones, both voted to endorse and prolong Galloway's suspension from the party

## Carillion strikers go national

Carillion workers in and around Scunthorpe are taking a series of strikes. The strikers, members of Unison, are calling for parity with the NHS workers they work alongside and a minimum wage of £5.02 an hour.

They began their strike with a two-day "break" which is when Carillion brought in workers and managers from around the UK, putting them up in a hotel and paying them time and a half plus expenses.

Carillion is one of half a dozen firms that specialise in making money out of government contracts for previously public services. Carillion workers across the country have jobs in the rail industry, maintenance for NHS trusts, canteen workers in hospitals and cleaners in schools.

Carillion have decided to make this strike national by recruiting people from across the country to cover on strike days, undermining the strike. The Scunthorpe workers launched a two-week campaign of striking on alternate days to make this strike breaking as difficult as possible.

The strikers have responded by "going national as well". They are asking all socialists and trade unionists to find out if Carillion runs an NHS canteen, cleaning or maintenance service near them. If so, there is a strong possibility the workers are being asked to either go to Scunthorpe or cover for those mysteriously "away". Already, many Carrillion workers have refused to go to Scunthorpe once they have been told that it is a scabbing operation.

It is a massive blow to the employer that there is national solidarity for the Scunthorpe workers and brings them a step closer to justice and victory.

For more details contact the Carillion strikers: c/o J Koper, 44 Cliff Garden, Scunthorpe DN15.

last month. As a result, Galloway will be ineligible to stand as a Labour candidate in the next election. The decision to forbid union backing for left-of-Labour candidates therefore means that the union can't even support George as an independent candidate. Unison has helped silence the most courageous anti-war MP in Britain. So much for Prentis' anti-war rhetoric!

The leadership, however, did not have its own way in every debate. A powerful anti-racist speech from Camden delegate, Mandy Berger, persuaded conference to affiliate to the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers. This clear-cut victory was soon followed by another defeat for the top table as the conference supported an amendment in favour of "taxing the rich and big business". Another significant success was in the rules

debate when Lambeth's amendment went through. This will help overturn the gross injustices of good activists being expelled (Candy Udwin and Dave Carr of UCLH) or debarred from office (Bernie Gallagher of Bolton) in the future.

Earlier in the week the union's local government service group (its biggest component) had adopted policies strengthening Unison's opposition to privatisation of council housing, whether through stock transfer or the back-door method of the Arms Length Management Organisation. There was also vociferous opposition to the thinly veiled threat to national pay bargaining contained in Gordon Brown's budget and the latest submission by local authority bosses to the Low Pay Commission.

But the local government gathering real-

ly came to life when nursery nurses from the East London borough of Tower Hamlets arrived at the conference centre on the second full-day of an indefinite strike. More than 120 had walked off the job on 13 June in protest at their abysmal pay rates and conference gave a rousing ovation to some 40 strikers who had journeyed down to Brighton. Even the better paid of these workers have take-home earnings of under £900 a month, while working a 35-hour week. Given the staggering cost of living in the capital this really is poverty pay.

The vicious attacks on Unison's low-paid base are bound to intensify in the coming months and years. Hospital workers at East London's Whipp's Cross and in Scunthorpe are also in the middle of pay disputes and involved in industrial action. Both sets of workers have repeatedly rejected slightly improved pay offers, proving their willingness to fight.

Many of the members involved are recent immigrants to the country and active solidarity can undermine many of the racist myths that surround asylum seekers.

Strikes are anathema to Unison's top brass. They involve too many rank and file members in activity and push demands onto the leaders that disrupt their cosy relations with chief executives and ministers. Worse still, they tend to get out of hand and spread to other workplaces.

But for those who want to make the union fight, these are all positive developments.

The key task for Unison activists is to relate to the mini-strike wave among small sections of the union membership. This could provide the springboard for a major campaign nationally to battle against poverty pay and privatisation, giving rank and file activists an opportunity to put Dave Prentis' rhetoric to the test. In the process we can win thousands of union members at the sharp end of New Labour's assault on our services to a rank and file movement that can chop out the dead wood at the top of the tree, and transform the union, root and branch.

# Manchester People's Assembly success

The first Manchester People's Assembly met on Saturday 7th June writes *Bill Jenkins*. Around 200 people representing a host of groups, organisations, parties, trade unions and just themselves converged on the Friends Meeting House, to discuss a range of topics, including globalisation, asylum, fighting fascism, privatisation and the world situation. Striking electricians from the Number 1 Piccadilly addressed the meeting and brought their solidarity.

The spirit of the assembly was overwhelmingly positive and constructive. All of the divergent trends within Manchester's anti-capitalist and anti-war movement were represented. They all had their chance to make their voices heard.

Before the meeting there had been concern expressed that we couldn't risk going beyond the Stop the War committees, that the meeting would get bogged down in wrangling and argument, that the meeting would be dominated or swamped by one group. None of these fears was vindicated.

After a series of small group meetings, the main plenary discussion debated the way forward. It considered a motion for the Stop the War Coalition, agreed by the steering committee the week before and a broader motion about what the campaigning priorities of the PA should be.

The discussion was held in an excellent spirit, with many new faces joining in and representatives from a range of different groups, organisations and

## Build People's Assemblies everywhere!

At its activists' conference on 21st June, the Stop the War Coalition called for a national People's Assembly, to be convened on 30th August.

This is an excellent development. We urge all our readers to build for this in their towns and cities. Contact local union branches, tenants' associations, refugee groups, and campaigning and political groups – form people's assemblies.

Now the war is over, there is a danger that the movement will dissolve back into our living rooms and separate groups. People's assemblies can build the links to prevent this from happening, and is the best preparation should Bush and Blair try to start another war.

individuals, within the STWC contributing. There was a consensus that the assembly was the way forward, that we had to go beyond single issue campaign, that we cannot return to the old way of countless fractured campaigns failing to co-operate and unite our forces. The assembly resolved to reconvene in three months. At some point someone mentioned that the five police vans, including an armed response and dog unit, parked outside the meeting room, couldn't be anything to do with us. But as we left, a prominent activist in the assembly, James Thorne, was arrested following an incident with an army band marching past (talk about coincidence!).

James was accused of assaulting a police officer, in spite of having many witnesses who saw the exact opposite, and there being no supporting evidence of the police accusation. He is completely innocent and has

the unconditional support of the Manchester People's Assembly against the police frame up.

James was clear: "This was an attack not just on me, but on the Manchester People's Assembly."

At the now transformed assembly steering group (formerly STWC) the following Tuesday, there was a tremendous determination to build on the success of Saturday, which was without exception recognised as a triumph.

It was agreed to go out and establish local groups, to take up the fight around the attacks by the police and council on democratic rights, to link up with the striking electricians, who had praised the assembly stating they'd never been to anything like it, and to continue our campaigns against the occupation of Iraq and for Palestinian rights.

The Manchester People's Assembly is here to stay.

## Solidarity with the people of Colombia

Tony Blair is convening a meeting on 10th July of EU states, the US, World Bank and IMF. The title of the meeting is "London Meeting on International Support for Colombia", but its actual purpose is to raise support for the government of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, which presides over the worst human rights abuses in the western hemisphere. We call for no aid go to Uribe's repressive regime and instead urge direct international solidarity with the Colombian people.

**VIGIL: 4pm - 7pm Wednesday 9 July**  
**PICKET: from 2pm with Rally 6pm - 8pm Thursday 10 July**  
**Both in Whitehall, opposite Downing Street, London SW1**

# For a workers' party

**B**lairism is in deep trouble. Tuition fees and the school funding fiasco have eroded Blair's support among the middle classes so much that, for the first time the Tories have a poll majority. As the union conference season draws to a close, it's clear that Blair's open supporters in the movement are reduced to a rump: the right wing within MSF and a few tiny unions led by dinosaurs who are too dopey to realise the tide has turned. And in the cabinet, open Blairites are dropping like flies.

Alan Milburn's departure removed the only credible minister who was "more Blairite than Blair". The talentless nonentities that form the "next generation" of Blairism - Miliband and Lammy - are being sidelined. The two Blairite bruisers brought in after Estelle Morris resigned have signally discredited themselves: Clarke with the schools funding crisis, Reid by failing to prevent the biggest backbench rebellion in history.

As *Guardian* journalist Jackie Ashley put it: "You can't have Blairism without Blairites. The lack of visceral support for Blair in the country is mirrored by what is happening at the top of government too. Out there, fewer voters consider themselves New Labour. Inside the inner circle, people are drifting away as well."

Labour activists are deeply worried about the party's electoral support in the core working class areas. Unless Labour stands up and offers more than privatisation, state racism and half-hearted constitutional reform, they fear they won't be able to mobilise the working class areas.

Outside of Wales, Labour's vote completely collapsed in May. Despite national alarm bells ringing over the BNP's eight council seats in Burnley, the fascists beat Labour again last month in a by-election in the Lancashire mill town.

Blair's lies on weapons of mass destruction are also undermining his ability to go on. During the war, every coffin draped with the Union Jack had propaganda value for the government. Now every one - and they keep on coming - prompts the question: why did they have to die if there were no weapons of mass destruction? That is a question being asked in the officers' clubs as well as in anti-war meetings.

It's clear what the ardent Blairites want. Peter Mandelson, writing in the *Spectator*, says:

"The nagging feeling that the New



**Tony Woodley, Derek Simpson and Andy Gilchrist** Election of left leaders show that union members want to fight but the record of such leaders is poor

Labour 'project' has lost momentum is because too few in government talk publicly and convincingly about their mission rather than that its purpose no longer exists."

Mandy's remedy is more privatisation: private money in schools, hospitals and the transport system. "Left conservatism" is the biggest danger, he warns. Fortunately this view is now confined to Mandelson, Blair and a few unelected advisors. Blair is increasingly corralled - but that makes it all the more important that the rest of the Labour movement takes decisive steps to finish him off.

The election of Tony Woodley as general secretary of the T&G has brought about a change in the balance

shift in policy. Having ruled out breaking the Labour link they have no sanction other than funding reductions and rhetoric if they find themselves royally shafted by the Blairites who control all the key levers of the party.

In the second place, the timing is wrong. There are pressing reasons why we can't hang around for 18 months until Brown takes over from Blair. The BNP is growing right now in the gap left by the Labour. George Galloway will very likely be barred this summer from standing for parliament as Labour in his Glasgow constituency. Foundation hospitals, tuition fees, the pensions crisis, rising unemployment will not wait 18 months.

In the third place what do we get at

*Those unions that are already convinced of the need to break with Labour - the RMT, many FBU branches and regions and others - should link up with the Stop the War Coalition and other left forces and campaigns to hold a series of local meetings over the summer. This can do two things: discuss challenges to New Labour in future elections; and mobilise the forces necessary to fight New Labour policies on the ground*

of forces in the unions. The left - as in left of Blair - is now a majority on the TUC general council. But Woodley will use his victory to pressure the other left union leaders to moderate their demands to what is "achievable".

The leaders of the "big four" unions - T&G, Unison, Amicus-AEU and the GMB - believe Blair will go and Brown will take over. From within the Labour Party they are under pressure to moderate their criticisms, in return for some scraps of policy change. For this they will be prepared to watch and wait until Blair departs - and rein in the most awkward of the awkward squad and rank and file activists, heading off moves to disaffiliate or democratise the political funds.

This is a dangerous policy. In the first place, there is no guarantee that Blair will go, or that there will be any

the end of it? Gordon Brown, one of the pioneers of New Labour, ideologically wedded to privatisation and the means test.

Never mind Brown, Cook, Short and Dobson - all of them have been up to their eyeballs pushing through the New Labour agenda of neo-liberalism and imperialist war. What we need is a new workers' party, and the fight for one must start now.

Tony Woodley, Billy Hayes of the CWU and Derek Simpson of Amicus fear that such a call will impede their chances of kicking out Blair. They couldn't be more wrong. A clear and open fight for a new party can focus the anger and frustration of millions of working class people and channel it into direct action now.

Those unions that are already convinced of the need to break with

Labour - the RMT, many FBU branches and regions and others - should link up with the Stop the War Coalition and other left forces to hold a series of local meetings over the summer. They should do two things: discuss challenges to New Labour in future elections; and mobilise the forces necessary to fight New Labour policies on the ground.

- Oppose every fat cat privatisation scheme - PFIs, PPPs, Trusts - and fight the cuts

- Demand Labour councils refuse to pass on the cuts, and set budgets to meet local needs

- Get out onto the estates to counter the racist lies and mobilise against the real enemies - the bosses and their New Labour friends.

Such a campaign can start to turn the tide in Labour's heartlands, places like Burnley and Wrexham. This is crucial if we want to nip the BNP's revival in the bud. It will also force the "left" union leaders and Labour MPs to be bolder, to challenge Blair now, to say what policies they want instead of Third Way Blairism. Finally, it can open up a real debate with millions of workers about what kind of party we need.

Even the most left of the awkward squad union leaders have only called for the rebirth of a broad Labour Party - "old" or "real" Labour. The problem with this is that a party that focuses on elections as the only way to defend workers' interests and change society is bound to end up ditching its principles in order to gain votes. In other words, Old Labour leads directly to New Labour.

Thankfully, the emergence and growth of the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements gives us a new model.

The new workers' party must be anti-capitalist. It must be internationalist and place itself in the forefront of the fight for a new workers' international. It must be fully democratic in the spirit of the anti-capitalist movement, basing itself on social forums and peoples' assemblies rather than the bureaucracies that disfigure our unions and the old Stalinist parties.

Most of all, the new party needs to have a clear programme, one that leads from today's struggles to a revolutionary workers' government. That is our aim. If you agree, you should join us now. If not - this is not an ultimatum, but the start of a struggle to confine Blairism to the history books. Join us in that struggle.

# GM foods: giant agribusiness companies put profits first

The recent debates over Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and the use of GM crops are the latest round in a long battle, writes *Jack Tully*. These questions go to the heart not only of our diet and the role of scientific research and its exploitation by industry, but also to the very meaning of what it is to be human and the reasons for our species' astonishing success.

GM technology was developed in the 1990s as an industrial application of the technique of mixing DNA from different species. It was first developed in molecular genetics laboratories at the beginning of the 1970s. Right from the outset, it has been controversial.

When the technique – known as recombinant DNA – was first developed in bacteria, scientists became extremely alarmed at the potential for damage. They were particularly concerned at the possibility that bacteria containing cancer-causing genes might escape from the laboratory into the wider environment.

In February 1975, a scientific conference on the new technology took place in California, including a whole day's discussion of the potential dangers and how to avoid them. Under pressure from the then-strong US radical left and from environmentalists, stringent containment procedures were put into place, requiring scientists to put safety first.

Over the next few years, a huge media debate took place in the USA over what was called "genetic engineering", including a proposal from US Senator Edward Kennedy to ban all research on the question.

The proponents of the new technology claimed it would be possible to make new organisms that could produce medicines and crops that could resist insects and diseases.

The opponents – mainly but not solely



from the left – claimed that the research was fuelled by industry's desire to make a quick buck and that untold environmental and health problems could be created by the unchecked use of the new technology.

Does that sound familiar?

A number of things have changed since the 1970s. Firstly, in a classic piece of spin, "genetic engineering" was rebranded into the more neutral sounding "genetically modified organisms". More importantly, the technology that was deemed so threatening turned out to be remarkably safe.

"Engineered" bacteria did not escape into the wild, and the potentially dangerous genes they possessed did not get expressed in unexpected ways. The same was true for "higher" organisms such as flies, mice and rats, all of which went through the geneticists' mill without apparent harm to similar species in the wild.

Today, recombinant DNA technology is

used routinely in scientific and hospital laboratories all over the world: the cumbersome containment procedures put in place in the 1970s have been long abandoned. They are considered about as necessary as a man walking in front of a train with a red flag.

The technology has even entered the realms of art and leisure. At the beginning of the century an artist applied a striking technique developed by scientists interested in the fine anatomy of the nervous system, which involves inserting a jellyfish gene that makes tissue glow in the dark into a normal organism. The result was a rabbit that glowed. Art or simply a green bunny? Take your pick – but it was certainly not a threat to the world's rabbit population.

And in June this year a Thai company announced the commercialisation of glow-in-the-dark carp, using exactly the same technology.

So if we can have glowing carp in our fishponds, what's the problem with GM crops?

The reason why people take the issue so seriously is not because of tabloid headlines about "mad cows" or "Frankenstein food", but because it relates to two major issues: our health and that of our children, and whether we can trust what we are told by scientists, governments or the food companies.

Some people oppose GM crops because "it's unnatural". That is wrong, and shows a complete lack of understanding about the world around us.

The history of all life is the history of a permanent struggle to change nature. All forms of life – animals, plants, bacteria, fungi – change the world as they attempt to survive, sometimes creating conditions that will lead to their eventual disappearance. Some species manipulate the world in remarkably complex ways – beavers building dams, ants "farming" fungi or aphids.

Humanity is unique in that we consciously decide how to manipulate the world, and one success leads to another. This key ability is what explains our incredibly rapid expansion, from a few thousand people living in Africa around 80,000 years ago to the billions-strong species that dominates the planet and has begun to reach into space.

And the most important of these ways of manipulating the world, the one that enabled us to expand our population and build civilisations, was the development of agriculture. This involved people capturing and selectively breeding plants and animals, changing the face of the world in order to feed ourselves. That in turn led to the development of a surplus and the creation of class society.

The whole of humanity's subsequent technological development has been based

## GM food – some facts

There are currently two main uses of GM crops, both of which have important environmental consequences:

- **Herbicide resistant crops** are used to enable farmers to cover whole fields in chemicals that will kill every plant except those possessing the key gene. As a result crop yields go up – less competition from weeds – but biodiversity goes down as invertebrates become less common – if they don't like the crop plant they're done for – and the birds and mammals that feed on those invertebrates suffer as a consequence.

- **Pesticide-producing crops** possess an inserted gene that means they produce a chemical that kills a key pest. It is alleged that this means farmers use less pesticides, but through cross-pollination, the pesticide-producing gene could escape into wild plants,

killing insects that live on them.

Monsanto initially proposed to introduce a "reaper" gene into its crops, which would effectively render them sterile, and oblige third world farmers to buy new seed each season. Following a massive outcry, they withdrew this "feature" for the moment.

Future applications may include the production of crops extra-rich in key nutrients to combat malnutrition and disease. Investment in providing clean water and sewage facilities to the bulk of the world's population would be infinitely more effective.

Currently 60 million hectares of GM crops are grown worldwide, mainly soya (62%) and maize (21%). Around 2/3 of crops are grown in the USA, with another quarter in Argentina.

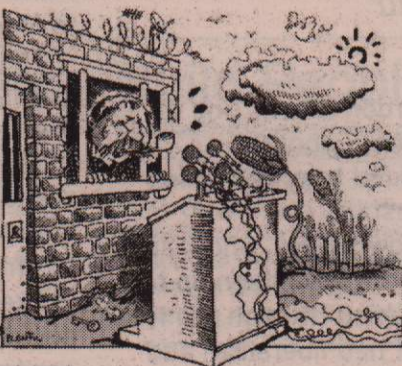
## The debate over GMs in France and Britain

At the end of June, French anti-globalisation campaigner and small-scale cheese-maker José Bové was arrested in an aggressive dawn raid on his farm-house involving helicopters and scores of gendarmes wearing body-armour.

Bové was carted off to serve a prison sentence for trashing an experimental GMO crop, having previously done time for smashing up a McDonald's. Protests are mounting in France, demanding that crooked President Chirac grant Bové a pardon on Bastille Day next month.

In Britain, ex-Environment Minister Michael Meacher has revealed that he didn't jump but was pushed out of office, and has suggested that the reason Blair heaved him out was that his friends and backers in the massive agribusiness industry wanted a Minister who was a clear supporter of GM technology.

In an interview with the *Observer*, Meacher claimed that many of the tests carried out on GM crops were "scientifically vacuous" and that if by chance any government-sponsored research suggested there was any problem with GM crops, it was routinely "rubbed" by the



government and its media contacts.

At the same time, in a pathetic piece of gesture politics, the government has responded to growing public disquiet about GM crops by launching a ludicrously under-funded and under-publicised "public debate" over the question under the title "GM Nation?"

This "debate" consists of a website and six national debates that will be held round the country, together with a series of smaller local meetings. The whole thing will be wrapped up by the middle of July, and a report will be presented to the government. A non-event for an extremely important issue.

on this key breakthrough. In principle, there is no difference between selective breeding of crops and the use of genetic engineering. Artificial selection – which has proved so effective over the last 8,000 years or so – is simply slower and less precise than genetic engineering.

GMOs may be unnatural, but so too are the cows in our fields, the maize they eat in winter, and the grass in the field itself.

However, genetic engineering is different, precisely because its effects are more rapid. It is true that ordinary agriculture has had some devastating effects on biodiversity and health, for example by eliminating or infecting local crops and making people dependent on a single, disease-susceptible crop. Similar events could easily be reproduced on a far greater scale with GM technology. There are reasonable doubts about the safety of GM foods in terms of both health and the environment:

- We do not know what the effects of ingesting food containing pesticides or herbicide resistant factors might be. Even the Royal Society's 2002 pro-GMO report accepted that current safety testing procedures were inadequate.

- There is the real possibility that the resistance genes introduced into crops could escape into local crops with important consequences on wild-life (see box) and on future agriculture.

The US, which has pioneered the commercial development of GM crops – 90% of GM plants are produced by US multinational Monsanto – has an extremely aggressive attitude towards the use of the new technology, and a highly dismissive attitude towards consumer choice.

They insist that if Europe labels food so that consumers can choose between GM and non-GM products this would be discriminatory. The "land of the free" doesn't want consumers to have a free, i.e. an informed choice over what they do and don't eat.

In the face of pressure from agribusiness and the US and British governments, workers need to defend three key principles:

- All food should be clearly labelled showing what it contains and how it has been produced. After the BSE scandal, we have no reason to trust the agribusiness companies. Consumers must be able to know what they are eating, whether or not GM crops are eventually allowed.

- There must be no introduction of GM crops without a European-wide labour movement enquiry, organised by trades unions, peasants' unions, the anti-capitalist movement, environmental activists and local consumer groups. This enquiry must hear advice from health campaigners, scientists and agriculturalists and decide whether and how these crops should be introduced.

- The huge agribusiness companies that dominate world agriculture and which are currently ruining the environment and our health by their use of insecticides and are crushing small farmers in Europe, the US and the third world must be socialised without compensation. The road to this is to fight for workers' and consumer control of agriculture. Besides its key objective to feed the world it must address the environmental and health crisis that current capitalist agriculture is producing, and which the introduction of GM crops could considerably exacerbate.

## Iraqi unemployed start to organise

To: All labour unions and organisations around the world  
Official letter from the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq

Dear Friends,

In the aftermath of the US devastating war on Iraq and on the following May Day, we, a group of activists in the labour movement, have founded the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq. Our decision to form this union was an essential response to the extraordinary circumstances that Iraq has gone through.

13 years of economic sanctions as well as the dominance of the Ba'ath regime have had the greatest impact on imposing minimum standards of living, the most inhuman working conditions, and large-scale unemployment on the masses of workers.

The Anglo-American war, which ended with the occupation of Iraq, has pushed unemployment rates up to dreadful levels. Most of the industrial and service facilities and institutions were rendered out of service and thousands of factories and smaller workshops have closed their doors either due to lack of water and electricity, or due to lack of security. Rumours are widespread that the US is thinking of privatising the public sector. This clearly means an increase in unemployment. Millions of workers are out of work with absolutely no means of earning a living, threatened with hunger while the food ration, distributed by the previous regime, is rapidly running out.

We have formed our union to bring all unemployed workers together and to push forward their basic demands. The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq has currently around 15,000 members across the country, with centres in 3 major cities in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Nasiriya. Since founding our union we have organised weekly demonstrations to draw the attention of the occupying forces to our status and conditions, but there has been no response to our demands so far. Our demands could be summarised: either jobs or unemployment



insurance. We also demand emergency allowances to all unemployed and full payments to all those who lost their jobs because of war.

Since 24th May, we have been in continuous negotiations with the US Civil Administration, in vain. They are clearly postponing and manoeuvring.

Our union has decided to organise a big demonstration across Iraq on Thursday, 3rd July. We therefore entreat you to support us in our demands. You could express your solidarity with us either through organising protest rallies or demonstrations, or holding big meetings on the day of our demonstration, in front of those authorities that are responsible for our current situation, i.e. the British and the American authorities. You could also send us letters

of solidarity to our union and letters of protest to the US and British consulates and embassies in your countries.

We call on the workers of the US and Britain in particular to raise their voices against their governments which deny us our simplest demands.

Your solidarity with us will certainly reinforce the impact of our protests to compel the occupation forces in Iraq to submit to our demands.

In solidarity,  
Issam Shukri  
International Relations Coordinator  
Union of the Unemployed in Iraq  
Bab Al-Sharki,  
Al Rasheed St.  
Old Labour Union Bldg.  
Baghdad, Iraq

## Communist Party and popular front

Dear Comrades,

Mark Hoskisson writes that the Communist Party of Britain is "desperate" to construct an electoral alliance as soon as possible (WP, June 2003).

Our party's position on electoral strategy, including the Labour Party and alliances, is set out clearly on our website (www.comunist-party.org.uk) in the section on our 2002 Congress resolutions. Where does Mark Hoskisson get the "desperate" from?

Secondly, he writes that we favour an electoral alliance with "Muslim elders" (sic), "businessmen" (but not women?) and the Liberal Democrats. Even a glance at our declared policy would show this to be drivell.

A moment's thought would indicate the absurdity of the Communist Party wanting an electoral alliance with the Lib Dems in the European elections, for example, where our positions are fundamentally opposed to one another.

Yours for communism,  
Ghayur Bangash  
Assistant Organiser

We reply:

Dear comrades

As Mark mentioned in his article, we deduced the "desperate" nature of your search for popular front allies from a political report to the executive of your party written by Andrew Murray, CPB member and chairperson of the Stop the War Coalition. The report has been widely circulated on the internet but we quote the relevant passage, in case your files are incomplete:

*"Historical analogies are necessarily imperfect, but this movement has similarities in its aim and scope with the classic ideas of the popular front..."*

*The anti-war movement has the greatest political potential of any I have encountered in my political lifetime. It combines militancy with breadth. It is rooted on the left, and in the peace movement, with CND paying a particular role. It has embraced the Muslim community in Britain in a wholly new way. It has now got a firm and extensive base in the trade unions. It reaches out into the Liberal Democrats in a serious way, and even into the ranks of conservatives."*

We're sure you are aware that the popular front, as classically conceived, is a vehicle for running in elections and gaining office. As such, the mention of the Lib Dems among the allies of the anti-war movement would indicate that at least some of your leading members consider them to be potential electoral allies, absurd though that may appear. Comrade Murray's report was written as recently as March, but we apologise if the Lib Dems are no longer flavour of the month.

Maybe on the question of the Euro they are insufficiently patriotic.

## ANL unity march a flop

Dear comrades

The Anti-Nazi League's much publicised Unity march and rally in Burnley, on Saturday, 28th June was supposed to rally the mass movement against fascism. Upon arrival it became apparent that as few as 200 protestors were present. After assembling in an empty car park under police surveillance, we were led on an ANL-agreed route, through the desolate backstreets of Burnley town. At no point during the day would the people of Burnley (present in the busy shopping centre) have even noticed the presence of a demonstration. After empty condemnation of the route from various trade union officials, including a Unison official who reported that his members continue to work with the fascist councillors because of "legal constraints", it took a young female Muslim protestor to ask, "Why have we allowed the leadership to settle for this?"

An ANL leader promised that "never again" would the ANL allow themselves to be sidelined, as if the ANL's capitulation to the police and council officials over the march route was a surprise that had nothing to do with them!

This capitulation follows the ANL's recent protest in Burnley against the inauguration of the BNP councillors. Once again, having failed to mobilise the local community, they fought fascism by throwing flour and eggs at the Nazi councillors, leading to the arrest of several young protestors and a violent assault upon one leading ANL member.

We have to question the effectiveness of the ANL when the BNP Nazi organisation continues to grow capitalising on deprived white youth, when the Nazis continue to commit violent acts on asylum seekers and ethnic minorities, and when the ANL's strategy has so utterly failed to mobilise the people of Burnley against the fascists. Shouldn't we be saying, "Now is the time to fight, not next time or the time after that"? Dare I suggest that we should seek direct confrontation (an approach with past successes) or should we stick to parading through backstreets and delivering speeches to ourselves?

Comradely,  
Jonny Harvard  
Manchester

## Imperialism's role in the Congo

Dear comrades

The Stop the Imperialist Wars Against Africans campaign is picketing the Belgian embassy on the day of the Congo's independence - 30th June 2003. Most of the causes of the present crisis are the direct legacy of Belgian colonialism:

(1) fratricidal warfare (disguised as ethnic/tribal wars by the white rulers and press), military occupation and pacification were the main forms of counter-insurgency wars under Belgian occupation. They aimed to break the unity of the African people against foreign white domination in the Congo.

(2) The so-called ethnic warfare between the Himas and the Lendu in the town of Bunia (eastern Congo), was first engineered by the Belgian colonists in the first quarter of the last century, alongside the Lubas versus the Lulua, the Hutu versus the Tutsi, to name just few examples. The Belgian government bears a historical responsibility: throughout the 1960s, in association with the United States government, it plotted the attack and destruction of Lumumba's government and the murder of over one million African democracy supporters, in the process of overturning the independence of the Congo. This led to the imposition of neo-colonial rule represented by Kasa Vubu, Tshombe and Mobutu. It is this vicious intervention by western rulers to maintain the status quo that has deprived the African people in the Congo, for 43 years, the benefit of a government of African unity and African solutions to reverse the barbaric legacy of the Belgian colonialism.

(3) The Belgian government, in violation of international law, sent over 25,000 troops to the Oriental province (eastern Congo) at that time in order to suppress the freedom and unity movement that existed in the region.

We are picketing also in order to expose to the peoples of the world the holocaust suffered by the African people

in the Congo between 1898 and 1908 at the hands of the King Leopold. Over 10 million Africans were massacred in the Congo in the process of building the Belgian economy. Informed by the historical role the Belgian armed forces have played in the Congo, we are opposed to any Belgian military presence in any part of the Congo or Africa.

This protest is also part of exposing and condemning, on the one hand, the Belgian government and its European partners who are using the deaths of four million Africans as a pretext to advance their own interest in their rivalry with the US government to control African resources. On the other hand, it is also used by Britain and its European partners to play down their differences over Iraq, by sending troops for a common European goal in the Congo.

Belgium has played a key role in the current genocide in the Congo. It allows the Rwandan and Ugandan governments to finance their war effort by selling the diamonds stolen from the Congo in Antwerp, Belgium, which is known as the world capital of the diamond market.

We are protesting in order to expose the EU and US policy to invade and re-colonise Africa. Holocaust and "looting" wars are imperialist tools to create chaos and a weakened Africa which can then be re-colonised.

It is our profound belief that Africa will never be defeated. The only solution in the Congo is an African solution: power to the workers and peasants of the Congo, under a united and Socialist government of Africa for all African people across the world.

Stop Imperialist Wars Against Africans  
African Liberation Support Campaign (ALISC): 07890 738 997  
nkexplo@yahoo.co.uk  
International People's Democratic UHURU Movement (InPDUM): 020 8265 1731  
uhuruasi@aol.com

# French teachers betrayed by union leaders

Matthieu Roux looks at the recent struggle of French workers against government plans for education and pensions

Last month, France was rocked by a series of strikes and demonstrations against the government's policies on pensions and education.

At the heart of the movement were the teachers who had been taking action against the government's proposal to "decentralise" the national education system since the start of the year.

The government proposed to transfer tens of thousands of classroom assistants, nurses, security and cleaning staff out of the national state sector and into the hands of regional local authorities, where they will inevitably be subject to job losses and attacks on their working conditions.

Under the guise of giving greater autonomy to the regions, this is in fact the first step towards the break-up and privatisation of the massive national education system – the biggest single component of France's huge state sector.

Several national one-day strikes mobilised up to 60 per cent of teachers, but they met with a blank refusal from the government to negotiate.

However, "decentralisation" of education is not the only attack facing teachers. Like all public sector workers, they are the victims of an attack of unprecedented proportions against their pension rights. The government now insists all public sector workers will have to work an extra two and a half years before they can retire!

On Sunday 25 May, more than 700,000 workers demonstrated all over the country, with the biggest in Paris where over 600,000 workers marched. Private sector workers – who accepted a similar attack without a fight over a decade ago – joined in the protests.

On Tuesday 3 June scores of demonstrations saw hundreds of thousands of workers – over 200,000 in Paris alone – cram the nation's boulevards. Among the strikers were railway workers, Paris metro drivers and Marseille transport staff, who are currently not affected by the government's proposals.

The transport workers have special pensions that enable them to retire at 55, and which are not affected by the current attacks. However, the railworkers are no fools – they know that they will be next in line if the government succeeds with other workers.

The rolling action demonstrated that a massive general strike was a real possibility in mid-June to force the government into a total abandonment of its plans on education and pensions – or go down with them.

Scared of this possibility the union leaders resisted calls from many sectors for just this and instead scheduled a further day of action for 10 June – the day the government's pension proposals were to be debated in parliament.

So on 5 June the rank and file workers took matters into their own hands. Infuriated by government intransigence and outraged by the refusal of their leaders to act

until the new "day of action", workers launched a wave of actions that was unprecedented in its scale and radicalism covering the whole country.

Several major cities, including Le Havre, Brest and Toulouse were blockaded by strikers, preventing cars and lorries from pass-

## Scared of the possibility of a general strike, the union leaders resisted calls from many sectors for just this and instead scheduled a further day of action for 10 June

ing. In Toulouse, more than 20 key roads were blocked.

- Key road routes were occupied and blocked. At Mulhouse, the motorway to Germany was blockaded by several hundred protesters, while on the other side of the country, the border crossing between France and Spain at Biarrotou was occupied.

- Rail services were disrupted by the continuing strike and by protesters. Nice station was occupied by hundreds of teachers and other public sector workers who put barricades on the rails and organised a sit-down protest until attacked by the CRS riot police.

- At Angoulême and Poitiers in the middle of the country, rail services to Paris were blocked by demonstrators. Solidarity pickets were organised to get non-strikers to join in. Two hundred striking teachers picketed the Bagnolet bus depot to the east of Paris, persuading the bus workers to go on strike and paralysing an important proportion of the Paris bus service.

- At Paris-Orly airport, several hundred private sector workers joined protesters from Air France and local schools in a demonstration that blocked access to the airport for several hours.

- Protest marches continued in a number of small towns, with thousands marching in Dijon, Grenoble and Clermont-Ferrand.

The most violent incidents took place at 10 local offices of the MEDEF – the bosses' organisation – were attacked round the country. At Pau, the office was completely sacked, while at La Rochelle the office was set on fire and burnt to the ground.

The MEDEF immediately denounced these attacks as "terrorist acts" and called on the government to intervene. The La Rochelle CGT leader scandalously joined in the howls of anguish, condemning the attack on the office.

The government responded by stepping up pressure on teachers, as many received official papers notifying them that they had

been requisitioned by the state to supervise and mark the baccalauréat ("bac" – the French 'A' level). Failure to comply would mean disciplinary action including sacking by the Education Ministry, and could also involve fines and other punishments.

Teachers in Périgueux, in the Dordogne, responded in the true joyous spirit of May '68 by saying that if they were requisitioned, they would simply give everyone top marks!

In retrospect these were crucial days. "Comités interprofessionnels" were growing in number and strength (see box). The power and control of the union leaders was threatened. The result? The leaders' headlong flight from an all-out confrontation with the government.

On Tuesday 10 June, hundreds of thousands of protesters demonstrated and took strike action, but it was clear that the level of mobilisation was substantially lower than previously. Worn out and uncertain after weeks of one-day strikes, workers were beginning to wonder whether their leaders were sufficiently determined to win.

Then on 12 June the teachers' unions agreed to accept some minor concessions from the government in the dispute over the transfer of around 100,000 school ancillary staff to region funding.

Although the government made a minor concession, maintaining about 7,000 school nurses and psychologists in the national system, more than 70,000 caretakers, cleaners and maintenance staff will indeed be "decentralised", with the attendant threat to their working conditions and status.

The teachers' union, desperate to grab at straws, nevertheless accepted the government's proposal and in return urged their members not to disrupt the first day of the "bac", which took place on Thursday 12 June.

The same day a further "day of action" took place, by far the weakest and least supported of the recent wave. Most noticeable was a joint rally in Marseille, attended by all the union leaders. At this meeting, CGT leader Bernard Thibault refused to call for a general strike, despite the urging of Force Ouvrière leader Marc Blondel.

The whole thing ended in a very low-key day of action, on Thursday 19 June. Demonstrations were poorly attended, transport functioned more or less normally, and there were no signs of any disruption to the exams. The government had weathered the storm.

In parliament, where the government's proposals are currently being debated, the Communists have proposed around 9,000 amendments to the law, while the Socialists have refused to even support these. Raffarin is confident that the pension law will be adopted in September. The government has won this round.

Next in line for "reform" if the government gets its way is the health system – the "Sécu". That was at the heart of the last wave of massive class struggle in France, in



Protestors at the 19 June demonstration (pictures Indymedia France)



November-December 1995 which forced the then Juppé government to abandon its most radical plans.

The union leaders are claiming that the masses will be back on the streets in September, to protest both against the pension law and against the imminent attacks on the Sécu.

The militants who are very angry at their leaders' betrayal have to take this chance to relaunch a massive wave of protest and wrest control of the action from the union heads.

Rank and file workers' democracy must replace bureaucratic misleadership. The lessons of this struggle must be learnt quickly.

## Union bureaucracy versus action committees

The government's strongest allies throughout June were the trade union leaders, who were desperate to get out of the situation by opening negotiations. At the end of May the leader of the key teachers' union, the FSU, stated that he no longer wanted the government to withdraw its whole plan, but simply the title of one of the sections!

The initial union united front against the pension "reforms" – unprecedented in recent years – was soon broken as one of the key unions, the CFDT, decided to accept the government's plan, provoking protests among its members, many of whom refused to go along with the national leadership's shameless pro-government policies.

Meanwhile, Bernard Thibault and the other CGT leaders, together with the teachers' leaders, did all they could to weaken and fragment the movement, to prevent a general strike from taking place.

They steadfastly refused to call a general strike for 3rd June, but said they were in favour of workers staying out for as long as possible! With "leadership" like that, it is hardly surprising that most workers stayed out for at most 48 hours.

Although unionisation levels are pathetically low in France – less than 10 per cent – because the unions are the only officially recognised form of workers' representation, they have a monopoly over all negotiations with government and bosses. Hence the power of the union leaders is out of all proportion with their actual base. Yet low unionisation does mean that in periods of convulsive mass action there is scope for a degree of self-organisation outside of union structures.

The key to beating the government's attack in June was the creation of rank and file control of the movement, through general meetings, strike committees, cross-workplace "comités interprofessionnels" ("interpros", as they are known, are action committees which united all the sectors in struggle at the base, regardless of which union, or no union strikers were in). In 1995, when similar strikes took place, reaching general strike proportions, one of the key features that gave the movement its vibrancy and its potential, was the emergence of rank and file workers' democracy and embryos of workers' control.

In the key railway town of Rouen, heart of the 1995 movement, workers this time also set up an "interpro" with delegates from the schools, railways, the chemical industry and the local massive Renault factory. The "interpro" organised a series of protests, forcing the local union bureaucrats to take action.

Many other local "interpros" sprung up too in May and June, although the signs are that they did not have the time to develop the geographical scale or degree of cross-workplace representation that they did in 1995.

The relative lack of national struggles since 1995, and the fact that none of them involved the creation of a national action committee probably explains this situation. Yet workers will have to rediscover and redynamise those traditions if they are to be able to override the union leaders' strategy of allowing the movement to wear itself out through a series of increasingly poorly-supported "days of action".

In September the union leaders will be obliged to organise some protests against the pension laws and no doubt the government will target the health system for similar attacks in the autumn. Keeping the "interpros" alive over the summer and building them into an effective fighting force that can control the struggle on both fronts is critical to the chances of success.

# East German workers strike for equality

Martin Suchanek, of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht, reports on the struggle for a 35 hour week in steel and car plants

The traditionally militant German union IG Metall is engaged in a struggle for the reduction of the working week from 38 to 35 hours for its members in the eastern part of the Federal Republic. The bosses refused to negotiate, so the union balloted its members in the steel, metal and electronics industries: 80 to 90 per cent of the workforce voted for strike action.

In the steel industry this led to a deal. IG Metall settled for a phased reduction of the working week to 35 hours in 2009. Definitely a "sell-short" if not a sell-out.

But even this was too much for companies like Siemens, BMW, VW and their small and medium scale subsidiaries and suppliers.

While the union leadership conducted the struggle in their "normal" way – strikes used as a bargaining chip for a compromise deal – the bosses played hardball.

They set out to make the 35 hour week in the East a political defeat for the strongest union in Germany. They were greatly encouraged by the recent capitulation of the union leaders to Gerhard Schröder's "Agenda 2010", a savage programme of cuts in welfare, unemployment benefits, health and pensions.

The bosses' media has unleashed a wild anti-striker campaign. Every day "economic experts" appear on television blaming the union for sabotaging the German economy.

No TV news is complete without interviews with East German workers complaining that the union "will not let them go to work".

The reality is very different. The strikes have been solid. The capitalists did not expect that workers would keep the strike going for four weeks in Saxony and now for two weeks in Brandenburg and East Berlin. Between 8,000 and 10,000 workers have been on strike every day for a month. The East proved that it was not the "strike free" special economic zone that it was advertised as.

The bosses did all they could to break the strike. Federal Mogul, supplier for several large multinationals, even used helicopters to fly scabs over the picket lines. But they finally had to give in and signed a separate contract with the union to introduce the 35 hour week.

The SPD-Green government in Berlin came out heavily against the strike. Right-wing social democrat "super-minister" for economics, Wolfgang Clement, called it madness. Schröder demanded a "rapid settlement". The liberal and conservative opposition called for a general ban on strikes and fining the union for "any economic damage done" by the strikes or demonstrations.

The regional governments of Saxony and Brandenburg sent representatives to assemblies of the bosses and strike-breakers. Jung-hans, the economics minister in Brandenburg, tried to enter the ZF plant in the

provincial capital, alongside the scabs. This factory produces vital components for BMW and the strike has halted production at the company's plants in Bavaria.

The courts also showed whose side they were on. They fined IG Metall €75,000 for not opening a corridor for those "who are willing to work", including strike-breaker Junghans who never did a day's work in a factory in his life.

As we go to press the strike is at a turning point. Negotiations have broken down once again. To win a substantial victory the political offensive of the bosses has to be answered by a political mobilisation by the union itself. Either the strike must be extended – or it will be prove difficult to keep it going.

The workers have showed that they want to fight and win. A layer of new leaders is emerging among the skilled workers who are the backbone of the struggle. The strikes in the larger companies have also become more political. At ZF Brandenburg, local union leaders led workers in chanting the old slogan of the Left – "Wer hat uns verraten? Sozialdemokraten!" (Who has betrayed us? The Social Democrats!)

But workers also need to look out for a stab in the back from their union leaders as well as a stab in the face from the Social Democrats.

The IG Metall leadership plainly wants to settle the strike at almost any cost. The

head of the union, Zwickel, has quietly been opposed to the strike throughout. He has already offered "compensation" to the bosses in terms of lower wages, "flexible" introduction, and different tempos for more or less profitable companies and by cutting wages for apprentices.

The strike has been openly opposed by

the right wing of the IG Metall leadership and by the chairmen of the works councils in the large multinational companies (like Daimler, Siemens, Opel, BMW, VW). Franz, the chairman of Opel (General Motors) works council called for an end to the strike in an interview in "Die Welt".

● For more go to [www.arbeitermacht.de](http://www.arbeitermacht.de)

## HOW TO WIN THE STRIKE

The current situation runs the danger of spreading fatalism amongst many strikers. The leaders are now negotiating, something may come out of it. They also see themselves as isolated in a sea of hostile public opinion.

First, workers should reject any idea of compensating the bosses for the 35 hour week. They must demand that no deal be struck without the agreement of the strikers themselves.

Second, they must demand the strike is extended throughout East Germany and to the West.

Third, the strike must be led under the control of the rank and file – not of the bureaucrats. All members of the strike committees and of the Tariffkommission (the leadership of the struggle) who are opposing the strike and lack determination need to be replaced by determined fighters for the 35 hour week. They have to be elected and recallable by regular strike meetings.

Fourth, links have to be built with other unions, local and regional unemployed associations, social forums etc. in order to build a strong solidarity movement with the strikes and in order to challenge the bourgeois media and their lies. As a first step, workers in the media should demand a right to reply for all strikers to every anti-union article or statement published.

Fifth, strikers and their supporters need to build a rank and file movement in the unions and to link this to the construction of new, revolutionary workers party in Germany and internationally.

# When the British government backed Mugabe

President Robert Mugabe may not be welcome in London or Washington anymore but once he performed a vital role in selling out the revolution, which is outlined in *Mugabe: Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe*. Review by Keith Spencer

After a week-long strike earlier this month, Robert Mugabe unleashed yet another wave of repression. The strike, the third such protest in as many months this year, was called by the Movement of Democratic Change to challenge Mugabe's rule.

While the strikes were a success attempts to stage large-scale anti-Mugabe demonstrations were met by mass arrests and violence. During the week, more than 800 people were arrested with many beaten in prison. The MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was arrested for treason for leading the demonstrations and has been paraded in court in chains. He is currently on trial for plotting to kill Robert Mugabe.

Socialists and anti-capitalists must demand the immediate release of Morgan Tsvangirai, and the dropping of the charges. Mugabe is a thug and a brutal dictator who has kept the Zimbabwean black masses in poverty for over two decades. But the black working class should beware their new-found champions in the British establishment and media. As *Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe* shows, they have not always been so ready to defend them from Mugabe's terror.

This book tells how Mugabe went from being a guerrilla to becoming a dictator, showing how his Stalinist politics aimed to limit the 1979-80 revolution in Zimbabwe to purely a bourgeois stage: votes for black people but leave the property and farms in the hands of the whites.

Robert Mugabe came to power in March 1980 after he won free elections in Zimbabwe with 63 per cent of the national vote.

Then, he had a reputation as Marxist guerrilla, feared and hated by the white ruling class of Zimbabwe and imperialist countries – especially the former colonial power, the UK.

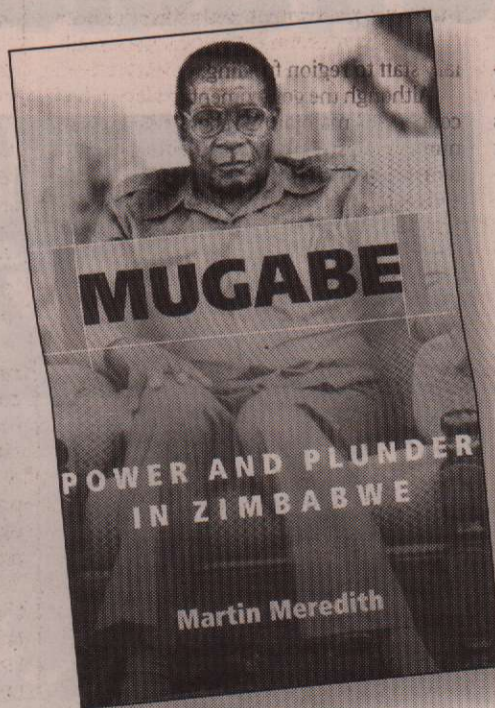
Today, he is also feared and hated by the same people and also many black people. But his Marxism has long since been exposed as the Stalinist variety and discarded.

The 1980 election came as a result of the Lancaster

House agreement, which was brokered by the Conservative Party. The agreement involved Ian Smith, leader of the whites-only Rhodesian Front, the moderate Abel Muzorewa's United African National Congress, and the two parties that had fought the guerrilla war, Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwean African People's Union and Mugabe's Zimbabwean African National Union.

When Mugabe won there were predictions of total breakdown and disaster. But after fighting a long guerrilla war, which had seen him imprisoned for 11 years, Mugabe soon distanced himself from his Marxist programme. He went on television to say that private property would be protected and that there would be no nationalisations. Under the Lancaster House agreement the 6,000 white-owned farms would be protected for 10 years. He met with Ian Smith, who went away saying how mature and sensible Mugabe was. He kept General Walls as head of the army even though Walls admitted to trying to get the British government to support a coup.

Mugabe even kept on the head of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), Ken Flower, even though he had planned to kill Mugabe on two occasions! After several meetings with the new president, Flower said: "Robert Mugabe was emerging as some-



one with a greater capacity and determination to shape the country's destiny for the benefit of all its people than any of his four predecessors."

Following the pattern of Stalinist leaders, Mugabe went out of his way to keep white, capitalist domination of the economy and to hold down the aspirations of the masses for a fundamental transformation of Zimbabwe. In this, other Stalinist leaders in southern Africa helped him. Samora Machel, president of Mozambique, had told Mugabe that if he didn't go to London in 1979 for peace talks he would disown him. After the election, Machel warned: "Don't play make believe Marxist games when you get

home, you will face ruin if you force the whites into precipitate flight."

The strangest relationship, however, was with the UK government's representative in Zimbabwe, Conservative minister Christopher Soames.

Soames had come to Zimbabwe to oversee the elections saying, "You must remember this is Africa. This isn't Little Puddleton on the Marsh, and they behave differently here. They think nothing of sticking poles up each other's whatnot, and doing filthy, beastly things to each other."

However, several months and many cosy meetings

later, Mugabe was asking Soames, "I would like you to stay on for as long as possible." Soames had to let him down but described Mugabe as a "good friend".

Hand-in-hand with Mugabe's courting of the Zimbabwe's white elite and the wider international community was his and Zanu's vice-like on the black population.

Relations between Zanu and Nkomo's Zapu had become fractious leading to violence between the two groups. Nkomo had been demoted in the cabinet. By 1982, Zanu accused Zapu of treason and collaboration with apartheid South Africa. White officers, still in place in the CIO, exaggerated reports of Zapu arm dumps.

The result was Mugabe's unleashing of the Fifth Brigade. Trained by North Korean officers it had its own weapons, uniforms and ethos. It was not under the normal command structures of the Zimbabwean army. It set out to maim, torture and kill any opposition in Matabeleland, Zapu's heartland.

The similarities with recent events are striking. Like now, Matabeleland was suffering a famine and food relief was used as a political weapon. Like now, being a member of Zanu was the only way to ensure safety. The military campaign continued up to the elections of 1985, which was marked by violence from Zanu youth gangs, abductions by the CIO and police and army attacks. But the result was a victory for Zapu, which won all 15 seats in the south. The campaign of terror continued for another two years culminating in Zanu incorporating Zapu in 1987. Mugabe and Zanu was now the sole party in Zimbabwe.

His murderous regime continued for another 15 years implementing IMF austerity programmes and entering into the bloody and reactionary Congo war, but it was only when Mugabe turned on the white farmers that the likes of the *Daily Telegraph* and Tony Blair took notice. The danger for the black masses now is that these same imperialist forces will seek to use the MDC to ensure Zimbabwe remains safe for white investment and property.

# Asylum seekers,

## 1 Asylum seekers live in the lap of luxury, while British pensioners live in poverty

In 2003, a single pensioner gets a guaranteed minimum income of £98.15 a week. A single asylum seeker gets less than half of that - only £37.77 a week - 30 per cent below the official poverty line.

Pensioners deserve a much higher standard of living but those responsible for their poverty are the Tory and Labour governments which have cut the value of pensions and refuse to even restore pensions to the real level of 1979. Pensioners have many times more in common with asylum seekers living in poverty than those who spread the lie that they live in luxury and call them 'parasites' and 'scroungers'.

## 2 Asylum seekers live off the state and contribute nothing

Asylum seekers are forbidden to work

until their claim is accepted. A significant number are doctors, educated professionals who could indeed contribute a lot but are not allowed to do so. They get 70 per cent less than the dole, and only 22 per cent of the minimum wage. The government tried to withdraw ALL benefits from those who don't claim at the moment of arrival but was blocked by the courts. Asylum seekers have a far lower standard of living than ANY British citizen. According to Oxfam 85 per cent experience hunger, 95 per cent cannot afford to buy clothes or shoes and 80 per cent are not able to maintain good health. An average family seeking asylum receives 24 per cent less than its British-born equivalent in income support and benefits.

## 3 Asylum seekers mean a rise in council tax for hard pressed local people

All the costs of looking after asylum seekers - including

accommodation and subsistence costs - are met by central government, not through council tax. Asylum seekers have nothing to do with councils putting their taxes up. The cause of this is the refusal of New Labour to raise taxes on the rich to pay for necessary improvements in housing, repairs, new building.

## 4 Britain is being flooded. More asylum seekers come here than anywhere else

Under 2 per cent of the world's asylum seekers end up in Britain. Within the European Union, Britain is ranked 10th in terms of asylum applications in relation to the overall population. Germany, France and Austria take over twice as many. Worldwide, Britain is ranked 32nd. It is some of the world's poorest countries that give most sanctuary: Iran, Burundi and Guinea for example. There are 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Iran.

## 5 Immigrants are bleeding the country dry

In 1999-2000, immigrants contributed £31.2bn in taxes and consumed £28.8bn in benefits - a net contribution of about £2.5bn to the economy

## 6 Asylum seekers are bogus: they come here just to improve their standard of living

Over 50 per cent of initial asylum claims are accepted. Of those refused, one in four succeeds on appeal. This despite the fact is that the whole system is racist and heavily stacked against refugees. Today, the top four countries that recent asylum seekers come from are Iraq, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan and Somalia. These are countries in the grip of war and brutal repression. A few years ago the top countries of origin were Bosnia and Kosova. The USA and the UK

# Neglect and racism provoke

There's no racism in Wrexham. The riot that gutted a local pub, forced Kurdish Iraqi exiles to flee the town out of fear and led to a four day occupation of a housing estate by hundreds of police was, according to Chief Superintendent Stephen Curtis, "not racism run mad, it's criminality pure and simple."

Seizing this particular telescope and clapping it firmly to her (colour) blind eye, the local Labour council leader, Shan Wilkinson, told the recently arrived flock of journalists that the riot was typical of the sort of thing that "happens in hot weather".

Summer heat and unspecified criminal motives led a mob of up to 200 boys and men, armed with baseball bats and petrol bombs, to target a handful of Iraqi Kurds on the Caia Park estate in Wrexham. The ensuing violence put one of the Iraqi Kurds into intensive care, led to the ransacking of a pub that the Iraqi Kurds happened to go into and attacks on the flats where the Iraqi Kurds lived.

But it wasn't anything to do with racism according to the local police and politicians.

Compare these views of the late June events in Wrexham with what the Iraqi Kurds had to say about the two nights' rioting. Ali Hussein Karim, who has been in Wrexham for two months, sadly commented, "People hate me, I don't know why."

The reason people hate Ali, and other refugees and asylum seekers, isn't a mystery. It is down to racism. And on the Caia Park estate the racist used the oppor-

tunity of a row between an Iraqi Kurd and a "local" to launch a vicious assault on the handful of Iraqi Kurds who had been housed in the area.

When the Iraqi Kurds defended themselves the police promptly arrested them, along with the instigators of the pogrom. They were all "criminals" you see. Of the first six arrests made four were refugees. The police told other Iraqi Kurds that the best thing for them would be to leave the town.

The racism in Wrexham isn't unique to that town. It is a direct product of three things, all of which are leading to an increase in racism from which the fascist British National Party is growing:

- The sustained hysterical anti-asylum seeker campaign by the vipers in the media - the Mail, Express and Sun in the forefront

- The credence given to that campaign by New Labour, and racist David Blunkett in particular. The Home Secretary regards all asylum seekers, indeed anyone who talks in a foreign language, as probably bogus, definitely a problem and a candidate for either being shipped out or being turned into a proper British person by attending one of his chilling citizenship courses

- The slow but sure crumbling of the infrastructure and services in working class communities and the desperation amongst white workers born of poverty and alienation.



Riot police in Wrexham

The lies of the press and the politicians become the common sense of the desperate. Racism is fuelled by these lies and the fascists move in and reap the electoral benefits. Of course many were quick to point out that the BNP were not involved in this particular episode of race hate. No matter, they will be over from their nearby base in Stoke in a short while and will find willing recruits on the Caia Park estate.

The scale of the lies pouring from the Mail and its like, really do border on fascism. The bigger the lie the more people

will buy it is the sick mantra. The lies filter down and become accepted as fact. Refugees end up in hospital, or, as in Sighthill and Sunderland, dead as a result.

The Caia Park estate is a case in point. One of its residents, their head stuffed full of stories from the press, said of the refugees:

"They are better off than our people. They come here with nothing but they soon have big cars and more money than us."

This is garbage. But garbage that has been carefully recycled by the Mail and

Express. If they say it, it must be true. It isn't.

There are an estimated 70 refugees in the whole of Wrexham (a town with a 98.91 per cent white population and whose largest non-white group are a very small number of Indians working in catering). Of the recent intake - the victims of the pogrom - most were single men. They lived in pairs, thanks to a council policy of housing two men in flats built for single people. They worked in menial jobs on low wages (the local industries have flourished because the



# racism and lies

have added to the numbers of refugees by bombing and terrorising Iraq and Afghanistan and by supporting brutal dictators like Saddam Hussein and Robert Mugabe. Only after decades did they fall out with these tyrants and then for economic reasons, oil in the former case and the land of the rich white farmers in the latter.

## 7 But many are just economic migrants

Yes there will be some people among asylum seekers whose main reason for coming here is to seek a better life. We say: if you had to live on a few dollars a day, what would you do? What did British and Irish people do in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In their millions they emigrated to America, Australia, South Africa. Mass flows of population are absolutely inevitable in a world where a third of the people live on

less than \$2 a day. The same multi-national companies that shut down factories and cut jobs in Britain take advantage of cheap labour and dictatorships abroad to create this inequality and force people to migrate.

People who want to migrate are forced to use the asylum system because Britain has closed off primary immigration (unless of course you are a white South African, Zimbabwean or Australian).

## 8 Asylum seekers are criminals

Even according to the Association of Chief Police Officers there is no higher crime rate among asylum seekers. In fact they are more likely than UK citizens to be the victims of crime.

- For more facts and arguments about asylum see: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

## What can we do to combat hysteria?

Socialists and trade unionists must go to the grassroots, street by street and door to door countering the lies of the press. We must refuse to accept police bans or re-routing of anti-racist and anti-fascist demonstrations.

For this we have to mobilise in large numbers and with militant tactics so that the police cannot stop us. It is vital to show workers, both those born here and those who have come to this country, that there exists a powerful movement for change and that together, united, we can bring this about.

The problem is that New Labour and right wing union leaders have shamefully neglected the problems of their constituents and members. We have to mobilise now to demand:

- First, the labour movement in every locality must pledge itself to help defend asylum seekers and help them defend themselves - physically wherever this is necessary. We need to make it clear that those who attack them do so at their own peril.
  - A massive programme of house building and repair. Planned by the communities that need it and carried out under their control.
  - A massive development of the health service and education, of building and repair of schools and hospitals, based
- on plans drawn up by those who work in and use these services.
  - An immediate raising of pensions and social security payments to a level agreed by the unions and pensioners organisations.
  - Abolish all restrictions on the right of asylum seekers to work. Down with all immigration controls.
  - Shut the lying myths of the hate sheets. Journalists and printworkers should shut down the presses everytime the promoters of racism write an article spouting these lies. Instead they should demand that space be given to asylum seekers to explain why they came to this country, what abuse they suffered to drive them to this and the awful conditions they live in here.
  - Mobilise the resources by taxing the rich and corporate profits, including the privatisers who have ripped off our public services.
  - Build peoples assemblies in every town and city to mobilise a massive campaign for these demands and to organise the defence of asylum seekers and immigrants from racist attack.
  - Drive the fascists off out streets and out of our communities with defence groups of local people and asylum seekers.

## riots in Wrexham

area is a low wage economy).

A more astute resident of the Caia Park estate pointed out why the idea that these men were all driving Mercedes was absurd:

"I don't know myself. If I had money I wouldn't live in an estate like this."

But the lie and the rumour, given apparent credibility every time Blunkett stands up and demands tougher laws to deal with the "threat" posed by refugees, does its work stoking up hatred, resentment and bitterness at the outsiders who are getting all the best jobs and houses. The fact that none of us in our daily lives have ever met the actual refugees who supposedly enjoy the millionaire lifestyle demonstrates that it is a classic urban myth. But its end product is a dangerous rise in racism and fascism.

To tackle both we cannot just preach tolerance to the desperate. The hatred that erupted in Wrexham, just like the hatred that erupted against established Asian communities in Oldham and Burnley, finds an outlet in racism because the major parties - above all, New Labour - have abandoned the poor to their fate.

There is no mass progressive working class alternative, no revolutionary party fighting for an alternative that can improve the lives of the poor in the here and now as well as linking that fight to the destruction of the root cause of poverty and unemployment, capitalism. Yet the events on Caia Park show why we need to build such an alternative now, as an immediate goal.

The Caia Park estate is one of the biggest

in Wales, with 14,000 people living on it. It suffers disproportionately high unemployment compared with other areas of Wrexham (where unemployment is 2.2 per cent - below both the national and Welsh average).

Many of these residents were visibly shocked by the events that unfolded in late June. They had worked hard to improve facilities and life on the estate. But they all said the same thing about the refugees. Their integration was made a thousand times more difficult by the fact that no resources to support such an integration process were provided by the state - at either a local or national level.

In other words the refugees were literally dumped on the estate, which already suffered from high level of deprivation. This is not the way to treat either refugees - who have suffered untold misery and hardship prior to their arrival - or established communities.

Both are expected to simply sit back and accept a shrinking share of the ever-shrinking resources (jobs, houses, services, schools, hospitals and so on) that New Labour's policies of cuts and privatisation have resulted in. And if the "locals" get restless, the Mail and Blunkett jump in to blame the refugees, diverting attention away from the real culprits - the mega rich bosses and their friends in New Labour.

The fightback to stop the rot in Britain's many abandoned working class communities needs to start here. If it doesn't then the threat of a mass growth of the BNP will be a step nearer. The national cam-

paigns against racism and in defence of asylum seekers need to approach the major unions with anti-racist policies and discuss a strategy of turning those policies into action. The action could start with a mass Labour movement and anti-racist demonstration in Wrexham itself.

This means approaching the Wrexham workers' movement, the Tenants Associations on the Caia Park estate and the local refugee organisations. We need to ensure that they are involved in the build up to such a demo and have the opportunity to mobilise the many thousands of people on the estate who are not racist and who do not buy the racist lies. Otherwise, a demo just by "outsiders" could play into the hands of the racists.

But any such demo needs to be followed up by systematic local work, supporting refugees, organising their physical defence by their own and other labour movement and community organisations. Every racist will think twice about wielding a baseball bat if they know that they could be on the receiving end too.

But above all, the fightback needs to address the link between the rise of racism and the growth of poverty in Blair's low-wage Britain. We need to build a workers' party now that can challenge Labour and the BNP at the polls, in the workplaces, on the estates and on the streets. And we need that party to commit itself to a struggle to smash capitalism - the system that ladles out racism and poverty to millions of us - not tinker with it as though it can be reformed out of existence.

# The SWP and the

The policy used by revolutionaries to unite with reformist workers in struggle is that of the united front. *Richard Bremner* looks at the application of the united front by the UK's biggest far-left group the Socialist Workers Party in the Stop the War Coalition and other campaigns

The Socialist Workers Party played a key role in leading the mass antiwar movement that brought 2 million people onto the streets of Britain on 15 February 2003. How did a small left party, with a few thousand members lead a movement of millions and will this lead to a major advance for revolutionary ideas in Britain?

The SWP explains the success of the Stop the War Coalition as the result of a correct application of the united front policy. This was applied by the Bolsheviks in the course of the Russian revolution, developed and codified by the Communist International and subsequently advocated by Trotsky and the International Left Opposition, especially in the context of the struggle against fascism in Germany.

This article will argue that insofar as the SWP has applied aspects of this policy, it has brought great success – insofar as they have abandoned aspects of the policy, it has obstructed the development of mass direct action against the war. The SWP left the trade union and reformist leaders unchallenged and may also have held back the growth of the party itself.

In short the SWP has not consistently applied the united front policy.

So what is this policy? Briefly put, it involves two integrally related elements. The first is the need to unite the working class in action to defend its interests and oppose the capitalists. The second is the need for the revolutionaries to extend their influence in the working class and to challenge the misleadership of reformists over the working class movement. Without either element the whole tactic falls apart.

Let's begin with the first of these elements. If revolutionaries were already the majority trend among workers and youth, there would be no need for this policy. But in normal times this will not be the case. As Leon Trotsky explained in 1922, the need for mass action means that the revolutionaries must demand that the whole working class movement – including the bureaucratic, reformist and even pro-capitalist leaders – should unite in struggle for defined practical goals:

"Does the united front extend only to the working masses or does it also include the opportunist leaders? The very posing of this question is a product of a misunderstanding. If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question of the united front would not exist in its present form.

The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organisations or support them. Their present experience is still insufficient to enable them to break with the reformist organisations and join us. It may be precisely after engaging in those mass activities that are on the order of the day that a major change will take place in this connection."

Trotsky added that the more the mass organisations were drawn into actual struggle, the more this would tend to radicalise and raise the confidence of the mass of the working class supporters, creating much more favourable conditions for revolutionaries to extend their influence.

So far, so good. The SWP without doubt pursued this aspect of the united front policy. They avoided the error of the anarchists and ultra-left sects, who claim that to put demands on the reformist leaders 'creates illusions' in them – as if these illusions were not already there! Indeed it was

precisely by demanding the involvement of trade union leaders in Stop the War – at a time when there was huge and growing pressure to act from their own members – that many of them were forced to affiliate to the Coalition, mobilise their members for the marches and appear on platforms such as in Hyde Park on 15 February.

But what of the essential second element of the policy? Revolutionaries must be aware that the united front policy carries with it a real danger – that the reformists will demand as a condition of their involvement that revolutionaries suspend all criticism of their opportunist approach. If revolutionaries agree to this, it would mean accepting that the struggle should take place within a blinkered reformist perspective and would silence the revolutionary message at precisely the time when it could gain a mass hearing.

The Communist International explained this as follows: "While accepting a basis for action, communists must retain the unconditional right and the possibility of expressing their opinion of the policy of all working class parties without exception, not only before and after action has been taken but also if necessary during its course. In no circumstances can these rights be surrendered."

Did the SWP apply this element of the united front policy in the great antiwar movement of 2003? It did not.

Take as a key example the tremendous opportunity presented on 15 February to address over a million people gathered to hear the speeches from the platform in Hyde Park. SWP member and Coalition convenor Lindsey German called correctly for the movement to go beyond marches and for workers to boycott movements of military goods and to take strike action against the war threat, shutting down the country the day the war started. She correctly said that a movement on this scale could go beyond protest and actually stop the war.

The problem, of course, was that the trade union leaders that shared the platform with Lindsey German were not prepared to call for this or organise it. And German should have called on them and their unions' members in Hyde Park to do so.

A correct application of the united front policy would have meant more than getting the union leaders onto the platform, more than calling for strikes. It would have meant saying something along the following lines:

"It's fantastic to see union leaders like Billy Hayes of the Communications Workers and Bob Crow of the RMT on the platform today. Together we have the power to stop this war. That's why I say now to Billy and Bob, don't just make speeches today against the war – commit to bringing your unions out on strike the day the fighting starts. If you give a lead we, the millions assembled here today, will come out. If you don't do this, you should be in no doubt – Blair will be off the hook and the slaughter of the Iraqi people will begin."

Of course it has been objected that if the SWP had directly challenged their allies in this way, the union leaders would simply have refused to share a platform with SWP speakers again and the urgently needed united front would have come to an end. But this means planning what revolutionaries will say not on the basis of what is vital for the struggle to succeed but on the basis of what the union leaders will put up with.

It means that revolutionaries must agree not to speak vitally necessary truths – like the level of action needed to stop mass murder. It means that the empty rhetoric of left fakers should not be exposed in public in front of them and their supporters, that rev-



How do revolutionaries convince the millions that came out on the streets against the war

olutionaries should in fact violate the principles of the united front policy and refrain from criticising the policy of reformists during the struggle – even if this touches on issues central to the success or failure of the movement in progress.

It is undeniable that the reformists would have responded indignantly to any criticism. It would have touched them on a raw nerve – the need to turn words into action. Right there in front of hundreds of thousands of people and tens of thousands of trade unionists, they would have been challenged to do just this. The rank and file members of their unions would have been given a clear message by the SWP – keep up the pressure on your leaders for action, don't let them off the hook and get ready to replace them if they let us down. The party would have made it known that here was no mere ginger group but an organisation seriously prepared to fight for an alternative leadership of the entire labour and trade union movement. The real aims of the organisation would have been apparent to far broader layers than could ever discover them by propaganda and paper sales.

The union leaders would have been under mass pressure. Either they would refuse to pledge themselves to official action and share in the blame for the movement's failure to stop the war, or might indeed be forced to make further steps forward under the pressure of the rank and file and the criticism of revolutionaries.

In the event, the SWP violated the principles of the united front policy by failing to do this – they neither called on the official leaders to act in the interests of the working class nor criticised them for their refusal to commit to action. This obstructed the development of effective action and retarded the growth of a revolutionary alternative.

Another example of the SWP's distorted application of the united front policy came at the first meeting of the national People's Assembly called by Stop the War on 12 March. A thousand delegates from local organisations attended, but the SWP leaders – hand in hand with the Communist Party of Britain – worked hard to prevent a proposal from Workers Power for the formation of local assemblies from even being debated and voted on. When finally they were forced to take an amendment to this effect, they voted against it en masse, though it still received 40% of the votes.

This was a really important moment. The call for local assemblies would have been taken up energetically across the country. With the authority of the People's Assembly behind them, revolutionaries and union militants could have maximised the pres-

sure for local trade union branches and workplaces, delegations from workers in dispute like the firefighters, representatives from antiwar Labour wards and from estates to gather and coordinate action locally. The perspective would have opened of the creation of an alternative centre of organisation for the movement, capable of organising strikes and solidarity actions even without the backing of the official union leaders.

Why did the SWP – which claims to stand for the formation of precisely bodies such as these to organise the struggle and as a basis for an alternative state power – actually oppose their formation at the height of a huge wave of anti-imperialist mobilisation? It is no exaggeration to say that we in Workers Power have found agitation for local assemblies, (or 'social forums') meets with a very receptive and enthusiastic response in the antiwar movement and beyond, raising the profile of our organisation and winning us new supporters.

There are only two possible explanations for the SWP's position on this – their official line in March that it was "too soon" is too absurd even to warrant a response. The first is that they were afraid that it would alienate the union leaders by confronting them with a democratic challenge to their control. If so, this again violates the principle that revolutionaries must not suspend criticism of reformists during a united front, and it sacrifices fundamental interests of the working class to preserving good relations with reformist bureaucrats. This is a gross opportunist violation of united front principles.

The second explanation is that they felt democratic delegate based local assemblies of the working class would undermine their position of influence and organisational control within the movement by creating an alternative to the Coalition. If so, this too was a violation of the policy of the united front. By putting the short-term perceived advantages of their group above the needs of the working class struggle as a whole, this approach is sectarian to the core.

Which was the real motive? Without a degree in psychology it would be impossible to tell. Probably it was some tangled combination of the two. Whichever the reason, one thing is clear. The SWP's failure to pursue a principled and creative application of the united front policy at that stage set back the movement.

Out of the biggest march in British history new popular democratic organs, dominated by working class militants, could have sprung up around the country. The ability of the union leaders to stifle action and call off resistance could have been seri-

# united front



that their strategy to defeat the drive to war is correct?

ously undermined. A new forum within which to fight for militant resistance could have been constructed. The party itself could have won widespread respect and new members by championing the most democratic and unified forms of organisation, dispelling unease at its attempts to control the movement form behind the scenes and charting a way forward to a new type of working class movement – one without bureaucracy, one able to co-ordinate both the struggle and society itself on the basis of direct working class democracy.

## Theorising opportunist practice

How does the SWP defend its approach? By giving a distorted picture of what the revolutionary movement has always understood by the united front. Its theoreticians, especially Alex Callinicos and John Rees, have written several articles purporting to explain the history and meaning of the united front, but which leave out critical aspects of the policy so as to excuse their opportunist practice.

In particular the obligation of revolutionaries to criticise the policies and practice of their allies during the united front itself is systematically downplayed and disparaged. This is not done openly but in an underhand way that deliberately tries to confuse several distinct issues.

Thus Alex Callinicos, in his article 'The united front today', (April 2002) denounces revolutionaries who "either abstain from united activity or (which amounts to the same thing) use it as a vehicle for denouncing everyone else".

The argument was dealt with at greater length in his piece 'The Anti-Capitalist Movement and the Revolutionary Left' (2001), in which he attacks the position of the International Socialist Organisation, the SWP's former co-thinkers in the USA, during the NATO war on Yugoslavia:

"The ISO Steering Committee argued that it was the 'duty' of revolutionaries, when building anti-war coalitions, to highlight the differences separating them from others opposing the NATO bombing campaign. In particular, they should attack illusions in the United Nations as an alternative to NATO, sympathy for Serbian self-determination, and opposition to Kosovo national-determination. 'It would,' they concluded, 'be unprincipled to ignore these questions within the antiwar movement.'

In their response the SWP leaders wrote to the ISO leadership:

"You make concessions to the misconception that the way in which revolutionaries differentiate themselves within united fronts is by 'putting the arguments' which

set us apart from other forces within the united front. In our experience it is more often through being the most dynamic and militant force in building the movement in question that we distinguish ourselves and draw new people towards us. Of course, this process leads to arguments, but these develop from the concrete situation rather than being produced by some abstract 'duty' to disagree with everyone else."

This is radically false, leaving open the possibility of the abandonment of criticism at crucial moments in the struggle that actually occurred in 2003. Of course revolutionaries must not simply "use the united front as a vehicle" for "denouncing everyone" on issues unrelated to the concerns of the struggle, as the most absurd sectarians do. Nor should we insist on adding extra political points to the very basis for the united front itself, so giving the reformists the excuse to avoid unity in action. As Trotsky explained in the context of the struggle against the Nazis, the agreement to fight together on a concrete issue should be "strictly practical, without any of those artificial 'claims', so that every average anti-fascist democratic worker can say to himself: what the communists propose is completely indispensable for the struggle against fascism."

But during the course of the united front, it is absolutely essential that revolutionaries should "put the arguments which set us apart" from the reformists. Of course these will "develop from the concrete situation" and will focus on how reformism and reformists are blocking the further development of the movement at critical moments. But the "process" will only "lead to arguments" and these will only "develop from the concrete situation" if revolutionaries use the concrete situation to raise these criticisms – not as sectarian point scoring but as vital necessities for the movement.

Was opposition to UN intervention in the Balkans an artificial point, a "shibboleth" as Marx described it? Did it not "arise from the concrete situation"? In fact among the opponents of the NATO war on Serbia were Labourites like Tony Benn who did call for a UN force in Kosovo. Without introducing an irrelevant issue or clouding the basis for united action against war, it was absolutely necessary for revolutionaries to oppose these objectively pro-imperialist arguments.

If "being the most dynamic and militant force in building the movement in question" was enough to distinguish revolutionaries on these occasions of course the task would be much easier. Above all the revolutionaries would never have to make a decision about when or whether to challenge the reformists' actions. Instead we

could simply rely on the process making this decision for us.

In reality the process does nothing. It will only present us with opportunities and dangers – it will not carry out our tasks for us. By passively waiting for the process to resolve the issue – the hallmark of opportunism – the SWP in reality lets the reformists off the hook and spares them concrete criticism at the crucial time. Whenever the concrete situation presents the need to make this challenge, as on 15 February or at the People's Assembly, the SWP leaders check their stop watches and, with a nervous eye on their "allies", they decide... not yet.

Unlike Callinicos and the SWP, the revolutionary Communist International did not warn its militants against criticising its untrustworthy allies, or dull their determination with sugary phrases about "the process". It was crystal clear – it left no room for ambiguity or opportunism:

"While supporting the slogan of the greatest possible unity of all workers' organisations in every practical action against the capitalist front, communists in no circumstances desist from putting forward their views, which are the only consistent expression of the defence of working class interests as a whole."

## Dividing the movement?

Underlying the SWP's opportunism is the idea that by raising practical criticisms of the left reformists – whether they be union leaders, MPs, or participants in the global anticapitalist movement – revolutionaries would be dividing the movement at a time when it is advancing and growing. The reformists would take umbrage, refuse to collaborate further, and all the advantages to the revolutionaries of participating in a mass active movement would disappear.

Was the Communist International unaware of this possible outcome of the united front policy? Of course not. Trotsky wrote in 1922 that "a policy aimed to secure the united front does not of course contain automatic guarantees that unity in action will actually be attained in all instances. On the contrary, in many cases and perhaps even the majority of cases, organisational agreements will be only half-attained or perhaps not at all. But it is necessary that the struggling masses should always be given the opportunity of convincing themselves that the non-achievement of unity of action was not due to our formalist irreconcilability but to the lack of real will to struggle on the part of the reformists."

Why were the union leaders and left reformists obligated to support the Stop the War Coalition? Because they were under the tremendous pressure of mass antiwar sentiment. The reason for the emergence of this united front – and of the involvement of mass Communist, socialist and trade union forces in the global anticapitalist movement – has been the sharp rise in the tempo of struggle over the last four years. History has slammed its foot on the accelerator, forcing the reformists and fakers to appear to be doing something, while all the time they seek and excuse not to act. To avoid absurd provocations that would give them an excuse to abandon the movement is criminal – it allows them to use the united front in exactly the way they want, as a cover for their inactivity.

The SWP's abuse of the united front policy and its trimming and limiting of practical revolutionary criticism is not a new development in the history of the working

class movement. The Communist International itself, under the impact of Stalinist degeneration, developed this opportunist version of the united front policy between 1925 and 1928.

The result was its failure to capitalise on revolutionary crises in Britain in 1926 and in China in 1927-28. After these fiascos, the International began to veer wildly to the left then to the right, first abandoning united front tactics altogether, with catastrophic consequences including the rise to power of Hitler in Germany, and then declaring that the united front should involve a non-aggression pact between the participating parties, which were now for the first time to include the liberal capitalists themselves.

Where will the SWP go now? It is possible that some within its ranks, aware of the fruitlessness of the current policy, will under the slogan "back to building the party" advocate a sectarian abandonment of the use of the united front altogether, throwing the baby of working class unity out with the dirty bathwater of opportunism. On the other hand, the opportunist leaders around Callinicos and Rees are already deepening their errors profoundly. Already they have started to adapt the policies actually fought for by the SWP to the ideas of their actual and hoped-for allies.

In the Social Alliance – not a united front of mass forces for common action, but an electoral bloc agitating for alternative policies to New Labour – they fought to leave the question of revolution out of its manifesto, in the hope of attracting individual reformists to the initiative. The platform represented, according to Callinicos, the "minimum acceptable to revolutionaries." This is a curious phrase indeed, describing as it does a policy for governing Britain that does not involve smashing the capitalist state. This question, he said, should be "left open" – which reminds us of Trotsky's response to the Independent Labour Party when it asked to be allowed to do just that: "The butcher has a sharp knife, but the calf has an open mind."

This miserable policy Callinicos distinguishes from the "classical" – i.e. principled – united front by calling it "a united front of a special type". But this wordplay won't work. An agreement between political forces, without the masses, to make common propaganda on a non-revolutionary basis is not a united front at all. It has a name though, a propaganda bloc. It is anathema to revolutionary Marxists, who, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, "disdain to conceal their views".

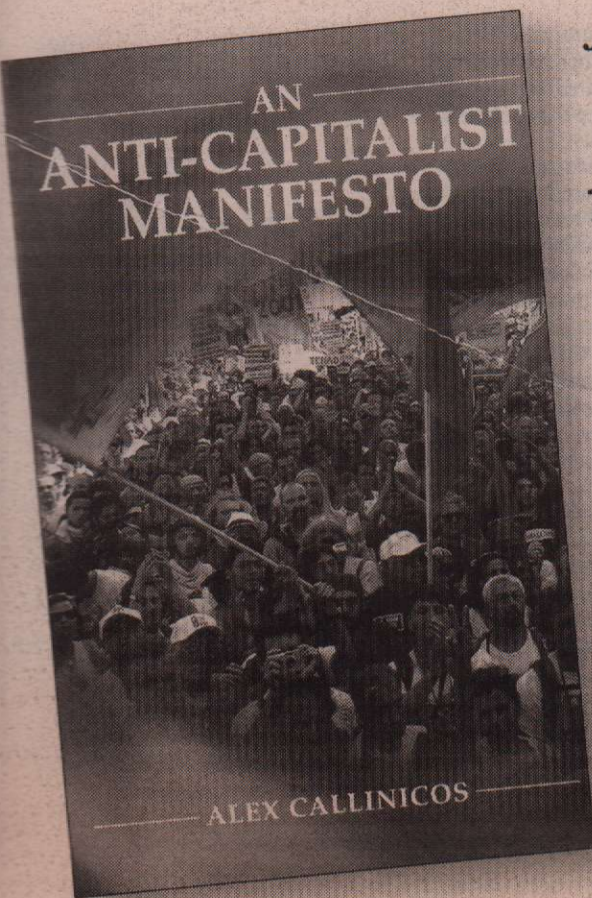
Even worse, this method has now been extended to the international terrain, with Callinicos writing an "Anticapitalist Manifesto" which systematically blurs the distinction between revolutionary Marxist policy and that of reformist and populist trends in the global justice movement.

Members of the SWP should sound the alarm. Callinicos and Rees are moving it sharply to the right. Unless this is corrected through a sustained struggle for the principled united front policy of Lenin and Trotsky, the current leadership will lead it into ever deeper accommodation to the reformists.

Start the fight right away. At Marxism 2003 use the presence of left union leaders like Billy Hayes and reformist anti-globalisers like George Monbiot to raise direct criticism of their passive programme and advocate a revolutionary programme for the movement. Serve notice that whatever your leaders say, the time for revolutionary criticism the misleaders – our temporary allies – is now.

# An opportunist manifesto

Jeremy Dewar reviews *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto* by Alex Callinicos



Alex Callinicos, leading member of the Socialist Workers Party and secretary of the International Socialist Tendency, has published *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*.

His ideas about the nature of capitalism in the era of globalisation and the way forward for the movement will be undoubtedly read by many activists in the anti-capitalist and anti-war movement. Its publication coincides with that of two other programmes for the movement: one from the reformist utopian George Monbiot and another from the libertarian Michael Albert. It is therefore a book of significance, one which will be seriously debated at the European Social Forum in Paris later this year, and at Marxism 2003 in London this month.

The problem? It is not a revolutionary socialist programme. In fact it represents a further stage in Callinicos' drive to accommodate to the reformist policies and practice of the SWP's hoped for allies in the movement. It tries to split the difference between the ideas currently in vogue in the movement and the principles of communism. And, if applied, it would lead to catastrophe for the working class.

## THE TRANSITIONAL METHOD

At the heart of the book is what Callinicos calls a "transitional programme". Although this phrase derives from Trotsky, whose ideas Callinicos consciously misrepresents in his text, Callinicos' programme is nothing of the sort. In fact he presents a series of disconnected reforms together with the vaguest possible explanation of the need for revolution - an explanation that avoids any mention of the forms of struggle, types of organisation and necessary tasks that would make a revolution a reality.

While Callinicos covers himself by saying that his is only an indicative set of demands and that "others could come up with more extensive and imaginative programmes" (p. 139) he goes on to say, "For all that, these demands aren't just a wish list plucked from the air. They represent responses to contemporary realities, and have all been raised by existing movements. At the same time, the tendency of these demands is to undermine the logic of capital... while not necessarily formulated for explicitly anti-capitalist reasons, these demands have an implicitly anti-capitalist dynamic. They are what Trotsky called transitional demands, reforms that emerge from the realities of existing struggles but whose implementation in the current context would challenge capitalist economic relations." (p. 140)

So do the demands listed in Callinicos' programme undermine the logic of capital and do they in their totality provide a bridge from today's situation to revolution?

They are certainly a very mixed bag of reforms. The Tobin Tax, for example, is criticised earlier in the book as "a method of

reforming capitalism - and in particular of rehabilitating national capitalisms" (p. 34). Later on Callinicos explains how Lionel Jospin's French socialist government pushed through an amendment supporting the Tobin Tax in November 2001 in order to "cultivate a socialist image" while he "actually privatised FF240bn worth (E36.4bn, £22.5bn) of state enterprises, more than the past six French governments combined" (p.90).

Other demands are clearly reforms which, while less utopian, can be absorbed by capitalism. Again, the reduction of working week was implemented by Jospin's government - at the expense of the working class. The accompanying "give back" by the workers, however, meant that the bosses actually gained more from increased productivity than they lost by workers leaving the plants earlier. The fraudulent nature of this "reform" was in fact one of the main reasons for working class disenchantment with the Socialist Party and its crash in the polls of April 2002.

The danger of reformism lies in its capacity to divert anti-capitalist anger into regulation of the market, and away from the goal of overthrowing capitalism.

Transitional demands are the means by which revolutionaries seek to build a bridge from the immediate burning needs of workers today to the goal of working class power; and a bridge from the mentality of workers to revolutionary consciousness. Here's what Frederick Engels said about the method as early as 1847:

"All measures to restrict competition and the accumulation of capital in the hands of individuals... are not only possible as revolutionary measures, but actually necessary. They are possible because the whole insurgent proletariat is behind them and maintains them by force of arms. They are possible, despite all the difficulties and disadvantages alleged against them by economists, because these very difficulties and disadvantages will compel the proletariat to go further and further until private property has been completely abolished, in order not to lose again what it has already won. They are possible as preparatory steps, temporary, transitional stages toward the abolition of private property, but not in any other way."

Here we have the whole transitional method explained. Starting from what the working class itself sees as necessary, rally the workers to exact measures which encroach on bourgeois economic and political power and strengthen the workers' self-organisation ("by force of arms") in the process. Because these measures impede the capitalists' ability to compete and accumulate, the working class and its allies will be forced to go further until capitalism itself is overthrown.

But Engels, and Trotsky after him, stressed that these measures are only possible if they are linked to the conquest of power.

Take the fight for a universal minimum income. This will, if it is to be set at a reasonable rate, have to be won through industrial action. Workers will have to build strike committees and wage a battle against their own union bureaucracy, who will want to sideline the campaign.

To establish the level of the income, working class communities will need to set up price watch committees, so as not to be swindled by economists or inflation. Bosses may plead bankruptcy and sack workers or even shut down enterprises as a result, in which

case workers will need to occupy the factories and demand to see the accounts and fight for nationalisation under workers' control.

Workers in Argentina have recently taken such measures. They ran the Zanon and Bruckman factories under workers' control for over a year. But company goons and the cops constantly attacked them and recently retook the Bruckman workshop by force.

So this too is only a "temporary, transitional stage" and "in order not to lose again what it has already won" the working class will have to fight for a workers' government that can bring the whole economy onto a socialised basis.

This is what is totally missing from *An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto*. In fact, the opposite is implied: "the demands listed above are generally placed on states acting either singly or in concert. This reflects the fact that, whatever the effects of globalisation, states are still the most effective mechanisms in the world as currently constituted for mobilising resources to achieve collectively agreed goals." (p. 139)

Here, Callinicos lays bare the limits of his vision. Of course, we should place demands on the state, but we should not sow illusions in the ability of the capitalist state to mobilise resources to achieve collectively agreed goals.

## THE CAPITALIST STATE CANNOT BE USED FOR ANTI-CAPITALIST GOALS.

But it flows quite naturally from everything Callinicos has written in the preceding chapters that his conclusion should end with the capitalist state machinery intact. His whole section on planning is based on the model of "negotiated co-ordination" where "economic power would be vested in negotiated co-ordination bodies for individual production units and sectors on which would sit representatives of the workforce, consumers, suppliers, relevant government bodies, and concerned interest groups." (p.125)

In other words, Callinicos wants a world where workers, consumers and the government regulate society in a series of tripartite bodies. Sorry, Alex, this is not socialism. It is a petit-bourgeois utopia. Negotiated coordination between producers, consumers and government can only occur if there is a general decision-making body that can coordinate the plan in the interests of the whole of the working class and the popular masses. This requires two things, both anathema to the populist, liberal and semi-anarchist trends in the anti-capitalist movement but critical for the future of socialism: democratic decision-making and a centralised state power of the toilers.

The world working class will need to establish democratically centralised planning - something which demands not just co-ordination between regional and local planning units but working class government and a working class state, a dictatorship over the old regime: not simply to ensure capitalism does not mount a counter-revolution, but also to raise the living standards of six billion toilers so that they can truly control their - and our - destiny.

The most critical aspect of Callinicos' policy is how it says this can be done. Despite the SWP's 'Where we Stand' column calling every week for workers' councils, a workers' militia and revolution to smash the state, *An anti-capitalist manifesto* calls for none of these things. Any transitional programme worth its salt today would relate to the most promising, mili-

tant and potentially revolutionary aspects of the anti-capitalist movement and develop demands linking their further development to the struggle for revolution.

After the mass attempt at organised self-defence at Genoa, it would call, as Trotsky's transitional programme did, for a working class defence guard, starting with the task of defending protestors and strikers from police attack but able to move forward to challenge the capitalists' monopoly of force. It would point to the social forums in Italy and the people's assemblies in Argentina as a growth of popular democracy and call for delegate based councils of workers, peasants and urban poor, as a way of co-ordinating the struggle on the broadest possible basis and as an alternative basis of power in society, the seeds of a future workers' republic.

And it would call for the smashing, the forcible demolition by the workers, of the apparatus of state repression that the capitalists use against the anti-capitalist movement and the peoples of the third world alike. This, and only this, is social revolution.

All this is absent from this utopian programme, which trades away the necessities of the struggle for the sake of negotiated co-ordination with the reformist intellectuals of the current day global movement. If you have a strong stomach, just read this, from page 141 of the book, which represents the revolutionary high point of Callinicos' analysis, the boldest he gets:

"But the latter option would be a revolution not simply in the sense of a systemic transformation: it could only be achieved by overcoming - forcibly if necessary - the resistance of capital and those mobilised behind it."

If necessary? This can only mean "perhaps it will not be necessary". The Susan Georges, George Monbiots and Luca Casarini can breathe a sigh of relief that perhaps they will be spared this catastrophe. And the revolutionaries are supposed to weaken our argument for their benefit, suggest that there is any possibility whatsoever, in the age of the War on Terror, of Genoa and the bombing of Baghdad, that force will not be necessary?

This is an abandonment of Marxism, which is a warlike doctrine of struggle from head to foot, and whose founder wrote over 150 years ago: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

For revolutionaries, a transitional programme is the "bridge" between the needs of the struggles of millions today and the need for revolution. Alex Callinicos' manifesto, on the other hand, is a bridge reaching out to liberal economists like Susan George and Walden Bello... a bridge the SWP and the anti-capitalist movement must not cross.

Fortunately, the programmatic discussion in the global anti-capitalist movement is not a three way debate between Monbiot's reformism, Albert's utopianism and Callinicos' opportunist attempt to broke a compromise between the interests of different classes: the workers and the middle class intelligentsia. Also to be presented to the ESF will be the forthcoming proposal from the League for the Fifth International, whose title leaves no room for ambiguity and consistently expresses the interests of one social class, the world working class: *Manifesto for World Revolution*.

# The birth of Bolshevism

Andy Yorke looks at the conference of Russian Marxists that founded Bolshevism, held a 100 years ago in London

On 30 July 1903, 70 delegates of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) assembled in a flour warehouse in Brussels. Rats scurried about their feet and outside an assortment of uniformed Belgian police and a few plainclothes officers of the Tsarist secret police, the Okhrana, tried to find out who the delegates were.

So heavy was the police surveillance that, after only a few days, the whole Congress packed its bags and crossed the Channel to London.

This was the party's second Congress. In reality there was as yet no unified party. The delegates hoped to unite the underground socialist groups scattered across the vast Tsarist Empire and the rival émigré political factions.

But by the end of the Congress the movement had split into two fiercely opposed tendencies, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, whose differences only deepened over the next decade until they became two distinct parties. What were the differences that caused this split?

The Russian Marxists had been around since the early 1880s, grouped around Georgi Plekhanov and the Emancipation of Labour Group.

But in the mid-1890s things began to change. A wave of strikes broke out in the new industrial centres of Russia. The younger Marxists saw in these struggles the opportunity to make contact with the broad mass of workers. In St. Petersburg, Vladimir Lenin and Julius Martov founded the League of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class to do just this.

This meant going beyond the workers' educational circles which had hitherto been their work. It meant focusing on the everyday problems that workers faced – starvation wages, fines for mistakes, long hours, dictatorial management, arrests of activists.

The young revolutionaries distributed leaflets calling for a fightback and linking this to the need to overthrow the Tsar's government. Despite a good reception from the workers, they rapidly fell victim to state repression. Both Lenin and Martov were arrested in December 1895 and imprisoned in Siberia. Nevertheless, these new methods – agitation – spread across Russia like wildfire.

However, differences of approach soon emerged among the Social Democrats. Carried away by the success of agitation on local and immediate issues, some of them saw talk about a revolution as increasingly irrelevant and even obstructing the fight over economic issues – for the time being, at least.

The struggle against the Tsar, they argued, should be left in the hands of the Liberals and the students. After all, every Marxist agreed that what Russia was expecting was a bourgeois democratic, not a socialist revolution. It would unleash capitalism from the chains of feudalism and the Tsar.

This approach came to be called economism. It meant abandoning revolutionary agitation in favour of trade unionism and legal reforms. In effect, Economism was the Russian version of the "revisionism" that Eduard Bernstein was promoting in western Europe. What he "revised" was the Marxist programme of social revolution and independent working class parties to fight for it, that had triumphed in the Labour movement in the 1870s and 1880s. It was the beginning of a conscious reformist perspective.

In exile in Siberia, Lenin reacted strongly against the Economists. When Lenin got back from his Siberian exile in 1900, he was determined to combat Economism and establish a party on a revolutionary programme. But he had also come to some far-



Lenin with fellow Marxists in the St Petersburg League of Struggle 1898, which he founded with Martov.



Iskra issue one

reaching conclusions about the party. He criticised the amateurishness of the "agitators" of the 1890s. They had not mastered the techniques of illegal work.

The older generation of Russian populists – Narodnaya Volya (People's Freedom) – had been masters of such techniques. But they misapplied these methods, blowing up or shooting brutal Tsarist police chiefs and reactionary ministers in the expectation that heroic actions would spark off a mass peasant uprising. This totally failed to materialise. The Russian Marxists developed a critique of this entire strategy – individual terrorism – as ineffective compared with the revolutionary struggle of the working class.

So when Lenin talked of the need to learn conspiratorial methods it was to enable revolutionaries to get through to the workers in factories, as well as the students in the universities and eventually the peasants too.

Lenin wanted to create an organisation that could also overcome the lack of political coherence in Russian Social Democracy.

## PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATION

First of all Economism had to be defeated. This could only be done by uniting the movement into a "professional" centralised party and a common programme. It needed to function in the conditions of harsh illegality. A revolutionary newspaper, to be distributed illegally right across Russia, was the first step.

Lenin met up with his old St Petersburg comrade, Martov. Together they visited Georgi Plekhanov and agreed to launch a new paper, Iskra (the Spark). Lenin and Martov used the paper to build a network of "Iskra agents" that smuggled it into Russia, distributed it locally and fought for its ideas. Lenin spelled out this approach in the pamphlet *What is to be Done?* – published by Iskra in 1902.

They soon attracted the most militant, revolutionary elements among the students and workers, including the young Leon Trotsky.

The aim of the Iskra-ists was to hold a Congress abroad, but with delegates coming from Russia, and thoroughly transform the RSDLP along Iskra lines. The result was the Second Congress of July-August 1903.

When the delegates gathered, everyone knew that there would be fierce battle. Iskra already had a majority but it faced the Economists and a powerful organisation known as the Bund – the General Union (Bund in

Yiddish) of Jewish Workers in Russia and Poland.

Half a trade union and half a political party, it was extremely militant but aligned to the Economists. In addition they had taken on a more nationalist coloration. They were at the Congress to demand that it recognise their complete autonomy as "the sole representative of the Jewish proletariat in the party."

Given the many different nationalities in the Russian Empire this principle could not be limited to Jews. If recognised, it would mean a federal party, as opposed to a centralised one. The divisions between nationalities would have been maintained within the workers' party, instead of workers of all nationalities uniting on a class basis.

After long debate, the Congress rejected the Bund's proposal by a clear majority. The Bund's delegates then withdrew from the meeting, along with the Economists, who also wanted a loose party so that they wouldn't be bound by the Congress decisions.

But shortly before the walkout an unexpected event took place. During the discussion of the party rules a debate erupted over the criteria for membership, one which split the Iskra group of delegates. Lenin had proposed the following formulation: "A member of the RSDLP is one who accepts its programme and supports the Party both financially and by personal participation in one of the party organisations."

Martov opposed this, substituting for the last part of the definition, "one who gives the party his regular personal co-operation under the direction of one of the party organisations." What this seemingly minor, purely organisational point was all about became clearer in the debate. Martov explained: "The more widespread the title of party member is the better. We could only rejoice if every striker, every demonstrator, answering for his actions, could proclaim himself a party member. For me a conspiratorial organisation only has meaning when it is enveloped by a broad Social Democratic working class party."

In fact his proposal went against the grain of the Iskra-ists' struggle for a strong, disciplined party. Such a party was for those willing to take the risks and learn the craft of illegal work. Other people could and should be grouped around the party.

Lenin's reply was that: "It must not be supposed that party organisations must consist solely of professional revolutionaries.

We need the most diverse organisations of all types, ranks and shades, beginning with the extremely narrow and secret ones and ending with very broad, free, loose organisations."

But for Lenin the inner core of illegally organised "professional revolutionaries" who devoted their life to revolutionary work would give a political lead to a whole range of semi-legal and hopefully legal organisations. Lenin in effect was distinguishing between the working class movement and the party, which is necessarily a vanguard.

## MARTOV'S BROAD PARTY

Martov was for a broad party with blurred lines and consequently a weaker capacity for decisive action – a recipe for a continuation of the very situation the Congress was meant to solve. It was therefore no surprise that the Economists and the Bund voted for it – giving Martov victory.

But after the Bundists and the Economists walked out (because their hopes of a federal, decentralised party had been defeated) those who had voted for Lenin's tighter definition of membership now outnumbered the supporters of Martov. This was soon to lead to a further and decisive split.

The explosion came when Lenin put forward a plan for three interlocking leading bodies for the new party. This included reducing the size of Iskra's editorial board from six to three, establishing a Central Committee based in Russia, and a Party Council made up of representatives from the first two bodies to co-ordinate the two sides of the organisation.

Lenin proposed himself, Plekhanov and Martov for the editorial board. Martov, realising that he would be in a minority, argued for retaining the old six-member editorial board, thus giving him a majority over Lenin and Plekhanov.

Martov's proposal was soundly defeated. Shortly after he and his supporters declared a boycott of all the leading bodies of the RSDLP. Lenin's majority supporters – in Russian "Bolsheviks" – and Martov's minority supporters – "Mensheviks" – became labels that stuck for life.

Shortly after the Congress Martov linked up with the Economists and the Bund. Together they began a vicious and unprincipled campaign against Lenin's alleged "ruffian centralism" and "victorial tendencies". In their polemics they called him a Bolshevik, a Jacobin, a terrorist, a

despot, an autocrat and a bureaucrat. Trotsky too wrote a scandalous pamphlet – *Our Political Tasks* – in the same vein.

These Menshevik accusations were later picked up by post-1914 Social Democrats, by anarchists, by cold war historians like Richard Pipes. They echoed down the century to today.

In reality, nothing could be less true. Lenin fought for a principled conception of the party as made up of dedicated activists loyal to a revolutionary programme. In times of illegality a secret underground core organisation was necessary. Even then Lenin was in favour of building links to looser, mass organisations that once democratic rights were won would come closer to, and even fuse with the party proper.

The task of the party was to give leadership to the working class and through the working class to other oppressed and exploited classes, nations, races in the struggle against capitalism.

The revolution that erupted in Russia in 1905 shifted the Mensheviks sharply back to the left. A re-unification of the party took place in 1906. But it was based almost entirely on the Lenin's terms. Ironically, even Lenin's rejected formulation on party membership was adopted with no opposition in 1907.

## LIQUADATIONISM

Unity did not last long. After the revolution the Mensheviks moved back to the right. They wanted a party like the British Labour Party. They wanted to liquidate the illegal core of the party. They wanted to leave to the liberals the leading role in any future revolution.

In 1912 Lenin and the Bolsheviks reconstituted the RSDLP (Bolsheviks) without the Mensheviks. The great revolution of 1917 confirmed that the issues of the split of 1903 had not been accidental. The Mensheviks formed a government with the Liberals against the revolutionary workers: the Bolsheviks led the revolutionary majority of the working class to the seizure of power.

Thus the birth of Bolshevism one hundred years ago is something all revolutionaries today should celebrate. It initiated the necessary split between reform and a revolution. Everyone today who turns their back on Bolshevism, who proclaims that the divisions of 1903 and 1917 are outdated or irrelevant, is giving us a fair warning that they will act as Mensheviks in the great revolutions of the 21st century.

Dave Stockton assesses the recent student protests and the dangers that lie ahead

# Iranian students must turn to the workers to bring down Khamenei

During the last month Teheran and then other Iranian cities were wracked by a series of militant student demonstrations against the 23-year-old Islamist regime. They were the largest since the mobilisations which took place four years ago and which eventually succumbed to brutal attacks of thugs organised by the regime.

The demonstrations originated as protests against the proposed privatisation of the universities, measures included in the "reforms" which the government has promised the IMF it will carry out as part of "modernisation" - i.e. integration into the corporate capitalist global order.

But the protests almost immediately became political - aimed at the reactionary bonapartist clerical regime. The students, absolutely correctly, want to win basic democratic freedoms: the right of assembly and of organisation, as well as freedom from the repulsive religious restrictions on dress, on women's rights and on all aspects of social life.

Iran's supreme religious leader, chief of the conservative faction, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was the main target of their anger. "Death to Khamenei" was the most popular slogan. But chants were also raised against president Mohammed Khatami, a so-called liberal, who has proved too weak to carry through a series of democratic and free market reforms because of the opposition of the clerical courts and Khamenei himself.

In a country where any criticism of the supreme religious leader carries a heavy jail sentence these actions were courageous indeed. Students fought in the streets with pro-regime vigilantes on motorbikes, armed with chains, clubs and knives. The security forces also fired machine guns in the air and used tear gas and batons to drive the demonstrators off the streets.

Ayatollah Khamenei has denounced the USA as the originator of these disturbances and made a thinly veiled threat to unleash the fascist thugs of the Hizbollah militia against the students as he did in 1999.



Iranian students give the victory sign during a demonstration in Tehran.

Nor is it only the students who are discontented in Iran today. The working class - forbidden to have independent trade unions or political parties - are once more on the move. Around 2,000 textile work-

ers at a factory in Behshahr in Mazandaran province in northern Iran have occupied the plant and gone on hunger strike. The workers are demanding 27 months of unpaid wages. The central government and

the local governor, have both done all they can to intimidate the workers. The police and security forces have virtually besieged the factory.

Workers in many parts of Iran facing similar delays in payment of wages and have been organising strikes. More than one million people have had their wages withheld by employers and the government. With a deteriorating economic and political situation and double-figure inflation, over a 100,000 workers have had their pay delayed from anything between three to 36 months.

It is to the working class that the students and rebellious youth must turn if they want to get rid of the stifling theocracy. Every movement of the students alone will fail unless they can link up with and help mobilise the workers, the urban and rural poor into action so massive that the gangs of thugs and the police will be unable to suppress it.

Unfortunately the forces first on the scene, trying to take advantage of the students' democratic hopes and illusions, were those of the exiled neo-liberal agents of US imperialism and monarchist reaction.

For there is no doubt that the US bird of prey has its eye fixed on Iran - always regarded as a "lost" possession since 1979. George Bush put Iran high up on his list of countries urgently needing regime change. As the third richest petroleum producer in the world it has obvious attractions over Syria, for oilmen like himself and Dick Cheney.

But bagging the last relatively independent state of the globe's top three oil producers cannot be achieved so easily. Certainly not by yet another full-scale invasion. Iran is a country of nearly 67 million people, with a mountainous terrain not easily occupied. Besides which the USA is bogged down in Iraq, having suffered over 50 casualties since Bush declared the war was over and only mopping-up operations left to complete.

Yet despite all this, the sinister Donald Rumsfeld is hatching plans to topple the mullahs from power. Already the pretexts for various forms of intervention are being faked - just as the key pretext for invading Iraq, WMDs, is being exposed as a total fraud.

One is the claim that Iran has a secret nuclear weapons programme and has hampered the inspections of International Atomic Energy Authority. The Pentagon has now claimed that Al-Qaida leaders are co-ordinating terrorist attacks from Iran.

Of course this absurd lie is being opposed once more by Colin Powell, the US State Department and the British government. The State Department and Britain have objected to Rumsfeld's plan, saying that it would undermine their hope for a takeover by the "moderates" around President Mohamed Khatami. Powell and Blair were allies in the futile attempts to rein in Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld - the four horsemen of the Iraqi apocalypse. Their fight over Iran will probably have a similar outcome in 2003-04.

The Pentagon's plan, meanwhile, is to de-stabilise the Iranian regime with anti-government broadcasts, and covert support to the Iraq-based Mojahedin-i-Khalq, even though it is designated as a terrorist group by the State Department.

The student protests have also been egged on by Farsi-language satellite television stations run by Iranian exiles based in the US, which many in Iran illegally watch. These stations, for example, called on Iranians to take to the streets, and grossly exaggerated

the number of demonstrators.

The Administration has been in regular contact with the pretender Reza Pahlavi, whose father, the Shah, was a bloody tyrant. He is a regular speaker on the satellite television stations.

But the policy of constructive engagement will come under fire in the next weeks and months as Rumsfeld steps up the allegations about Al-Qaida and Iran's nuclear weapons programme. "There's no question but that there have been and are today senior Al-Qaida leaders in Iran, and they are busy," claims Rumsfeld. Iran vehemently denied the accusation and demanded that Washington produce its evidence.

The European Union has a completely different policy on Iran, as was dramatically displayed when the French swept up 28 supporters of the Mojahedin-i-Khalq, the USA's new Islamist allies in Iran. But anti-war activists should beware that the "constructive engagement" of the EU translates into "wholesale corruption" on the ground. Tony Blair, nevertheless, rushed to prove he was on Washington's side. "We have said very clearly to the Iranian government that harbouring Al-Qaida would be entirely unacceptable", he said, thereby carelessly rubbing his hapless foreign secretary's entire policy over the last year.

The students and the workers of Iran are quite right to mobilise against the reactionary Islamist regime. Its claims to be a "revolutionary" or "anti-imperialist" one are totally bogus. True, the revolution which overthrew the Shah in 1978-79 was indeed an anti-imperialist one. The Shah was imperialism's direct agent in Iran, as well as in the Gulf region as a whole.

But this mass revolution rapidly succumbed to an internal counterrevolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Its first victims were the student based Marxist left (disoriented by the false stages doctrine of Stalinism) and the workers, who had built workers' councils (shoras) and launched the general strike which led to the regime's collapse (misled by the Tudeh party, Iran's traditional Communist Party). Thousands of militants went into the torture chambers or before the firing squads.

But if today's students and workers place any confidence in the "democratic" blandishments of US imperialism, or its Iranian agents in exile, then they are heading for disaster. Most likely they will lose all mass support, which will be repulsed back into the arms of the reactionary mullahs. If not - if the regime actually totters under US economic and military pressure - then the gates could be flung open to a new Shah and a new period of US domination over the country.

Absolute independence from the regime and from the USA and its agents is the only basis for a democratic, anti-imperialist revolution in Iran. For any revolution to succeed in establishing these goals it must go all the way this time, to a government based on workers' and popular shoras.

Such a government must set about laying the foundations of socialism in Iran and spread the revolution to the entire Middle East and central Asia. Thanks to globalisation, to the occupation of Palestine, to the "war on terrorism", there is no shortage of socially combustible material to hand.

The Iranian workers and students have the power to unpleasantly surprise Bush as their fathers and mothers did Carter. The key is that they be clear as to their goals and tactics, but above all, be clear as to who are their allies and who are their enemies.

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# Occupation runs into the sands of resistance

Keith Harvey reports on the need for solidarity with Iraqi workers to build opposition to US/UK troops and firms

The death of six British soldiers in Al-Amarah at the end of June represents a key deepening of the resistance to the US and UK occupation of Iraq. Almost all the attacks in the previous 10 weeks since the war was officially described as over have been in the so-called "Sunni triangle" north west of Baghdad.

These incidents were portrayed by Washington and London as nothing more than the work of a bunch of "deadenders" – fanatics loyal to the old Saddam regime.

But the fierce organised attack on the six military police and earlier the same day on a Paratroop regiment patrol in the town of Majar al-Kabir took place deep into Shia southern Iraq. These Shia Muslims, long oppressed by Saddam's Sunni regime, welcomed the invasion by the US and British forces to oust the bloody dictator.

The fact is that the nearly 30 US combat deaths and the largest single-incident number of British fatalities since the 1991 Gulf War prove that geographical scope and military effectiveness of the Iraqi resistance is growing.

The reasons for this are not hard to fathom: daily acts of repression by the occupying forces, a continuing lack of democracy and a deteriorating economic and social situation for most Iraqis. This is a combustible mixture exploding in the faces of the soldiers.

The most widely reported repression has been the work of US troops in the Sunni areas north of Baghdad. In Fallujah, US soldiers killed 18 protesters soon after occupying it. A series of operations, such as Desert Scorpion, involved searching villages, making arrests and confiscating weapons. This has resulted in arbitrary detentions, public beatings, stealing of money (so it cannot be used to buy arms, it is claimed), violation of children and women's domestic areas and even bulldozing of homes of families of men "suspected" of being involved in resistance to the occupation.

And there are potentially thousands of Iraqis willing to sign up to the resistance. The near anarchy that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of the downfall of Saddam's regime made ordinary Iraqis fear for their homes and lives. The occupiers, who only wished to secure oil fields and Presidential palaces, contemptuously left the rest of society to fend for itself.

In much of Baghdad at the end of June there was still no electricity. Generating capacity is half its pre-war level. There are no functioning banks to deposit your money in. The US-run administration in Iraq has collapsed the Ba'athist bureaucracy without putting anything remotely efficient or resourced in its place.

After the 1991 Gulf War the regime got the country up and running again after 40 days. The destruction to the country's infrastructure was far higher than now. The problem is not a technical one but a social and political one. The US administration is not concerned in implementing an emergency plan to meet the desperate needs of the Iraqi people, but rather laying down the foundations for a free market.

So the 23 government ministries have no real power and no money except that given by the Coalition Provisional Authority to pay for wages. The CPA meanwhile has distributed \$2.4bn to overwhelmingly US



Burned out British truck at Majar al-Kabir

companies to run the economy.

This debacle claimed the head of the first US appointed Viceroy of Iraq – retired general Jay Garner. He was replaced by Paul Bremer as head of the CPA, a former US diplomat whose main impact has been to sack 30,000 Ba'ath party officials followed by 400,000 members of Saddam's army and leave them and their families destitute and angry.

He has declared war on the overwhelmingly state-owned economy and ushered in dozens of US multinationals to privatise it. He has overnight liberalised imports thereby destroying Iraqi small businesses that were able to survive 10 years of sanctions.

These measures have created mass unemployment, hunger and resentment in equal measure. Before the war and occupation 60 per cent of the population depended upon the Iraqi state to supply them with food rations. This figure has risen.

Wars, including civil wars, create hardship and dislocation. These may be worth it as the price of getting rid of Saddam Hussein if the Iraqi people were in control of their own destiny. But they are not.

The initial rhetoric after the fall of Saddam Hussein was that a representative Iraqi government would be created within two months to take over the running of the country. Of course, what they meant was that the Pentagon trained cabal of Iraqi exiles would slip back into the country and take over the symbols of office while leaving the levers of power firmly in the hands of US "advisers" and the deeds to Iraq's resources in the vaults of US banks.

But a handful of assassinations of such quislings in May, the rise of the uncooperative Shia clerics, the first abortive national gatherings of the native clan leaders and exile politicians, and – above all

– growing guerrilla resistance forced a rethink in Washington.

The plan to hand over power to a democratic Iraqi government of was shelved indefinitely. Worse, protesters on the streets have been brutally shot down. Bremer followed this up by making it illegal to publicly oppose the US occupation. Most recently he has imposed censorship over the emerging Iraqi "free" press.

A UN resolution, adopted in May with the full backing of France and Russia, states that Bremer himself should choose 25-30 Iraqis to set up an interim administration!

Political parties in the new Iraq will have vetted and approved before they can stand in any future elections. And as for that cornerstone of a vibrant civil society – independent trade unions to safeguard and represent the interest of the mass of Iraqi workers – we can be fairly confident of their future by looking at the fiercely anti-union record of the bulk of US multinationals that Bremer has chosen to plunder Iraq's resources.

Bremer has made it clear that elections are a long way off. It will have to wait until a constitution is drawn up and approved. But drawing up a constitution for Iraq was far too important a task to be left in the hands of the Iraqis themselves. So the US will organise a conference in July ("invite only") that will begin the work of drawing up a new constitution – a process that could take years.

By embedding the virtues of a free market economy, globalisation, foreign investment, fiscal probity into the legal code Washington hopes to ensure the CPA will eventually be followed by an oil-rich government in Baghdad which promptly signs a series of treaties with Washington allowing the USA the right of permanent access

to the country's airbases and airspace.

In the short term resistance is destined to grow. As one senior CPA official quoted in the *Financial Times* said: "The situation on the ground is definitely moving faster than we are. The situation the British faced in 1920, where momentum towards independence became unstoppable, is repeating itself."

But the decisive questions are what form will this resistance take and with what tempo of development?

To date small organised groups exist armed with heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. They are probably units which deliberately melted away rather than fight when the US/UK invasion forces arrived. They have a rudimentary command system and their hit and run tactics are capable of some small-scale successes against patrols.

In addition groups of ordinary Iraqis – many armed for years – can spontaneously rise up and take revenge on poorly armed and isolated units such as occurred when the six military police were killed.

But Iraq is not Vietnam and it would be very difficult for a guerrilla force to entrench itself in secure territorial bases, enlarging the sphere and scale of its operations. With greater intelligence the occupying forces could destroy its command structures.

In addition, the longer the CPA stays in place, the more it can rebuild a relatively loyal and trained army and state bureaucracy. Eventually, too, the basic infrastructure will be restored even if it is owned by US multi-nationals.

But the reconstruction of Iraq is also the reconstruction of the Iraqi working class, which will reemerge as investment comes in and services are rebuilt. The future of the

Iraqi resistance has to be one in which this working class rediscovers its self-organisation and class consciousness.

It needs – with the help of the trade unions of Europe especially – to rebuild its independent workplace organisations. Along with Burger King and McDonalds the US will want to export ready-made US loyal bureaucratic prison-houses courtesy of the AFL-CIO, primed with state department money and headed up by corrupt pro-IMF officials.

This is why it is so important that the Stop the War Coalition is campaigning for unions to send delegations and offer money to help build class struggle trade unions committed to fighting privatisation, corporate globalisation and of course, the military occupation.

This is not utopian – already there are reports of new Iraqi unions leading limited strikes. This can be backed up by direct twinning of unions in the West with fledgling Iraqi unions at every level – from workplace branch to national HQ. The RMT and Aslef currently face the imminent threat of Bechtel leading a consortium to part-privatise the London tube. They should immediately contact Iraqi workers up against the very same Bechtel with a view to exchanging information and, eventually, organising joint days of action.

Solidarity groups and local Iraqis should build mass, legal demonstrations for unemployment benefits, payment of back wages, trade union rights and a programme of public works under the control of local communities.

If this is not done swiftly, then two things will happen. First, official bureaucratic structures will be imposed on the working class as part of the reconstruction of Iraqi civil society; second, the influence of the mosque leaders will spread among the population as they are seen as the only alternative to the CPA.

Already armed Islamic groups loyal to the clerics control 50 per cent of all hospitals; the mosque is a trusted centre of anti-looting vigilante groups. A secular, democratic alternative force is urgently needed, one that is mass, visible and capable of getting results out of the CPA.

Such a force must become a political force – leading the fight to expel the occupying troops and the band of 600 CPA officials. It can and must popularise the demand for a revolutionary constituent assembly, convened by delegates elected in all the towns and villages.

Forming local assemblies – open to all of working age, including women – to debate the current crisis is the best safeguard against the imposition of the Bremer/UN "interim administration", and capable of contesting its authority on the ground should it ever be put together.

- UK/US and all foreign troops out of Iraq now.
- Down with the CPA and any "Iraqi interim administration".
- For a revolutionary constituent assembly.
- For the right to form independent trade unions and political parties; no to press censorship.
- For a programme of emergency public works under the control of the Iraqi locally elected popular committees.

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**BBC exposes lies over Iraqi weapons**

**Blair's case for war comes unstuck**

For once last month the *Daily Express* got it right: "Just complete and utter lies", writes Helen Watson. This was its verdict after US Pentagon official Paul Wolfowitz admitted to the world that the Bush administration had chosen the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq as the "bureaucratic" excuse to go to war because it was the lie that was easiest to sell to a sceptical public.

Yet the allegation that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs was decisive for Tony Blair's case for invading and occupying Iraq.

Most British people were suspicious about this claim before the war began. Millions made this loud and clear on the streets from September 2002, through the course of the war itself and afterwards.

But to bypass this mass opposition in the country and secure enough votes from his own backbenchers in parliament for this imperialist adventure Blair had to come up with enough "proof" of this claim to quell doubting MPs.

The furore between Blair's spin doctor Alastair Campbell and the BBC over the intelligence briefings on WMDs focused on whether Downing St "sexed up" reports to make them more convincing. In particular the row centred on whether a last minute insertion into the report - crucial for persuading MPs to back the case for war - that Iraq was capable of delivering a chemical or biological attack within 45 minutes was correct.

The BBC stood by their defence correspondent Andrew Gilligan who has claimed a high level source in the British intelligence services reported that this was a "doubtful" claim, put in without the intelligence services' consent by a Downing St committee (Joint Intelligence Committee) that compiled the document.

This row reflects the same breach between the Bush administration and the CIA over the White House's case for war. In each case the issue is how intelligence services were either ignored, sidelined or bullied into providing the information that Bush and Blair needed.

The story starts on 11 September 2001. In the immediate aftermath of the al-Qaida 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon Paul Wolfowitz pro-

posed blaming it on Iraq and invading the country. At the time public support for this position was very high. But it was shelved in favour of war against Afghanistan - the main host country for al-Qaida training and command.

By February 2002 support for the idea of a war with Iraq had waned in public. Meanwhile, CIA investigations into Iraq's WMDs and links with Al-Qaida had drawn a blank. In February 2002, the CIA found "no evidence that Iraq has engaged in terrorist operations against the United States in nearly a decade, and the agency is also convinced that President Saddam Hussein has not provided chemical or biological weapons to Al-Qaida or related terrorist groups." By summer key Congress leaders were openly sceptical of the case against Iraq.

But the decision to go to war was taken in August 2002 and so the case had to be manufactured. On 26 August, vice-president Dick Cheney warned of a Saddam "armed with an arsenal of these weapons of terror" who could "directly threaten America's friends throughout the region and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail." A month later, secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld claimed he had "bullet-proof" evidence of ties between Saddam and Al-Qaida. And, on 7 October George Bush warned: "The Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons."

The CIA believed Iraq still possessed stocks of chemical and biological weapons, but they were divided about whether Iraq was rebuilding its facilities and producing new weapons. "There is no reliable information on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons, or where Iraq has - or will - establish its



chemical warfare agent production facilities."

The CIA was ignored. Then UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix said of US and British intelligence tip-offs: "Only in three of those cases did we find anything at all, and in none of these cases were there any weapons of mass destruction, and that shook me a bit, I must say... I thought - my God, if this is the best intelligence they have and we find nothing, what about the rest?"

Faced with all this Blair and Bush did two things. First, they set about discrediting the international weapons inspectors' team. Secondly, they decided to set up their own parallel intelligence committees to come up with the evidence they needed.

In October 2001, Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld, and under-secretary of defence for policy Douglas Feith set up a special intelligence operation in the Pentagon to "establish a separate entity to offer alternative intelligence analyses to the CIA".

In all of this Blair followed behind. Clearly the British intelligence services were just as sceptical as the CIA. Clearly Blair was just as determined as Bush to go to war. The formation of the JIC aimed to provide the same conclusions as the special Pentagon committee.

After three months of occupation Blair and Bush have come up with nothing. On 21 May, Bush officials said that the United States had discovered two trailers that could only have been used to manufacture biological weapons. A few days later, President Bush claimed the United States had "found the weapons of mass destruction". But the trailers contained no "weapons," and tests uncovered no biological agents. A week later, after other experts had had access to the trailers

one intelligence analyst told the *New York Times* that the initial findings were "a rushed job and looks political."

Earlier, aluminium tubes, said to be of use in making nuclear weapons, were later found to be of use only for delivering conventional artillery shells. The claim that Hussein had tried to import uranium for processing into nuclear weapons from Niger has been proven to be a hoax.

Faced with all this supporters of the war have adopted three different responses. The first is Bush and Blair's: "WMDs do exist and we will find them in time." Even if they do "exist" no one will believe them given this history of doctoring information and given they will not allow Unscm to control the search.

The second approach is to rescue the integrity of the governments by blaming the lies (or cock-ups) on the intelligence services. In the USA, CIA Director George Tenet is being hung out to dry. It may be that in Britain, Alastair Campbell, as the co-ordinator of the JIC material, will be hung out to dry to save his leader's neck. Even so, the fact remains that the record shows that Bush and Blair were not victims of disinformation but actually demanded it.

It is not new for governments to lie to their people in the face of impending war. Since time immemorial governments have made up reasons for war to persuade a reluctant population to support them. Invariably the lies are exposed, if at all, long after the damage is done; those lower down the political food chain are sacrificed, many of those responsible have moved on.

This time the mass anti-war movement is in a position to stop this happening. House of Commons select committees won't stop it; the BBC won't stop it; neither will the bosses' courts... all of these have too many ties with the establishment. They will always back off from putting the capitalist state in the dock.

But we, the millions that marched and nearly stopped the war, have no such ties. We should hound Bush, Blair and all the lying warmongers from office - and fight for a workers' government that will open the vaults of the secret services and reveal the weapons of mass deception that led to this war and many previous ones.

**Get active, stay active, join Workers Power**

Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International (LFI)

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