

Workers power

revolution
against
global
capitalism

British section of the League for the Fifth International

An anticapitalist challenge to New Labour - back page

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League for the
Fifth International

January 2004 ★ Price 50p / €1 www.workerspower.com Issue 282

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TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ BLAIR OUT OF OFFICE

Tony Blair and George Bush ended the year claiming two new triumphs in their "endless war".

First, US troops tracked down Saddam Hussein, publicly humiliating him on television. Then Blair announced that Colonel Gaddafi had bowed the knee and agreed to dismantle Libya's programmes for creating "weapons of mass destruction".

Neither of these "triumphs" will make the world, nor Iraq a safer - let alone a freer - place.

Saddam was, by the US occupiers' own admission, not co-ordinating the growing armed resistance to their rule in Iraq. So, his capture will not stop it; indeed, it may even encourage it as those who feared his return may now consider joining the resistance.

And while Gaddafi's climbdown shows the impact of the US/UK bullying tactics, Libya has not sponsored terrorism for many a long year. If anything, the humiliation suffered by another Arab nationalist strongman may boost Islamist movements in the region and across the world.

These announcements are mere smokescreens, designed to hide two undeniable truths:

- Iraq did not possess any significant weapons of mass destruction and Tony Blair lied through his teeth to get to war.
- The real terrorists in Iraq are the US and British troops.

Blair has not uttered a word about the brutal murder of Baha Mousa at the hands of British troops.

Baha was arrested after four guns were discovered at a hotel where he worked. He and seven colleagues were taken to a notorious torture centre of the old regime, bound and hooded - and kick-boxed to death.

Insultingly, the army offered Baha's family £4,500 hush money. The family refused to accept.

Every time Tony Blair opens his mouth on Iraq another porky pops out. At Christmas he told British troops that "massive evidence of programmes" had been found since the occupation. Alas for the Downing Street deceiver Jonathan Dimbleby repeated these words to Paul Bremer, the US governor of Iraq without identifying their source.

The US governor snapped back: "I don't know who said that. It sounds like a bit of a red herring to me. It sounds like somebody who doesn't agree with the policy, that sets up a red herring and then knocks it down." He looked mightily disconcerted when he was told it was the words of the British Prime Minister! Another case of friendly fire.

So whatever Lord Hutton's inquiry reports, it is now clear Blair deceived Parliament and dragged the country into war based on a whole pack of lies. It is Blair who condemned Iraqi conscripts and civilians to die under the cluster bombs and depleted uranium shells of the Coalition forces - and now applauds troops who continue to kill.

Blair called these troops "pioneers of twenty-first century soldiering". Pioneers of twenty-first century colonisation for Bechtel and BP more like.

In any real democracy the verdict of the people, that this man is a liar and cannot be trusted, would lead to his instant dismissal. Labour would have to seek a new mandate to govern. But of course this is not how it works in a capitalist democracy; two or three years down the line, when he has to call an election, Blair hopes that this will all be forgotten.

The British and US occupation forces must get out of Iraq now, and Blair driven out of office, before more countries are bombed and invaded and thousands of innocent civilians killed.



Abortion rights under attack

New threats have emerged to women's hard-won rights to control their own bodies. *Rachel Hardcastle* examines two court cases that have provided opportunities for those wishing to restrict women's rights

On 1 December 2003 in Britain, judges upheld a previously rejected complaint against two doctors who had carried out a late termination on grounds of foetal abnormality. Eight days later, a French woman, whose foetus had been unintentionally aborted due to a hospital mix-up, petitioned the European Court of Human Rights to recognise the right to life of the unborn foetus.

Both cases contain highly emotive elements, which makes them ideal material for those peddling the anti-choice agenda of the Catholic Church and other religious institutions in the mass media.

CASE ONE: THE CLEFT PALATE

Under Britain's Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990, termination after 24 weeks (when the foetus becomes "viable" outside of the womb) is permissible where two doctors agree that there is a "substantial risk of serious abnormality". The seeds of the current debate were sown in 2001, when a late abortion was carried out under the terms of the 1990 Act on a woman whose foetus was diagnosed as having a cleft lip and palate, a condition that varies in severity and may sometimes involve other congenital defects.

A Church of England cleric, Joanna Jepson, who had herself suffered from the

same condition at birth, applied for a judicial review to declare the termination unlawful on the grounds that a cleft palate did not represent a serious abnormality. This application failed, but her second attempt resulted in a High Court reversal of the first decision.

CASE TWO: A TRAGIC ERROR

Unlike the British example, which was instigated by a third party with no connection to the woman concerned, the French case was brought by the woman herself following an error at a hospital, which had harrowing consequences.

Thi-Nho Vo entered a Lyons hospital for a check-up in her sixth month of pregnancy in 1991. Coincidentally, another woman of Vietnamese origin with the same surname was also present for the removal of an intra-uterine contraceptive device; the doctors mixed the two women up, with the result that Vo lost her foetus. The doctors were prosecuted and found guilty of involuntary homicide, but this conviction was eventually overturned by France's highest court on the grounds that French law does not recognise the foetus as a person.

Vo then turned to the European Court at Strasbourg, arguing that the right to life enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights should apply before as well as after birth. Her lawyer has stated that they wish to establish that human life begins

at the moment of conception; such an interpretation would, of course, render any European laws permitting abortion incompatible with the Convention.

DIFFICULT ISSUES RAISED

Both cases have generated a great deal of public debate. The Jepson campaign centres on the "slippery slope" argument that any abortion based on abnormality inevitably leads to eugenics. At the same time, Jepson, who underwent several operations to correct the condition, can point to herself as living proof that a cleft palate is no obstacle to full participation in society. The Vo case is linked to the personal tragedy of a mother losing a baby she wanted and a justified desire to ensure that nobody else suffers from similar incompetent practice.

The arguments against the campaign in France are probably more straightforward: it is a prime example of the dictum that "hard cases make bad law". Tragic though the events may be, they do not have sufficient wider resonance to form the basis for general legislation.

For many – even among those who support a woman's right to abortion – the Jepson campaign raises more complex issues. While technology can extend the survival chances of those born prematurely and can aid the identification in the womb of all

sorts of abnormalities, there is also growing unease about designating people as "abnormal" or "disabled" in a society more sympathetic to the concept of rights for disabled people. It would be illegal to discriminate against a person with a hare lip, the argument goes, so how can it then be right to kill such a "person" in the womb? And even in the case of a severe physical or mental disability, who has the right to pass judgement on another's quality of or, indeed, right to life?

Socialists are not automatons; we recognise and indeed often experience ambivalence around these issues felt by honest people, whether they are religious or militant atheists. We also acknowledge the undeniable hurt caused to many individuals through personal loss or the persistent discrimination that blights life for many disabled people. But we also recognise two vital principles.

First, a foetus is not a person. For Marxists, what creates personality and true humanity is existence as a social being, which can only occur after birth. To speak of the "viability" of an unborn foetus at any stage is not relevant. An embryo in the womb is not, and can never be, a social being; until birth it is an utterly dependent appendage of the woman who has conceived it, and who therefore has the same rights over it as over any other part of her body.

Second, the only person who should decide whether or not to go through with a pregnancy is the woman herself. A decision to abort may be difficult or easy, the reasons grave or trivial; others may brand the motive selfless or selfish. But no one has the right to prevent her from making and implementing that decision. To do otherwise would be to assume the control and use of another person's body, an affront to and violence that can be allowed neither to the state nor to any other grouping or individual.

It is particularly necessary to assert this right for working class women, who suffer social oppression as women on top of class oppression and are thus doubly deprived of control over their lives and bodies.

If we are to assert these principles fully, it is not enough to resist attacks on existing abortion laws. These laws allow the state and the medical establishment rather than women themselves to determine whether and on what grounds a termination may be carried out. Nor should a woman's economic means determine her access to full health and abortion facilities, as is still the case even in Britain.

We must fight, and call upon the labour movement and anticapitalist movement to fight for free abortion on demand for all women through all stages of pregnancy.

Working class unity can smash fascism

This year in the Greater Manchester Area a united campaign against the fascists was launched. It has set as its aims exposing the anti-working class nature of the British National Party (BNP) and campaigning against the racism of the Blair government.

With Blunkett off the leash, New Labour, as part of its general assault on civil liberties, has been busy attacking immigrant and black communities.

A united campaign did send the BNP packing from Failsworth, Oldham, showing that the majority of workers are beginning to see the true nature of the BNP. Not only are they vile racists but they're also viciously anti-working class – in a word, fascists. The campaign was made up of trade unionists, community activists and some Labour Party members (going against their own regional party's instructions).

On 17 January, the Greater Manchester campaign, Manchester Against Racism, has organised a meeting, Unite Against Fascism, in Manchester Town Hall. Topping the bill is Billy Hayes, General Secretary of the CWU, whose postal worker members in Oldham recently won a wildcat victory.

With speakers from Coronation Street and Manchester United Football Club as well, this meeting is

Jason Travis, Oldham NUT

a step in the right direction. We should mobilise to get as many militant workers and youth as possible, black and white, to the meeting.

But we should also use this meeting to expose the true fascist nature of the BNP and the need for a workers' united front to smash them. If they, or one of their splinter groups, dare to demonstrate we should enforce a policy of no platform for fascists – by driving them off the streets. We need to show the streets belong to us: the anti-racist workers and youth, not to the fascists or racist police who attempt to protect them.

However, the election result in Oldham, whilst a clear defeat for the fascist BNP, also shows there's a lot more to do. Labour got over 60 per cent of the vote cast, on an explicitly anti-BNP campaign that the regional party scandalously refused to support. But the BNP still got 17 per cent, with just over 500 votes in all (on a 30 per cent turnout).

This is precisely because of New Labour's betrayals. For example, Oldham's Labour Council is proposing a £1million cut in the education budget for next year. Workers have had their jobs slashed, council houses run down, school and hospital services reduced, while local and national press drip feed the racist

propaganda of Labour's Home Secretary, kid-snatcher Blunkett.

In any future campaign we need to call a workers' convention of trade unionists and the community to democratically decide on the anti-fascist campaign, ideally to run a candidate on a workers' action programme to challenge cuts and racism. If the workers' united front calls for a Labour vote we should demand that the candidate breaks from Blunkett and Blair's pro-war racist policies and pledges to fight for working class services and jobs.

Above all we must launch a radical protest movement of our own: strikes by workers and students against any cuts and occupations by workers' and community organisations of council offices and the Town Hall. We need to fight for a workers' budget based on our needs. If they say they can't afford it we demand they open their books and accounts so we can expose their lies, their cuts and their mismanagement of our services. And we must call for an end to the war on Iraq which is costing millions every week.

A few afternoons of white and Asian youth and workers occupying the Town Hall demanding better services for all, a workers' budget under workers' control, will do far more to dispel any lingering illusions of workers in the racist BNP than many months of passive election campaigning.

Civil servants step up pay fight

The new year looks set to witness the most bitter pay fight since the 1980s between tens of thousands of civil servants and the Government. At the Home Office, members of the largest civil service union, the PCS, rejected a derisory employers' offer by four to one (albeit in a low turnout). They will now join other PCS members in the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Constitutional Affairs, Treasury Solicitor's Office and the Prison Service in a strike ballot.

At present, a two-day stoppage is planned for 29 and 30 January. Meanwhile, staff at the Office for National Statistics will also vote from 5 January on a pay offer rejected by the PCS group leadership.

The government's stance has hardened in recent weeks, with management imposing what amount to cuts in real pay, often in advance of ballot results. The departments have offered most staff nominal increases of between 0.5 and 2.5 per cent. After tax and National Insurance, this will amount to less than £1 a day for many low paid workers.

Rampant sexism among civil service management means that the lowest grades are predominantly filled by women while the higher

By a PCS member

positions are a male preserve. So this inluting offer is also a slap in the face for women workers in general.

The Government claims that it cannot afford any more members but has already spent billions (so far!) on the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

This dispute could set the tone for the public sector generally in 2004 as Gordon Brown has made it plain that he wants average increases across the sector of only 2 per cent. A victory would boost the confidence of PCS members in taking forward other campaigns and give a fillip to trade unionists in local government and the NHS. PCS members are undoubtedly angry, but the must organise to ensure the union's recently elected left leadership has the tactics and the will to win this dispute.

The leadership and activists must ensure that there is a huge "Yes" vote for strikes. The strike action must be co-ordinated so workers in different departments go out together. In addition, the case must be made now for indefinite all out action.

Control of the strike action must be put under the control of members through mass meetings and the election across departments of accountable strike committees.

Defend secular education Oppose Chirac's ban on the headscarf

The pressure is on in France to legally enforce the banning of the headscarf worn by some Muslim women in French schools. A special commission to look into revising the 1905 law on the separation of church and state has recommended that open signs of religion should no longer be tolerated in state schools, along with political and philosophical symbols.

President Chirac set the Stasi Commission up earlier this year after months of pronouncements by leading politicians on the incompatibility of French secularism and the wearing of headscarves in educational establishments.

The issue of headscarves has raged in France throughout the 1990s, following the expulsion of three school students from their school in northern France in 1989. The 1990s saw an increase in the number of school students wearing the headscarf in the classroom. This can largely be explained by the increasing ghettoisation of France's Muslim community. France has five million Muslims, one of the largest concentrations in Western Europe. However, this community is largely invisible within French society. Rates of unemployment amongst the Muslim community are way above the national average. Many of France's Muslims live in poverty-stricken estates

By Christina Duval

in the suburbs surrounding the big towns.

In the face of growing social deprivation, exclusion and outright racism, religious identity is increasingly a reference point for a population in search of its place within a society that offers little opportunity for integration. Many women also see religion and its outward expression as a haven and protection from the growing and often violent sexism of the young men who live on these estates.

The international situation in which the Muslim world and religion is being stigmatised as harbouring terrorism and being associated with extremism and fundamentalism is intensifying this retreat into a religion seen as under attack.

In this context, banning the headscarf in schools is correctly seen as part of a systematic attack on Islam by a Christian majority, hiding behind the cover of secularism. There is no proposal for example to ban Christian crosses from around students' necks, only 'ostentatious' signs of religion. This is clearly aimed at the Islamic headscarf. The left in France, and internationally, has a duty to unambiguously defend freedom of expression, including religious expression.

This has not been the case in France however. The left has not been in the forefront

of defending the Muslim community against this attack by the French state. In doing so, the left has opened the door for the right wing to also attack the right of political expression within French schools.

For left forces ranging from the Parti Socialiste to Lutte Ouvrière (LO), the opposition to wearing headscarves is justified in the name of 'the defence of secularism' and the need to fight women's oppression.

But supporting these measures has nothing to do with the socialist demand for a secular education system which means removing religion from the curriculum (abolition of religious education) and from any official role in the school/college e.g. a ban on school religious services, on religiously funded or influenced advice services, the public display of crosses in school classrooms etc.

It does not mean the banning of private expressions of religion in school. Indeed we defend these rights as a matter of individual liberty for example the right of Sikhs to wear turbans, Jews to wear skullcaps, Muslims to wear the headscarf. We also support the right of access to prayer rooms, religious dietary requirements in school canteens etc.

Defending these rights does nothing to undermine the socialist principle of secular education, which refers to the secular nature of the school, its lessons and its administration, not to the student's private

religious beliefs and practices.

In relation to the headscarf being a symbol of women's oppression in Islam, of course socialist and progressive forces are against the oppression of women that is an integral part of all the major religions. However, it is for Muslim women to take up this fight within their communities with the support and solidarity of socialist and secular forces. Supporting the right of the French state to impose a ban means supporting the right of a historically racist state to oppress a minority community.

It is certainly true that many young women in France are forced to wear headscarves by parental and peer pressure; it is also true that some young women also choose freely to cover their head as an identification with their religion. If women choose to wear the headscarf, this is their right and should be defended. If female school students express the desire to rebel against the headscarf and parental authority then the school and the authorities should certainly provide support and protection against reprisals, from parents and peers, just as socialists insist society protects young people against forced marriages and other reactionary cultural practices.

But banning the headscarf will not liberate these young women nor take the struggle for secular education forward. On the contrary, it will reinforce the role of Islam in their

lives. Expelling students who refuse to remove their headscarf will lead to them being excluded from secular education which can challenge their religious beliefs. It will also hand an enormous weapon to the religious fundamentalists who would pose as the defenders of religious rights and individual liberties against "authoritarian socialists" and the secular state. It will accelerate a drive towards private schools religiously, racially and sexually segregated, just what the right and the fundamentalists want. And this will probably lead to sections of youth rallying to religious leaders who otherwise would not have followed them.

For all these reasons, attempts to impose a ban by law should be resisted. The two main far left organisations LO and LCR, who will be mounting a joint electoral challenge to the established political parties next year, have failed to give a lead on this issue. Whilst they are not necessarily in favour of a new law and whilst LCR is split on the issue, leading members of both organisations have led action in schools to enforce this position, down to taking strike action to enforce the expulsion of school students wearing headscarves.

This is a scandalous position for revolutionaries to take and will only damage the ability of socialists to win the confidence of one of the most oppressed sections of French society.

AIDS: The silent genocide of the world's poorest

Imagine this: a woman goes to see a doctor. She can barely walk. She has been feeling ill for months. As she waits to see the doctor a sharp pain runs through her chest. She can barely breathe. She thinks she has TB. She is praying in her mind that it's only TB. People have survived TB. The doctor calls her in. He has the results of her blood test. As he confirms that she is "HIV positive" the woman can't fight back the tears. All her nightmares have become reality in that phrase.

In a whisper she asks, "can you give me drugs to keep me alive?" The doctor answers, "no, we can't afford them." With that the woman is sent away to her death. Her body is already weakened by untreated diseases and malnutrition; the HIV virus will destroy what's left of her already weakened immune system more rapidly and allow the TB to kill her.

This is not just the story of one woman; it's the story of millions living mainly in Africa, who are HIV positive but have no access to the life-saving drugs that are available to HIV-positive people in North America and much of Europe.

1 December 2003 was World AIDS day. To coincide with it the UN and the World Health Organisation (WHO) released the AIDS epidemic update 2003. It reported that some 42 million people were infected with HIV worldwide. Between 25 and 28 million of those with HIV live in sub-Saharan Africa. The single highest figure is for South Africa, where nearly five million people or some 10 percent of the population is infected.

In many places AIDS is quite literally killing off the working population, leaving behind the elderly and the very young. Many of the young have had the virus transmitted to them by their mothers as only 1 per cent of pregnant women in the most severely affected countries have access to the drugs and healthcare needed to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Across sub-

By Rekha Khurana

Saharan Africa life expectancy has fallen, while in Botswana, which reports the highest rate of infection at 35 per cent of a population of 1.6 million, projections suggest that by 2010 half of all children will be orphans and average life expectancy will have plummeted to 27 from 47 years.

But it's not just Africa that is at risk. The report highlights a growing number of cases of new infections in countries which had previously reported very low HIV rates: China, Indonesia and Vietnam. The most rapid increase has been seen in India, where the total number of people infected with HIV could outstrip the figure for South Africa by 2005.

A record 5 million people this past year. The AIDS epidemic is getting worse for the world's poorest countries, while western governments and multinational drug companies do next to nothing while millions silently die.

Their "solution" is for countries with high infection rates to focus on prevention. Of course, tackling the pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa will require sex education programmes and the distribution of condoms. But the reality is that "structural adjustment" policies authored in Washington, London and Paris often mean that the per capita debt to imperialist financial institutions far outweighs the spending on healthcare in the worst affected countries. In effect, the West is prepared to condemn millions to painful, premature deaths.

Some commentators blame the growth of prostitution in the Third World and migrant male workers for the spread of AIDS. But they rarely go deeper and look at cause and effect.

Globalisation has massively increased the numbers of landless workers, evicted by capitalist farmers, who migrate in search of work. Poverty also throws millions of female peasants and workers in desperation into prostitution. Parted for months if not years from their families, transient sexual rela-

tions are rife – and with it the risk of AIDS.

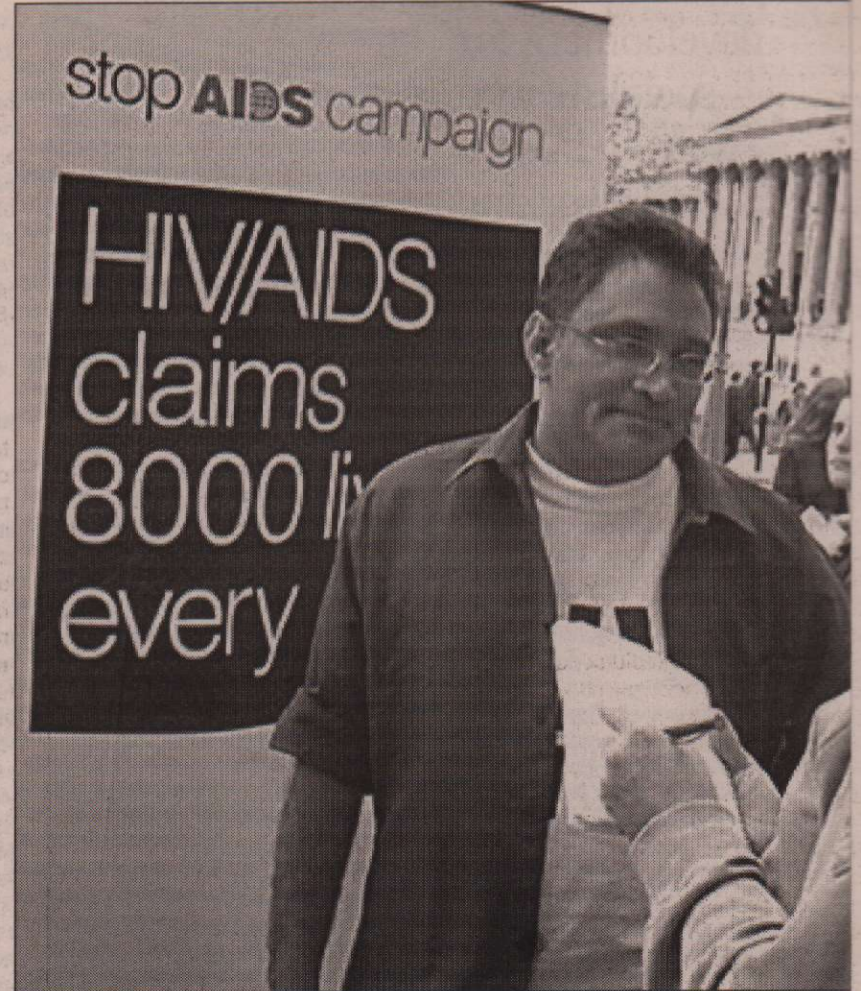
And of course the double tragedy of AIDS is that it tends to hit those in their 20s and 30s, i.e. the most economically active section of the community, who would normally be raising young families. Hence, the millions of AIDS orphans, and yet another twist in the spiral down to poverty.

Capitalism, which once destroyed African family life with slavery, is doing it again. And its filthy apologists dare blame the Black man's mores.

Why are the retroviral drugs now widely available in much of the West not available to people in the countries where the need is most acute? Why are western governments standing by and letting millions die when they could live longer?

The answer lies in the profit system itself and the way it operates in a world dominated by a small number of imperialist powers. A handful of powerful global conglomerates, based in a handful of nation states, thoroughly control the world market. The cost of developing a new retroviral drug, from the perspective of the corporate executive, is high. For example, a year's treatment for an HIV-positive individual using the latest anti-AIDS medication, Fuzeon, produced and marketed by Roche, currently costs some £12,000. In Botswana, per capita spending on healthcare is £358 p.a. and that is one of the higher figures for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.

The pharmaceutical corporations are determined to defend the monopoly profits derived from exclusive patents, whatever the costs in human lives and suffering. Bosses at a drugs giant like Pfizer will spend tens of millions on advertising campaigns to promote Viagra with the aim of maximising profits. Such corporations do not exist to perform "humanitarian" roles and will seek to block even modest reforms in world trade rules that would facilitate the production of generic copies of retrovirals in countries such as Brazil and India.



South African AIDS campaign

The Bush administration has tried to garner positive press coverage for its modest package of aid to combat that AIDS crisis in Africa, yet the sums promised are minuscule compared to the \$87 billion approved by the US Congress for the continuing occupation of Iraq and a tiny fraction of the \$450 billion budget for the Pentagon war machine.

In sharp contrast to the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf the small farmers, agricultural workers and urban poor of sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere in the Third World are utterly expendable from the perspective of those who rule on behalf of global capital. That's why the fight against AIDS is inextricably linked to the fight against globalisation.

Populism at the

On 30 November last year a small group of people agreed to launch a new political formation –

Respect.

On 25 January this year a national convention will be held to launch the coalition and ratify its manifesto.

Mark Hoskisson considers the implications of this development for socialists who want to build a new working class party

They met in George Galloway's house. The MP for Glasgow Kelvin, now an outcast from the Labour Party, played host to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and a few of their friends. Their brief was to consider how to take on Tony Blair in a series of elections to be held on 10 June – European Parliament, Greater London Assembly and various local council elections.

The outcome of the discussions was the Respect Declaration. It hails the anti-war movement, attacks the democratic deficit that now exists at the heart of British politics and pledges itself to 11 policies ranging from opposition to the occupation of Iraq through to a call for the restoration of trade union rights.

The summation of Respect's policies comes at the end: "We want a world in which the democratic demands of the people are carried out; a world based on need not profit; a world where solidarity rather than self-interest is the spirit of the age."

Or to put it another way, we want a world in which the words socialism, revolution, capitalism, class struggle and the centrality of working class politics, are not mentioned. We want a world in which we can get away with presenting the electorate with vague policies combined with nice values in the hope that we can win quite a few protest votes and at the very least get someone elected courtesy of proportional representation.

It all reads like a version of John Lennon's song *Imagine*, but stripped of his poetic vision.

ANSWERS

Every one of the 11 pledges begs a series of questions that the Declaration does not even attempt to answer.

It wants an end to the war and occupation in Iraq – good. How and when? It does not tell us. Does it want the troops withdrawn now? In six months? Two years? Does it want the UN to replace them? Silence.

It wants to bring back into "democratic public ownership the railways and other public services". By definition the "other public services" are already in public hands! Does it mean the steel industry? The mines? Telecommunications? Your guess is as good as ours.

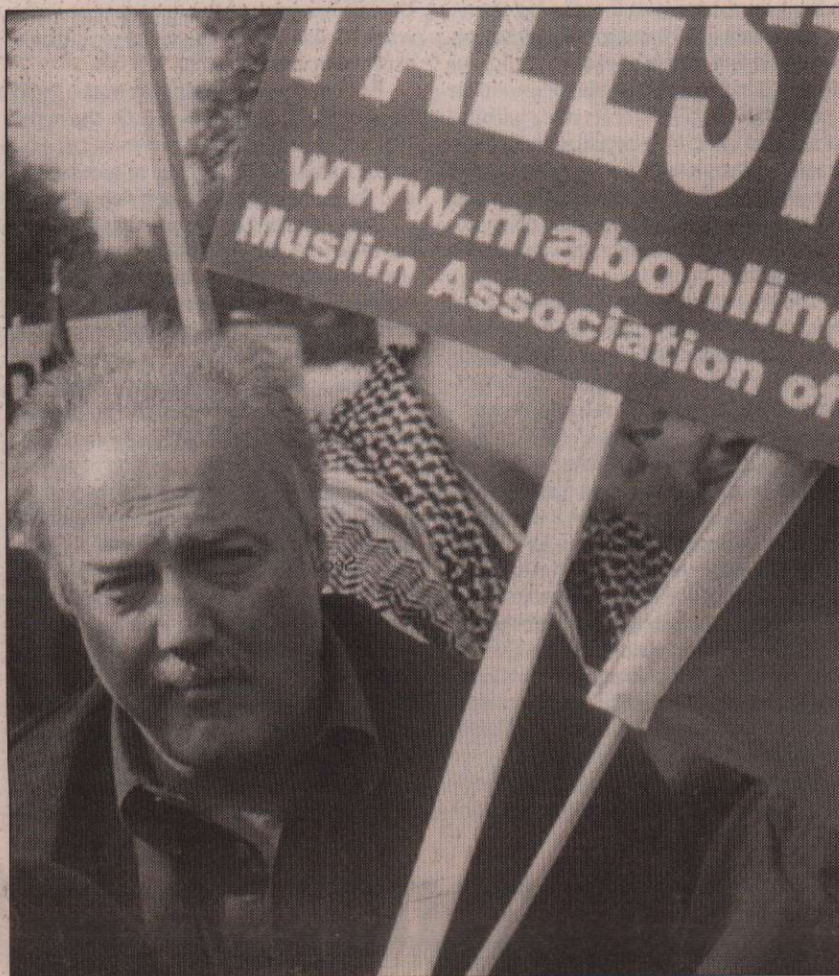
And would a Respect government compensate the bosses for them? Would it expropriate them? Would it place them under workers' control? Would it take over the banks? Silence again.

This is an economic policy that a Labour loyalist could tear to shreds in minutes. And in an election there will be quite a few of them around ensuring that Respect activists don't get let off the hook because they are part of a "new movement".

On education the Declaration has no policy on grants or top up fees; on the NHS it does not even mention Foundation Hospitals. It refers to the rights of refugees but does not come out against immigration controls. It is against "the destruction of the environment" but does not advocate a single measure to prevent that destruction.

This vagueness runs throughout the declaration and is deliberate. The less clear you are the fewer people who are put off, goes the argument. Keep it as broad as possible and we will get more votes.

But what happens when these questions are asked, on TV, at public meetings or on the doorstep? The answer would seem to be that George Galloway and any other "personalities" the coalition is able to attract can say whatever they like, but if a revolutionary tries to give a revolutionary answer they will be



George Galloway

taken to task for going "too far too fast". That, at least, is how it has worked in all of the rallies and meetings held so far to drum up support for this project.

The only policy on which the manifesto is specific is on the Euro – joining would "out-law government deficit spending". Just as well we have Gordon Brown championing deficit spending then! And what is socialist about deficit spending anyway – if you tax the rich sufficiently you don't have deficits.

Joining the Euro will, we are told, "reinforce the drive to privatise and deregulate the economy". Doesn't this drive come, above all from Blair, who is always trying to bludgeon the Europeans to follow Britain's exam-

For Galloway himself the populist project has three uses. First, it enables him to maintain a base from which he can carry on his political career... Second, it is a means of putting pressure on his friends in the Labour Party to push ahead with their campaign to "reclaim the party"... Lastly, and this is very much his third choice, it could become a party in which he would be a key leader – an old style Labour Party

For a workers' party

Workers Power urges all its readers to support the following resolution which we will try to get onto the agenda of the 25 January Respect convention:

"We welcome the convening of a forum to discuss the formation of an alternative political organisation to New Labour. In our opinion we need a working class party fighting for working class interests. Labour's agenda of privatisation, racism and war are the product of its support for capitalist big business. We need a working class party that is anti-capitalist if we are to mount successful resistance to privatisation, racism and war. To this end we call on the organisers of today's convention to elect a steering committee charged with:

- Launching a campaign in every town and city to build a new working class party, paying particular attention to winning trade union support for such a project.
- To organise a fully democratic discussion of the policies such a party should be formed on, with no restrictions on the rights of participating organisations or members to put forward and canvass support for the policies they believe such a party should adopt.
- To assess whether or not such a party could be launched in April, with a fully democratic conference deciding its policy and with local organisations democratically selecting its candidates for the Euro and GLA elections.
- To convene a policy conference in April of all members and participating organisations to determine an action programme for the Euro and GLA elections in the event that the committee decides that it is impossible to launch a party and a manifesto based on an adopted party programme."

Founding the Comm

The guns, mortars and rifles that opened fire in 1914 shattered not only the lives and limbs of a generation of young soldiers. The Second (Socialist) International itself collapsed under fire.

The major "socialist" parties, the German Social Democrats (SPD), the Austrian Socialists, the British Labour Party and French Socialists, pledged their loyalty to their own ruling classes. They enthusiastically urged the workers of their countries to support the imperialist carnage in the name of "defending the fatherland".

In place of internationalism they urged "patriotism". In place of class struggle they urged support for the national war efforts and voted for war credits to the capitalist governments. In place of solidarity they urged workers to shoot their brothers and sisters in other countries.

This betrayal had been long prepared by the reformist leaders. The great parties of the Second International had of course declared their opposition to war, even as late as the 1912 Basle Congress. But the resolutions turned out to be a facade of fine words. What lay behind them were bureaucratic apparatuses that had already made their peace with capitalism and set their sights on steady reform within it rather than a struggle to overthrow it.

But almost immediately a socialist opposition arose, small at first, that opposed both the war and the Social Democratic leaders' capitulation to the imperialist warmongers. This opposition did not emerge suddenly and out of nowhere. A left wing had been developing inside the Second International to counter its drift towards reformism, not only around the question of war but on almost every aspect of Marxism, from theory through to strategy and tactics in the class struggle.

The left wing of the Russian social democrats, the Bolsheviks, joined with the left of the German SPD, led by Rosa Luxemburg, to fight this opportunist trend. As early as the Stuttgart Congress of 1907, where the fight against war was a major issue, Lenin commented: "the remarkable and sad feature was that the German Social Democracy, which hitherto had always upheld the revolutionary standpoint in Marxism, proved to be unstable, or took an opportunist stand." Even so, the speed and extent of the collapse into "social patriotism" in August 1914 shocked Lenin and the left of the International.

In response the Bolsheviks issued a statement in September 1914, accompanied by an article by Lenin that outlined a revolutionary position on the war. It characterised the war as imperialist and declared that it "had placed on the order of the day the slogan of socialist revolution." It called on the workers to turn this imperialist war into a "civil war" against their own rulers.

Lenin wrote: "The second international is dead overcome by opportunism. Down with opportunism, and long live the Third International ... To the Third International falls the task of organising a revolutionary onslaught against the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie in all countries for the capture of political power, for the triumph of socialism."

In September 1915 the Italian and Swiss socialists convened an anti-war conference that met at Zimmerwald, Switzerland. The gathering included not just the left but also a "centre" current of socialists. This grouping opposed the war from a pacifist perspective and resolutely opposed Lenin's call to break completely with the oppor-

Stuart King explains how the revolutionary turmoil that engulfed Europe during the closing stages of World War One led to the formation of the Communist or Third International



Lenin with other delegates at the first congress

tunists of the Second International whom he stigmatised as "social patriots".

The majority at Zimmerwald voted to reject the Bolshevik position of turning the imperialist war into a civil war. After a series of stormy debates, the Bolsheviks eventually voted for the declaration against the war that came out of the conference. They saw it as "a call to struggle" and a first step. They established a Zimmerwald Left, which issued its own statements alongside the majority and acted as an organising centre for the revolutionaries.

As Trotsky later noted: "In Zimmerwald Lenin was tightening up the spring of future international action. In a Swiss mountain village he was laying the cornerstone of the revolutionary International."

The Zimmerwald movement, as it came to be called, rallied increasing support as the horror of the war hit home. Along with the Italians and the Swiss, other important forces, including the Norwegian Labour Party, the Swedish Left Social Democrats, the British Independent Labour Party and of course the German left came over to the movement. Karl Liebknecht and Otto Ruhle, both Social Democratic members of the German parliament, had broken with the party's leadership and were using their parliamentary positions to denounce the war and mobilise opposition. On Mayday 1916, 50,000 Berlin workers demonstrated against war and for socialism.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS

The opposition to the war was given an enormous boost by the two revolutions in Russia in 1917. The October revolution especially, which brought the Bolsheviks to power and led to the withdrawal of Russia from the war, raised the standard of working class internationalism and inspired workers everywhere to join the revolt.

By January 1918 mass strikes, with munitions workers to the fore, spread across Austria, Poland, Hungary and Germany. Two million workers were involved.

These strikes were contained but in November the German fleet at Kiel mutinied. Workers' and soldiers councils sprang up throughout Germany, the Kaiser abdicated and power fell into the hands of the workers' councils with the German Social Democrats at their head.

The war had split German Social Democracy three ways. Rosa Luxemburg and Liebknecht had formed the German Spartacists, which became the German Communist Party (KPD) at the end of 1918.

The social patriotic leaders had forced a split on the reluctant "centre", as leaders like Kautsky and Hugo Haase moved to oppose the war in 1916. They formed the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), a centrist party that vacillated between reform and revolution, but one which grew to several hundred thousand members when the revolution broke out in Germany. The SPD itself, now firmly in the grip of the right, proceeded to become the hangman of the German revolution.

In Austria too, the right-wing socialist leaders were placing themselves at the head of the mass movement that demanded an end to war, empire and capitalism itself. And, as in Germany, their aim was to curb that movement, destroy its revolutionary potential and save capitalism. The Austrian socialist leader, Otto Bauer, explained this new counter-revolutionary role of social democracy with candid accuracy: "The Social Democrats alone could put a stop to the stormy demonstration by means of negotiation and remonstrance. The Social Democracy alone could negotiate with the unemployed, could manage the People's army, could restrain the masses from revolutionary adventures which might have been conducive to revolution. How deeply the bourgeois social order had been affected was best shown by the fact that the bourgeois governments, without the participation of Social Democrats had become an impossible proposition."

A leader of the right-wing German

National People's Party echoed Bauer's analysis but from the vantage point of German big business: "A government without the Social Democrats during the next two to three years seems to me quite impossible, since otherwise we shall stagger from general strike to general strike."

And so it proved to be. In Germany, Austria and Hungary workers rose, formed soviets and declared war on capitalism. In each case, notwithstanding the weakness of the revolutionary elements and the mistakes they made, the principal determining factor proved to be the old parties of the Second International.

They joined multi-party, cross-class national governments. They took over police forces or supported monstrous paramilitary forces, such as the German Freikorps of former soldiers, which marched through Germany smashing working class resistance and murdering working class fighters and leading Marxists such as Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

Everywhere the reformists joined hands with the bourgeoisie and set about brutally crushing the international revolution that threatened capitalism across the whole of Europe.

In the war the reformists were the recruiting sergeants for the capitalists. In the revolutions that followed the war they became its bought and paid for executioners, gunning down workers and revolutionary socialists. Reformism had demonstrated in practice that it was now not merely against revolution - it had become the bourgeoisie's best means of smashing revolution.

To counter the reformists, to provide leadership for the revolution, Lenin urged that a new International be created as quickly as possible.

The Bolsheviks, now renamed the Russian Communist Party, took the lead in convening a conference to found a third, Communist International. An appeal was broadcast by radio from Moscow on 24

Timeline

- August 1914:** First World War starts
- September 1915:** Anti-war socialists meet at Zimmerwald
- February 1917:** Revolution breaks out in Russia, the Tsar abdicates and a provisional government is formed alongside the soviets of workers and soldiers
- October 1917:** (old calendar) Bolshevik-led insurrection establishes first Soviet government in the world
- Summer 1918:** Imperialist armies of several states invade Soviet Russia
- November 1918:** Revolution in Germany. Kaiser abdicates, workers and soldiers soviets hold power. SPD calls National Assembly.
- December 1918:** Russian communists issue appeal for founding meeting of a new, Third International. Communist Party of German founded (formerly German Spartacists)
- January 1919:** Spartacist rising in Berlin, crushed by SPD instigated Freikorps. Luxemburg and Liebknecht murdered
- February 1919:** Rump Second International reconstitutes itself in Bern, Switzerland
- March 1919:** Third, Communist International is founded in Moscow.
- Late March 1919:** Hungarian Soviet Republic comes into being
- April 1919:** German communists establish Bavarian Soviet which is quickly crushed
- June 1919:** treaty of Versailles signed
- August 1919:** Hungarian Soviet overthrown, thousands of workers killed
- March 1920:** Kapp putsch in Berlin met with general strike, putsch collapses.
- April 1920:** 500,000 Italian workers on general strike in Turin, mass factory occupations
- May 1920:** Polish army occupies Kiev in the Ukraine, Red Army launches counter offensive
- June 1920:** Gilan Soviet government established in northern Iran
- July 1920:** Second Comintern Congress starts in Moscow

December 1918. Lenin had proposed to invite all those groups and parties who wanted "to break with the social patriots", who wanted the socialist revolution now and "stood for the dictatorship of the proletariat" and for soviet power.

In practice, because of the continuing military action in parts of Europe and the widespread revolutionary turmoil few parties were able to assemble in Moscow for the founding congress, eventually convened in March 1919. Russia was being blockaded and attacked by the western armies of intervention. Only 35 voting delegates were present, as opposed to the hundreds at the Second International gatherings. Aside from the Russian Communists the most important parties represented were from Germany, Norway, Sweden and the Balkans.

The assembly opened in early March under pictures not only of Marx and Engels but also of the martyred Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. Both had been murdered in January 1919 by troops brought into Berlin by the SPD government to crush

unist International



Delegates follow the advance of the Red Army into Poland

an attempted rising by the Spartakists and the Berlin shop stewards' movement.

The German Communists, represented by Hugo Eberlein (the other delegate had been arrested before getting out of Germany) had already discussed the question of founding of the new international. While Luxemburg considered it "absolutely necessary" she and the party leadership, prior to her murder, had been against the conference declaring a new international immediately. The German Communists felt that a number of communist parties needed to be founded before an international could be proclaimed.

Such was the Bolsheviks' respect for the German party that, despite their firm belief that an international should be formed immediately, they agreed to make the conference a preliminary one, rather than a founding one.

However, this initial decision was reversed when Gruber and his fellow Austrian delegate arrived after struggling for 17 days to get to Moscow. A delegate later recalled "they had travelled on locomotives and on tenders, on springs and on cattle wagons, they had tramped, had got by trickery through the front lines of Petlioura and Polish bands... Gruber hardly takes time to wash and runs to the Kremlin to be the sooner among his comrades, to help raise the standard of a new, a third International, truly revolutionary."

Gruber's news of revolutionary upheaval across the disintegrating Austro-Hungarian empire and of workers' and soldiers' councils in Vienna electrified the preference. A proposal was put to form the new International immediately. While Eberlein abstained he promised to try to win the German Party round to the decision when he returned home. Every other delegate voted to found the Communist International (Comintern) there and then. A new movement of global import was born.

The decision to found the new international was quickly confirmed as correct. Several large workers' parties joined within months of the declaration – the Socialist Party of Italy, the Norwegian Labour Party, the Bulgarian Party, the German Communists and so on. Three others, the

French Socialist Party, the USPD and the British ILP, broke with the Second International and entered into discussions with the Third.

In October 1919, the Danish Socialist Youth broke away from the parent party and affiliated to the Communist International. A month later the delegates of 14 revolutionary youth groups claiming 300,000 members united in the Communist Youth International.

By contrast, the Second International convened in July 1919, was a flop. Of the major European countries only two – Britain and Germany – sent delegations. And its message to the world working class was to make peace with the capitalist warmongers, who had overseen four years of unprecedented carnage and to make war on revolutionary Russia.

WORLD PARTY

The Communist International was not simply a body that would pass resolutions and issue proclamations. It was to become a means for implementing them internationally. It was to become a real world party, organising and directing action around the world. It was to become the first truly global International of the working class.

In this task, in just over a year, it was to prove enormously successful. When the Communist International convened on 19th July 1920 for its second congress it was a very different and much stronger organisation. There were 217 delegates representing 67 parties and organisations from over 40 countries.

The delegates to the Comintern's second congress met for nearly three weeks, convening in the Throne Room of the Kremlin's imperial palace. In a side room delegates sometimes took catnaps in the former Tsar's bed – it could hold five of them at a time! And the Tsar's throne acted as a clothes tree, heaped with jackets and hats.

In a smoking room nearby there was a large map of western Russia and Poland. Poland, encouraged by the French government, had attacked the soviet Ukraine. With the attack having been repulsed, the delegates could track the progress of the Red Army as it struck back into Poland,

arrows recording the advance towards Warsaw and eventual defeat.

But serious work was being done at the meeting, which in many ways was the real founding congress of the new International.

The revolutionary upsurge had continued across Europe as the impact of the post-war crisis was felt. A Hungarian soviet republic had come into being weeks after the first congress, in which the young communist party held power in alliance with the social democrats.

The republic was drowned in blood as the imperialist allies armed the counter-revolution to crush it. A soviet republic formed in Bavaria in 1919 suffered a similar fate. In Italy in 1919-20 the government faced an accelerating crisis. Peasants occupied the land and the workers organised wave after wave of mass strikes. In April 1920, the Turin workers declared a general strike in defence of factory committees and occupied the factories.

Once again Germany was the centre of attention. After the crushing blow delivered to the Spartakists and the Berlin workers in early 1919 right-wing sections of the military overplayed their hand. The Kapp putsch of March 1920 ousted the SPD in Berlin and tried to establish a dictatorship. Only the resolute action by the SPD and USPD-led trade unions in declaring an indefinite strike saved the day. Faced with paralysis and growing armed clashes the coup was defeated and the workers' movement emerged with renewed confidence.

Opening the Second Congress, Zinoviev recalled his prediction at the founding congress that "all Europe would be soviet within a year". "In reality", he now said, "it would probably take not one year but two or three for all Europe to become a soviet republic". This was not just empty rhetoric; the left was gaining strength across Europe.

The capitalists faced ever-deeper political and economic crises, especially in the defeated countries as the victorious powers exacted economic and political revenge through the Versailles Peace Treaties. The manifestos of the first two congresses reflected this – it was the period of the offensive; soviet power was the order of the day.

And the Second Congress was very much the war council of the revolutionaries to discuss, plan and execute this offensive. It was a real working body, which started welding together the new forces that were being drawn to revolutionary communism under the impact of the Russian revolution.

It fulfilled the promise of the First Congress, a promise summed up by Trotsky in his article of March 1919, *Great Days*: "The Tsars and priests – ancient rulers of the Moscow Kremlin – never, we must assume, had a premonition that within its grey walls would one day gather the representatives of the most revolutionary section of modern humanity. Yet this did occur... The revolutions in Germany, Austria, Hungary, the tempestuous sweep of the soviet movement and of civil war, sealed by the martyrdom of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and many thousands of nameless heroes, have demonstrated that Europe has no roads different to Russia. Unity in methods of struggle for socialism, disclosed in action, guaranteed ideologically the creation of the Communist International and at the same time made it impossible to postpone the convocation of the Communist congress. Today this congress convenes within the Kremlin walls. We are witnesses to and participants in one of the greatest events in world history... What a joy it is to live and fight in such times!"



First congress session

The First Congress develops the communist programme

Among the resolutions passed by the First Congress was a set of Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. In these theses, introduced and written by Lenin, the Russian Communists tried to distil some of the lessons of soviet democracy and explain why it was superior to parliamentary democracy.

This was a vitally important question. Soviets (workers' and soldiers' councils) were being formed right across Germany and Austria, as well as in new states like Hungary.

The German Social Democrats were denouncing the Bolsheviks as anti-democrats for disbanding the Russian Constituent Assembly in 1918 and handing all power to the soviets. They were trying to weaken or disband the workers' councils in Germany by convening a National Assembly. The SPD leadership had declared in the midst of the November 1918 revolution, "All power to the councils of workers' and soldiers' deputies? No. We reject the idea of the dictatorship of one class if the majority of the people are not behind that class."

The theses replied to such wilful misconceptions, "it is not a question of 'dictatorship in general' but of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, i.e. the proletariat, over its oppressors and exploiters... History teaches us that no oppressed class ever did, or could, achieve power without going through a period of dictatorship i.e. the conquest of political power and the forcible suppression of resistance always offered by the exploiters, a resistance that is most furious and stops at nothing."

They also attacked the ideas being put forward by the USPD leaders that somehow workers' councils and the National Assembly could co-exist "peacefully" together. This was actually a project designed to rescue the bourgeoisie's power base while gutting the councils of any real power.

The Congress Manifesto, written and moved by Trotsky, declared: "Our task is to generalise the revolutionary experience of the working class, to cleanse the movement of the disintegrating admixture of opportunism and social patriotism." This was true throughout the period of the revolutionary Comintern, as the Communist International came to be known.

The first congress also debated its attitude towards other socialist currents. It recognised, without hesitation, the true nature and role of the reformist social chauvinists. Events had revealed this all too clearly. Perhaps more important was the attitude it adopted to those socialists who wished to keep a foot in both camps – the so called centre.

It opened the door of the new International to these forces, but it did so on the basis of calling on them to break decisively with the Second International and to declare unambiguously in favour of soviet power. And, in its Manifesto, it made clear that this was no purely "theoretical" question. The fight for soviet power was now the task of the hour:

"Socialist criticism has sufficiently denounced the bourgeois world order. The task of the international Communist Party is to overthrow this system and construct in its place the socialist order."

The experiences of the Bolshevik party and the successful tactics it developed were little known to the masses now rallying to communism and the Third International. The role of soviets and soviet power, revolutionary strategy in situations of dual power, the opposition to workers' representatives entering radical governments, the use of the united front in the struggle for power, developing a revolutionary approach to national self-determination in multi-national states, communist principles in relation to war and proletarian tactics to break up the bourgeois armed forces – all these questions had been addressed by the Bolsheviks in the course of three revolutions, dating from 1905, and a successful insurrection.

The strategy and tactics needed to be generalised and developed in the debates and resolutions of the new Communist International and to become a guide to action for the national communist parties. The next three congresses of the Comintern set about performing this task.

The ESF is coming to London

The European Social Forum is likely to come to London this year. If it does, it will be a major event in working class and progressive politics in Britain. Preparatory assemblies have already begun to discuss its viability and organisation. *Jeremy Dewar* outlines the key debates taking place

One hundred and fifty representatives of various organisations from across Europe met in the City Hall, London on 13-14 December for the first preparatory assembly for the 2004 European Social Forum. A wide variety of trade unions from Britain and the continent, NGOs, local and national social forums, and political organisations participated in a lively – indeed at times stormy – debate. The presence of militants and representatives from the RMT, Unison, TGWU and was a big step forward and their contributions added a note of practicality into the proceedings.

The good news was that the ESF has managed to push the European trade unions and mass reformist parties into action. In 2002, the Florence ESF initiated the call for co-ordinated international anti-war demonstrations, which led to millions taking to the streets on 15 February. Last year the Paris ESF endorsed a campaign for a continental day of action against the European wide neoliberal attacks such as cuts in pensions, welfare cuts, privatisation, anti-union legislation. Thanks mainly to the efforts of the German social forums and activists in Europe's largest and most important union, IG Metall, the European TUC has been pushed into calling two days of action: 2 and 3 April.

This represents an important forward. It is the first time the ETUC has called for days of action. It is also a demonstration of the strength of the social forces gathering behind the ESF, attempting to use it to launch Europe wide actions.

However, the reaction of the ESF to this call also points to one of the key weaknesses of the movement. The international preparatory assembly on 14th to 15th December, a consensus resolution noted the fact that the ETUC had called for actions on 2-3 April but did not endorse it. This was the result of objections made by the Italian rank and file union representatives from Cobas and SinCobas. They objected to any declaration of support for the ETUC call as this would sow illusions in the ETUC.

It is ultraleft – indeed sectarian – non-

sense to suggest that workers have already "seen through" their elected leaders and that to support such actions would be propping up these leaders. Quite the opposite, we should push these leaders further, arguing for strikes on Fri 2 April. And it would be rank sectarianism to boycott such days of action. British representatives from the RMT and Unison indicated that their unions will press the TUC in Britain to support it. They pointed out just how important this day could be for drawing in the unions into the ESF movement.

However, the social forum rule that decisions can only be made by consensus meant that the Italian "alternative" unions were able to veto the assembly's overwhelming majority who wanted to support the call and build it from below.

The movement must rapidly discover a method of facing and resolving differences over tactics – not fudging them in the name of consensus. Such a method exists: it's called voting. Supporters of the World Social Forum Charter (the Porto Alegre principles), which outlaws voting at the various social forums, claim that voting will split the movement. But trade unions have voted for more than 100 years; they have needed to because unions have to take action. Parties do the same. If the ESF is not to become an empty talking shop, paralysed when it comes to action, it too must take votes on disputed policies and actions.

DISAGREEMENTS

The sharpest disagreements came from within the UK "movement". The latter term has to be put in inverted commas because no united forums for debate or action exist either on a local or a national scale. The arguments reflected the deep suspicion among independent activists that they were being manipulated by the Socialist Workers Party.

The SWP likes to claim that Globalise Resistance represents the movement in Britain but everyone knows that this has become a shrivelled front organisation. In addition the SWP strictly abides by the reactionary ban on parties – also imposed by the Porto Alegre principles. SWP members

appear with their GR masks on. The party ban is a double offence to democracy because it infringes not only the rights of members of political parties, without which this movement would not even exist, but the right of the many non-party activists to know who is really speaking to them. This only fuels such suspicions of non-party activists, some of it justified but much of it sheer paranoia and anti-party phobia.

It is noteworthy that whenever the speakers from the League for the Fifth International and other organisations denounced this ban no one defended it or tried to enforce it. Good! But only lack of political courage can explain why prominent members of the SWP (and the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire) do not defy this doubly undemocratic provisions. Their meek behaviour has not prevented the right wing in Attac from witch hunting both of them.

It did not take long for the first and most heated debate to erupt from within the "British delegation". The London and Manchester Social Forums have been bitterly opposed to holding the ESF in 2004 and in London. These forums are in fact very small bodies mainly dominated by libertarian individuals, deeply hostile to the SWP and seeking to thwart what they clearly believe is a conspiracy, hatched with London Mayor Ken Livingstone, to ensure that the ESF excluded them.

The point of contention was the viability of holding the ESF in London – the most privatised capital in Europe with the most rabid pro-Bush and neoliberal government in Europe. The Labour London councils are totally Blairite and will be far more hostile to the ESF than Chirac was!

The cost of putting on the ESF in Paris was 5 to 6 million euros. But much financial support (3 million euros) came from local, regional and even national government funds. The same was the case in Italy. In both cases the local authorities opened schools and sporting facilities to provide sleeping accommodation. This will be highly unlikely in London.

Mayoral officials, present at the assembly, had costed putting on the event at a big single venue such as Alexandra Palace, at

between £500,000 and £750,000. With interpretation equipment and all other facilities, the cost overall would be up to £1.5 million. While a number of unions are likely to give some financial support, this too will be limited. Clearly a massive campaign of fund raising will be necessary. The final decision on the venue will now be finally taken on 6-7 March at the next European preparatory assembly, also to be held in London. The mayoral team will meanwhile produce a report on its financial viability.

AGENDA

There will be another UK assembly on 24 January. In the meantime working groups have been set up to discuss the programme of the meeting, practicalities, culture, expanding participation, and the future ESF and Social Movements' Assembly process. There was widespread support for the idea – put forward by the League for the Fifth International – that the seminars should be organised by networks of activists, campaigns and other organisations already at work in various fields, and that there urgently needs to be a mechanism whereby proposals for action and policies, which emanate from discussions at these seminars, can be put to the Assembly of Social Movements (see below for our proposals that we put out at the meeting).

Both in the working group on expanding participation and in the plenary sessions, the SWP resisted all attempts to promote local social forums across the UK. Yet, how else can the ESF become a real living movement in Britain, unless it has local units which can enjoy lively debates on all the issues of the movement, and unite to take common action against council housing sell-offs, education and health cuts, privatisation, racist anti-asylum laws, and so on?

Indeed, without some kind of local forum – call them mobilising committees, people's assemblies or even Stop the War Coalition subgroups if necessary – how can even the victories of the ESF, like the ETUC-backed April days of action, be followed through? The British TUC will most likely ignore it unless there is organised pressure from



below to make it happen. It was clear from the contributions of many of the prominent trade unionists at the assembly that this is precisely what they want from the movement. Alex Gordon from the Bristol RMT and its national executive and Kenny Bell from Newcastle Unison have shown their willingness to build local social forums. Workers Power intends to work with them and others in 2004 to ensure that, by the time of the London ESF, there will be an anti-capitalist movement in Britain. If you agree with all or any of the proposals we are fighting for, contact us and work alongside us.

What we are fighting for in the ESF

Workers Power proposes a radical reorientation of the way the ESF is structured.

We suggest a smaller proportion of the time (the evenings only) are devoted to a number of big rallies or plenaries.

They should be limited to the main issues of debate, centring on the policies to be adopted on critical issues of struggle, and should be confined to a few (two or three) speakers for counterposed positions.

The plenaries should debate such issues as:

- The nature of the 'new imperialism' and its relationship to globalisation.
- To struggle for state power or to dissolve state power.
- Local and decentralised economy or democratically centralised planning.
- The relation of elections, and "direct action" to the struggle as a whole
- To humanise capitalism or abolish it
- Reform or revolution
- What name for the movement (anti-capitalist, altermondialiste, social justice or

- communist/socialist?)
- Do we need parties, what sort of parties, an international party of social revolution?

The rest (i.e. the great majority) of the meetings should be grouped together in themes or around spaces:

- The struggle against imperialism and war.
- The struggle for women's and gay liberation.
- The struggle of youth.
- The struggle against state and far right racism, for full rights for the immigrant communities of Europe.
- Labour and the world of work.
- The struggle to liberate Latin America, Africa and Asia - the global south - from the corporate exploiters and the imperialist states.
- The struggle to save the environment.
- Parties, movements, internationals and the struggle against capitalism.

In each of these the aim would be – well before the forum – to get coalitions of the activist organisations to run their own space, to organise meetings, exhibitions, workshops, films and so on to

- (i) illustrate the experience of struggle and draw lessons
- (ii) suggest and debate policies and where possible agree on courses of action
- (iii) create links, networks of mutual assistance.

Lastly, as in Paris, there should be self-organised fringe meetings. Instead of the variably sized and differently composed roving preparatory assemblies and a not very transparent inner core of organisers, a small international committee should be elected by an assembly to meet in the new year – a Winter Assembly.

This should of course be transparent in its discussions, which should be minuted with all proposals and documents produced by it or submitted to it to be put up on the website. A web forum for debate in various languages should be maintained. The plenary debate proposals should be brought to an assembly in the Spring and agreed by vote. The Spring Assembly should re-elect the international organising committee and decide on whether a

Summer Assembly is necessary. The arrangements for the spaces should be left to coalitions of organisations to meet and decide on.

One whole day – the Saturday – should be devoted to the Assembly of the Social Movements (ASM). A co-ordination should meet every day of the forum to assemble proposals for debate (composed wherever possible) and adoption by the ASM.

As a minimum, there should be a debate on the Porto Alegre principles and the proposal to change those which forbid decision making or voting.

The ESF should be timed to coincide with half-term (usually the end of October), with full creche facilities provided. This will aid the participation of school students, parents and teachers.

It is also a good time to mobilise college students before the rigour of exams and coursework sets in.

Globalise Resistance: an obstacle to the development of the anticapitalist movement

Jeremy Dewar was a member of the Globalise Resistance steering group for two and a half years. He resigned from the group in December. Below we print his resignation letter

It is with some regret that I am resigning from Globalise Resistance and its steering group after two and a half years of service. The reasons for this are entirely political. The current course of the Socialist Workers Party and, therefore, it has to be said, of Globalise Resistance is, I believe, fundamentally flawed.

At the heart of my disagreements with the SWP over the direction of the anti-capitalist movement lies the need to build open, democratic and fighting social forums in Britain.

Background

We have an enormous challenge in 2004. If we get it right, we will build a mass anticapitalist movement in the UK, involving workers, youth, unions, NGOs. If we get it wrong, despite the hundreds of thousands - millions - who have mobilised against the war, we will remain weak and divided.

The 20 November demo in London was a very significant event. About a quarter of a million people demonstrated - on a weekday - against Bush. School and college strikes boosted the proportion of youth on the demo, giving it a very young character. Bush was clearly seen by those carrying the thousands of home-made banners and placards, as the embodiment not just of aggressive militarism, but of corporate plunder, environmental destruction, oppression of the global south... in other words, CAPITALISM. This was Britain's biggest anticapitalist and anti-imperialist demo ever.

Yet the SWP continue to say that now is not the time to build local social forums.

The SWP's false arguments

It is not a valid argument to simply point to the FALSE social forums like the London Social Forum as sufficient reason not to build REAL ones (i.e. ones with real social forces like unions, community campaigns, youth organisations, political groups, and so on, ones which organise action and solidarity, not just talk about idealised processes). By the way, the Manchester People's Assembly/Social Forum got off to an impressive start and the Cardiff Social Forum still does involve real forces and initiate real campaigns; so, it's not such a black and white picture as the SWP paints.

Nor is it enough to think only in terms of mobilising these diverse forces into an electoral challenge (i.e. RESPECT). Elections - however important they may be in publicising a bold anticapitalist programme, and counting the support it can win - are only a part, and a subordinate part at that, of building organisations - social forums, militant trade unions, a party - to take on capitalism on all fronts and eventually overthrow it.

Elections are only a tactic - and by no means the most effective one - in the anticapitalist struggle. And what happens the day after the elections? Social forums can lay the basis for and build on electoral success.

The SWP claims that social forums must develop organically and, until then, we must build Globalise Resistance. There are two problems with this approach.

Can Globalise Resistance be built?

Firstly, Globalise Resistance cannot simply



grow and absorb all those that want to get organised in the anticapitalist movement.

GR is widely perceived as a front organisation for the SWP. Largely because this is the truth. Look at the facts:

- GR has only about 1,000 members (mostly passive) after a series of enormous launch meetings (Jan-Feb 2001) and 3 years of high-profile (at least in the media) activity. In all probability, the great majority of these are SWP members, too.

- GR has no organised, functioning base, outside of a few campuses and towns, and the steering committee.

- The steering committee does not 'steer' GR; no votes are taken; in theory, we can take votes, decide on who represents GR, what GR's policies and priorities are, etc. The SWP is the largest and most centralised force on the steering committee, as well as the force in control of the apparatus of GR. It effectively makes policy for, takes decisions on behalf of, and is the public face of GR (e.g. Jonathan Neal, Chris Nineham and Alex Callinicos are invariably the speakers for GR whenever the meeting is important).

- As a result, distrust of GR is widespread - from Attac (France), the NGOs and the London Social Forum on the right, through to the anarchists and libertarians on the left. Now Workers Power, the only other political organisation that has sought to build GR, has left it.

The SWP claims that 2003 was atypical. The strength of the Stop the War Coalition meant that there was little room to build GR. This is nonsense. The anti-war movement provided the basis from which to build anticapitalist social forums (hence the vote at the second People's Assembly to do so, a vote disgracefully sidelined by the chair of the meeting). Nor will 2004 be different. StWC will be central in the

build up to 20th March, and from there on the RESPECT coalition, in the run-up to (and possibly after) the June elections, will 'crowd out' GR again.

Can social forums be built?

But, according to the SWP, there is no alternative until social forums develop organically. What does this mean?

For the SWP, it means refusing to initiate a campaign for social forums; waiting for others to take the lead. And by "others" they mean those forces in the movement to the right of the SWP, like the trade union officials and the NGOs. I predict that the SWP will only turn to building local social forums when these forces start to build them from above. Where this has happened elsewhere (like Stuttgart, Germany) this has resulted in weak, reformist-dominated social forums, not the vibrant ones that have emerged out of rank and file initiatives from below. So will it in Britain if the right wing is afforded a privileged, leadership role in advance of any movement from the base.

Of course, the campaign to build local - and a national - social forums should involve collaboration with all other progressive social movements: the Stop the War Coalition, the unions, political groups, community campaigns, youth initiatives, environmentalists, ethnic minority organisations, faith groups, and so on.

The revolutionary left and the mass movement

And this is precisely what Workers Power will be concentrating our forces on in 2004. In this fight, the SWP (and, therefore, GR) will inevitably be on the opposite side because it is mesmerised by one fact alone. This is NOT that the SWP is by far the largest single far left group in Britain, but that the SWP is numerically extremely weak in comparison with

the British movement. How can a few thousand SWP activists ensure that the self-proclaimed revolutionary party (the SWP) makes a qualitative breakthrough from the anticapitalist/anti-war movement? This is the question from which the SWP's tactical considerations proceed.

It means that the SWP is obsessed with keeping the right wing of the movement on board at any cost - even at the cost of the base of the movement being shut out of decision-making (hence, now is not the time to challenge the Porto Alegre principles) and the insistence on top-down structures (StWC, GR, RESPECT).

As a revolutionary communist myself, I can find no complaint at wanting a revolutionary party to grow in the current period. However, I do not see this as the result of various manoeuvres against the interests of the movement itself. On the contrary, open, democratic social forums can and must become the base organisations of the movement. Only these can draw in ALL the anticapitalist and anti-imperialist forces in a dynamic way.

Will this force the right wing to split? Is it essential that the left wing limits what it says for the sake of unity? Certainly, the right wing has not and will stop provocatively putting forward its demands for the movement - and we have not walked out because of that. If certain people choose to leave because of mass, democratic social forums, organised on a local, national and international level, then so be it. But the democratic deficit in our movement cannot be the price of unity.

The League for the Fifth International, and its British section Workers Power, is committed to this perspective precisely because we believe our proposals meet the needs of the movement in the period immediately ahead.

We believe that, if the movement does not raise itself to the level of a new fighting organisation, a major battle against the EU and US offensive could be lost; the movement could be thrown back.

We do not fear the discrepancy between our size and the goal that we set ourselves. On the contrary, we believe that one of the burning issues of the day is to democratise the European (and World) Social Forum by tearing up the ban on political parties and majority voting and making it accountable to delegates from local and national social forums. We believe that this movement has all the social forces needed, all the courage and determination too, to found a new, world party of anti-capitalism, a fifth International.

Not only, does this perspective provide a bigger, more honest and bolder picture of what can be achieved than the SWP's manoeuvres and backroom deals, it is also incompatible with Globalise Resistance, which acts (or rather, the SWP acts in Globalise Resistance's name) to thwart the progressive way forward for the movement.

- Build social forums in every city, town and metropolitan borough! For a UK social forum!
- Challenge the ban on democratic voting and the ban on political parties!
- Forward to a new world party of social revolution, a fifth international!

World Social Forum

The fourth World Social Forum (WSF) is opening in Mumbai, India on 16 January. One month ahead, 52,000 people from all continents had already registered to take part. Organisers expect that anything from 70,000 to 100,000 may actually take part in the forum. *Dave Stockton* looks at the short history of the WSF and who really runs the show

The shift to an Asian venue for the WSF presents the possibility for a huge involvement of workers, poor peasants and popular organisations in the world-wide movement against global capitalism and imperialist war. An assembly of youth will also take part at the forum as will a whole series of other meetings of campaigning bodies

As at the previous three WSFs, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, large scale conferences will take place on several key themes: Land, water and food sovereignty; Militarism, war and peace; Wars against women, women against wars; Globalisation, Economic and social security; Exclusions and oppression – Racism and Caste based discrimination; Labour and the world of work; Religious, ethnic and linguistic exclusion and oppression.

These huge assemblies have their limitations. Hopefully they will allow the voices of key figures in recent struggles in Asia to join those of Europe and the Americas which have dominated the WSF so far. But the key issue is how much space is accorded to meetings where speakers from the floor can make proposals on policies for fighting global capitalism and imperialist wars and whether any mechanism can be brought into existence to launch common actions in the year ahead.

The whole history of the WSF means we can't be optimistic on this.



Roughly 100,000 people participated in the 2003 WSF

Beginnings

The WSF - whatever its organisers claim - is not synonymous with the anti-capitalist movement born in the late 1990s. Bernard Cassen's recent memoirs about the movement he insists on calling "altermondialist", are actually called "It all began in Porto Alegre". This is a lie. Indeed, Seattle 1999 - not Porto Alegre - is often taken as the starting point.

But even this is not completely true. Seattle certainly created a world-wide focus on the "new movement" and launched a series of mobilisations to the gatherings of the global capitalist elite. But in fact far left organisations like the LCR, anarchist, radical ecologist and populist forces like RTS, People's Global Action (inspired by the Zapatista's) had begun to mobilise from 1996 onwards. The French journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Attac-France* (founded in June 1998) belong to this period too, but they cannot claim to monopolise it.

The WSF's origins lie in January 1999 in an "anti-Davos" counter-conference in Switzerland organised, among others by *Attac*. The next anti-Davos event in January 2000, brought together groups like the World Women's March and the Brazilian MST (landless rural workers movement). After this, Bernard Cassen, chairperson of *Attac* and director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, met in Paris with Francisco Whitaker, of the Brazilian Justice and Peace Commission, to discuss the possibility of holding a world forum, like the Davos events, at the same time as the World Economic Forum was meeting. One powerful motivation was to avoid the confrontation with the WEF on the streets of Davos or Zurich. It was agreed that it should be held in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre and should be called the World Social Forum.

The first WSF in January 2001 attracted some 5,000 registered participants from 117 countries as well as many thousands of Brazilian activists. At the second forum the figures had more than doubled, rising to over 12,000 official delegates from 123 countries and tens of thousands of total participants from Brazil. The third forum in

January 2003 was even more massive, with over 20,000 official delegates and roughly 100,000 total participants.

The key force behind this was the Brazilian PT, in power in both the city and the state. In 2002 the Porto Alegre municipality provided approximately \$300,000 and the state of Rio Grande do Sul \$1 million for the event. Though it appears that the "investment" of the Brazilian organisers yielded a profit, nevertheless the dependence of the WSF on huge donations from reformist parties and their cultural and front organisations determined the increasingly conservative nature of the official results of the WSF.

Right-wing funding

In addition the WSF, as a body, receives funds from agencies, closely tied to corporate interests and outright imperialist outfits like the Ford Foundation. "He who pays the piper calls the tune" is an old principle and one to which the Ford Foundation has devoted its existence, co-opting radical movements and representatives for decades using Detroit dollars. As long as the WSF is bound to such funders then it is inconceivable that it should become a body devoted to overthrowing just these interests. It seems that the funders were amongst those insisting on the exclusion of all political parties per se and on especially all organisations involved in "violence" - violence against capitalism and imperialism naturally. French imperialist ministers were welcome, of course!

Since then there have been thematic and regional social forums: one on neoliberalism held in Argentina in August 2002, the first European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence in November 2002, the first Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad in January 2003 and the second ESF held in Paris in November. These formed part of a semi-official forum calendar, maintained and controlled jointly by the Organising Committee/Secretariat and the International Council.

Naomi Klein has characterised the structure of the first World Social Forum as "so

opaque that it was nearly impossible to figure out how decisions were made". In fact, WSF decisions are made by a tiny number of organisations, but with considerable financial resources. The WSF gatherings are focussed on a few celebrities of the NGO world - Susan George, Walden Bello, Bernard Cassen - who propagate the NGO worldview. While they talk passionately about "another world being possible" the alternatives they propagate are policies for implementation by reformed bodies of the existing system, rather than the overthrow of the system itself.

That is why these academics and journalists hate the term for the movement, taken up on the streets of London, Seattle, Prague, Genoa: anticapitalist. After juggling with terms like "global citizens movement" they coined a new French word - "altermondialist" - alternative globalisation.

Decision making

Formal decision-making power was originally in the hands of the Organising Committee (OC), consisting of the Central Trade Union Confederation CUT (Central Única dos Trabalhadores), the MST and six smaller Brazilian civil society organisations.

The other main body of the WSF, the International Council (IC), was founded in Sao Paulo in June 2001. The OC decided who to invite to the founding meeting. In April 2002, the OC was transformed into the WSF Secretariat. As of June 2003 the International Council consists of 113 organisations, though in practice many of them have not participated. The IC was assigned an only an advisory role but it has grown in importance.

The decision-making mechanism at IC meetings - as throughout the WSF - is the famed "consensus". However the power of initiative lies with the Secretariat. It submits a proposal and the IC debates it. If no clear consensus emerges, the Secretariat will have a separate meeting and reconsider its original proposal. In some cases, it will then (typically on the second day of the two-

day meeting) present a new proposal taking earlier discussion into account. Normally, the new proposal will carry the day with everyone agreeing, more or less.

The precondition of this method is that the World Social Forum is not a deliberative body aimed at deciding common action, that it will not take political positions and that therefore it needs no decision-making procedures.

The parallels of this form of decision making with the way the WTO in Geneva operates are so stark that it can only be a unique form of doublethink that prevents the great crusaders against globalisation from drawing it.

This suits the Brazilian reformist organisations, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the unelected bigwigs of *Attac* and the NGOs down to the ground. The WSF in their view must remain a 'space', a 'forum', an 'event' and not a movement or political actor. But by no means do all the participants agree with this.

Michael Albert - author of *Parecon* - a libertarian key figure in movement in the USA, has proposed that the annual WSF gathering should be made a delegate event. The WSF could be attended by 5,000 - 10,000 people "delegated to it from the major regional forums of the world". He has even talked of it becoming an International, like the First International (as imagined by anarchists).

Impotence

The Italian organisers of the European Social Forum, in Florence in 2002, wanted to use a social movements declaration drafted by WSF participants as the foundation-stone of the ESF's own forum. The WSF Secretariat vetoed this on the grounds that the Porto Alegre Charter of Principles can be the only official basis for events organised within the WSF umbrella.

At the Bangkok meeting in August 2002, Bello argued that the International Council should produce a public statement calling on movements around the world to take part in

protests in Cancún in 2003. In the Porto Alegre meeting of the council in January 2003, delegates argued in favour of making a public statement against the imminent war in Iraq. In both cases, consensual decision-making was used to "decide" not to issue any such statements. This shows the absolute impotence of the WSF if it remains within the framework of the Porto Alegre Principles and under its present leadership.

According to its Charter of Principles, the WSF is "a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context". The bloc of the Brazilian PT leaders and the leaders of *Attac* have strictly policed these principles - principles never debated or adopted by any democratic assembly. In August 2002 the Secretariat vetoed the plans of the Italians to invite political parties to take part officially in the European Social Forum

As Cândido Grzybowski of the Secretariat put it, "political action is the responsibility of each individual and the coalitions they form, not an attribute of the forum". While Francisco Whitaker attacked the "self-nominated social movements" that "seek to put the forum inside their own mobilising dynamics, to serve their own objectives." And who - we ask - nominated these self-appointed and inflated bureaucrats to speak for the anticapitalist movement?

The only partial breach in this ban on politics was the historic call for anti-war demonstrations of 15 February 2003 that the many movements gathered in the WSF 2003 in Porto Alegre agreed to "make public". Whitaker protested against these, fearing that "the media might consider them semi-official". The media? Or the Ford Foundation, perhaps?

There have been even more radical critics at the ESF, though the organisers have done all they could to sideline them. During the first WSF there was a large, militant youth camp, many of whom issued a denunciation of the organisers hopeless-reformism and elitism. A group of young and angry participants from this camp burst into the posh all-glass VIP room where the leaders and important guests were being expensively wined and dined.

Mumbai

The WSF 2004 in India takes place at a crucial moment in the history of the movement. Certainly it offers the possibility spreading the movement against corporate power, imperialism and war much more widely. On the other hand, the power and domination of the NGOs and the reformist parties, especially the Communist Party of India (Marxist) will weigh heavily in favour of continued impotence.

That is why revolutionaries need to raise in every meeting within the forum the demand for a real deliberative assembly, for the rejection of the Porto Alegre Principles, for the "legalisation" of political parties, for no privileges to the reformist bureaucrats or journalistic bigwigs. We must call for an end to funding by US and EU imperialist agencies and state bodies. We must call for social forums in every major city, in every country and a process of delegation to the continental and world forums, with the European and North American movements raising the funds to enable the Asian African and South Americans to be fully and fairly represented, wherever it is held.

Corporate globalisation and the war on terrorism demand the maintenance and development of a huge world movement to fight them and to overthrow them.

This demands another major step forward: the creation of a mass International of the workers and poor peasants - the Fifth International.

China powers ahead

The major house journals of capitalism are full of articles about the 'Chinese miracle', its industrial might and sustained growth rates. *Frank Kellerman* looks at the aims of the new Chinese leadership and the problems they face

The west is waking up to China. This year it will become the world's fourth biggest economy; by 2040, according to bankers Goldman Sachs, its GDP will surpass that of the USA - that is, if both go on growing at their present rate. In the last 10 years it has become the literal workshop of the world - the number one producer of TVs, DVDs, PCs and mobile phones, the number one consumer of steel.

China is swallowing large chunks of the west's surplus capital whole: at \$53bn a year, China is the world's number one destination for foreign direct investment (FDI). And with it goes jobs - tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs from Europe and America have moved to China. Not even the cheap labour hotspots of Latin America can compete: over 200 Mexican sweatshops have closed and moved production to China.

For years, China watchers have been concerned with the impact of capitalism on China: could it happen without bloodshed; would the Communist Party dictatorship stay in tact through the restoration of capitalism? Now these questions are being subsumed in a larger question: the impact of China on capitalism.

For in the process of capitalist restoration, China has not become a subservient satellite of America - no matter how many of the new middle class and top bureaucracy find their way to a place at a US business school. China is becoming both an economic and political power to be reckoned with, and the decisions taken behind the high, closed gates of its ministries will have a significant impact on the class struggle, economic policy and international relations in the west.

Who rules China?

In October 2002 the so called "Fourth Generation" of Chinese bureaucrats took over. Led by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, the impact of their accession was initially seen in the western press as a matter of "presentation". But the rise to power of Hu was significant. It signalled the growing power of a faction for which completing the transition to a full-blown capitalist economy is the number one priority, even over and above maintaining the rule of the party.

Hu wishes the CCP to become a party of the Chinese bourgeoisie, while maintaining a social safety net that keeps the masses from revolt and binds a layer of the better off workers to the party. The hope is that, after a decade or two, Hu's China will be a developed capitalist country and the CCP will be a cross between the US Democrats and New Labour.

Hu and his allies definitely continue one tradition: that of the faceless bureaucrat. Hu was hand picked for his mediocrity and - as leaked documents from the Chinese CP show - passed an arduous process of selection whose main purpose was to weed out anyone who had ever done anything out of the ordinary and thus represented a risk to the course set by the retiring leaders.

Since Chinese politics are conducted wholly in secret, with the masses having to search for hidden meanings in the pages of the People's Daily, it's impossible to gauge the true tempo of Hu's economic policies. But their direction is clear. At the 3rd Plenum of the 16th Congress of the CCP, in October 2003, the party decided to speed up the closure or privatisation of all China's remaining state-owned enterprises. It also ratified changes to the Chinese constitution aimed at guaranteeing the rights of private property owners. This is not just the last phase of the destruction of the Stalinist economy: it is a work of construction -



Chinese President Hu Jintao, and US presidential envoy, James Baker

namely the construction of a normatively functioning capitalist economy, with businesses entitled to expect the rule of law, at least in the economic sphere. In addition Hu has speeded up the process of recruiting the bourgeoisie to the party.

However the construction of a normal functioning capitalism does not mean China will adopt the neo-liberal model - the so-called "Washington consensus" - even though that is what it is urged to do by every Financial Times and Wall Street Journal article that touches on the subject.

Problems ahead

In the first place China faces a linked series of strategic obstacles to completing the transition. The first is the land question. Two thirds of the population lives on the land, earning less than a dollar a day, the majority on plots of land no bigger than the centre court at Wimbledon. This means the domestic economy cannot become the motor of Chinese growth were foreign investment to falter. Nor can China become a truly modern economy, since in regions of dirt roads and shoelessness it is hard for the central bureaucracy to control the actions of local crooks, businessmen and regional bureaucrats - let alone for western-trained accountants to audit the books.

At present the land question is "solving" itself by propelling 10 million young peasants a year off the land and into the cities, where they have to live as second class citizens under the remnants of China's strict system of residency permits. There are 150 million migrant workers, mainly in their 20s, the vast majority working in China's new capitalist sweatshops under strict work discipline and living in dormitories. But a full solution to the land question will involve the automation of agriculture, the creation of big farms and the expulsion of - Chinese experts believe - about another 250m adults from the rural workforce.

Since this cannot happen without the continued breakneck expansion of Chinese industry, this dictates the whole of the rest of the domestic economic policy. Far from reigning in its attempts to attract FDI, China must increase them. As one Chinese official said on BBC Newsnight, "in the west you are always worrying about what if all the

manufacturing jobs go to China. Our problem is: what if all manufacturing jobs come to China - it's still not enough". Hence, for China's policymakers, maintaining growth at the official rate of 9% a year is a minimum requirement.

The problem is not just how to do this, but the kind of capitalism that is created in the process. Western capitalism, for all its booms and bubbles, is so sclerotic that it cannot even comprehend the idea of growth without inflation. China can have double digit growth without inflation, due to the massive deflationary power of its surplus labour force to keep wages down. Hence, for economic policy it has adopted a kind of crude Keynesianism - pump-priming public spending projects of which the Three Gorges Dam and the 2008 Olympic Games infrastructure projects are just the tip of the iceberg. This is combined with a heavy dose of protectionism, notwithstanding its accession to the WTO.

Dysfunctional?

To a western banker, China's economic policy looks dysfunctional: there are massive bad debts in the largely state-owned banking system. The banks mobilise the savings of the Chinese masses and pour them into loss making private enterprises. The property boom, which rivals that of Japan in the 1980s, is another sign that a fully-functioning financial system (with solvent banks and a transparent stock market) do not exist. Capital flows to wherever it can to make a surplus, but it cannot safely do so through the financial system. However, to the Chinese bureaucracy these policies are functional and form the core of the Keynesian growth strategy outlined by Jiang Zemin's finance minister Zhu Rongji and maintained by Hu.

It is easy to see how all this might break down: if foreign investment were to dry up, or western consumption of Chinese exports were to falter - both conditions that would arise from a US/European recession - China would be faced with the obligation to "take the strain" for the world economy. In order to do that it would have had to create a fully functioning domestic consumer market. But, although to the eyes of western visitors this seems to exist, in the

shopping malls of the seaboard cities, it does not predominate in the Chinese hinterland. Chinese economists believe a fully modernised consumer economy is two or three decades away.

But the ultimate problem facing the Chinese leadership is the need to extricate the party from the economy. It is not just that the bureaucracy has its fingers in the pie of the nationalised sectors; it is enriching itself greedily in the private sector as well. Yet there is no external supervision: when it comes to a drug company, the man that owns it can be in the party that runs the health system which buys it and the regulatory system that certifies the drug as safe. The only external supervision is the party itself, since the press is not free and criticism and exposure of corruption, unless sanctioned by the party, is met with prison. This, both Hu and his friends in Washington agree, is dysfunctional. The aim is some form of "separation of powers" which allows the judiciary and civil service to discover the many hidden Enrons in Chinese capitalism without bringing the system down.

The Chinese workers

Amid all this what is happening to the Chinese working class? It is undergoing a traumatic process of destruction and re-composition. In the north-east provinces, where Mao concentrated industrial investment in the 1950s and 1960s it is going through hell. Huge factories are being closed on the orders of the bureaucracy; whole populations of workers are thrown out of work. Protests occur in these towns almost daily, according to the Chinese website China Labour Bulletin, and repression is severe.

Independent unions are forbidden in China. The fate of two union organisers, Yao Fuxin and Xiao Yunliang, both men in their 50, is demonstrative. They led protests against the layoff of millions of workers in Liaoyang, north-east China. They were sentenced to seven and four years respectively, time they are serving in a penal colony so harsh that both men have been hospitalised since October and are feared to be in danger of dying. This in a country which has signed up to the United Nations International Labour Organisation, and whose stooge union the ACFTU sits on the governing body of the ILO.

While the protest movement is said to be growing in north-east China the scale of

repression means it has been virtually impossible for foreign activists and journalists to raise solidarity or to report it at the time. Hence, as far as the British media and Tony Blair's government are concerned, it does not exist.

In the "new" China, things are different. Whereas the typical workforce in Manchuria is older, well trained and possesses strong self-organising tendencies, the workforce in the south is largely new. In Shenzhen, the Manchester of the 21st century, the typical factory employs mainly young women from the rural provinces of the south-west.

They live in dorms, are subject to heavy supervision and forced pregnancy testing. Their wages can be five times what they could earn at home. These massive workplaces full of first generation urban workers will be for the Chinese revolution what the giant Putilov factory in Petrograd was to the Russian revolution - but they have a long way to go before self organisation takes root. Indeed, the availability of masses of replacement workers - and the high turnover (the average career length for a young woman worker is five years) means it will take a wider social upheaval to break the hold of the line managers here.

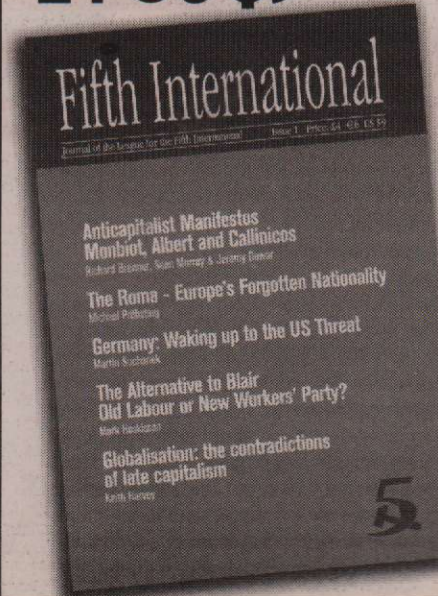
Revolution not reform

Right now the political watchword both of the bureaucracy - and even the independent workers' leaders - is reform. The bureaucracy will use friendly internal criticism, combined with a ban on independent organisation, to nudge the party away from the horse trough it has been feeding from since the 1990s. In return, maybe in a decade or so, there will be an independent labour bureaucracy that acts as broker between the big employers and the workforce.

The Chinese workers need to break this policy which will condemn them to decades of superexploitation. What is needed is a real Chinese communist party: a revolutionary workers party that can mobilise the billions of exploited and oppressed to settle accounts with Chinese dictatorship and establish the power of the workers and poor farmers. Only then can the Chinese masses harness their enormous energy and potential to benefit all in society through establishing a soviet China, a real workers state.

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There is growing disillusion with Blair and his Labour Government. Workers are fed up with New Labour's privatisation policies, young people hoping to go into higher education are outraged at the abolition of grants and introduction of top up fees, black and minority communities are incensed at racism and attacks on refugees.

People are still outraged at being dragged to war on the coat-tails of George Bush having been lied to about 'weapons of mass destruction' in Iraq. There could not be a better time to build a real socialist alternative to new Labour.

A number of leading anti-war activists and socialists have called a conference on January 25 to launch a new movement to challenge Blair at the polls – it is called Respect. We don't agree with its declaration, we think Respect's leaders have turned their backs on socialism (see inside pp 4/5).

Here is our alternative declaration for an anti-capitalist electoral challenge to New Labour – we intend to fight for it, and a new workers' party, at Respect's founding conference. If you agree, join us in this struggle.

The greatest mass movement of our age has brought us together. We have marched in our millions against war, against racism, against privatisation and corporate power, in defence of democracy and civil liberties. Our views are shared by millions, often a majority.

Yet no establishment politician or party will lend their voice to this movement.

The system that creates these injustices is global capitalism. It plunges the world into war as rival nation states and corporations compete for resources and domination. It scours the face of the earth for the cheapest labour and pushes working peoples' wages and rights down to the lowest level.

Another world is possible- one based on social ownership and a democratically planned economy to meet the needs of the millions not the greed of a few millionaires. With the wealth of the world in the hands of its people, poverty and inequality could be eradicated forever.

Blair took us into war with Iraq against the wishes of the majority. We elect 659 MPs every five years, but in the meantime they cannot be held accountable, recalled or replaced. In reality power lies in the boardrooms of the City and with the police chiefs and high command of the army – none of them elected.

Lasting changes cannot be carried out through parliament, but through action by millions in the workplaces and on the streets. To create a fairer world demands revolution – the overthrow of the state that defends the wealth of the capitalist class.

We are standing to give voice to the struggles of working class and poor people. We are working to build a new political party of the working class to challenge the capitalist parties and capitalist rule. We will not join any capitalist coalition government – the only power we support is a workers' government. This would be based on People's Assemblies – democratic councils of delegates elected from the workplaces and working class communities. Our goal is a Socialist United States of Europe as part of a socialist world.

We stand for the following policies and campaign for mass action to secure their implementation:

A society that renounces imperialism

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

A society that puts need before greed

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

A more equal society

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

A more just society

- Restore civil liberties removed by Labour
- Repeal all anti-trade union laws
- Action against discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or age
- Purge racists from the police
- Full citizenship rights for asylum seekers

A society that backs global development

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

A more productive, fairer society

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

A society of real freedom for women

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

A society that empowers the many not the few

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

Get active, stay active, join Workers Power

Even the onset of war did not stop the global revolt against it.

Across the world the working class is coming together. Globalisation has forced workers and activists from different countries and continents to unite, work and fight together. There have been huge Social Forums of resistance in Europe at Florence and Paris, in Asia at Hyderabad and in South America at Porto Alegre.

Together with the LFI, which is represented on the European Social Forum, Workers Power campaigns to bring these movements together into a New World Party of Socialist

Revolution – the Fifth International.

This is a momentous time, one of those times when the true nature of the world we live in suddenly becomes clear to millions. Capitalism is revealing itself to be a system of war, conquest and global inequality. By taking to the streets against war and capitalism, hundreds of thousands of people are showing that they have seen through the lies.

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

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

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Tel: 020 7820 1363
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Print: East End Offset, London E3
 Production: Workers Power (labour donated)
 ISSN 0263-1121