

Workers power

revolution
against
global
capitalism

British section of the League for the Fifth International

ESF SPECIAL

Who's who at the European Social Forum

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Wildcat action shows the way

Strikes & workers solidarity win

POST DISPUTE

Round-up from the picket lines across London and a look at the potential fallout from the biggest wildcat strike in years

PAGE 2

PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

George Monbiot and Salma Yaqoob have issued a manifesto, called "Principles of Unity". We examine the problems with their populist programme

PAGE 4

WORKERS HISTORY

The Second International (1889-1914) was the first mass international working class organisation. What are the lessons for the anti-capitalist movement today?

PAGES 12-13

REVOLUTION IN BOLIVIA

Another Latin American president has been forced from office. What happened and where to next?

PAGES 14-15

Post office workers have shown we can win using direct action and solidarity. When management tried to victimise workers they walked out. When the mail from that sorting office was moved to another office the workers stuck to their principles and refused to handle it. Before Royal Mail boss, Adam Crozier, could say "modernisation" wildcat strikes were spreading like wildfire.

This strike was not a series of one-day or partial actions - it was indefinite. From the moment the first workers walked out the managers had no idea when they would return. With the strike hitting industry and commerce the senior executives of the Royal Mail and their New Labour paymasters panicked at the thought of it continuing over the busiest time of the year.

And they were scared the action wasn't completely in the hands of the union leaders. It was the militancy and organisation of the rank and file that forced the managers to back down, not the negotiating skills of the union leaders hoping for deals from New Labour ministers.

Militant, rank and file action like this is happening across Europe.

Co-ordinations - cross-union strike committees - rocked the French government.

Italy was brought to a standstill with a four million-strong general strike started by rank and file unions and social forums.

The lesson is clear. Our unions need to be under rank and file control and use direct action that hits the bosses where it really hurts.



Mass walkout to defend conditions and the union

Britain's postal service has again become a major flashpoint in the industrial class struggle. *Workers Power* provides a round-up from the picket lines across London and looks at the potential fallout from the biggest wildcat strike in years

As we go to press it appears the biggest and most militant wildcat strike in years has resulted in a major climbdown by Post Office management. At Greenford, in west London, where the strike began, workers cheered when they heard an account of the deal and voted to return to work. The agreement returns to the status quo before local managers started to unilaterally impose new working conditions backed up with disciplinary measures. The Communication Workers Union and Royal Mail have agreed to negotiate over London weighting and the introduction of single deliveries.

This is a real victory for all out, unofficial action. Action which defied the Thatcher-Blair anti-union laws and which caught both management and the government unprepared for a national dispute. It shows the power of the rank and file, if they organise their own action and go all out to win. Of course the disputed issues now go to Acas for negotiations. Rank and file postal workers need to watch the CWU leaders Billy Hayes and Dave Ward like hawks. They must not be allowed to "snatch defeat from the jaws of victory" by making any concessions on jobs, working conditions, or wage levels.

The outcome of the postal strike will undoubtedly encourage other militant sections of workers. It is doubly important given the serious knock-back postal worker militants recently suffered with the narrow loss of a ballot for national strike action. Hopefully, the firefighters – whose national leadership frittered away a powerful start to an industrial dispute by stringing out a series of one and three day strikes, interrupted by weeks of fruitless negotiations will take encouragement from this to mount a counterattack of their own. In fact the more sections of workers that take action together the better the prospects of victory. We need to give a big shock to the arrogant union-busting managers, put in by Blair and company to break up the public services and prepare them for marketisation, if not outright privatisation. We need a hot autumn, indeed a hot winter of struggle to throw back the whole offensive on our services and jobs. The postal "wildcats" show just how to do it!

Nearly 30,000 postal workers across London, and other cities and towns were out on unofficial strike by 31 October in a remarkable display of solidarity. The action that began in west London had spread to sorting and delivery offices in Berkshire (including the international sorting office at Langley), Buckinghamshire, Essex, Kent and Oxfordshire, while CWU members in Coventry had walked out on Wednesday night, 29 October.

Meanwhile, work stoppages had occurred at the giant Wishaw centre in Lanarkshire and among drivers at Portsmouth. New walkouts had been reported from Bristol and Swindon in the South West through Preston and Warrington in the North West to Stoke-on-Trent by the Friday morning.

The strikes came in response to a series of provocations by Royal Mail bosses, attempting to impose far worse conditions on postal workers and undermine smaller, and, as they thought, isolated CWU branches. The response was not surren-



The role of the government

Many postal workers quickly saw the current dispute as deeply political. After all, the top executives are New Labour appointees, and there are certainly elements within the government close to Tony Blair, who are keen to privatise the Royal Mail. They recognise, however, that the enduring strength of CWU organisation is a major obstacle to yet another sell-off of a nationalised industry. Blair himself has repeatedly made veiled threats against the unions should they stand in the way of his so-called "reform" programme for the public services.

Having had a rotten time of it since the

der or just pockets of resistance, but a spirited, spontaneous defence of hard-won conditions and union organisation.

Workers Power spoke with a leading activist at Rathbone Place in west central London, Britain's biggest delivery office, with a 1,000-strong workforce. It also has one of the most ethnically mixed workforces in Britain and close to 95 per cent of the workers are CWU members.

He told us: "After both the first and second days of official strike action over London Weighting, management had a strategy of picking off the smaller (Dartford and Southall), or what they saw as the less militant offices" in order to impose new terms and conditions, like the Tailored Delivery System. When the workers refused the new conditions, the management imposed a "punishment charter" which led to a walk out. "TDS is equivalent to single delivery and it gives management the excuse to axe 20,000-30,000 jobs. It will also mean a huge increase in workload. The average delivery round would take a constant three and a half hours on the road under TDS."

The Rathbone Place rep explained how management had been shocked by the response when they tried to transfer post

Iraq war Blair may be looking for a fight with an "enemy within", a sector of workers to beat to prove his lasting usefulness to British bosses and once again reduce the Tories to silent supporters of his tough stance. But the rapid spread of resistance made the government conclude that discretion was the better part of valour, in this case.

Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt declined calls to intervene from both the Liberal Democrats and Tories. "Neither megaphone diplomacy or unofficial action will solve the problem", Hewitt said before adding: "Both sides need to put all efforts

into working... to reach an agreement and stop this action."

In the meantime CWU members need to put the pressure on union-backed Labour MPs and especially members of the Socialist Campaign Group to call for the full renationalisation of the Royal Mail and Parcel Force, without compensation and under workers control. This dispute has also highlighted the need to reopen the battle over the union's political fund and to challenge the argument advanced by CWU general secretary Billy Hayes that it can somehow be used to "reclaim" the Labour Party.

ment behind the current conflict, several pointed to the fact that senior bosses Allen Leighton and Adam Crozier had been hand-picked by the Department of Trade & Industry. On the other hand, the Rathbone Place rep suggested that "Leighton and co had hoped that it wouldn't spread beyond London and still hope that it won't go national." Obviously he was right. Neither Number 10 nor the Royal Mail were ready for a militant and unofficial strike. Doubtless it raised the blood pressure of CWU officials too.

As one striker put it, "The Government definitely sees the CWU as a union, and postal workers in general, as in need of 'sorting out'. The amazing thing is that the dispute has created militancy among postal workers in a way that union leadership had not. I am a bit surprised that they haven't gone to the courts yet, though it may be that the statement from Deputy General Secretary Dave Ward is enough to delay things. There may also be a greater possibility of pursuing individual reps over the wildcats."

The strike has highlighted the tremendous strengths and certain serious weaknesses in the CWU. Though there has

Workers Power spoke with Greg Charles, secretary of London south west branch, CWU on the picket line

What is the strike all about?

The unofficial action that we're taking at the moment is basically all about the fact that management have decided to initiate a campaign of victimisation and intimidation against our members and the trade union officials for carrying out their activities. The fact of the matter is that once the action started they then decided to rip up all local agreements and impose their own working terms and conditions.

The strike is spreading and it appears to be an attack on the union, do you think the national union will make it an official strike?

Because of the unofficial status at the start of it, it's impossible now to turn it into an official strike but you're correct in saying that the strike action is spreading now right across the width and the breadth of the country. Although it's not supported by national headquarters they understand our position. The problem with it is because it is unofficial.

The Royal Mail and the Blair Government are out to get the CWU, at the moment and that's why they provoked you. Do you think there are any lessons to be learnt from the firefighters' dispute where they took on the FBU?

Certainly we can draw comparisons. This dispute has been going on now for nearly two weeks in London. The Government hasn't stepped in at any stage at the moment. They could obviously apply pressure on to Mr Leighton and Mr Crozier. They are the main shareholder of this industry and it's up to them to sort this industry out. They have decided to take a back seat. It's what they decided to do with the FBU and it didn't work. The fact is our members do not want the terms and conditions that are being imposed on them. They do not want this union broken in half and I believe that the government, as the major shareholder, can step in and they can stop this action by management.

been an increase in the use of casuals in some areas, union density is still very high in most of the large workplaces. For the vast majority of CWU members, picket lines, whether official or unofficial, still mean "don't cross" and the boycotting of work transferred from another office in dispute remains a respected principle.

On the other hand, contrary to Royal Mail management claims, there is little if any co-ordination between workplaces even within London. Mass meetings have taken place at some offices, but not most and information to the majority of members is coming from mobile phone calls. There is currently no forum for activists. CWU militants and activists need to co-ordinate nationally as well as across towns and cities. Mass meetings were and are still needed at the workplace and district level to keep CWU members informed of what is happening in the negotiations. CWU members need to be in a position to keep tabs on the CWU officials and ensure that any agreement with Royal Mail management is examined with a fine tooth comb and subject to ratification at mass meetings. Extreme vigilance is necessary to ensure that there is no victimisation of local reps and activists.

ESF: turn to the workers and youth - forward to the Fifth International

The European Social Forum meets in Paris after a year of remarkable successes in expanding the movement against global capitalism and imperialist war.

Directly stemming from the first ESF in Florence, 20 million marched against the impending Iraq war. The largest demonstrations many cities had ever seen brought together youth from schools, colleges and factories, trade unionists, and the immigrant populations. This movement has been proved right by events since the conquest and occupation of Iraq. The bragging imperialists, Bush and Rumsfeld, Blair and Hoon, have been thrown onto the defensive, their popularity sinking as the casualties rise.

Then, from May to July, a wave of workers' struggles broke over Europe. In Germany and Austria, Spain and Portugal, workers took strike action and marched against the European Union's concerted attack on pension rights, working conditions and welfare. After Genoa, in 2001, the Italian workers linked up with anti-capitalist and anti-war activists in local social forums. Now the idea is spreading to other countries. Since the Larzac assembly, these popular bodies are now spreading across France, where rank and file railworkers, postal workers and teachers are forming co-ordinations - cross-union strike committees.

Even in conservative Britain, where for years the trade unions

have been hobbled and restricted by the most draconian anti-union laws in the EU, rank and file postal workers have won a wildcat strike re-introducing long-banished traditions of solidarity and initiative - illegal secondary picketing, prevention of strike breaking, in short, militant self-organisation from below.

It is vital to continue to coordinate the struggle against the war-mongers. We need to turn the mass antiwar mobilisations into ones demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces. We must warn of the threat of ethnic cleansing hanging over the Palestinian people if they refuse to surrender to the mass murderer Ariel Sharon. International mobilisations against Bush, Blair and Sharon still need to be red letter days in the calendar of action drawn up in Paris, and actively built for.

The long term project of the European corporations and the imperialist states of the European Union to create an imperialist superstate to rival the USA as well as to act as a fortress against those asylum seekers and "economic migrants" fleeing the wars and material misery engendered by global capitalism and imperialist war: these we have to fight as hard as we fought Bush and Blair.

Thus a new task faces the ESF which stems directly from the inspiring union battles of the spring and early summer. These battles are already resuming. We need a concerted Europe-wide counterattack

against the EU leaders and their attacks on our social gains and democratic rights.

Doubtless the trade union leaders will attack this as "interfering in the autonomy of their organisations". Nonsense. We are talking about a call, not a command. It should be addressed to the union leaders for sure. But it should also be addressed to the rank and file of the unions, to the young French teachers and railworkers who came out in force against Chirac and Raffarin in June, to the young Italian metal workers of FIOM who have defied Berlusconi and Fini, to the English wildcat strikers in the post. We should not recognise the right of the union bureaucrats to veto their members' participation.

In Paris the meeting of the Assembly of Social Movements and Actors is the only forum which can plan and call for action. This body came into existence precisely to escape from the straight-jacket on decision making that the Porto Alegre Principles impose on the ESF as a whole.

But even this has no transparent, open and democratic way for people to submit resolutions to it. Nor has it a procedure for debating them (i.e. taking speeches against as well as for). In Florence the ASM was a huge enthusiastic rally. The speakers list had been fixed by tortuous negotiations in advance. The only purpose was to endorse the anti-war call worked out behind the scenes by the "big hitters".

In the Forum we need to ensure

the maximum participation of rank and file trade unionists, members of youth organisations and political parties, as well as the broad layers of non-party activists from the mass anti-war and anti-capitalist mobilisations. With these forces we can stop any takeover by the reformist bureaucrats. But to do so means to name them and shame them, to fight them openly and call on everyone to do so. To do so only in private meetings, or in oblique references, will not do.

This year the ESF Co-ordination must discuss proposals to create an annual democratic decision making assembly. It should call on unions, parties, social forums, etc. to send delegates to such an assembly. It should explicitly call for and encourage the formation of local and national social forums which can give the rank and file activists of the movement a major voice and a large number of representatives in the European Assembly.

Next years assembly should be not merely democratically representative but a body capable of decisive action on a number of different issues. The democratic deficit and the privileging of academic-utopian lectures must be ended or the ESF will collapse under its own weight like an obese dinosaur.

That is why the members of the League for the Fifth International and the socialist youth organisation, World Revolution, will be arguing in Paris for measures to strengthen the workers' resistance and open the road to power.

We need:

- a one-day European General Strike in early 2004, to assemble our forces for a united resistance to the EU states' attack on our living standards and futures. This can and should be used to launch an all out Europe-wide struggle to force governments and the institutions of the EU to end these attacks, and pose a workers', an anti-capitalist, solution to the so-called crisis of social spending
- social forums in every town and city, based on delegates from every workplace, every estate, every campaigning initiative and every working class political organisation, to co-ordinate the struggle from below and prevent the trade union bureaucracy from holding back our struggle or trading away our interests
- the formation of a mass youth international, controlled organisationally and politically entirely by young people themselves, to unite their struggles and prevent their energy being co-opted and dissipated by official politicians
- fighting to build a new, Fifth International, a world party of social revolution, armed with a programme to place power in the hands of democratic councils of working people, poor farmers, the unemployed and the youth.

Programme of the League for the Fifth International - Out Now - £1.50 € 2.50

**FROM
PROTEST
TO
POWER**

**MANIFESTO FOR
WORLD REVOLUTION**

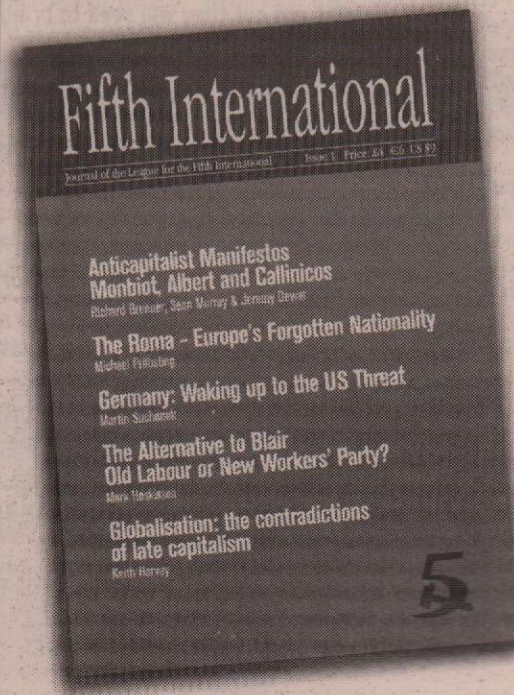
All history proves that the capitalists will never relinquish their property peacefully - to claim otherwise in the age of 'Shock and Awe' is either hopeless naivety or wilful deception. There is only one way: their apparatus of state repression must be overthrown by force. The capitalists' monopoly of military power - armies, police and security forces, prison systems, civil servants, judiciaries - must be smashed to pieces and replaced with the rule of the working people themselves.

This can be done - the majority of humanity can cast off the tiny minority of parasites. It will take mass organisation, an unambiguous strategy and, when the hour strikes, courageous and ruthless action.

Some may balk at this, but the alternative to revolution is not decades of undisturbed peace. Basing a global civilisation on the empowerment of a few thousand and the impoverishment of six billion is like lodging depth charges in the planetary core. If the logic of capitalism is left to unfold, our world will be torn apart by starvation, disease, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and war.

In the struggle against capitalism, greater energy is equivalent to greater humanity. For with the suppression of our exploiters and an end to the tyranny of profit, human history can truly begin.

Journal of the League for the Fifth International Out Now



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We need socialism not populism

By Lesley Day

George Galloway's expulsion from the Labour Party (see opposite) has given further impetus to moves to develop a broad, left alliance that can field candidates for the European, London and local elections next June.

Earlier in the year, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) launched this project of drawing all the forces that joined the anti-war movement into an electoral challenge to Labour. The first attempt failed when an approach to the Communist Party of Britain was rebuffed in the Morning Star. Attempts to draw in leading figures from the Mosques likewise ended in failure. Now meetings and rallies are being held up and down the country under such titles as "British politics at a crossroads" and "A new programme for Britain".

It is certainly the case that tens of thousands of workers and anti-war campaigners want a real alternative to New Labour. They want to see Blair and his pro-business policies defeated at the polls. Combine the young anti-war activists, the trade unionists who have made a stand against privatisation and union busting, with the campaigners to defend council housing or local hospitals from the privateers - and you have the basis of a formidable movement.

The key question is what sort of movement and what sort of party is needed to challenge Labour? The SWP, and its supporters in the Socialist Alliance like Socialist Resistance, recognise that you cannot unite the whole of the anti-war movement around a radical socialist alternative. Their answer? Dump the socialism and go for a broad, "populist" or radical alliance.

Here is where George Monbiot, a liberal anti-globalisation writer and Guardian columnist, and Salma Yaqoob, a Birmingham-based Muslim anti-war activist, come in. They have issued a manifesto, called Principles of Unity, "which promotes social justice, harmony with the environment and peace in the world". This document runs to over 2,500 words without mentioning the words 'socialism' or 'class' once (see below). They have published it on various e-lists and invited the Socialist Alliance, among others, to discuss it.



"Principles of Unity" - George Monbiot and Salma Yaqoob (inset) want to turn the antiwar movement into a progressive block against Blair

Peace, justice and harmony - these are just the sort of vague values, in place of clear class-based policies, that would suit the projected movement perfectly. As John Rees of the SWP has said, the Monbiot/Yaqoob document is "part of the process".

It is certainly a deeply undemocratic process - with decisions being made behind closed doors by the "leading figures" and then presented at meetings. For example, at the October London rally where Galloway, Yaqoob, Rees and Bob Crow, the railworkers' leader, spoke, it was announced that the new movement - which Galloway called "popular unity" - would be contesting the Euro and London elections but supporting Ken Livingstone. Who decided this - no one knows.

Salma Yaqoob herself has called for a convention to decide the basis of the electoral coalition. There are two problems. Firstly, the experience of the last few months leads us to suspect that anything involving the SWP and George Galloway will be a staged-managed affair in which any convention is presented with a fait accompli - probably a very basic document which is against privatisation and war but is not specifically socialist. Secondly, Salma Yaqoob talks of the "majority" and "people" rather than the working class as the basis of the campaign. She told the Birmingham rally, where her manifesto was launched, that she wants to "get past labels", which is another way of saying we must appear as all things

to all people.

This leaves the way open for another cross-class bloc in which working-class demands and interests would be sacrificed in order to keep other supporters on board - for instance, as in the Yaqoob-Monbiot document, restricting the platform to opposing further privatisations rather than taking services back into public hands.

Hundreds of thousands of workers, from the railways to the hospitals, continue to suffer from New Labour's privatisations and anti-union laws. They want their unions to stop funding Labour and seek an alternative political voice for the working class. While most union leaders and Labour MPs have sought to steer this discontent into the

dead-end of a "Reclaim Labour" campaign, Galloway and Crow's answer to the capitalist leadership of the Labour Party is to ditch the idea of a working class party completely!

A loose, populist alliance, where the working class is just another "interest group" and the leaders cannot be held to account by base organisations of the movement, suits these left reformists down to the ground. It is the kind of arrangement that has held the working class back from winning the battle for democracy in countries as different as the USA and Argentina. It would be criminal if the SWP and Socialist Resistance allowed the left leaders to lead the most militant section of workers into ditching 100 years of class independence and returning to the days of alliances with the liberal capitalists.

Workers Power says socialists should clearly oppose the whole project of building a populist bloc. This does not mean socialists have to be relegated to "sectarian carping" (which is undoubtedly what defenders of the project will say). We argue not only for a new workers' party won to a revolutionary socialist programme, but also for broad social forums as part of the anti-capitalist movement, where campaigners and workers' organisations can come together to fight against privatisation, for jobs, against war and so forth; and we have demonstrated in practice our willingness to work with others to build these forums.

Nor does it mean ignoring the upcoming elections which do indeed present a great opportunity to challenge the Blair government. There is surely an opportunity to convene genuine workers' conventions at a local and national level to debate the way forward, to decide whether and who to stand, to ensure candidates are accountable to working-class organisations and to debate the programme of a new workers' party. These conventions could encompass dissident Labour voices as well as anti-war groups, trade unions and working class political organisations.

We will continue to argue for a genuine, democratically-run debate on how to build a new working class party, how best to challenge Blair at the polls and how to win the anti-Blair forces to a genuine socialist platform.

Monbiot / Yaqoob: non-socialist unity

"Principles of Unity" promotes the goal of a peaceful, just and ethical capitalism. It wants to see equal access to quality healthcare and education for all. It wants a "progressive taxation" system. It opposes moves to towards privatising public services (although does not call for re-nationalisation).

It supports "independently owned and operated companies which are socially responsible" and also "a new kind of economy which encourages employee ownership and workplace democracy". At the same time the authors "oppose the size and concentration of power of certain corporations which can act to undermine democracy".

This is all very well-meaning, but it is a load of utopian nonsense. The inevitably rapacious nature of the capitalist profit system, explained by Marx and Engels in the 19th Century, has been confirmed through bitter experience in the course of the 20th. A history of class struggle, imperialist wars and barbarism has taught us that it is not possible to tame capitalism as a system.

Can capitalism provide equal access to healthcare and education? The capitalists may, as they did at the end of the Second World War, and for the sake of their own survival, let the state run part of the economy. They may countenance state welfare and nationalisations

of semi-bankrupt industries. Even then, they run these services for the benefit of the capitalists. But their desperate desire for profit means that as profit margins are cut they will seek to bring these areas of the economy back into private hands.

Secondly, capitalism is inevitably a viciously competitive system. In the drive for accumulation, capitalist firms knock each other out and take each other over. If you "oppose the size and concentration of certain corporations" as the document says, then in reality you have to oppose the whole system. The top 200 corporations already account for a quarter of economic activity in the whole planet.

The Principles declare that they "support independently owned and operated companies which are socially responsible". Which capitalist concerns these are, are not mentioned but the smaller the firm, the more rapacious, and less "socially responsible" it normally is. The multi-nationals take pride in their social responsibility (and the gross hypocrisy that goes with it). McDonalds sponsors Fun Runs while stuffing its customers with salt and sugar; BP has won a place on the Stock Exchange's Social Responsibility Index while polluting the water table of whole regions of Latin America; Nike

swears by its labour code but constantly moves its factories to cheaper areas where unions are banned.

The Principles call for progressive taxation to overcome the worst of societies inequalities. But any serious attempt to tax the well-off is immediately met by all kinds of scams and evasions. If such a policy seriously dented the wealth and profits of the rich and the multi-nationals they would use all means at their disposal to undermine and overthrow such a government, as they did with the Popular Unity government in Chile in 1973. To fail to link such demands to organising the working class in defence of its government, through building workers councils, defence guards etc., shows how utopian this programme is.

Can employee ownership and workplace democracy provide a way forward to a new kind of economy? Certainly there are cases of successful small scale individual cooperatives - but the logic of the capitalist system surrounding them mean they usually have to sell up or - as in the case of the vicious attacks in Argentina on the textile co-operative Bruckman - get bust up.

Monbiot and Yaqoob, recognising the fact that the giant corporations and financiers move their wealth around the globe, propose "controls on capital movement". But there is no clue as to

how this is to be carried out. Monbiot has written elsewhere of the need for a global parliament and new international institutions such as an International Clearing Union. These proposals either rely on the good will of individual nation states including the most powerful (an unlikely scenario) or could only be carried out if the pro-capitalist governments are overthrown.

The evidence shows that the real task is not regulation but expropriation - taking the companies, factories, services and banks out of the hands of the few and into the hands of the many. This of course begs the question of how. These profiteers go to war for oil - they will certainly go to war to defend their profits. Time and again they have persecuted workers who fought them and overthrown governments who challenged them. To do this they use their control over the state, mobilising the police, the state bureaucracy and when necessary the armed forces against the opposition.

The Yaqoob-Monbiot document is a mixture of liberal, radical, progressive ideas which accepts the continuation of the capitalist system but wants to place it under the control of the people. What working class people need is anti-capitalism. And to be consistently anti-capitalist means being socialist; and being consistently socialist means being revolutionary.

Defend George Galloway

George Galloway, the Labour MP for Glasgow Kelvin, was expelled from the Labour Party in late October, writes *Mark Hoskisson*. He had been suspended from the party for the several months leading up to the hearing that finally kicked him out.

The disciplinary committee that tried Galloway said he had brought "the Labour Party into disrepute by behaviour that is prejudicial or grossly detrimental to the party." The charges included that:

- He incited Arabs to fight British troops.
- He incited British troops to defy orders.
- He threatened to stand against Labour.
- He backed an anti-war candidate in Preston.

As Tony Benn pointed out immediately after the decision: "The message that is sent out is: if you are in favour of the UN charter and peace, then don't be a member of the Labour Party because if you do, you might be expelled."

For whether or not Galloway was guilty of any of the charges was always irrelevant. The real issue was that Galloway was the foremost opponent within the parliamentary party of Blair's bloody war against the Iraqi people and was prepared to do more than any other Labour MP to turn that opposition into action against the war. Blair will not tolerate meaningful opposition in his ranks.

George Galloway was guilty of standing on his principles, fighting for them and disregarding - unlike many of the anti-war MPs - the consequences. For that he should be applauded and supported.

His local party immediately declared support for him. Mark Craig, the Kelvin constituency chairperson, said: "It is fair to say that George was met with goodwill and support. Members of Kelvin Labour Party expressed opposition to the decision by the leadership of the Labour Party to expel George, and continue to reject the charges brought against him." He is proposing that the local party launch a campaign demanding Galloway's reinstatement.

Every Labour member and trade union affiliate who opposed the war should support this call, as should those who have since said that they were misled following revelations during the Hutton inquiry. If anyone should be expelled from the party it is Blair. As Galloway himself said after the expulsion, he intended to "fight with every bone in my body to bring a lying, deceiving prime minister to account."

That is the real issue at stake. Galloway was expelled for telling the truth. Blair was given a standing ovation at the party conference for being a liar, an imperialist war criminal and an enemy of the world working class. Fighting to reinstate Galloway and dump Blair is one way that Labour party members can begin to make amends for the war crimes committed in their name. It will be a measure of the effectiveness of the "Reclaim the Labour Party" campaign to see how far they throw themselves into such a struggle. It might not get the MP for Kelvin reinstated but, along with building the movement to end the occupation of Iraq, it can continue to make life as difficult as possible for Blair.

Letters

Council workers prepare for action to defend jobs and services

Dear Comrades

Unison balloted our members last week and, on a large turnout, got an overwhelming majority for industrial action. Islington Social Services managers, as a result, have finally come to the table to negotiate. It is clear that the ballot result is what has led management to the table to conduct negotiations. Paul Curran, the Director of Social Services, said he is initiating the council's disputes

procedure, but, if there is no resolution, he will continue with his plan to implement the review of job descriptions and staffing levels.

The union's position is that all staff in the Highbury resource centre have a fundamental right to a post in the new structure without recourse to an interview. We do not accept management's argument that the posts are substantially different and warrant ring-fenced interviews.

Unison, however, will not

accept interviews of any kind for our members for jobs that have been effectively downgraded. While on interview training, staff members received a second Job Description - different from the one that began the dispute - that included additional responsibilities of basic grade staff.

Islington Social Services must now recognise that Unison members are serious about defending our jobs and services. Whilst we are willing to negotiate with the

council in order to bring about the changes to the services in a phased manner, we cannot tolerate interviews for downgraded posts. Many of our members will have their pay effectively frozen for four years if the Council has its way under the proposals. No responsible trade union can consider such an attack on the fundamental rights of its members and we will not accept these proposals. We are always willing to keep the door open and negotiate - but they have to

understand that we will take industrial action if we need to.

The change in Job Descriptions and the existence of a hit list of staff who do not fit the Broker/Strategy Manager's plans for the configuration of the new service is utterly intolerable.

We will do our utmost to win this dispute.

Mike Calvert
Assistant Branch secretary
Islington Unison

Teachers take action in Oldham over unqualified staff

Dear comrades

Ever worried about your children's education? You ought to. The government, which already subjects children to a record number of meaningless tests, is now bringing unqualified staff with minimal training into the classroom to replace teachers.

Oldham NUT members are involved in an industrial dispute over an attempt to replace qualified teachers with unqualified "learning managers". In a clear attack on the working conditions of both teachers and students, Radcliffe School in Oldham has been chosen as a Department For Education and Employment Pathfinder school to try out new working practices, such as replacing teachers by unqualified staff under a new national "agreement" (opposed by the National Union of Teachers) which goes by the sinister name of Workforce Remodelling.

However, the government may have to do some remodelling itself as NUT members give them some lessons to learn! Members

at the school voted 35 to 0 to refuse to set or mark work for Learning Managers forced to cover classes.

Under the initial phase of the plan, Learning Managers will cover the first ten days of absence. They have no qualifications and no accredited training, so this means that many classes will frequently be taught by untrained staff.

This should be a wake-up call for all teachers and students to take action to defend conditions and demand better education instead of meaningless tests and cutbacks. We are not against Learning Managers having a career path, leading to qualifications, but the government's agenda is to smash the teachers' unions and provide education on the cheap.

Oldham NUT members and parents have been holding stalls against the SATs exams (which, according to a survey released on the 24 October, nine out of 10 NUT members oppose because SATs are restricting education). We have played a role in reinvigorating the Trades Council, encouraging trade unionists to organise with

the community to fight against fascist attacks and racist policing. And we opposed the war against Iraq, with students from several schools walking out on strike against the war.

This latest industrial action is an important test case. At the moment the National Executive is supporting this official action with Doug McAvoy, the General Secretary, addressing a meeting of more than 30 members in the school.

But union members, parents and students must keep up the militant mood to ensure success. Never depend on the leadership: depend on teachers, colleagues and children, the people with the most to lose.

Fax resolutions and messages of support to Oldham NUT on 0161 911 5006 or phone the same number for petitions to circulate in schools and communities.

Organise in your school and your street, across Manchester and across the UK!

Jason Travis,
Oldham NUT

Legal defence umbrella group needed

Dear comrades

I was arrested at a demonstration against Sharon's visit to Downing Street, when the police were being deliberately provocative, and intrusive in their surveillance.

It was just after Galloway was suspended from the Labour Party and within a couple of months of the DSEi protests, where more than 150 arrests were made. A crackdown by the state is well under way. Many protestors are feeling the sharp end of the state's brutality: imprisoned, harassed, persecuted...for exercising our democratic right to demonstrate.

In fact, the right to demonstrate is a myth. You have to get permission to protest by the state (remember the fiasco about allowing us to use Hyde Park in February?) and if you demonstrate effectively, you'll soon be in a cell or a police van.

What happened to the "right" to demonstrate on 22 March outside Fairford airbase when two busloads of protestors were effectively hijacked and taken back to London? What happened to the "right" to demonstrate against the bombing of Iraq for the 35-plus school students who were prevented from going to the Whitehall on the day the war started?

Karl Debbaut was arrested, along with two other parents, for organising those school students. He is being charged with assault on a police officer, which carries a possible sentence of 6 months in prison. He's in court again on 19 January 2004 - 10 months after he was arrested.

Many of the DSEi cases are up in court during November and December.

It is important to have a co-ordinated response to this increasing persecution of our movement. We need support from organisations and groups who have the resources

and the contacts to help see through effective campaigns for all these cases.

Karl Debbaut's is clearly a case which needs highlighting, and there are many others. There needs to be a coming together, and a sharing of experiences of people involved in different campaigns and cases, to effectively publicise these cases of harassment.

Being involved in the Stop the War Coalition, International Solidarity Movement and so on I was lucky because I knew enough people to make the right phone calls as soon as I was arrested. Imran Khan had phoned Charing Cross police station before I had arrived there myself.

The next day, when I was released, there were already e-mails being circulated calling for witnesses and photos. People had gathered outside the station, and MPs were phoning the police to demand my release. This all makes a huge difference to the case, and should be the norm, but it isn't.

There should be a monitoring group, with links to the many campaign groups around the country, to help those arrested on demonstrations get good lawyers, good advice and good publicity: a body which people can automatically turn to for support to ensure they're not forgotten.

When Karl wanted to speak at the rally in Trafalgar Square at the end of the last national demonstration in London, the Executive Committee of the STWC opposed him. Disgracefully, they prevented him from speaking to a large audience who would have wanted to know about his case, and how they could support him. Why did the SWP/CND leadership oppose him speaking?

Karl Debbaut is a co-ordinator for the Socialist Party, not the SWP. It is precisely this sectarianism that the movement can do without.

Why does the StWC not have anyone in charge of legal issues? Someone who could facilitate the setting up of an umbrella-group of experienced activists to look out for these victims of state persecution?

It is as if the StWC is saying to its members and supporters that they are not going to get arrested for demonstrating in the UK. The "leaders" are effectively sowing the illusion that we trust the police or the courts in this country. This is clearly wrong and, as the demos against Bush's visit gather momentum, you can bet your life there will be plenty more arrests to come.

I was able to twice call Ariel Sharon a War Criminal during my proceedings. I was glad to get the chance to clear my name, and to win this important victory in a hostile court. But I could not have done it alone, nor was it about only me. An attack on one is an attack on us all - as the StWC liked to remind us when George Galloway was being persecuted.

So now is the time to gather support for the imprisoned and harassed, the beaten and the brutalised of our movement - not just for the "important leaders".

The Legal Defence and Monitoring Group has been defending and advising activists since 1995, in the wake of the Criminal Justice Act.

But the StWC should be supporting these cases arising from the actions in the last year. They can help financially and publicise their cases politically.

To contact the LDMG, or to volunteer for training or assistance with them, (they particularly need help in the run up to the Resist-Bush demonstrations) go to: www2.phreak.co.uk/lmg/index.php

Max Watson
London

Democratise Resistance?

Dear comrades

Globalise Resistance may have (briefly) forwarded Britain's anti-capitalist movement a couple of years ago, but Jeremy Dewar is deluded if he believes it is anything other than a block to its further development today. GR is an SWP front. It has no local branches. It undertakes no local activity. It has no membership. Its sole purpose is to represent the interests of the SWP in the European anti-capitalist movement, more specifically the social forums and, turn up on mayday, or the odd demo.

It's not a mass workers' organisation or movement where the rank and file can be rallied against the leadership. Jeremy and Workers Power can demand all they like that GR should do this or that. But who are they addressing their demands to? The only membership GR has is the very leadership the demands are addressed against. Clearly this is absurd.

Just as the SWP oppose the establishment of social forums, so does GR. Guy Taylor (GR's leader), pontificated at the ESF organising meeting in Manchester that it would be two years before social forums could be established in Britain, because the G8 hadn't visited yet and consequently the Brits had no experience of joint working in a mass movement. The war doesn't count (there was evidently no co-operation between the left, anarchists, anti-capitalists and the Muslim community; the anti-war movement was of course tiny here in the UK).

Odd indeed that an organisation which claims to represent Britain in the European Social Forum is opposed to social forums in Britain, the country it purports to represent. By continuing to participate in GR, Workers Power serves the same function as the Liberals and Greens in the STWC, a flag for the SWP to hide behind, except of course from the left rather than the right. Workers Power legitimises the existence of GR and gains nothing in return. Jeremy's appeals for activity and democratisation, fall on the deaf ears of a non-existent organisation with no membership outside the steering group and a few SWP officials.

When Jonathan Neal explained that he, not Jeremy, represented GR, he wasn't wrong. If Jeremy's in doubt why not ask at the next steering group meeting? It's about time Workers Power realised what everyone else knows already. GR cannot be reformed. It should be denounced as a block and a barrier to the growth of the anti-capitalist movement in Britain. Get real, Workers Power, and get out of GR!

Bill Jenkins
Manchester

Racist cops caught on film - again

Millions were shocked after watching the programme on the BBC uncovering racism in the police force. But the police force can never be rid of racism, argues *Rekha Khurana*

“A dog born in a barn is still a dog. A Paki born in Britain is still a Paki.”

This is just one of the vile racist comments that were unearthed in the undercover investigation by Mark Daly, a BBC journalist, in his television programme *The Secret Policeman*. As well as racist language the programme exposed scenes of a policeman turning a pillowcase into a Ku Klux Klan style white hood and then pretending to go and “knock on the Paki’s door” and smacking his fist into his hand as if it was someone’s head.

Other comments made by policemen in the programme included one man saying he would go as far as he could in his treatment of Asians and would put “the fuckers” under train tracks if he could. He also confessed on tape to seriously assaulting an Asian man in a bar purely because he was Asian (to date he has not been charged for this despite the evidence being on tape and he is unlikely to be). It was also stated by a policeman in the film that Hitler had the “right” idea, that gas chambers were the “best way forward” and also that Asians were taking over the country.

The day after the programme was aired there were the expected comments from police chiefs stating how shocked they felt after watching it. But it wasn’t just the pro-

gramme that shocked people. David Blunkett’s initial comments about the programme also evoked that response. He lashed out not at the racist police officers featured in the programme but at the BBC for wanting to create news rather than report it and called the whole thing a “cheap stunt”. It was only after the programme had been shown that David Blunkett called it “horrendous”, and it still took him three more days to apologise for calling the programme a stunt.

It has now come to light that his department had been trying to stop the programme being aired since September. Mark Daly was accused of “misleading” the police officers.

Is David Blunkett’s response a surprise? Hardly! This is the man who has unashamedly contributed to racist immigration policies. His latest attack on asylum seekers, the third major piece of asylum and immigration legislation in less than four years, will mean that asylum seekers who arrive here without their passports could face a two-year jail sentence. He has also announced plans to shorten the appeals process and restrict access to legal help.

All this has fuelled the racist hysteria against asylum seekers in the UK, leading to a dramatic rise in support for the BNP and to direct attacks against asylum seek-



ers. Last week effigies of Roma “gypsies” were burnt at an open village bonfire party in Fittlehampton, East Sussex. A caravan was wheeled down the street with the word “pikey” on the back and stuffed figures of women and children inside. It was then burned to cheers from the crowd. No one has been prosecuted for such an open display of racism. This is a direct result of the culture of hatred against refugees that Blunkett’s policies and tabloid scare stories have created.

Tony Blair’s response to the programme was equally sickening. He blamed the racism in the police on “a few bad apples”. But the Macpherson report stated years ago that the police force was institutionally racist and since then nothing has changed. Black men are eight times more likely to be stopped and searched than white men and since 1969 there have been over 140 cases of black deaths in police, prison and psychiatric custody. The inquest verdicts for the majority of cases are either unknown, accidental

death or death by misadventure.

It has taken Roger Sylvester’s family four years to get an inquest into his death. The verdict was of unlawful killing and the officers involved have been suspended. Whether any charges will be brought against them is yet to be seen but, considering the fact that, out of the seven previous unlawful verdicts, only one has successfully led to prosecution, it seems highly unlikely. This isn’t the result of a “few bad apples” but a whole rotten barrel.

Since the documentary has been shown, many have suggested that the racism in the police could be solved by the recruitment of more black and Asian officers. But even the record figures of black and Asian recruits to the police need to be taken with a large dose of salt. An internal Metropolitan Police memo, leaked to *The Observer*, states that ethnic minority recruits are three times as likely to leave the force during training, and five times as likely in their first two years on

the beat.

Black and Asian police officers must have the right to whistle-blow on their racist colleagues and take charge of internal inquiries. Internal procedures, however, are not enough. Representatives from the black community and from the labour movement should have the right to investigate all complaints of police racism and corruption - and those they find guilty should be sacked and brought to justice.

But even this will not change the nature of the police force. While such checks can help rein in some of the cops’ more overtly racist elements and provide some degree of immediate relief to black and Asian people, it will not stop police racism.

The police is not a neutral force in capitalist society but the defender of the capitalist state - and the system of capitalism is racist, sexist, homophobic and anti-working class. That cannot be changed; it must be smashed.

Challenge the politics of the BNP

By Andy Yorke

The fascist British National Party is looking to take a leap forward in 2004. Most English council seats will be up for grabs in June because of boundary changes, and the simultaneous Euro elections will give the fascists another opportunity to gain ground. Tony Lecomber, a leading BNP organiser, says that the party will stand hundreds of candidates and could win up to 60 council seats. Nick Griffin, the leader of the BNP, says it could gain four or five members of the Euro parliament. The warning is clear: they intend to make another breakthrough - and we have to start organising now to stop them.

In several by-elections since August the BNP’s results have been mixed. In Tyneside it obtained a miserable number of votes, and in Burnley a seat vacated by the resignation of a BNP councillor was won by Labour on 16 October, with the BNP knocked back to third place. But in elections in Halifax and Stoke-on-Trent it polled a strong second. August also saw the BNP victorious in Kirkcaldy, West Yorkshire. In September it also won in Grays, Essex, a traditionally solid Labour ward, breaking new ground for the BNP in the South. And the BNP’s Red White and Blue summer event this year had 1,500 attending, twice as many as last year and far more than the 200 who showed up to the first such event in 2000.

There are serious tensions between Nick Griffin’s focus on respectability and elections, and the fascist core that is growing impatient with his compromises. The result has been resignations, sackings, and a crisis in their Oldham and Burnley branch-

es. However, the BNP is continuing to expand into new areas, and there are opportunities for it to grow.

How has the BNP grown? BNP candidates have again and again praised Labour and the right-wing press for creating hysteria about asylum seekers and refugees. The results of this can be heard everyday. A poll for the *Sunday Times* in 2002 found that more than one in five people would support a British version of the French National Front - anti-Europe and anti-immigrant - if it was on offer.

To build a campaign that can push the fascists back into the gutter we need to tackle the government and media lies about asylum seekers and refugees - that they are all scroungers or criminals. This is the “common sense” respectable racism that the BNP is using to draw thousands of people into their orbit and organise for action and racist violence. Unless anti-fascists confront this everyday racism, people will always remain vulnerable to the BNP message. It is necessary to link the fight against fascism to the fight against the racist filth directed at asylum seekers and refugees.

The ANL-inspired unity campaigns have largely failed to do this, relying on the 1970s formula of exposing the BNP and National Front as secret Nazis. But this will not work against a fascist front which constantly denies the allegations and, for the moment, eschews the methods of street-fighting thugs and intimidatory marches.

We need to rethink our strategy before the BNP becomes strong enough to try and reassert its strength on the streets. And that means tackling them politically.

The only way to debunk these racist myths about immigrants is to explain why the poorest and most vulnerable people in

the world are seeking to escape from dictatorships and obtain a decent standard of living - and why we must support them in a common struggle.

This will not alienate people. The millions attracted to the anti-war movement cheered anti-racist speakers on demonstrations. Workers already oppose the government’s policies of privatisation and cuts in the UK - we must win them to oppose these policies globally. Pointing the finger at the government, big business and neoliberalism will highlight the effects of cap-

italism and globalisation.

We also need to decouple the linkage the BNP try to make between crumbling inner-city services and unemployment blackspots on the one hand, and immigration on the other. We need to finger the real culprits: local authorities and central government who have frozen house-building programmes, privatised education services and run the NHS down.

But how are we going to do this? We should demand that local and national unions, dissident Labour Parties, tenants’

associations and black and anti-racist groups join together and trawl the streets of the very estates the BNP is targeting for its racist message. After all, just one serious overturning of a recent BNP stronghold will shatter their confidence and aura of invincibility, and embolden every terrorised black or Asian community living in their shadow.

And if, in desperation, Griffin, Lecomber and co. let their mask slip and reveal their true fascist face - we’ll re-arrange it for them!

Blunkett turns the screw once more

By George Binette, chairperson of Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers

Within 72 hours of announcing a partial “amnesty” for some 15,000 families who had arrived in Britain before autumn 2000, Home Secretary David Blunkett relaunched his offensive against refugees. The Government is determined to introduce still another round of asylum and immigration legislation that will further restrict refugee rights, having already announced dramatic cuts in legal aid for asylum cases. Legislation to feature in the government’s programme for the next year, due to be announced in the Queen’s Speech on 26 November, will include:

- Added restrictions on the right of asylum seekers to appeal, with little or no access to higher courts.

- A new criminal offence for “failure to provide a good explanation for being without travel documentation.”
 - New powers for the Immigration Services Commissioner to seize documents from solicitors’ offices.
 - Fast track deportation for families to “safe” third countries.
 - Termination of all support to families refusing paid, voluntary “repatriation” to countries such as Afghanistan.
- The latest proposals come in the wake of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 that:
- Featured Section 55, which effectively denies any form of support to “late” applicants and has already left some 3,500 single adult asylum seekers destitute.
 - Renewed the Tory “white list” of countries from which all asylum

applications are routinely rejected.

- Substantially extended the use of arbitrary detention in “removal” centres, such as Harmondsworth, that have been heavily criticised by the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

In response to the Home Office’s announcement, the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers has called an emergency meeting, with the backing of Camden UNISON, for all organisations interested in a united campaign to oppose the proposals and support non-compliance with their implementation. It takes place on Monday 10 November, 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1 (nearest tube: King’s Cross).

Further information from the CDAS website: www.defend-asylum.org or phone 07941 566 183

What direction for the ESF?

Between the 13 and 16 November, in Paris, hundreds of meetings with thousands of people will debate and discuss key issues that confront the workers' and anti-capitalist movements. Over the next four pages the League for the Fifth International proposes the way ahead for the ESF and argues that the politics of the dominant organisations will lead to defeat



The gathering of tens of thousands of people in Florence last November and in Paris this year marks a big step forward for the struggles against corporate globalisation, the war-mongering of Bush and the offensive launched by the governments of the EU against our social gains and civil rights.

In Florence one great positive step was taken – to call a day of Europe wide anti-war action as part of a campaign to stop Bush and Blair's attack on Iraq. We mobilised upwards of 20 million people worldwide. Bush and Blair were shaken. And now they are exposed by the very results of their victory (no WMDs, mounting Iraqi resistance) they will have difficulty repeating the process, at least in the next few months. But we have an equally savage enemy here "at home" in Europe, attempting to slash to pieces our social rights and public sector services and jobs, to create an imperialist superstate to rival the USA and a fortress against those asylum seekers and "economic migrants" fleeing the wars and material misery engendered by capitalism.

A number of Italian and French trade unions are proposing a day of action including mass political strikes on 30 March next year. This is an important initiative and needs to be spread to the whole of Europe, built for by local and national social forums or councils of action

which draw in the trade unions and all the social forces represented here in the ESF. It needs to be not simply a one day action after which the union leaders go off to negotiate separately their own compromise with their own government.

We need to agree in mass rallies that we reject

- All privatisation,
- All cuts in pensions and welfare benefits,
- All restrictions on union and workplace rights,
- All racist and undemocratic measures building "fortress Europe".

We demand that the central authorities of the EU as well as the governments withdraw all measures enforcing or promoting these policies – immediately and unconditionally.

We want an escalating campaign of direct action up to and including a Europe wide general strike to win our demands in full and open up the road to ANOTHER EUROPE – that is a SOCIALIST UNITED STATES of the continent – open to all, helping the global south to liberate itself from imperialism.

What structural changes do we need for the ESF to move in this direction?

We need to shake off the shackles of the Porto Alegre principles that forbid the open participation of political parties – at least anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal ones.

There should be no privileges for parties certainly but no undemocratic bans or enforced dishonest disguises. Masks off! Only thus can people drawn for the first time to the ESF know who is who and what they really stand for. Only thus can they judge their proposals and their capacity for carrying them out.

We need to shake off the ban on taking decisions by a democratic majority, providing their has been a full and open debate. Why should a minority – maybe even a tiny minority – prevent us from taking action or adopting common goals in our various struggles? Insistence in consensus or unanimity ties us to the lowest conceivable common denominator and often to no act in at all. If we stick to this the ESF will exhaust itself as a huge and expensive talking shop. It will not survive or it will fall into the hands of the union and left wing municipality bureaucrats, disguised party and NGO officials, and publishers who pay for it and control the key decisions from behind the scenes.

The Assembly of Social Movements and Actors exists precisely to escape the Porto Alegre straight-jacket. The ESF Co-ordination should adopt proposals to take major steps towards a democratic decision-making Assembly. It should call on unions, parties, social forums and so on to send delegates to it but at the same time it should encourage the

formation of local and national social forums which can give the rank and file activists of the movement a voice. Then next years Assembly can be a broadly representative but also a decisive body.

We in the League for the Fifth International, as our name suggests, see this as a step forward to a new international capable of fighting global capital and US and EU imperialism and linking up with similar bodies on all continents. We believe that it can and must adopt a series of measures – a strategy for replacing capitalism with socialism (a programme), the creation of national sections of what will become a united world party of social revolution.

Everyone who agrees with the practical first steps we suggest this week for the ESF can contact us and should support the tabling of our resolutions in the Co-ordination and at the Assembly.

Those who agree with or wish to seriously discuss our overall perspective for a new, Fifth International come to our workshop, visit our stall, contact us by e-mail or telephone.

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Attac attacks the left

By Dave Stockton

In the run in to the European Social Forum rumours are rife that the organisers will use their enormous material clout to ensure that the forum does not lead to any radical actions. The leaders of Attac France, their close allies in the CGT union bureaucracy and the reformist Parti Communiste Français (PCF) dominate the organising committee. Sharp conflicts with the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) are widely reported.

The "leadership" of Attac has certainly not been earned on the battlefields of the anti-capitalist, class struggles of the past three years. So what is Attac and who are its leaders?

Attac is an acronym meaning "Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens." It was founded in June 1998 by the editors of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, an independent monthly supplement to the prestigious Paris evening paper. Its central figure was Bernard Cassen, an academic and journalist.

Attac is the centre of the right wing and reformist attempts to politically tame and organisationally hobble the anti-capitalist movement. Bernard Cassen initiated the Porto Alegre principles – which have to be signed by all participants – formally banning the participation of parties and forbidding the taking of decisions or issuing of statements by the world or regional social forums.

In fact this ban hurts only militant anti-capitalist parties, those fighting on the streets and on the picket lines. The big reformist parties like the Workers Party of Brazil and the PCF will be represented through their councillors, MPs and presidents.

Attac's reformism is also shown by its own internal life, which is nearly as undemocratic and impenetrable as the neoliberal institutions it is fighting. For its members, local meetings consist of brief discussions of stalls, followed by long educational presentations about details

of the international economy. But the top spokespersons like Susan George and Bernard Cassen are not elected.

Attac, as is well known, has made a fetish of the Tobin Tax – a small percentage tax on all international financial transactions, which will then be used for social welfare spending at home and development aid abroad. Its defect – apart from its insignificance as an attack on capital (0.5% per transaction) – is its utopianism – only the most powerful states, the G8 and the USA specifically, could impose and collect it – and its reactionary character- it envisages a reform of the world financial system, not its expropriation.

The Attac leaders reject the term anti-globalisation to describe the movement and even more so the term anti-capitalist. Instead Cassen and Co have come up with the horrible neologism "altermondialisation" – alternative globalisation. This indicates that they wish to give globalised corporate capitalism a human face – to "fix it not nix it".

Bernard Cassen makes no bones about his national reformism. At the Attac countersummit in Geneva in June, he stated: "The framework of our struggle remains national... The national level is appropriate... One can still make some progress on a national level – even if less than before."

Cassen – with the arrogance typical of the intellectual caste – loftily sweeps aside the idea of even discussing the strategic alternative "reform or revolution". "The debate which has occupied us, and particularly myself, for decades, between reform and revolution, is, frankly, completely uninteresting... I believe it has become a purely rhetorical exercise, which has little value as far as action is concerned. What is important is where the social forces are going, whether they have only just started in motion or whether they are accelerating."

He went on: "One should not measure the radicalisation of society from the numbers participating in demonstrations. That would be a great error. It is good when many participate in demonstrations. But this is not

decisive. Look what happened in Spain: three to four million demonstrated against war, against Aznar, and afterwards Aznar barely lost ground in the elections. He did not collapse. So take heed! The demonstrations are not everything. What counts are the voters."

In fact Cassen has spent the last year, since the Florence ESF bemoaning the influence of Rifondazione Comunista and the far left there, the antiwar character of the huge million strong demonstration at its close. In an interview given recently – acting according to the interviewer "like a football referee, blowing for off-sides, and distortions of the principles of the social forums" – he said of Florence.

"The movement does not need pilots. An attentive reading of the list of the Italian speakers " enabled him to detect that "the members, or those close to Rifondazione Comunista, took the lion's share, giving [Florence] a tonality definitely less pluralist than Porto Alegre".

Never mind the massive presence of the leaders of the Brazilian PT at Porto Alegre and the hysteria for Lula, Cassen claims that this hardly mattered since "they never interfered either in the planning of the programme, or in the choice of the speakers, as I am rather well placed to testify."

Indeed, the honorary president of Attac clearly sees non-interference with his decisions as the test of democracy and pluralism. None of the reports of the two events by ordinary participants suggested that Porto Alegre was more democratic than Florence. Quite the opposite. Cassen hails the greater involvement of the unions in the movement, obviously meaning their bureaucracy.

Attac has recently turned even further to the right with the appointment of PCF economist Jacques Nikonoff as its President. Nikonoff's appointment (not election) followed a long period of in-fighting within the leading body, but was not allowed to be voted upon by the membership.

After the massive rally at Larzac during the summer, when in a minor incident some anarcho-syndicalists from the CNT trashed a Socialist Party stand, Nikonoff unleashed

his ire against the entire far left. He has made a series of attacks both in the press and at the Attac summer school, using terms that are redolent of 1930s Stalinism. He accuses the far left and the neo-liberal right of having a common interest.

"Instead of gathering together, extremism divides. The verbosity, violence, gesticulations, sectarianism which mark the tradition of the extreme left would announce the defeat of the movement if the latter were to yield to it. The neo-liberals always prefer the extreme left, because they know that it never gained anything and that it never will. The altermondialist movement must resolutely prefer the diversity which makes its richness and its strength."

He turns the old accusations – justifiably made against the PCF – of "recuperation" (i.e. of trying to take over a movement) against the left. He says that the left has its place "as long as, like everyone else, it abides by the democratic rules of the movement". He then goes on to call for a bureaucratisation of the anti-globalisation movement by erecting "firebreak systems that can prevent the groupuscules who are trying to manipulate things behind the scenes".

Nikonoff has also criticised the various radical mass actions that took place in the spring and summer (for example confrontations with police at the end of the demonstration against the pensions reform, the trashing of Medef headquarters and even the threat by teachers to strike as the exams were about to be taken).

Let us hope that in Paris – as in Florence – a massive participation by French rank and file trade unionists and youth brings to nothing the efforts of the leaders of Attac to make it an impotent talkfest for reformist bigwigs like Cassen and Nikonoff themselves.

We need to show the bourgeois journalists, the municipal councillors, the NGO officials and trade union bureaucrats who cluster round the banner of Attac that if they think they can buy the anticapitalist movement, they have another think coming... Our movement is not for sale!

The revolutionary party

The British Socialist Workers Party and their co-thinkers in the International Socialist Tendency appear to be the most left wing of the European movement. They were the driving force behind the 15 February initiative which placed the question of war and imperialism centre-stage for the anti-capitalist movement. Crucially, they publicly insist on the need for a revolutionary party. But, argues *Jeremy Dewar*, it is the relationship between the revolutionary party and the revolutionary class – the working class – that the SWP cannot get right

The Socialist Workers Party and its predecessor, the International Socialists, emerged from the Fourth International in the late 1940s. Under the direction of its leader, the late Tony Cliff, the SWP developed a tradition whose hallmark was the abandonment of theories and policies developed by Leon Trotsky and VI Lenin, and by the revolutionary Third and Fourth Internationals.

THE CLIFF TRADITION

In his book, *State Capitalism in Russia* (first published in 1948), Cliff argued that the USSR was a state capitalist country and that the ruling bureaucracy was part of the international bourgeoisie. Marxists can agree with Cliff in arguing against the Stalinist theory that the USSR and the other Eastern Bloc countries were examples of "really existing socialism", and how it was necessary for the working class to overthrow the bureaucratic caste through a revolution in order to open the road to democratic planning.

But that was not the point of Cliff's theory. Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* embodied both these positions and a programme for achieving it – political revolution. This, however, required at the same time defence of the USSR against imperialist attack.

Cliff wanted to prove that in the Cold War, the working class had no interest in defending the USSR against imperialism – because the USSR was itself imperialist.

Cliff argued that the USSR had to be capitalist because the working class was politically oppressed, denied basic democratic rights. How could the USSR have abolished capitalism if the working class, through its own democratic organisations and militia, was not in power? But this theory only proves the need for a political revolution, a revolution to instigate democratic work-

ers power, but not a social one to overthrow the capitalist class for that was done in 1917. If we were to judge the nature of a society solely by its political structures, the UK today – with its monarchy and huge landowners – would not be a fully capitalist country

The truth is that Marxists define the class character of a society by looking at the relations of production. And in the USSR, private property was abolished and production organised according to a plan, not the market. True, the Stalinist plans ignored the real needs of the working class and the environment and they supported a privileged and totalitarian bureaucracy. The working class had to wrest control of the planned economy from the hands of the self-serving bureaucracy, but it couldn't do that by standing aside from the struggle against the imperialists who wanted to restore capitalism. As we can see today, the working class of Eastern Europe is paying a heavy price for the restoration of capitalism in the early 1990s.

Yet, this theory formed the basis of the International Socialists' refusal to support the Korean and Cuban national liberation struggles in the 1950s and 1960s – because both movements turned to the USSR for material support against imperialist aggression.

Given their reluctance to support anti-imperialist struggles, it is not surprising that the Cliffites next ditched Lenin's theory of imperialism. By 1965, the International Socialists argued that "finance capital is not nearly as important for and within the system as it was; the export of capital is no longer of great importance to the system; political control, in the direct sense meant by Lenin, is rapidly becoming dated". One would have to say that in 2003, it is Cliff, not Lenin, that is looking dated!

The programmatic fruit of this revision was soon felt

in Northern Ireland, where the IS actually supported the intervention of British troops in 1969. The "breathing space" that this was supposed to afford the Northern Irish working class, of course, turned into a bloody 25 year war of occupation by British imperialism.

However, this did not mean that the IS saw in the global south a straightforward fight between the working class and its national bourgeoisie for socialism. Trotsky's theory and programme of permanent revolution was also duly considered redundant – because the new proletariat of the underdeveloped countries was not "constantly revolutionary", still had "one foot in the countryside" and was therefore unable to lead the peasantry to socialism.

Far from being an audacious development of Marxism, this was an old piece of Menshevism, which relegated the struggle for socialism in large parts of the world to the distant future. All that could be achieved now was for the workers to secure the most democratic reforms possible. The heroic anti-apartheid struggle, for example, could only lead to a democratic republic – hence the SWP's support for the ANC, when it sought the black workers' votes on an openly capitalist programme. The past 10 years of ANC rule have subsequently proved how imaginary the real content of this "democratic" stage is for the workers and the poor.

SOCIALISM FROM BELOW

Of course, the real function of all these revisions was to avoid all those "difficult" questions of internationalism while the SWP's leaders built the party in Britain. But here too, the party sought to escape from the revolutionary duties of leading the fight for socialism

and against reformism.

Cliff constantly belittled the idea of developing a revolutionary action programme to lead the working class from today's struggles to socialism by means of transitional demands. Most crudely and famously, he likened the method of the Marxist programme to presenting a picture of a machete to someone needing a real machete for defence.

Of course, this piece of facetiousness raises other unanswered questions: How do the oppressed and exploited get their hands on weapons? How do they ensure that the weapons are used in the service of the revolution, directly controlled by workers' and poor peasants' councils? What should be the goals of the working class and its allies once they have got their hands on effective weapons? These are the questions only a revolutionary programme can answer.

Instead, the SWP has relied, and continues to rely on the struggles of workers coming up against the limits of what capitalism can afford with reforms, and spontaneously growing over into a revolutionary fight for power. The tasks of revolutionaries were reduced to supporting whatever the most militant workers were already struggling for. There was no need to combat reformist ideas since these would be exposed by events.

This tradition – dubbed by the SWP as "socialism from below" – contains real problems. First, it underestimates the ability of capitalism to renew itself. There is no hopeless situation for capitalism; unless the working class takes advantage of its crises, it will bide its time and regroup, make the working class pay for the crisis, create new markets and return to profitable conditions. Indeed, it is the all-pervasive nature of capitalism, the fact that it seems to billions the only way of organising society, that makes reformism the natural,

The Fourth International was formed in 1938 to unite working class organisations in a world party of social revolution. This year it abandoned that aim, refusing to campaign in the global anti-capitalist movement for the formation of such a party. So, as scores of thousands of workers and youth gather for the ESF in Paris, *Richard Brenner* asks...

Whatever happened to the Fourth International?

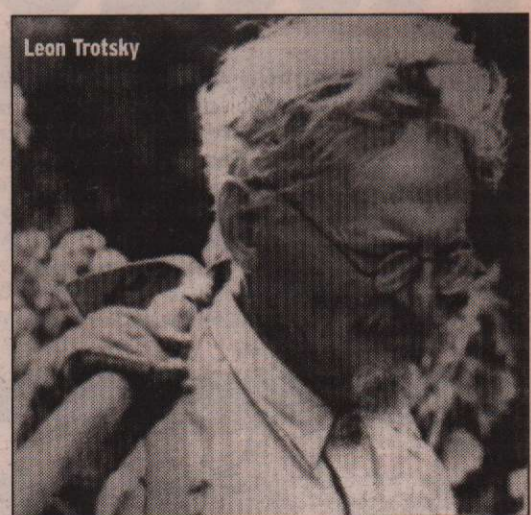
The Fourth International (United Secretariat) will be the largest far left force at the European Social Forum. It is also the largest far left international organisation in Europe today. It has sections in nearly every European country and its French section – the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) – has around 2,500 cadres.

Olivier Besancenot (a 27 year old postal worker militant) was its candidate in the presidential elections last year. He gained 4.25 per cent of the poll or 1,210,699 votes. Its militants are active in the unions, especially in the SUD, CGT federations and teachers' union. Their militants played an important role in stimulating the growth of assemblies and co-ordinations in the strike wave of the early summer, and are active in Attac. The youth organisation Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires (JCR) is associated with it.

At the European level, the Fourth International promoted a series of international demonstrations – the Euromarches – from 1997 onwards, which prefigured the great anti-capitalist mobilisations of the last three years. It welcomed and promoted the initiatives for the World and European Social Forums. It is promoting an alliance called the European Anti-capitalist Left which it hopes will be able to contest the elections to the European Parliament in 2004. There is no doubt that the Fourth International and the LCR represent a major force which has helped create the movement. But is it, as its names suggest, a continuation of Trotsky's revolutionary programme and method of organisation. We think not.

Though the Fourth International claims organisational continuity with Trotsky's FI, this claim is only justified in terms of the continuity of its leadership cadre from the 1960s to today. Its claim that there is a fundamental political continuity with Trotsky does not stand up to even a brief inspection.

Trotsky founded the FI on the basis of the Transitional Programme and the "world party of social revolution". Trotsky saw the sections of the FI, however small they were, as the embodiment of that programme. Their task was to plunge into the mass struggles of the work-

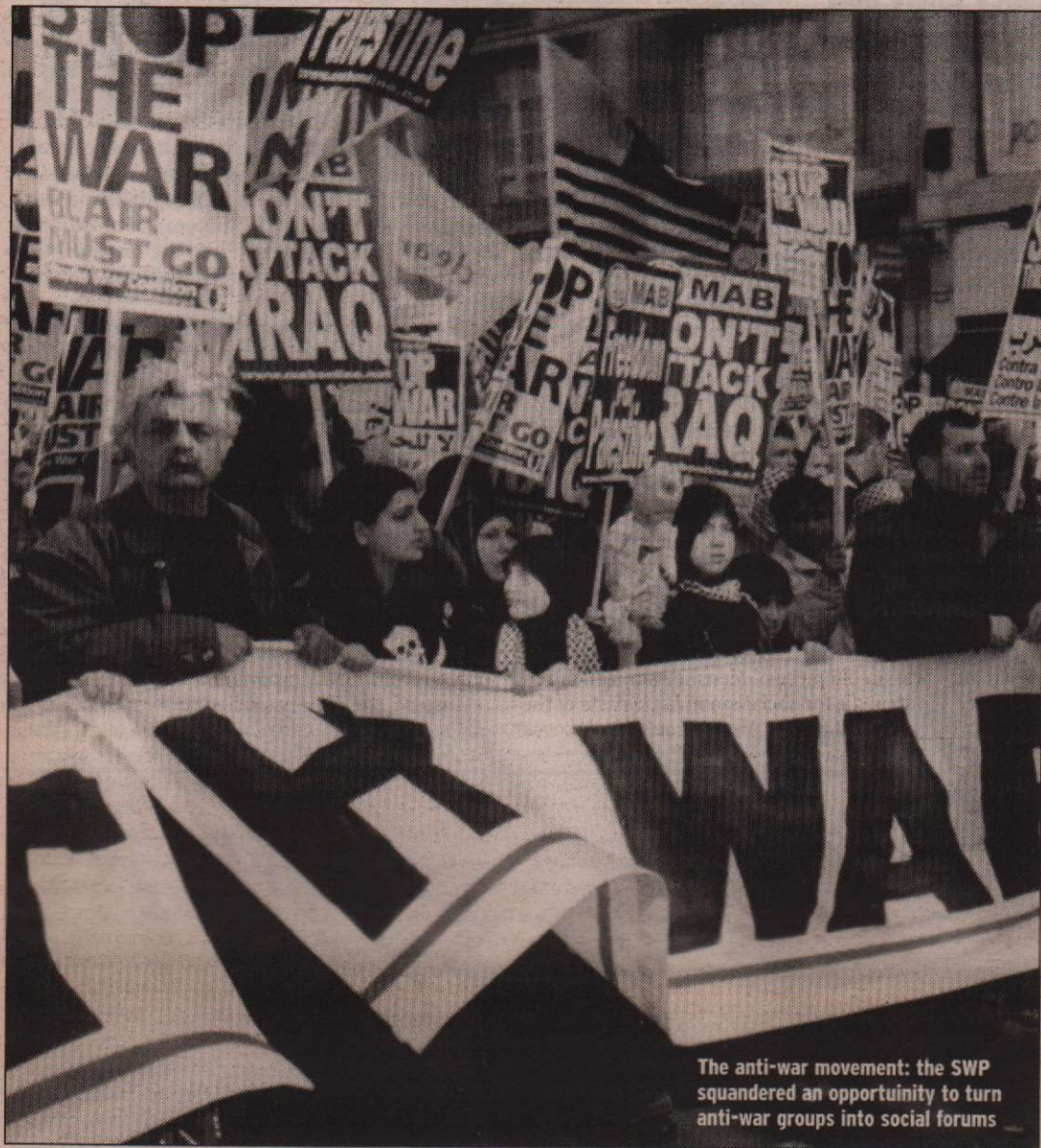


ing class without any hesitation, using the method of the united front: march separately under one's own revolutionary banner (programme, revolutionary slogans); but strike together with the reformist and centrist organisations when they were also taking action. He resolutely refused to accept that this intransigence over programme was sectarianism or presented ultimatums to the movement.

"No ultimatum whatsoever in relation to the masses, the trade unions, the workers' movement; but the most intransigent ultimatum in relation to any group that claims to lead the masses. The ultimatum that we are talking about is called the Marxist Programme." (Crisis in the French Section p107).

This year the 15th Congress of the FI renounced this claim. François Vercammen, member of the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International and its Executive Bureau reports: "Our principal task as the Fourth International consists in contributing to a vast reorganisation of the labour and social movement on a world scale with our perspective the constitution of a new internationalist, pluralist, revolution-

and the working class



The anti-war movement: the SWP squandered an opportunity to turn anti-war groups into social forums

spontaneous ideology of the working class.

Second, and related to this fact, it underestimates the strength of reformism within the working class. The working class is not simply one undifferentiated mass of exploited toilers. At its bottom end, there is unemployed, unorganised and casual labour, those whom the trade unions barely, if ever, touch. This can become the most determined and self-sacrificing section of workers, but, if revolutionaries do not offer hope, it can also become a breeding ground for racism and even fascism.

At the opposite end, there are workers who, because of their skills and strategic importance in production, receive some privileges (compared to their class sisters and brothers) in terms of job security, wages and social status. Again, without the conscious intervention of revolutionaries, these workers – the “aristocracy of labour” as Lenin called them – can see every reason for reforming, rather than abolishing the capitalist system.

By relieving themselves of the task of bringing socialist consciousness to the day-to-day struggles of the working class, the SWP time and again find themselves defenceless against reformism. Not only this, but the theory of socialism from below begs an important question: If the working class will automatically come to revolutionary conclusions through its own experiences alone, why do we need a revolutionary party?

This is a question we will return to later. But what is the situation facing the movement and the policies put forward by the SWP.

UNITED FRONT OF A SPECIAL KIND

The SWP benefited enormously from two related factors in the early 1990s: the fall of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the rightward shift of social democracy and New Labour in particular. The party had never been associated with the crimes of Stalinism – indeed, it was Stalinophobic – and had ceased to work in the Labour Party in the 1960s.

Though the SWP exaggerates its claim to have been in on the mass youth radicalisation that became the anti-capitalist movement – Workers Power spotted it earlier and launched the Revolution youth group to

orient towards it – it certainly attracted a large periphery of young activists and, increasingly, the attention of the liberal press.

By the new millennium, the SWP was poised to find itself at the head of a mass, militant opposition to Tony Blair’s government. But, this new opportunity proved double-edged: the SWP’s political tradition and method was put to the test as never before in its history. And they were found wanting.

The key problem they faced was: how to put themselves at the head of a movement that was not spontaneously either socialist or revolutionary. For all their successes in leading rank and file militants to revolt against the unions’ funding of Labour, educating and mobilising youth around the issues of the anti-capitalist globalisation movement, and finally building the biggest anti-imperialist movement Britain has ever seen – the SWP could not make a decisive breakthrough.

The problem increasingly came to be seen as the party needing to further water down its politics (never a problem for the Cliffites) and an internal battle to shed the sectarian aversion to working with other left groups and reformists. The policy that emerged, pioneered by John Rees, Lindsey German and Alex Callinicos, was the “united front of a special kind”.

The policy was “special” in two ways. First, these fronts were neither to be episodic nor bolt-ons to the party. To an unprecedented degree – though not without the occasional sharp reversion to type – these united fronts (Socialist Alliance, Globalise Resistance, Stop the War Coalition and others) were to become, each on their separate terrain, the face the SWP turned to various struggles.

But they were also special in that they were conceived of as a clean break from the classic united front policy, as worked out by Lenin, Trotsky and the revolutionary Communist International. Noting the ebb of the post-war revolutionary tide in the 1920s, the young communist parties were urged to approach the leaders and members of reformist workers’ organisations with proposals for common action. The purpose of this united front policy was two-fold: first, to force

Continued top of next page

ary, militant force with a mass impact”. This assertion implies a significant revision of what the Fourth International could carry out. It is not the world party of socialist revolution (the objective it adopted at the time of its founding), nor even the central nucleus of such a future party... “We are one Trotskyist current among others, one revolutionary current among others. The chapter is closed when the Fourth International could have the perspective of being carried to the head of the revolutionary process, with the help of a huge militant effort, a correct analysis and a successful battle inside the Trotskyist movement.”

Remarkable. But in practice the FI had renounced playing the role Trotsky envisaged and adopted the one Vercammen suggests over fifty years ago.

This “new” method owes its political origins to the Third Congress of the Fourth International, held in 1952. The then leaders of the Fourth International, Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel, James Cannon and Joseph Hansen all agreed that the task was to fuse with roughly revolutionary currents being created by the revolutionary process.

Since then, relying on the creative powers of this process, it has repeatedly sought to fuse with currents coming out of Stalinism, social democracy and petit bourgeois nationalism. In the semi-colonial world it sought to fuse with Castroism and Guevarism in the 1960s with the Sandinistas in the 1980s, with the Zapatistas in the 1990s, and various left-social democrats, Eurocommunists, ex-Maoists etc in the imperialist countries. Over the past five years it has sought to fuse with the left Stalinist, populist and reformist forces which make up the de facto “leadership” of the anti-capitalist movement. Only the disinterest of its various “partners” stopped it.

In the final stage of the collapse of Stalinism, the USFI even adapted to Gorbachev, calling for “deep perestroika” and brushing away the danger of restoration.

This policy accounts for the leftward swings of the FI in the 1970s (guerillaism in Latin America, ultra-radical student vanguardism in Europe) and the right-

ward ones of the 1980s and 1990s. In France the LCR was barely critical towards the Mitterrand presidency in the early 1980s. Then it supported the former leader of the French Communist Party, Juquin, in 1988, and it has had the same attitude toward the reformist majority of the Workers Party (PT) of Brazil until the last few months.

What is involved here is not what Trotsky called pedagogic adaptation – speaking in language understood by the mass forces you seek to win to revolution. It is political adaptation to alien class forces. To refuse to tell the truth about parties, movements and leaders, because you believe that the movement will sort out these problems for you is to fail to warn the masses that these leaders will prove inadequate at the decisive moment, incompetent, and even treacherous. An alternative to these leaders cannot be improvised. It has to be prepared at every stage of the struggle.

A group that relies on the revolutionary process and non-revolutionary leaderships (rather than building revolutionary parties) must question the Leninist vanguard party and the soviet as necessary instruments for socialist revolution: they can be replaced by all sorts of “actually existing” bodies.

During the post-1989 restoration process, the FI failed to defend socialised property in the means of production and to pose the need for a political revolution. At recent congresses the leadership has sought various pretexts for dropping the name and Trotskyist designation of the FI.

Today its attitude to the anticapitalist movement shows the same method. It is an ideological, programmatic chameleon – taking on the political colouration of whatever background you work in – rather than conquering a space for revolutionary politics alongside the reformists in common struggle.

Today’s FI apes the terminology and the policies of the petit bourgeois ideologues and self-appointed leaders of the anti-capitalist movement. The time is never ripe for presenting a revolutionary positions or Leninist forms of organisation. The task is at all costs not to offend the “leaders” whose views are taken as the

The Fourth International has repeatedly sought to fuse with currents coming out of Stalinism, Social Democracy and petit bourgeois nationalism. In the semi-colonial world it sought to fuse with Castroism and Guevarism in the 1960s, with the Sandinistas in the 1980s, with the Zapatistas in the 1990s, and various left-social democrats, Eurocommunists, ex-Maoists, etc. in the imperialist countries. Over the past five years the Fourth International has sought to fuse with the left Stalinist, populist and reformist forces which make up the de facto “leadership” of the anti-capitalist movement. Only the disinterest of its various “partners” stopped it

outer limits for the FI’s everyday agitation.

Far from adopting the objective necessities of the struggles of the day as its starting point, it seeks to unite with reformist parties and organisations on their programme. It claims – entirely wrongly and in contradiction to the principles on which it was founded – that this approach is essential if fighting unity is to be achieved. And, as a down payment to its hoped for allies, it abandons key elements of revolutionary policy in advance, trading away vital needs of the working class in return for short-term advantage.

These are serious criticisms. In case readers should think that we are exaggerating, let’s examine them in more detail.

Standing in elections can be very useful for revolutionary communists – it allows us a platform to support workers’ struggles, to expose the crimes of the social democrats and to agitate for revolution. It is of course critical that, in this process, revolutionaries clearly distinguish ourselves from all bourgeois politicians, denounce the limitations of capitalist democracy, and focus workers’ attention not on the illusion of peaceful parliamentary reform, but on the need to break the repressive state forces: the armies, police forces, security services and secret control centres.

In the age of Genoa, of the bombing of Baghdad, of rising political polarisation in Europe and of working class contempt for the social democrats, this is a message that relates to real current conditions, that can be easily understood and readily taken up by workers.

But what does the FI believe the appropriate programme for the European Anticapitalist Left? Its journal International Viewpoint quotes the decisions of the European Anti-capitalist Left at its June 2003 conference approvingly:

“our alternative programme is as simple, easy and clearly defined as the bosses’ one: a full-time, stable job, a decent wage, and a liveable replacement income (in the event of unemployment, disease, disability or retirement) for everyone; radical reduction of working time

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Who's who at the ESF

SWP continued

the reformist organisations (and their misleaders) to fight on crucial questions for the class; second, to win their best militants to communism through merciless criticism of the revolutionaries' temporary allies.

"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."

Or, as Trotsky put it, "March separately, strike together. Please remember to do both."

Contrast this to Alex Callinicos' denunciation of his own members who "either abstain from united activity or (which amounts to the same thing) use it as a vehicle for denouncing everyone else". Having attracted dissident MPs like George Galloway, union leaders like Billy Hayes of the postal workers, and liberal journalists like George Monbiot, the last thing Callinicos wanted was for over-zealous party members to frighten them off with stinging criticism or – horrors of horrors – to call on them to go further than they were already willing to do.

The fruits of this policy were a series of rightward lurches by the SWP. In the anti-war movement, the SWP gave a platform to trade union leaders without once calling on them to lead strike action to stop the war, even though there were hundreds of thousands of workers who wanted to take it. They even supported inviting the Liberal Democrat leader onto the platform in Hyde Park. In the anti-capitalist movement, the SWP has lauded the liberal journalist George Monbiot and Callinicos has published a manifesto that dodges the key question of the need for violent revolution and counterposes the libertarian idea of autonomous, communities exchanging their products to the socialist goal of a democratically centralised worker's plan.

But it is in the electoral field that we can see the

SWP's trajectory most clearly. Their first united front of a special kind was the Socialist Alliance, which the SWP ensured adopted a left reformist programme but then effectively disappeared between elections. When this consistently failed to win more than 5 per cent in the polls, John Rees tried to negotiate first a popular front with the Mosques, and now a populist alliance with Monbiot, Galloway and the progressive Islamist Salma Yaqoob. Lindsey German warned that key socialist demands on women, secular education and workers' rights should not be turned into "shibboleths" – thus indicating that they were dispensable when drawing up the basis for a broad popular coalition.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

So, what of the revolutionary party in all this? If it refuses to fight for revolutionary tactics and drops its goal of socialism for all purposes except its Marxism seminars, why build the party? This is how John Rees sums it up in the current issue of *Socialist Review*:

"But [the Stop the War Coalition] would not have been so influential, nor would the decisions been so effectively translated into action, had not an organised body of socialists been willing to advance them and act upon them. In this way a revolutionary organisation willing to work with others in a non-sectarian way can both advance the interests of the whole movement and strengthen that movement's core of determined socialist opponents of the whole system."

Rees is trying to do two things here. First, he is aware that the current phase of the movement will not last forever – and the SWP will want to come out of the other end with greater numbers and influence in

For an organisation that prided itself on its slogan of "Socialism from below" their policy today now seems very much like "Reformism or populism from above"

society. Second, he wants to use the party's advantage of centralised leadership and disciplined membership to win the leadership of the movement, despite its relatively small size.

Stated thus, no Marxist can object to these goals. But once the revolutionary content has been removed from the equation, by the SWP's constant trimming of the socialist programme, then one is left with unprincipled manoeuvring and a tendency towards bureaucracy. The packing of meetings to oust opponents to populism from the Socialist Alliance leadership, the calling of fake People's Assemblies which have no authority while the Stop the War Coalition is run by a war cabinet of the Communist Party of Britain and the SWP, the horse-trading behind the scenes in the ESF by Globalise Resistance which, after two and a half years, still has little more than 1,000 members and less than half a dozen active branches – all these represent ever more desperate attempts to "make the breakthrough".

And the breakthrough is increasingly perceived as coming in a form entirely within the gamut of conventional bourgeois politics: electoral success, mass demonstrations and hosting the ESF. Again, nothing wrong with these goals as a subordinate part of a wider strategy to build rank and file movements in the unions, to launch a new workers' party and force the union lefts to back it, to establish real social forums in every town and city, to fight for a workers' united front to deny the fascists a platform and counter their racist filth. For an organisation that prided itself on its slogan of "Socialism from below" their policy today now seems very much like "Reformism or populism from above".

But will it work? In a word, No.

Fourth International continued

without loss of pay or intensification of work, with compensatory hiring; the right to housing, education and professional training and health care, all good quality; and access to means of public transport. These political and social rights will be equal for all workers, native and immigrant, men and women. Implementing them requires: a radical extension of public services; a recasting of the state budget (including the tax system) which drastically increases social spending; and a radical redistribution of wealth and income from capital towards labour. For this purpose all anti-capitalist measures must be taken that are needed to control and, if necessary, expropriate private property and transform it into social, public property. Another Europe is possible: social, democratic, egalitarian, ecological, internationalist – a socialist Europe!"

This is a programme for the peaceful transformation of current society into one based on controlling private property, nationalising it "if necessary", an enhanced welfare system, certain guaranteed rights and a redistributive tax system. All of these things are entirely progressive – and all are possible within the confines of the capitalist system. This is nothing more than a programme of reforms. It is silent on the forms of struggle needed to achieve these goals, and silent on the type of government and social transformation needed to carry them out.

No lasting gains can be made for the working class if the key levers of economic power remain in the hands of the capitalist class – they will sabotage and undermine all attempts at an equitable distribution of the

– drafted by Leon Trotsky – it explained this:

"The Fourth International does not discard the programme of the old 'minimal' demands to the degree to which these have preserved at least part of their vital forcefulness. Indefatigably, it defends the democratic rights and social conquests of the workers. But it carries on this day-to-day work within the framework of the correct actual, that is revolutionary, perspective. Insofar as the old partial, 'minimal' demands of the masses clash with the destructive and degrading tendencies of decadent capitalism – and this occurs at each step – the Fourth International advances a system of transitional demands, the essence of which is contained in the fact that ever more openly and decisively they will be directed against the very foundations of the bourgeois regime. The old 'minimal programme' is superseded by the transitional programme, the task of which lies in systematic mobilisation of the masses for the proletarian revolution..."

"Classical social democracy, functioning in an epoch of progressive capitalism, divided its programme into two parts independent of each other: the minimum programme, which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the maximum programme, which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future. Between the minimum and the maximum programme, no bridge existed. And indeed the social democracy has no need for such a bridge, since the word socialism is used only for holiday speechifying."

So what do the leaders of the Fourth International say when reminded of the revolutionary origins of their organisation? They argue that it is a "slur" to describe such limited programmes as reformist; that it would be "sectarian" to propose a revolutionary programme today and would divide the left. We will now examine each of these objections in turn.

First, they defend these limited programmes as adequate. In a critique of the policies of Workers Power the FI's leader in Britain, Alan Thornett, defends the Scottish Socialist Party, attacking us for: "A sectarian slur on the SSP. It does not have a reformist programme at all. It has a class struggle, action programme incorporating all the main demands of a socialist programme – short of the revolutionary overturn."

So a reformist programme is apparently something other than a series of improvements in the conditions of the workers "short of" revolution. What is the working class likely to make of this?

The Scottish Socialist Party has members of the Scottish Parliament. It campaigns energetically in elections. What are the workers of Scotland to understand by its proposals other than that it will carry them out through parliament? It certainly fails to agitate for a revolu-

tionary perspective, let alone to link the steps workers need to take in real struggles today to revolutionary goals. This is a reformist programme. SSP leader Tommy Sheridan was only drawing logical conclusions from this when he assured a BBC interviewer that an SSP government would not nationalise the giant food retailer Tesco.

So why do Thornett and the FI believe that workers should have to make do with a programme "short of" their own political power? Fortunately Thornett explains it very well. He goes on: "That is as it should be. Like the Socialist Alliance, if the SSP were to adopt a full revolutionary programme it would reduce itself down to its revolutionary components, and that would be the end of it."

Unlike the Socialist Alliance, the European Anti-capitalist left does contain mass forces. At its congress in Athens this year was represented Rifondazione Comunista of Italy. To propose a revolutionary programme here would be a fight, a fight for influence over their members.

"But this is absurd!" the Fourth Internationalists will object. "If we proposed such a thing, the PRC's leaders would withdraw! We would be reduced to Thornett's tiny 'revolutionary components'."

But what does this reveal? That the task is posed entirely in terms of negotiations between the party tops for an agreed electoral platform. In these terms, admittedly, only a compromise on the lowest common denominator is possible. But there is an alternative.

Instead of a closed meeting of party representatives, there is the wide open space of the European Social Forum itself. There will be scores of thousands there – not just hardened reformist leaders but rank and file workers, trade unionists, party militants, youth of all parties and none. Why not fight for the adoption of a revolutionary programme there? Why not link it – indeed subordinate it to – a massive campaign of direct action against the neo-liberal plans being forced through by all the EU governments.

We could point to the strike wave in Europe to support the need for rank and file organisation, to the social forums as a basis for delegate co-ordinations of all struggles, to the repression in Genoa and in Iraq to promote organised working class self-defence, to the violence of the imperialist order to support the case for forcible overthrow of the system. If we won the support even of a minority of the delegates at the ESF, it would be a huge step forward, weakening reformism and strengthening the forces for revolution.

"But this misunderstands the whole nature of the ESF!" they will reply. "It does not take decisions or votes on these questions. There can be no motions debated or policies agreed except by 'consensus'."

And this is true – it is the means by which the reformists are seeking to maintain control over the anti-

If you trim your politics so much that you go to the electorate posing as a liberal capitalist outfit, people will vote in the Liberal Democrats, the real McCoy. If you try to keep the anti-war movement mobilised on mass demonstrations alone and refuse to broaden it into a social forum movement, it will wither. And if you host the ESF in London without a real movement, it will flop and become more right wing under the pressure of the NGOs, the TUC and Ken Livingstone's GLA.

With such policies the SWP and its international group IST will falter and splinter. Already the IST has suffered damaging splits in its largest sections outside of Britain – the USA, Germany, Greece, Zimbabwe – in recent years. It expelled its first American section when it (correctly) raised the question of self-determination for the Kosovans during the US-Serbia war and (wrongly) delayed its turn to the anti-capitalist movement. It then set up a new US section, *Keep Left*, which described itself as an anti-capitalist network. *Keep Left* split from the IST this year, because it took the logic of liquidating itself into the movement too far and decided that the socialism stuff was a "shibboleth" too.

The temptation of many militants who fall foul of the SWP's latest turn will be to seek out a "golden age" of Cliffism and try to return the organisation to its roots. As we have shown in this article, there never was such a golden age. The abandonment of the Marxist programme and the opportunist adoption of reformist and liberal positions runs like a yellow thread throughout its history. Revolutionary youth and workers shocked by these latest capitulations should do what Workers Power did when we were expelled from the IS in 1975 – and rediscover the tradition of the great revolutionary Marxists.

● For a more in depth look at the politics of the SWP read workers Power's *The Socialist Workers Party: A Trotskyist Critique* from BCM Box 7750, London WC1 3XX, UK. Price £1 make cheques or postal orders out to Workers Power

capitalist movement, to sidetrack its struggle into a tame campaign for constitutional changes.

If there can be no democratic voting and majority decision making, then how can the revolutionary minority appeal to the reformist workers to reject the path of compromise with capital and take the path to power? How can the members challenge let alone overturn the leaders? How can issues be decided by the masses themselves?

And yet the Fourth International today, with utter cowardice, accepts the reactionary imposition by the ESF of a ban on majority voting and decision making.

Instead of challenging this and agitating for the ESF

The Fourth International is in reality systematically abandoning revolutionary policy. This is no clever short-term tactic but the very essence of its strategy

to take steps towards the formation of a new international political party with its own democratic structures, the Fourth International has accommodated to the reformists' concept of how the movement should be organised. This is what abandonment of the concept of a world party of social revolution means in practice.

The Fourth International is abandoning revolutionary policy.

This is no clever short-term tactic but the very essence of its strategy. Rather than demanding as the revolutionary FI did that parties in the anticapitalist movement should rule out governing in coalition with the capitalists, it proposes a deceitful formulation for the European Anticapitalist Left: "against participation in social-liberal governments." Why not rule out participation in all capitalist and imperialist governments? Because the Rifondazione support with its votes in parliament the Olive Tree Coalition – and because to its shame Fourth International members are taking part in Lula's coalition government with capitalist politicians in Brazil today, where an FI member is minister of agriculture! In the government which refuses the Brazilian peasants' insistent demands for land and is denounced by the Catholic hierarchy for being no better for the poor than its predecessor!

The abysmal abandonment of revolutionary policy by the Fourth International will not help to unite the left in the interests of the workers. It can only help the reformists to find another means of fooling the workers and reconstituting bourgeois politics on an international scale within the working class movement. At the ESF, revolutionary workers and youth should reject all attempts to shield reformists from criticism and join the struggle to take the movement forward to a new world party of social revolution – a fifth international.

Unlike the Socialist Alliance, the European Anti-capitalist Left contains mass forces. At its congress in Athens this year was represented the Rifondazione Comunista of Italy. To propose a revolutionary programme here would be a fight, a fight for influence over their members

social product. What is more, no such gains can be made permanent while the levers of state power and social coercion remain at the exploiters' disposal – this lesson has been learned by workers, from the Paris Commune 130 years ago to Chile 30 years ago.

Without abandoning the fight for reforms, revolutionaries must never shy away from pointing out these fundamental features of the system. We explicitly link the struggle for partial improvements to the fight for working class power. In the FI's founding programme

BBC and NHS: capitalist logic of privatisation

“In 1993, I was asked to consider undertaking a new version of my book *Politics in Britain*, which was first published in 1983 and then revised for Verso in 1987. But by 1993 I felt that the advent of economic globalisation meant that national politics had to be analysed in a new way, focusing on the causal chains linking global market forces to national politics.”

The opening words of Colin Leys' illuminating study acknowledge the reality of globalisation as a significant development of capitalism. His theme is the impact of the globalisation of capitalism, driven by a neoliberal economic ideology, on national politics.

Central to this book is the manner in which the opening of areas formerly completely or largely excluded from the market – primarily essential public services provided and controlled by the state – has profoundly altered the political and social landscapes of countries where it has been introduced.

Leys looks at the effect of globalisation on British politics and society, concentrating on two areas of public provision, the BBC and the NHS. With New Labour's plans for the Royal Mail drawing an angry response from union members and the farce of rail privatisation being exposed nearly every week, this review exposes the lie at the heart of the privatisation of public services.

Both Thatcher and Reagan represented a new brand of conservatism, motivated ideologically by neoliberal think-tanks and willing to ditch any lingering “paternalism”...in favour of giving rein to capital in its most ruthless and predatory form

He charts the development and examines the elements of the drive to globalisation in the post-war world, which eventually reached the stage when capital, straining against the limits of traditional markets, turned its attention to non-market areas. This required a thoroughgoing restructuring of not only the economic and financial spheres, but also of the political, social and cultural areas.

The restructuring was not carried out by impersonal forces, but by national governments, the prime movers being the US and UK governments under Reagan and Thatcher, respectively, for reasons grounded in ideology. Their motivation was the desire to defeat “socialism”, that is to destroy the post-war social gains of the working class such as wages, conditions and public services while slashing taxes and restrictions on capital.

The economic might of the US and the UK's position as a major financial services centre ensured success in liberalising markets at a global level and other countries hastened to get in on the act. Both Thatcher and Reagan represented a new brand of conservatism, motivated ideologically by neoliberal think-tanks and willing to ditch any lingering “paternalism” and, in the case of Thatcher, “one-nation Conservatism” in favour of giving rein to capital in its most ruthless and predatory forms.

The growth of the multinational corporations throughout the 1980s and 1990s led to an accumulation of private capital that

rivalled that of the major powers and dwarfed that of small and medium national economies – the £10 billion spent by the UK government to prop up the pound on 1992's “Black Wednesday” was lost without impact on the vast ocean of speculative capital. Instead of national governments regulating the behaviour of capital, the global markets and the cabals of the multinational corporations became the regulators of national economic policy.

To facilitate the triumph of market values, social cohesion and collectivism were replaced, through relentless attacks on the working class to instil consumerist values, with a society of atomised “customers” increasingly willing to see services as well as goods in terms of commodities. At all levels people turned into passive spectators of, rather than active participants in, politics and social institutions. Successive acts of parliament restricted union rights and curtailed civil liberties.

After coming to power in 1997, Blair's New Labour held faithfully to – indeed, considerably extended – the legacy of Thatcher. State services had been largely sold off by 2000, which left all the profits with the private buyers and all the risk with the taxpayer. Those services that remained were those that defied immediate commodification, among them the BBC and the NHS,

largely because they were perceived to provide a public good rather than a product susceptible to commercial pricing. Core public service functions would therefore take more time to marketise. So the initial step was to insist on internal markets and competitive sourcing of goods and services, on terms disadvantageous to in-house provision.

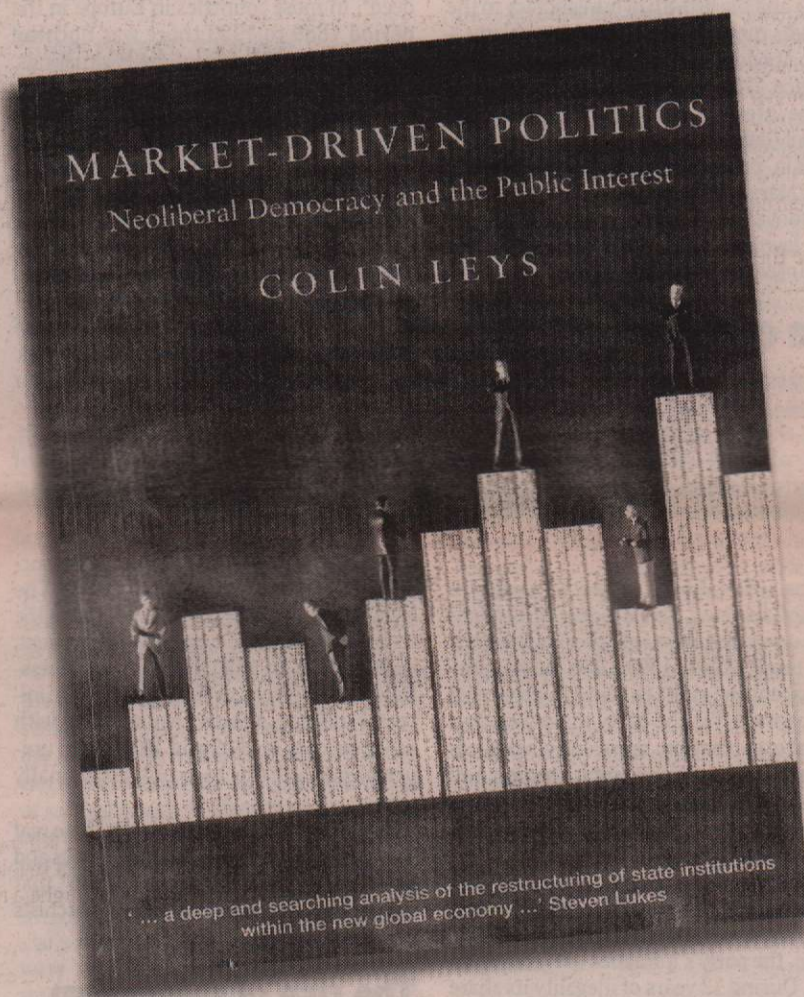
As Leys remarks, in the context of an examination of the US privatised healthcare system, when a service has been thoroughly commodified, its use value is almost entirely lost sight of: the commodity “becomes not so much a product as a by-product.” It is instructive that the US system is far less cost-effective than the NHS. What matters in privatisation is not whether the result is better value for money, but who pays the cost and who makes the profit. A system that costs more and delivers less can generate greater profit once the costs have been thrown onto the individual “customer”.

PUBLIC OR PRIVATE BROADCASTING?

The BBC's charter spells out its public service remit, and when the commercial ITV companies came onto the scene in 1955, they too were subject to similar requirements and closely monitored by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Up to the 1980s, the perception of television broadcasting was steeped in its public service and socially cohesive roles: the idea that broadcasting should contain a serious element that served the democratic process rather than commercial interests.

Twenty years after Thatcher came to power, this vision was greatly diluted and losing ground fast. The attacks on the BBC were intense and sustained: the power of the unions was smashed, the licence fee decreased in real terms, internal markets established and “competitiveness” enforced

Rachel Hardcastle reviews Colin Leys, *Market-driven Politics: Neoliberal Democracy and the Public Interest* (2001, reprinted Verso 2003)



against satellite and cable providers with no public service commitments at all. Massive staff cuts were made between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, a third of BBC workers cut to join the axed 44 per cent of ITV staff to swell what was to become a permanent pool of overworked, casualised skilled labour, the new norm for the broadcasting industry.

Programming budgets were cut savagely, a process also affecting the ITV companies, resulting in an attempt to compete with commercial television for ratings, a strategy that undercut its public service obligations. With the public interest increasingly accepted in Murdoch's terms of “what interests the public”, old-fashioned public service broadcasting could be painted as out of touch, minority programming – conveniently, since such programming (investigative journalism, serious political debate, one-off heavyweight drama) was far more expensive than the increasingly standardised mass fare which was the staple of the new broadcasters.

These changes took place against the background of a massive world-wide restructuring of the communications industry, into which television was subsumed. This had also happened with print media. The choice and variety provided by the proliferating

media agencies was spurious, as ownership of all these operations rested with a handful of monopolistic giants.

SELLING OFF THE HEALTH SERVICE

The NHS presented a far bigger challenge to the privatisers than did the BBC, due to its monolithic status, its efficiency – it provides better care than the US private system at a third of the cost – and its high level of popularity. Since it was out of the question, on political grounds, to engage in wholesale privatisation, the opening of the NHS to market forces had to be initiated in a piecemeal way by fragmenting the monolith and introducing internal markets.

Hospitals became self-financing “trusts”, providing services to “purchasers” such as health authorities or private patients and run by a new layer of managers for whom questions of cost took precedence over clinical priorities. Non-medical services were outsourced to private contractors, resulting in the wholesale transfer of lower grades of

NHS staff to the private sector (the number of people directly employed dropped by more than 40 per cent between 1981 and 1991).

The care remit of hospitals – the most expensive element of health provision – was redefined, so that long-term care was shifted into the private sector. Under the provisions of the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act, responsibility for long-term residential care was transferred to councils, who were then obliged to spend 85 per cent of the funding available on private residential provision. Free dental provision was eroded by capping the funding available, with the result that most dentists stopped taking on adult NHS patients. The balance of power was shifted to primary care, with patients and GPs seen as “customers” for services they were encouraged to think of in terms of consumer choice.

The privatisation of acute healthcare was a problem for political reasons and because few private acute hospitals provided the full range of services available under the NHS, as profitability lay in routine surgical operations with minimal inpatient requirements. The Private Finance Initiative (subsequently Public-Private Partnership) addressed this by putting the building and staffing of new hospitals in the hands of private consortia and requiring the NHS to lease the services on terms as profitable to the private companies as they were costly to the taxpayer. As with long-term care, “the real key to privatisation was diverting public funds to for-profit companies.”

Leys deliberately refrains from offering solutions: “It seems best...to leave conclusions to be drawn by the reader.” Although he is, of course, within his rights to do so, it smacks of an abdication of responsibility after the lucid and cogent manner in which he has outlined and developed his theme in the preceding chapters. He does, however, insist that despite changes to class identity and structure, class politics will be central to any opposition to the globalising project.

This is a timely contribution to the anti-capitalist movement, coming at a time when striking postal workers are facing union-busting managers, job cuts, commercialisation and the threat to end the state monopoly: all, as Leys points out, pre-conditions to the privatisation of public services. All the arguments for safeguarding standards of working conditions and public service, resisting market forces and fighting for working class control of postal services.

And the striking post workers also provide the key to solving the problem that Leys leaves to the reader: rank and file control,

The NHS presented a far bigger challenge to the privatisers than did the BBC, due to its monolithic status, its efficiency – it provides better care than the US private system at a third of the cost – and its high level of popularity

militant strike action, backed up by a public campaign of solidarity involving the whole of the working class. Only that can prevent the eventual privatisation of the BBC, NHS, Royal Mail, and reverse the disasters on the rail and elsewhere.

Reformism breaks

Sean Murray looks at the history of the Second International and draws the lessons for what kind of International we need today

The Second International was founded from disparate political forces – the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), various reformist and mass trade unions. Under the guidance and advice of Frederick Engels, the Marxists triumphed over the reformists. But the reformists were not excluded from the new international. See – The first mass global gathering – January 2003) Stuart King, *Workers Power* 271.

Indeed, the whole history of the Second International was to be a struggle between these forces. The leading Marxists – August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Karl Kautsky – at first seemed to act as the guardians of “orthodoxy”. But by the new century – as imperialism, the threat of global war and the growth of bureaucracy in the workers movement posed new problems – this orthodoxy became a cover for reformist practice. This had disastrous consequences for the International. A younger generation not only defended what was correct and principled in “orthodoxy” but renewed and developed Marxist theory and practice to meet the above challenges. Unknowingly they were laying the foundations of yet another new International.

The early years

The Second International ended the national isolation of socialist organisations after the collapse of the First International (1864-1874). During this period powerful socialist parties in many European countries – particularly the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) – had emerged.

The SPD had been subject to repressive anti-socialist laws. Thousands of party members were jailed or were thrown out of their jobs. From 1878 to 1890, all its public activity (except the right to stand in elections) was banned. Yet the party maintained an illegal organisation: apparently harmless “front” organisations, such as singing and sports clubs were used to win workers to socialism and group them around the underground party.

The Social Democrats smuggled into Germany from Switzerland a Marxist newspaper. And, despite the best efforts of the police, the party's influence grew dramatically. During 12 years of illegality its share of the vote rose from 7 per cent to 19 per cent. In the same period the party became more and more overtly Marxist. Its leading theoretician Karl Kautsky – who worked with Engels in London during the 1880s – ran a journal that spread Marxist ideas and developed theory not only for Germany but across the continent.

The German party had enormous prestige and became, informally, the leading party in the Second International. The smaller socialist parties in Europe looked for the support of a powerful international movement to help them follow in the SPD's footsteps. The founding conference of the international in 1889 had only raised the questions such as: what was the role of parliamentary elections, of the trade unions, of direct action? Subsequent congresses – Brussels in 1891, Zurich in 1893 and London in 1896 – Attempted to answer them.

Political action and the struggle with anarchism

The struggle against anarchism waged by Marx and Engels in the First International was to continue in the first four congresses of the second. The struggle centred around, the question of “political action”

– should socialists stand for parliament and once elected there should they propose measures achievable under capitalism, i.e. reforms, or should they limit themselves, as the anarchists suggested, to “direct action”.

The appeal of direct action was a strong one. Not only was there a tradition in favour of it in many countries in Europe, there was also the living memory of barricades and street fighting, from the revolutions of 1848, to the Paris Commune of 1871.

The anarchists, however, did not understand that the tactics of insurrection were made possible by deep socio-economic crises and a revolutionary situation not the other way around. Revolutions could not be manufactured by the “propaganda of the deed”. In most countries in Europe in the period 1889 to 1903 there was nothing approaching such revolutionary situations.

By wilfully ignoring elections and workers' eagerness for major social and political reforms the anarchists were reduced to propaganda circles, to individual terrorist acts (a tactic they borrowed from the Russian Populists) or eventually a variety of trade unionism (anarcho-sydicalism). Only the latter brought them near to achieving mass influence, in Spain, France and Italy.

Meanwhile, the SPD took up the issue of workers' rights and organised and built trade unions; it fought for universal suffrage for both men and women; it organised a women's movement and a youth movement; and it won hundreds of thousands of working class militants to the programme of Marxism.

Other socialist parties in the Second International were soon gaining similar successes by employing the same tactics. The Belgian socialists were solidly rooted in the trade unions and the cooperative movement, with 30 MPs. In 1886 they had unsuccessfully used the mass strike to try and win universal suffrage. A tactic they repeated with more success in 1893 and 1913 when universal suffrage (for men only) was finally won.

It was by being able to point to these real achievements and generalise the tactics and experiences of taking “political action”, that heavy blows were delivered to the Anarchists and Syndicalists.

The rise of reformism in the German SPD

When the anti-socialist laws were repealed in Germany in 1890, the SPD had the opportunity to meet and revise its programme. During the period of the anti-socialist laws a large left-wing opposition developed in the party that condemned parliamentary action as futile. But at the same time, the party's deputies in the Reichstag parliament became tribunes, denouncing the system, advocating socialism and fighting for reforms under capitalism.

Of course, few of these reforms were carried through by the Reichstag because of the right-wing majority. But the SPD was able to show by this very fact that socialism and working class power were needed to really achieve even these democratic and social gains. In elections and in parliament the SPD remained intransigently opposed to all the bourgeois parties: the Liberals, the Catholic Centre Party as well as the right. They refused any “progressive bloc” for elections with the left liberals and stood on an outright socialist platform.

The socialist goal and immediate demands (reforms) had to be reconciled, and this culminated in the Erfurt programme, which was adopted in 1891. The programme was divided into two parts, the first outlining a theory of capitalism and



The Amsterdam Congress – 1904

the goal of working class power and socialising the economy. The second part laid down a series of far-reaching immediate aims that the SPD would try to win with in the framework of capitalist society. The former came to be known as the maximum programme and the latter the minimum programme.

The synthesis of the two ideas, reform and revolution, would hold as long as the workers could meet some of its immediate needs and was not driven to revolt.

It was in the south of Germany, where the liberals were stronger than the conservatives that reformism first appeared in strength and the revolutionary aspects of the programme were toned down as the party tried to win small landowning peasants to the party. But this reformism was soon to spread to the Trade Unions in an even more dangerous form.

With the lifting of the anti-socialist laws the SPD increased its efforts to organise the working class into unions. A tendency grew within the party that was in favour of watering down the programme of the party in an attempt to win workers to the trade unions. With economic expansion the second half of the 1890s the danger became more acute. The apparatus of full-time officials in the unions grew bigger and bigger. The leader of the unions Karl Legien swung towards the reformist right wing of the party.

The unions became large and wealthy organisations. The bureaucracy, unlike the party's left wing, saw its success in terms of collective agreements and the improvements in wages and conditions it achieved for its members – not in terms of organising the working class for revolution. Inevitably the interest of union leaders and the better-paid union members became more closely identified with capitalism. Reformism had developed powerful social roots that Engels and Marx had not foreseen.

Against this background, Eduard Bernstein put forward a theoretical justification for the party's increasingly reformist practice. A debate broke out in the SPD, the result which was to have a profound effect on the International's trajectory.

Bernstein summed up his views in *The Presuppositions of Socialism and the Tasks of Social Democracy*, published in 1899. He rejected Marx's view that capitalism was doomed to ever more deepening crises, believing capitalism promised growth and stability.

He said, “I cannot believe in a final aim of socialism. But I strongly believe in the socialist movement, in the march forward of the working classes, who step by step must work out their emancipation by changing society from the domain of a commercial landholding oligarchy to a real democracy... the goal is nothing, the movement everything.” He urged the SPD to direct all its resources to winning government and they would have the support of a large section of the bourgeoisie if they dropped their revolutionary phraseology.

Rosa Luxemburg – a young Jewish Marxist from Poland – was his sharpest revolutionary critic. She replied to him in the pamphlet, *Reform or Revolution*: “People who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place of and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modification of the old society.”

She pointed out that fighting for reforms would prepare the working class for revolution, not by their success, but by their failure. The very nature of capitalist society made fundamental alteration to society

the International

impossible by reformist means, and this would make the necessity for the seizure of political power by revolutionary means clear to the working class.

Bernstein and revisionist ideas were formally condemned at the German SPD's Hanover Congress in 1899, and again at the Dresden congress of 1903 by an alliance of the left wing and the party leadership. But they party did so by appealing to the traditional principles and practice of the party, not by clarifying how the fight for reforms was linked to the need for revolution.

The growth of reformism internationally

Revisionism and reformism were two growing international trends and were the main debates at the Paris congress in 1900, and Amsterdam in 1904.

In France too socialists saw their support and representation in parliament grow. A constitutional crisis hit the French government in 1897. The ruling class was split over the trial of a Jewish army officer, Dreyfus, who had been framed as a German spy by the more reactionary wing of the capitalist class. French socialist leaders like Jean Jaurès rushed to the defence of Dreyfus and were criticised from the left for spending too much time on the affair, which after all was a fight among the ruling class.

In 1899 the socialists who had allied themselves with the bourgeois supporters of Dreyfus found themselves in an even more difficult position. A new government was formed and the liberal wing of the ruling class was looking for support to defend the French Republic from the right wing. Alexandre Millerand, a leading socialist, accepted the position of Minister of Commerce. The Minister of War in the same government was General Gallifet, the man who bloodily suppressed the Paris Commune in 1871!

All over Europe, the growing strength of the socialist parties in the 1890s was accompanied by growing reformist practices and compromise.

When the fifth congress of the International opened in Paris in September 1900, Jules Guesde, leader of the French orthodox Marxists, and the Italian, Enrico Ferri, wanted to condemn any participation in capitalist governments, in any circumstances. They held that the workers' party cannot share power with a bourgeois party simply because it has some tactical points in common.

They argued that the rest of such a "progressive" government's policies defended and strengthened capitalism. Participation would mean socialist ministers taking collective responsibility for crushing strikes, increasing workers' taxes, supporting militarism and colonialism and ultimately war – calling on workers in uniform to shoot

their proletarian brothers in the opposing army. Such a sell out of fundamental principles for short-term gains was the rankist opportunism.

Guesde pointed out that "with an Italian Millerand, a German Millerand, and an English Millerand there would be no International possible any more". But there were many who wanted just such an opportunist policy. Belgian leader Emile Vandervelde put the case that a "coalition is legitimate in the case where liberty is threatened as in Italy; it is legitimate again when it is a question of defending the rights of the human personality as recently as France (Dreyfus). It is legitimate finally when it is a question of winning universal suffrage as in Belgium."

Karl Kautsky presented a resolution on behalf of the German delegation that aimed at compromising these two irreconcilable positions. This allowed socialists, as an exceptional, temporary measure, to enter a capitalist government. But it also condemned Millerand because his actions in joining the government before his actions were approved by the party. The left rightly called this an "India rubber resolution" that could be stretched to cover anything.

The decision was a victory for the "centre" around August Bebel and Kautsky. Neither the left nor the right obtained what they wanted. But, as we will see, Kautsky's "exceptional, temporary measure" was the gap through which the majority was to stampe during the extreme "exception" of an imperialist war. Their excuse was that of the necessity of the defence of the republic or fatherland or even of the workers' organisations themselves.

Also at the Paris congress an International Bureau of representatives of the leading parties was appointed and provided with its own secretariat and offices in Brussels. Emile Vandervelde was its first President. Great hopes were placed in this new leadership of the International. As it became more active and held regular meetings attended by the leading socialists of Europe, it was hoped the ISB would become a real general staff of the revolution.

It soon became clear, however, that in practice its functions were strictly limited because the biggest parties of the International had no intention of submitting their tactical decisions to the vote of an international body. All it could do in practice was to co-ordinate the activities of the individual member parties and promote unification in those countries where there were several competing parties.

At the next congress in Amsterdam in 1904, Bebel and Jaurès debated the issue of revisionism in front of the congress. Jules Guesde presented a motion that had been passed at the German SPD congress the year before. The argument took four days, three in a sub-committee and one full day in front of the entire congress. In the end the motion was passed.

It correctly condemned the revisionists saying the results of their tactics would mean the International would end up being content with a reformed capitalism. It restated the position of 1900 that the parties of the International should not participate in capitalist governments and should use their position in parliament to fight for social and democratic rights and to argue for socialism.

Those in favour of the motion used the debate in Germany around Bernstein and revisionism for their defence and as a justification for their policy. But just as in Germany the year before the International was not clear on how the fight for reforms was connected to the struggle for power and the need for a revolution to overthrow capitalism. This separation was never overcome and would be the source of future conflicts.

The mass strike

In 1902 the Belgian working class launched a general strike in an effort to win universal suffrage. In 1903, the Dutch labour movement utilised the same weapon to combat anti-union laws that severely limited the right to strike.

The Amsterdam congress of 1904 rejected the position that the general strike was "the most effective means to achieve the triumph of labour" and warned the socialist world against being "taken in by the anarchists". Yet the congress recognised that a "strike which spreads over a few economically important trades or over a large number of branches of a trade, may be a means of bringing about important social changes, or of opposing reactionary designs on the workers". This was a step forward. At previous congresses the German leadership had declared that the general strike was "not for discussion". But it remained vague and was never implemented.

The Russian revolution of 1905 shook the world. It showed in practice how a mass strike could be used to achieve revolutionary aims. It revived the debate in the sections of the International about the tactics of seizing power. It placed the question of working class power before the eyes of the world. It also provided ammunition to the small revolutionary wings of various parties to fight against reformist practices and especially the growing union bureaucracy who were only interested in calling strikes over immediate, economic questions. Such was the effect of the Russian revolution that in the following two years strike waves were common all over the world.

Socialism and war

At the same time the rivalries between the European powers were increasing. War, never off the agenda of the International, was becoming a more immediate issue. In France, in discussions over war, the issue of the mass strike was constantly raised. War was to be the central issue at the Stuttgart congress of 1907.

Gustave Hervé proposed a motion, that he had moved at the French congress the year before, that any declaration of war should be met with a revolt and a general strike. He also used the occasion to attack the growing bureaucracy of the German movement.

Bebel tried to maintain that there was no need to discuss the question any further because it had been dealt with at previous congresses. Of course all the previous resolutions were useless because they did not require any action to be taken by any of the sections of the International. Vandervelde stressed that the movement was now an international one, "on which the sun never set", and more had to be done other than stating that war was inherent to

capitalism and that popular militias had to replace standing armies – the position from the first congress.

Lenin and Luxemburg, drawing on the experience of the Russian revolution of 1905, realised that a European war would weaken the machinery of the capitalist state and give socialists the opportunity to make a successful revolution. Luxemburg urged that agitation, insurrection and strikes on the outbreak of war should not only be aimed at ending the war, but the overthrow of class rule.

Out of the debate emerged a resolution that contained something for everyone while committing no one to anything. It was adopted unanimously.

The resolution stated that war was inherent to capitalism; that the working class and its organisations should provide neither a penny nor a man for the capitalist war machine; it was in favour of the abolition of standing armies and for their replacement with popular militias; that the International couldn't say what action to take against wars as it would be different in each country; that the International should work for peace and disarmament; if a war should break out it is the duty of the working class and its representatives to hasten the end of the war and the end of capitalist rule. It was wholly inadequate as events were to prove.

The outbreak of war in the Balkans in the summer of 1912 sent the alarm bells ringing in the International. The International Bureau met to decide what action to take. An emergency congress was held in Basle, Switzerland. More than 550 representatives from 23 different socialist groups assembled. Nearly all the leaders of the international socialist movement were there.

Speech after speech painted the horrors of war and affirmed the strength of the working class to stop it. There were many more hollow sounding speeches such as one from a Dutch delegate, who said that: "The proletariat of the small countries stands with it positions and its blood at the disposal of the international for anything it decides in order to banish war." The problem was it didn't decide to do anything.

On the 29 June 1914, Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. After an initial expectation that war would break out, the whole of Europe heaved a sigh of relief when the Austrian government remained silent. But three weeks later an ultimatum was issued to Serbia – the Austrian government was bent on war.

The German government announced it would stand by its Austrian ally, and it prepared for war, as did the rest of the European powers.

The International Bureau was summoned to meet on 29 July. The socialist lead-



Rosa Luxemburg

ers of the world cut short their summer holidays and rushed either to Brussels or home. Demonstrations against war were held all over Europe. No specific action was called by the International. Most of the time was taken up with the call for a Congress to discuss "the War and the Proletariat".

In Berlin, the SPD members in the Reichstag met. In the years since 1907 the trade union bureaucracy had increased its hold over the party leadership. It had long since made its peace with capitalism and was willing to suspend the class struggle and join the war effort.

On 4 August the SPD members in the Reichstag voted for war credits and with that, international solidarity was shattered. When the others socialist parties followed suit, the Second International was no more. Europe embarked upon the bloodiest war in history where millions of working class men and women fought each other on behalf of the capitalist class.

"With an Italian Millerand, a German Millerand, and an English Millerand there would be no International possible any more." How right Jules Guesde had been in 1900. The forces of reformism had triumphed in the international and now the working class would pay a heavy price.

The lessons for today

Today there is a burning need for a new International, a world party of social revolution that organises and co-ordinates the struggle against capitalism – a Fifth International.

The Second International proved beyond doubt that political struggle, trade union action, electoral campaigning and wide-scale agitation and propaganda can rally mass forces to working class parties everywhere. Like the Second, a Fifth International must use the techniques of mass political action.

The new International must have a common programme of action too, but the programme can not repeat the mistakes of the past and be divided in to a maximum (socialism) and a minimum (immediate reforms) programme. It must overcome this divide, that proved to be a cover for reformism in the Second International, and bridge the gap with an action programme that takes up the immediate needs of the working class and relates them to the need for working class power.

But never again can we repeat the fatal error of tolerating reformist officials and careerist place-seekers in our ranks. Bureaucracy, national chauvinism, parliamentary or trade union reformism will all mean bloody defeat for the anti-capitalist movement and have to be fought at every opportunity. But the main lesson we have to learn from the Second International is that the only way forward is the seizure of power and the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the working class.



Bernstein and Kautsky after the destruction of the Second International

Revolution in Bolivia

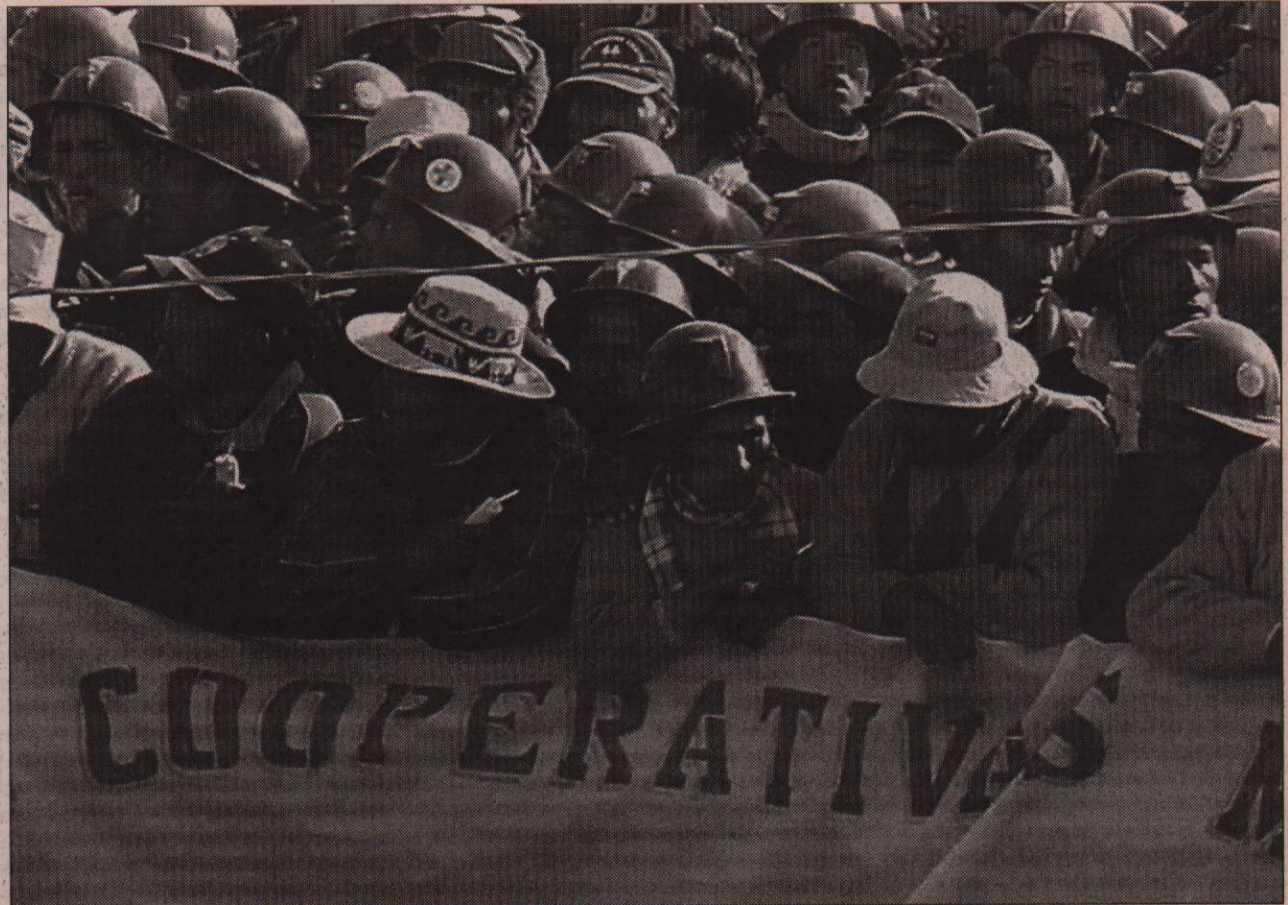
Yet another Latin American president has been forced to flee before the wrath of his people, this time in Bolivia, the scene of many historic revolutions. After more than a month of mass protests, a general strike by the main trade unions and a virtual state of insurrection in the poor barrios of El Alto, above La Paz, President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada resigned and fled to Miami on 17th October. *David Ellis* relates the story of a remarkable month and examines the question, What next?

De Lozada (Goni) is the fourth South American president to be forced from office by a popular rebellion in the past three years joining Alberto Fujimori of Peru, Jamil Mahuad of Ecuador and Fernando de la Rúa of Argentina. The wave of popular protest against the effects of neo-liberalism in this crisis wracked continent should give new heart to anti-capitalist militants worldwide.

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the region but has Latin America's second-biggest reserves of natural gas. President Sanchez de Lozada planned to privatise the industry and export it to the US and Mexico via Chile. Since he was elected last year with only 22.5 per cent support Sanchez de Lozada has faced mounting opposition to his neo-liberal policies.

The gas deal became the focus of opposition with the mass of the people angrily rejecting the sell-off. They knew that the profits would end up with a handful of rich Bolivians with ties to Goni and the British and Spanish multi-nationals waiting to take charge of Bolivia's gas deposits. The Bolivian people would receive a pittance.

During the struggle, the central federation of trade unions - COB - called for nationalisation of the gas industry as a prerequisite for any contracts to sell the gas. The mass of workers and peasants began to raise other demands including higher wages, better pensions, comprehensive land redistribution and Bolivia's withdrawal from the planned Free Trade Area of the Americas. But it is not just hostility to the gas plan that spurred on the protests. Among the most militant of the protesters are coca-growing peasants in the central Chapare region, who have been radicalised by US-backed attempts to eradicate their crop as part of Washington's "war on drugs". These farmers have been led by Evo Morales, a congressman and leader of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), who came second to Goni in last year's presidential elections.



Bolivian miners march on La Paz with sticks of dynamite in their hands

On 19 September, 150,000 people demonstrated in La Paz and other main cities rejecting the privatisation and sale of gas. Jaime Solares, leader of the COB, gave the government one month to annul the privatisation decrees and threatened a general strike. For some days prior to this, the peasants of the Warisata region, organised in the militant CSUTCB (Rural Workers Union) led by Felipe Quispe, had been blockading highways in the region demanding the

release of imprisoned peasant activists, as well as protesting against the gas sell-off. The president ordered the removal of the blockades and the army killed six peasants, among them a little girl. The massacre unleashed a rebellion of the peasants, who responded in their thousands, blocking roads throughout the whole Altiplano (High Plateau) region, effectively blockading the capital La Paz. On 29 September the COB called a general strike. The movement

spread, with increasing support for the general strike and the road blockades. Many times the army tried to break the blockade of La Paz but failed.

On 11 October demonstrators and the police were involved in pitched battles for the control of the La Paz-El Alto highway, where the international airport is. Despite the use of light tanks and helicopters no trucks were able to leave carrying gasoline or fuel. The struggle reached a high point

An action programme for Bolivia

The COB has put forward a list of demands that it wants the government to implement. These include:

"Cancellation of the law that establishes privatisation of the gas industry.

Cancellation of the agrarian law that aims to sell-off the peasants land. Redistribution of the land and respect for the communitarian property of the indigenous peasants.

Restitution of the social rights of the Bolivian workers with immediate cancellation of free hiring and firing.

Reactivation of national production, rejection of free commerce established by the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement

No impunity for the October butchers: bring to justice those who ordered the attack on the Bolivian population that raised itself in defence of the natural resources and democracy."

These are good, immediate demands on the government, but only if they are fought for in a militant manner. The COB must immediately give an ultimatum to the new government that it implements the demands of the mass organisations without delay. If the government does not meet these demands then the COB, CSUTCB and the MAS must organise a general strike and blockades to force it to do so, or to bring down the government.

But workers and peasants must not wait for their leaders. The fight for workers' control in the mines, factories and offices must start now, while the bosses are still reeling. The unemployed must copy Argentina's piqueteros and continue the devastating tactic of road blockades. Peasants must not wait for land reforms, but occupy estates and demand the legalisation of the squats.

Should a fresh struggle threaten the stability of his government, Mesa may consider inviting in some of the leaders of the mass organisations to form a provisional government. The workers and peasants must demand that not one of their leaders enter such a government. Felipe Quispe remark that "We are not going to be with the executive, we are always going to be in opposition" is absolutely right. There must be intransigent opposition to any regime until a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government set up.

Nor should the masses be bought off with a constituent assembly. The organisations of the Bolivian masses have already shown they can control the cities and streets - so why not take control of Bolivia! There will be no capitalist government, even a "left" one, that will guarantee the implementation of the masses' demands. Only the workers and peasants relying on their own revolutionary struggle and power can guarantee that. In order to end the desperate poverty of the



Protests about the sale of natural gas resources sparked the revolution

people, to end unemployment, to bring about a real agrarian revolution, to ensure that the indigenous people win national rights, to cancel the payments on foreign debt and to end the neo-liberal economic policies - the workers and peasants must take power.

To do this they must first establish their own organs of power. The experience of the councils in El Alto shows the way forward.

Hundreds of neighbourhood councils (juntas) have been convened and united into a city-wide body, the FEJUVE. The FEJUVE, in turn, organised a Community General Command along with the COR (the regional organisation of the COB) and the CSUTCB, as a co-ordinating body.

This situation must be reproduced all across the country. Workers' councils must

be convened in every town and city and poor peasants' councils in the countryside. There must be a national congress of delegates from these councils. This would be the start of a real alternative power to the neo-liberal government.

Faced with such a challenge the Bolivian ruling class will not roll over and die. They will use the army and the police to try to crush the movement. The example of the self-defence brigades in El Alto must be taken up. Self-defence organisations must be formed all over the country and co-ordinated at a national level. The juntas and brigades must immediately start agitating among rank and file police and soldiers to organise them against their officers and to win them to refuse to carry out any orders where they are sent to attack the mass movement.

Many of the COB and CSUTCB leaders claim to be for a revolution and for power to pass into the hands of the workers and peasants. They even talk about the need for a revolutionary party. But to say you are for a revolution is not enough. To form a revolutionary government the vanguard of the Bolivian workers must create their own revolutionary party that will not hesitate to destroy the power of the ruling class, disarm the capitalist state. A revolutionary government, based on the juntas, will dissolve the capitalist government, take the factories, mines and transport from the capitalists and place them in the hands of the workers, take the land from the big landowners and give it to the poor peasants and set about spreading the revolutionary struggle of Bolivia across its borders.

- Break the truce with Mesa's government
- Workers in all industries - fight for

The workers and peasants must take power

in El Alto, a city near La Paz, with a population of 750,000 who are mainly Aymara indigenous people. The military and police attacked El Alto on 12 October in an attempt to break the blockade of La Paz. It was reported that 25 civilians and an army conscript were killed. The conscript soldier was shot dead by his commanding officer for refusing to fire on the protestors, some of whom were armed only with sticks, stones, and slingshots.

As in Warisata, the population of El Alto responded to this vicious crackdown. Over 500 local neighbourhood councils (juntas) of the workers and the poor were formed. These councils united across the city into the Federation of Neighbourhood Councils (FEJUVE). In the face of constant harassment and murders suffered at the hands of the government forces, the FEJUVE instructed its members to form "Armed Self-Defence Brigades" composed of volunteers armed with "Molotov bombs and explosive bombs".

This level of resistance and organisation terrified the ruling class. Not only were the workers and peasants organising self-defence but now there were signs that sections of the army and police were refusing to fire on demonstrators. At one point the government announced the detention of seven policemen accused of organising an alleged mutiny. The coalition government began to unravel with various parties jumping ship.

By now the miners' columns, who had marched for days, reaching the outskirts of La Paz, were blocked by army tanks. But, armed with sticks of dynamite, they declared that they would not return to their mines and would fight and die if necessary. The army was forced to allow them to march into La Paz. On Friday, 17 October, 50,000 people took to the streets; they chanted "Rifle, lead, the people won't keep quiet" and "Goni, bastard, up against the wall"; by the evening Goni had fled to Miami handing power to his vice-president.

workers' control over production, hiring and conditions now. Unemployed workers - build blockades, occupy against plant closures, demand work or pay. Peasants and landless - step up land invasions and squats. Unify the struggles through workers' councils

- Repeal all laws on the privatisation and sale of gas abroad; nationalise the industries responsible for extraction and distribution under workers control; let the people decide how to use the country's natural resources
- End the US-directed campaign of coca eradication! All US troops, bases and advisers out of Bolivia! For an agrarian revolution putting the land into the hands of the peasant communities and cancelling the debts of the poor peasants
- Repudiate of the foreign debt; end all privatisations; reject IMF austerity programmes
- Build workers and peasants joint defence brigades to repel the police and army attacks. Bring the killers to justice. Release all those arrested during the protests
- Build workers' and poor peasants' councils in all towns and cities to co-ordinate and control the resistance. For a national congress of the councils
- For a workers' and poor peasants' government based on the councils and protected by self-defence brigades
- For a revolutionary workers party that will resolutely lead the fight for the workers and peasants to take power
- For a workers' and peasants' Bolivia as part of a United Socialist States of Latin America.

Even while the Bolivian workers and peasants were still celebrating the fall of President Sanchez de Lozada, the Bolivian ruling class was already plotting to deny the people the fruits of their victory. The lessons of Argentina should stand as a clear warning as to what will happen if the masses fail to seize the current revolutionary opportunity.

Vice President Carlos Mesa, a media millionaire and political independent, was sworn in as the new president as Goni made his get away. He has distanced himself from the main political parties in an attempt to create a government of national unity and has given ministerial posts to so-called technocrats who are, in fact, neo-liberals. Mesa immediately pledged to hold "a binding referendum" on the exploitation of Bolivia's natural gas. He also proposed early elections to form a constituent assembly. He asked for the main organisations involved in the struggle to call a truce and created a new ministry of indigenous affairs - hoping no doubt to demobilise one of the most militant sectors of struggle.

Lula, the President of Brazil, quickly telephoned Mesa and "put the Brazilian government at the disposition of the new president". The Brazilian leader and President Kirchner of Argentina have sent two international envoys to try to mediate between the government, opposition parties and civil organisations.

These capitalist statesmen are offering negotiations and concessions to stem the revolt of the Bolivian masses. But neither this nor a reshuffle of leading politicians must be allowed to demobilise the protests. Already the streets of La Paz are reported to be "calm" as the coca farmers return to their farms and the main national organisations of the Bolivian workers and peasants have indeed called a truce.

Disgracefully, Evo Morales of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) said that "time has come to give enough time and space to the president to take over the command of the country, without any social or political pressure". The COB met on 18 October, the day after the fall of Goni, and called off the general strike. After the COB meeting, its general secretary, Solares, paid a visit to the new president. But instead of demanding the government fulfils the workers' demands within a given period of time and declaring his complete mistrust of the new government he adopted a conciliatory line, stating afterwards, "We have said that he will have our support as long as he fights boldly against corruption, because we should not forget that this has greatly damaged the country." Solares went on to say that the president had shown interest in the points raised and that the doors of the government palace are open to the COB leaders.

The leader of the peasant federation CSUTCB, Felipe Quispe, at least had the merit of setting a deadline. He has given Mesa 90 days to solve the demands of the Indian



Evo Morales of the MAS

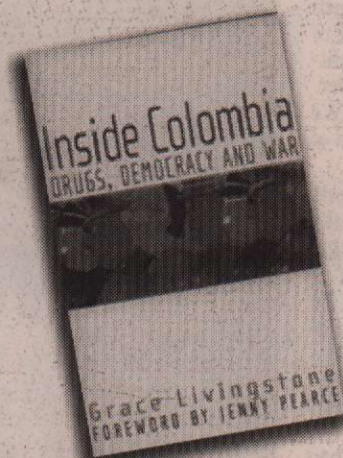
peasants or otherwise he will "call an uprising with the aim of taking power".

Yet the decision to privatise the gas, the very reason for the uprising in the first place, has not been reversed by Mesa and may still go ahead. The Bolivian legal establishment is already saying that any referendum would not be "constitutional". The decision to give Mesa time is a betrayal of the Bolivian workers and peasants by their leadership. Why do they need to give the government time to organise? Mesa and the Bolivian ruling class will only use this time to demobilise the masses so they can regroup and launch a counter-attack to implement their neo-liberal economic policies and austerity plans. The ruling class may give temporary concessions here and there, it may even call a constituent assembly and fresh elections but it will only do so in order to bide its time for a new assault against the workers and peasants.

The latest statements from Mesa and his ministers already show the ruling class view the decision to call off the general strike and blockades as a sign of weakness. Mesa has insisted that the export of gas must go ahead and has not set a date for the referendum. Economy Minister, Javier Cuevas, has confirmed that the new government will not stray from the economic programme set down by the IMF and agreed to by Sanchez de Lozada. Now Mesa, far from handing over power to a constituent assembly, is even suggesting he should complete his term of office until 2007. Meanwhile the Washington Post ran an article advising the State Department to reach out to Morales and the MAS and make some concessions to the coca farmers. Morales, they said, was a man Washington could do business with, likening him to Lula in Brazil.

The decision by the leaders of the main workers and peasants organisations to make a truce with Mesa shows that the Bolivian workers need a new political leadership: a leadership that is not prepared to give the Bolivian ruling class time to regroup; a leadership that knows the only solution for the masses in Bolivia is for the workers and peasants to take power - in short, a revolutionary leadership. The best and most politically conscious class fighters must come together to form a revolutionary workers party.

REVIEW *Inside Colombia. Drugs, Democracy and War* by Grace Livingstone



by Pablo Rodriguez

If you ask a Colombian about her/his country's violent past and present, s/he will most likely tell you that no-one really has a tangible concept of the word "peace" and that - as in a Garcia Marquez novel - no-one now really knows why or how it all began.

However, that isn't quite true. The imperialist machine knows both why and how. In fact, in the 180 years since independence was won from the Spaniards, the imperialist powers have ground down its population, enslaving it in a cycle of poverty and oppression, and perversely vilifying its attempts at resistance as the cause for the acute crisis that the country suffers. Never mind David Blaine, capitalism's illusion on the cause of Colombia's poverty and deprivation is without equal.

Colombia is perhaps the economically richest country in the United States' self-proclaimed and forcibly submissive "backyard". With vast expanses of virgin rainforest, huge reserves of coal, oil, gas and minerals as well as the 'traditional' exports of coffee and cocaine, it is valuable booty indeed for the imperialist leaders and the local capitalists. It is no coincidence that Colombia is the third-largest recipient of US military aid, since over two-thirds of the country lies on potentially oil-bearing sedimentary basins, as well as being the world's leading exporter of emeralds and cocaine. It all adds up to make Colombia a far too important to be allowed self-determination. The fact that this exploitation takes the day-to-day form of mass displacements, massacres, ethnic cleansing, trade union victimisation, worker and peasant oppression and social exclusion is something that is lost in the avalanche of fabrication and rhetoric that is the "war on terror" and the "fight for freedom".

Anyone who has any doubt about imperialism's true aims - not only in Colombia, but in other semi-colonial countries - would do well to read Grace Livingstone's "Inside Colombia. Drugs, Democracy and War" as an introductory piece that delves into the humanitarian side of the conflict and, whilst relying far too heavily on official "statistics", provides a good factual overview of Colombia today. As it is, Livingstone's prosaic approach is politically effective, despite these drawbacks, because of the sheer weight of the evidence she brings to bear on the question.

Livingstone links the US foreign policy and the intervention of multinational corporations to the misery suffered by millions in Colombia and Latin America as a whole, and dedicates an entire chapter to that bastion of American imperialism: Plan Colombia. She states, "The USA's redesign of Plan Colombia turned it...into a battle plan." Indeed, the USA's dirty paw print can be found on almost every page of the Colombian conflict. And with Plan Colombia its hidden hand seeks to write new chapters.

Plan Colombia comes in at a cost of \$7.5bn (\$4bn from the Colombian people themselves, mainly through extensive privatisation programmes). Its alarmingly contradictory full title is "Plan for Peace, Prosperity and the

Strengthening of the (Colombian) State." It calls for "tough austerity and adjustment measures" and the strengthening of the state's repressive forces in order to seize the natural resources and quell resistance. Unfortunately, although Livingstone agrees that Plan Colombia is an extension and intensification of the billions of dollars in military spending that have been channelled into Latin America, she fails to make the connection with the plan being the usual American attempt at flexing its military muscle to fulfil economic aims: in this case the establishment of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA).

The US sees Colombia as being one of the focal points for anti-imperialist insurgency. As they pave the way for the introduction of the FTAA - a long term plan that seeks to turn Latin America into a giant sweatshop - they believe success there would go a long way towards "persuading" neighbouring countries that the FTAA is the continent's economic destiny, as well as securing the riches that so many multinational corporations covet.

Livingstone accurately says that much of Plan Colombia's fumigation and eradication of illicit coca crops, all in the name of the war on drugs, is nothing more than the privatisation of warfare with the spoils being distributed between MNCs, local capitalists and illegal paramilitary groups. Contracts for fumigation have been handed out (Monsanto being the main recipient) with large tracts of land being cleared for biotech and GMO companies to then plant and test their crops.

DynCorp was awarded a \$170m contract to fly fumigation planes and military helicopters. Oppression is big business. And before you naively begin to think that Britain is exempt, bear in mind that in this war-for-business campaign against the Colombian people, BP, the largest foreign company in Colombia, is known to actively use paramilitary groups to protect its oil installations and enforce draconian working conditions. It has regularly passed on intelligence and photos to the armed forces and paramilitaries who have then kidnapped, tortured and murdered opposition campaigners and trade unionists.

Livingstone provides a great deal of first-hand testimony to show the human cost of the Colombian conflict. The first chapter - dedicated to human rights abuses by the army, paramilitaries and, to provide some balance, the guerrillas - is a strong humanitarian appeal made in the name of the "thousands of families (that) now live in grim poverty... in slums, having lost their homes and possessions". She realises that further militarisation will not provide answers, but "further embroil civilians in the war." Indeed, Livingstone exposes the collusion between the paramilitary groups and the armed forces.

However, she subsequently fails to explain that the Colombian government finds paramilitary groups of great help due to their unaccountability and illegality, and allows them to carry out its dirty work unchallenged. In fact she sets the tone for the entire book by repeatedly quoting various human rights reports on Colombia, falling way short of commenting that these organisations are themselves tainted by their dependence on multinationals and those governments which benefit directly from the exploitation of Colombia's riches.

And that is the general feeling throughout the book. As an introductory guide to current events in Colombia it is solid in its facts and reporting and, beyond that, Livingstone clearly understands the nefarious inner collusions of the system. Unfortunately, she stops short of providing a political solution. In this way she fails to realise that the problems that have afflicted and continue to torment Colombia, and the rest of the oppressed peoples of the world are now so deeply rooted and overlapping that they can only be eradicated in the most dramatic of ways: an organised workers' and peasants' revolution.

Bush: not wanted in Iraq, not wanted in Britain

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George W Bush visits Britain this month for the first time since his conquest of Iraq and clearly hopes for a reception befitting his position as the new world emperor from his loyal vassal, Tony Blair. We should make sure that he receives a different kind of reception altogether.

There are 10,000 reasons to get out onto the streets and loudly condemn this tyrant's visit: that's the estimated number of civilians killed by the US/UK illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Estimated - because the invaders do not count the Iraqi dead. They merely shoot... and move on to the next victim.

Inevitably, this is producing a growing resistance to the New American Century - in Iraq, in the USA itself, and around the globe.

Donald Rumsfeld, the architect of the invasion, has been forced to admit that they are involved in "a long hard war... that is difficult and complicated".

The Iraqi adventure is looking more like Vietnam every day. When 16 US soldiers were killed and 20 more severely wounded in a missile attack on a Chinook helicopter early this month, Rumsfeld called it, "a tragic day for Americans".

These freedom fighters are not merely remnants of Saddam's Ba'athist regime, foreigners streaming in from Syria and Saudi Arabia, or fanatical supporters of al-Qa'ida. Some in the resistance may be. But the tens of thousands chanting, "Death to America!" - in the mounting protests for benefits, jobs and essential services as well as on religious processions - are not.

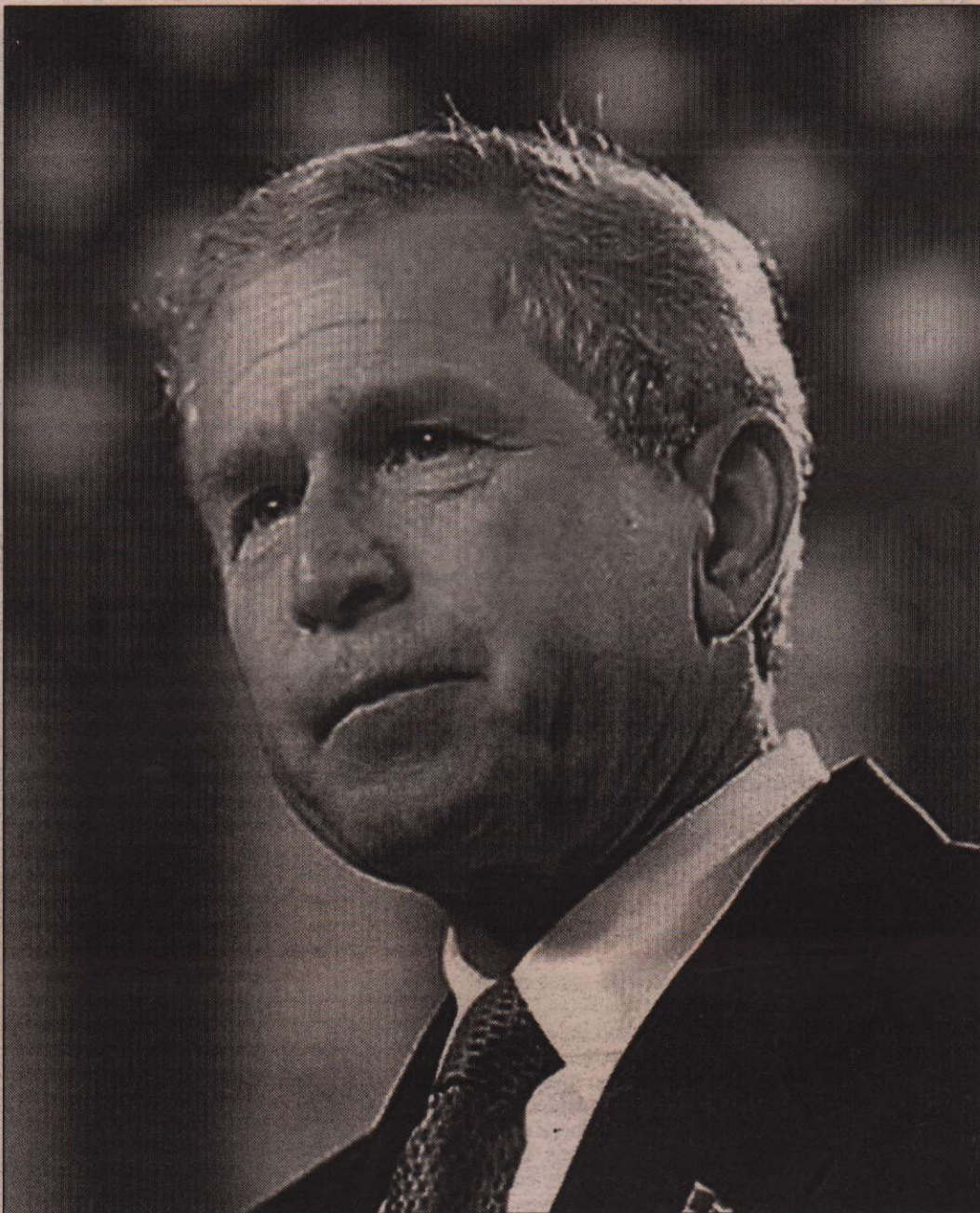
Indeed, the armed resistance is increasingly supported by a mass movement against the occupation. And that's not surprising.

Having promised "democracy" and "free elections", the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) has appointed a toothless - and hated - "Iraqi Governing Council" with a vague mandate to draft a constitution by an ever-receding deadline. This is a signal to the world and to the Iraqi people that the occupation will continue indefinitely, while its Iraqi collaborators provide it with a thin veneer of legitimacy in the duplicitous world of big-power diplomacy.

At the same time, Iraqi industry is to be privatised, sold off to the highest bidder from those countries that backed Bush and Blair's war, with the prize pickings going to the likes of Halliburton and the other close corporate buddies of Bush and his cronies in Washington DC. The Iraqi people, already suffering mass unemployment and economic devastation, will have the misery of redundancies and plant closures imposed in the name of "market forces" thrust upon them before any election has been called or any vote cast. To add insult to injury, the US-appointed dictator of Iraq,

Paul Bremer, has even announced that Israeli companies will be allowed access to the Iraqi market - and Iraqi oil - on an equal footing with firms from other countries. This juicy piece of diplomacy was announced just after the US had condoned Israel's unprovoked bombing of a disused Hizbollah training camp in Syria and her "apartheid wall" which will further ghettoise the Palestinians and steal even more of their land.

The celebrated "road map for peace" is looking more like the highway to state-sponsored terrorism and racist annexation every day; Bush's war for democracy more like a war for imperialist control of the Middle East.



The United Nation Security Council's recent vote to "legitimise" the occupation of Iraq will not change these facts. On the contrary, it will further de-legitimise the UN.

But, if Bush was hoping no one would be counting the Iraqi dead, he sure as hell now hopes people would stop counting the American casualties. The attack on the Chinook brought the total number of US soldiers killed after their president announced the end of major conflict to 138.

US Labor Against the War, a trade union initiative, has mushroomed in recent months, boosted by the support of soldiers' families alarmed at the lies surrounding both the lead-up to the war (the non-existent weapons of mass destruction) and the occupation itself.

Embarrassingly, last month, it was exposed that the US Army had sent near-identical upbeat letters to region-

al newspapers, supposedly signed by soldiers in Iraq, saying how well the war was going. Meanwhile, emails from the Sunni Triangle reveal an army confused as to why they are there, aware of widespread hostility to their presence and angry at the lies of their officers and government.

40,000 marched in Washington DC against the occupation at the end of October, chanting, "Bush says, Bring 'em on - we say, Bring 'em home!" The anti-war movement there is, if anything, stronger than it was back in the spring.

Indeed, Bush's popularity back home is waning fast - his approval rating has dropped to 45 per cent, same as it was prior to 9/11 - and here are some of the reasons why:

- George W Bush stole the presidency through a rigged election

- The US Patriot Act has removed basic civil liberties of the 10 million immigrants, while criminalising trade unionists, anti-capitalists, Muslims and anti-war activists
- He has outlawed more strikes than any previous president and used the fiercely anti-union Taft-Hartley Act to break strikes by airline workers and California dockers
- His anti-abortion stance threatens women's rights to control their own bodies
- In contrast to this deeply-held respect for the right to life, he supports the death penalty and, while Governor of Texas, signed death warrants for youth as young as 16.

Bush's record already condemns him in the eyes of millions as a criminal, a terrorist, an environmental polluter and a danger to the democratic rights of ordinary people.

Under his leadership, the United States has torn up the Kyoto protocol on global warming, while giving the green light to US multinationals to exploit and pollute the globe. It has insisted on immunity for its soldiers from prosecution for war crimes by the International Criminal Court, while imprisoning - and torturing without trial hundreds of captives from its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, according them neither prisoners of war status nor the due process of a fair trial.

That's why it's vitally important for tens of thousands to come down to London on Thursday, 20 November to drown out his every interview with the world's media, to ruin every photo-opportunity he and Blair try to stage-manage, to howl with derision at every triumphalist gesture he attempts. If students have to walk out of schools and colleges, if workers have to down tools to get there so be it!

Already Bush is said to be "disappointed" at the enforced cancellation of his coach-ride with the Queen and address to the House of Commons - cancellations, Downing Street has admitted, were due to the expected size of the demonstrations. Let's make him feel gutted by the time he leaves.

Remember, the whole world will be watching. This could make or break the next American president. Let's make a difference. Go for it!

**STOP BUSH
NATIONAL
DEMONSTRATION**

Thursday 20th Nov
Assemble: 2pm
Malet Street W1, Central London
(nearest tubes: Goodge Street, Russell Square and Euston/Euston Square)
March to Trafalgar Square

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