

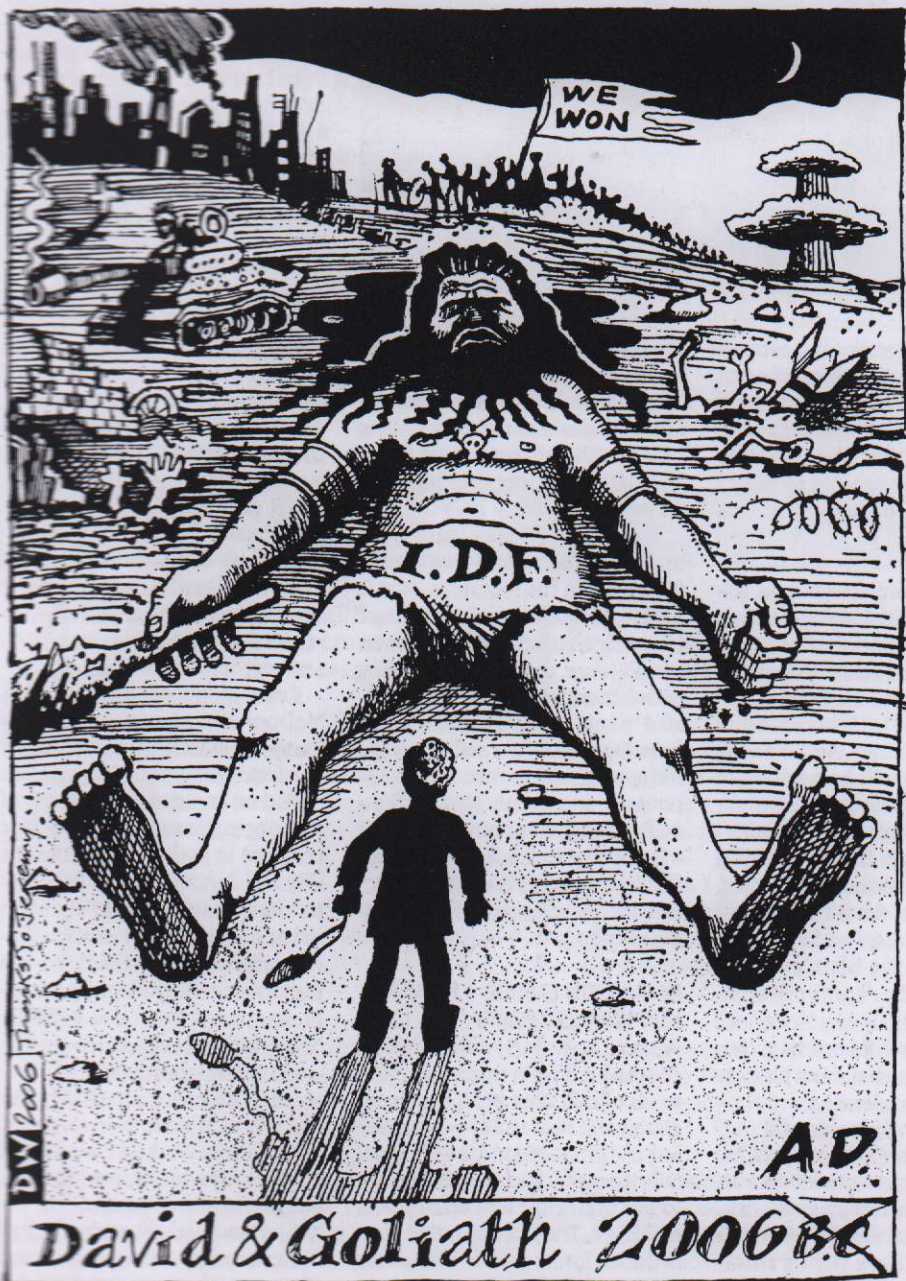
# workers power

September 2006 ★ Price £1 / €1.50 Issue 308

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

As Lebanese resistance repels Israeli invasion...

## Now drive imperialism out of the Middle East



### INSIDE

- Four page pullout on the Middle East
- Mexico: revolutionary crisis opens
- Can we force Blair out?
- Why have the Scottish Socialists split?



League for the  
Fifth International

ROLE REVERSAL: LEBANESE DAVID KNOCKS OUT ISRAELI GOLIATH



## EDITORIAL

# Kick Blair out now

## But what do we replace New Labour with?

Tony Blair has been forced to leak a date for his departure – May-June 2007. As many as a hundred MPs were in open mutiny, demanding he “name the day.” Grassroots Labour activists fear another electoral debacle in the Scottish Parliamentary and Welsh Assembly elections next May. Gordon Brown sensed that Blair was delaying his departure so that a Blair-loyalist could be found to rob him of the top prize at the last minute.

Blair wants nine months to strut the world stage and help George Bush set up another war – an attack on Iran. He wants more time to push forward his “reforms” (attacks) on public services and civil liberties. He wants to put one or other of his closest political cronies (Alan Milburn, Stephen Byers, John Reid or David Miliband) in a position to challenge Gordon Brown.

Whenever he goes and whoever succeeds him, Blair will remain the most hated Labour prime minister since Ramsay Macdonald. He has embroiled the country in more wars than any prime minister in living memory: in Serbia, Kosova, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq. Like Bush, he supported Israel's bloody invasion of southern Lebanon this summer. For many Labour MPs, including some of his own supporters, this was an outrage. Moreover he backed the losing side. Israel's defeat was a defeat for Tony Blair.

### NO SHORTAGE OF STRUGGLE

Over 100,000 marched to protest the Lebanon atrocities in London on 5 August, marking a revival of the antiwar movement. Meanwhile, in the workplaces too, resistance to Blair and his policies is mounting.

Post office workers have walked out in protest at plans to shut offices and franchise services out to WH Smith, while the threat of privatisation is igniting a whole series of local strikes. Over a thousand firefighters have launched back-to-back strikes on Merseyside against 10 per cent job cuts and punitive shift changes. Rail unions RMT and Aslef have had several strikes on GNER, Heathrow Express and South West Trains to battle the rule of profit on the railways.

Thus the Time To Go demonstra-



tion on 23 September and counter conference the day after come at a good time. Sure they must demand that Blair goes now, not in nine months time. But they must do more than discuss what to expect from Gordon Brown as leader of the Labour Party, or for that matter a campaign for John McDonnell. Brown was the architect of more private finance initiatives and means tested benefits than the Tories. He is a self-proclaimed admirer of the USA, who sees Britain's future as permanently linked to US imperialism's world domination. Anyone who thinks Brown will be better is in for a rude awakening.

Tony Woodley of the Transport and General says Blair is a liability because of the war and privatisation. The trouble for him is that the candidate he favours, Gordon Brown, will not criticise Blair's wars or espouse Woodley's anti-privatisation agenda. This is why McDonnell and the left have an opening; they dare do this. So what about his campaign for the leadership?

The left, both inside and outside the Labour Party, can pack big meeting halls and run a tub-thumping Old Labour campaign for him, if it wants. But they know and he knows that there isn't a snowball's chance in hell of him winning or coming anywhere near it. This is not 1982; the vast majority of working class activists are not even

members of the Labour Party, and tens of thousands of the most militant wouldn't vote Labour either. After ten years of right wing New Labour militants are looking for an alternative in a way they have not done since the early 1970s.

This does not mean that we are unable to oust Blair or stop Brown following in his footsteps. But it does mean the way to do this is not to concentrate on reviving Labour. We believe that constituency activists and unionists still affiliated to Labour should give support to McDonnell, when and if they get the opportunity to vote. But we say honestly and openly that McDonnell's strategy – reclaiming Labour – is doomed to failure. In any case this is completely the wrong direction for the vanguard of the working class to take.

### BREAK WITH LABOUR – FORM A NEW WORKERS PARTY

We need a new party of the working class and it is plain that many thousands of militants in all the struggles against Blair and Brown, against war and privatisation are willing not only to vote for such a party but also to put their time and energy into building it. The problem is that most of the left forces outside the Labour Party are failing to show the way to create such an alternative. The populism of Respect, the nationalism of the Scottish Socialist Party and

Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity, the reformist programme imposed by the Socialist Party in the Campaign for a New Workers Party: none of them provide the way forward.

The Time to Go and Fighting Unions conferences must start an open and democratic debate about the future of the workers' movement: both about what sort of political party we need and how the unions can be transformed into real fighting bodies, free of bureaucratic control.

We need to break the unions from Labour, and use their political funds and vast network to form a new working class party. The tens of thousands of militant trade unionists, the campaign activists who are leading the fight against big business and the government, the youth mobilising against war, could immediately provide the backbone of such a party.

But such a struggle will be in vain if it results only in the recreation of Old Labour, i.e. a party chained to the strategy of changing society through parliament and limiting our struggles to what is acceptable to the capitalist class. Old Labour led to today's New Labour – precisely because capitalism no longer requires nationalised industries and the welfare state. Profitability requires privatisation, inequality and war.

Even a cabinet stuffed with McDonnells, Sheridans and Galloways would not be able to change this fact. The way the Iraq war was foisted on an unwilling majority of the people showed that real power rests not in parliament, but in the City and Sandhurst. A radical government would have to abandon either its programme or its parliamentary strategy. It could carry out the former only by adopting revolutionary means. But it is no good discovering this at the last minute. The working class must be told and prepared in advance for the hard tasks that it faces, if it is to take real power.

That's why Workers Power fights not just for a break from Labour, but a break from reformism. We want a new workers party to adopt a revolutionary action programme. We want such a party to fight in the workplaces and on the streets, not just at times of elections. We want it to fight for power not for office.



# CONTENTS



# NEWS IN BRIEF

### SUPPORT POST STRIKE

Post Office staff in south Wales will walk out on strike for two hours on 4 September 2006 in protest against the closure of offices in Swansea and Llanelli. WH Smith is due to take over the Post Office franchise.

CWU assistant secretary Andy Furey said, "The purpose of this industrial action is to cause maximum disruption to the employer at minimum cost to our members and the public."

Workers Power thinks that all-out indefinite strike action is the way to win the dispute, along with local bulletins, demos, meetings and actions. Postal strikers in Belfast earlier this year ran just such a campaign – and won.

### DEFEND FIREFIGHTER JOBS

Over a thousand firefighters are striking on Merseyside to prevent 150 job cuts.

The first of two 4-day strikes started on 31 August. In an approach, we approve of, the second strike will start two hours after the first one ends. Even better, the army has said that, due to the occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan, they will not be available to scab on the dispute.

### ASBOS FOR UNBORN BABIES

Tony Blair's authoritarianism knows no bounds. He plans to label



**THAT FOETUS IS UNDER ARREST**

children as antisocial before they are even born.

This is a return to the kind of eugenics practised in the 1950s, when working class and black mothers from deprived backgrounds were declared unfit to be parents.

This month's issue of Workers Power sees the launch of our new format.

While this change was forced upon us by the split in the League for the Fifth International, we hope to continue to bring you the same quality of coverage of the class struggle, and of Marxist analysis.

We shall complement our new magazine with a more regular theoretical journal, *Fifth International*, which will carry some of the longer articles that used to appear in the newspaper. We shall also improve our websites, with more pages dedicated to discrete areas of the class struggle and a more

complete archive.

We will continue with our free newswire services via email. A fortnightly international wire will alternate with a fortnightly British-focused one. Readers can subscribe via our websites.

Revolutionary reading!  
The Editorial Board

# IN THIS ISSUE

**4** Left wing MP John McDonnell hopes to unseat Tony Blair in Labour but can he reform the party? Meanwhile Respect has called a conference for fighting unions

**5** The government proposes to limit the number of workers from Romania and Bulgaria coming to Britain. *Dave Stockton* argues against this racist policy

**6** Following Tommy Sheridan's successful libel case against the News of the World, the Scottish Socialist Party has split

**8** The League for the Fifth International held its seventh congress this summer. Delegate *Joy MacReady* reports on its decisions

**9** *Marcus Chamoun* explains how Hezbollah defeated Israel and points to the limitations of the Islamist group's politics

**10** US imperialism is at a turning point in the Middle East. *Jeremy Dewar* looks at its weaknesses and argues for the antiwar movement to press home its advantage

**12** While the world's eyes have been on Lebanon, Israel has continued its land grab in Palestine. *Simon Hardye* calls for one workers' state for all

**13** News from the L5I: *Marc Lasalle* asks, "Where next?" after the victory over youth labour laws in France. *Martin Suchanek* reports on our candidates in the Berlin election

**14** It's been a hot summer in Mexico with millions on the streets and dual power in Oaxaca. *Keith Spenser* outlines the tasks for the Mexican revolution

**16** Seventy years ago, the Spanish Civil War erupted. *Andy Yorke* look at the roles played by the various currents in the working class

**18** Revolution, the independent socialist youth organisation, held its international conference. *Josh Davies* and *Luke Cooper* were there

**20** Spotlight on communist politics: what is revolutionary defeatism?



## LABOUR MOVEMENT

# Make Respect union conference springboard for new party

Respect has called a Fighting Unions Conference for Saturday 11 November. It is already backed by some of the most militant workers' leaders (Bob Crow of the RMT and Mark Serwotka of the PCS), along with more than 500 union officials. It also has the backing of many officials who are still in the Labour Party, with MP John McDonnell speaking.

The conference is called to campaign to stop privatisation of public services, defend pension rights, and support the RMT-sponsored Trade Union Freedom bill. One session will discuss the crisis of political working class representation.

Activists must seek to turn this latter session into a real debate on how we are going to break the unions from Labour, and use their funds and resources to form a new workers' party. Campaigns to repeal trade union laws, fighting cuts, improving pensions, getting the troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan all need a political

party to lead the struggles.

This year alone we have seen an RMT conference on this subject and the Campaign for a New Workers Party launched. The success of Respect in the local council elections, while the Labour Party continues to lose members and voters, due in and Blair and Brown's continuing neoliberal offensive.

Therefore what will most probably be the largest gathering of trade unionists for many years must debate the need for a new workers' party and what sort of party this should be. Workers Power will unite with other forces to build such a party in the trade unions and campaigns and to unite activists all over the country. And we will fight for such a party to be a revolutionary one.

None of the union leaders support this course of action. Mark Serwotka does in words, but has done nothing to swing the PCS behind such a campaign. As on other questions, grassroots trade unionists have

to demand their leaders, left or right wing, take action - and organise to do so without them if necessary.

We should demand an end to the market in public services, the nationalisation of private contractors, and a movement against privatisation and pension cuts, including co-ordinated ballots and political strikes. Our campaign for the repeal of all the anti-trade union laws should organise to smash and repeal them all. The Trade Union Freedom Bill only allows limited secondary picketing; we need to take political strike action, like they do on the continent.

To do all of this we will need to replace our existing trade union leaders, and transform the unions into democratic, class struggle organisations. Otherwise, as happened with the pensions dispute, our strikes will be called off, our united fronts divided, and our demands watered down.

Officials, who sell out or hold back the struggle, should be

instantly recallable by members and earn the average wage of those they represent. No more privileges for the bureaucracy. Elected strike committees should control industrial action, not the officials.

Yet the SWP/Respect have left no space on the agenda for a session on organising the rank and file in the unions - not surprising since this would be anathema even to the left leaders like Serwotka and Crow.

It will, however, produce a declaration to be amended and voted on. Let's use it to launch a campaign for a new party, and organise the rank and file of the unions to link it to militant resistance to Labour's offensive.

**Fighting Unions Conference  
Saturday 11 November  
Shoreditch Town Hall  
London**

**Contact  
sam@respectcoalition.org or  
phone 0207 613 5624**

# John McDonnell challenges for leadership of Labour

John McDonnell, MP for Hayes and Harlington, has announced he is to stand for the leadership of the Labour Party when Tony Blair retires: "I am standing to ensure that thousands of Labour Party members and supporters have the chance to participate in deciding not only who should be the next leader of our party but more importantly what policies the party should be pursuing."

McDonnell has a good record voting against the government, and is a tireless worker for causes such as asylum rights and Hands off Venezuela, as well as supporting the RMT, FBU and PCS unions in the Commons. He recently fronted a mass lobby of parliament under the slogan, Public Services Not Private Profit and is chair of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs and

of the Labour Representation Committee.

But McDonnell hasn't a chance of winning. The Labour Party has always been outside the control of its own membership. But in 1982 the rank and file in party and the unions nearly elected Tony Benn as deputy leader. The right wing majority of the parliamentary Labour Party openly threatened to split the party if he were elected leader or deputy. So Neil Kinnock and Tony Blair repeatedly changed the rules to make sure this would never happen again..

So what is McDonnell's campaign for?

The danger is that, after the votes are counted, it will be business as usual. When the right go on the offensive, the left will back pedal to avoid being thrown.. Whether

under Gordon Brown or John Reid, or Charles Clarke, McDonnell and the left will continue hall down the flag and "live to fight another f day".

But it doesn't have to be like this. The struggles of the working class, against privatisation, against war, should come before that of Labour unity.

McDonnell and his supporters should use their campaign to declare open and unending war on the warmongers in the party. They should obstruct the government's programme at every step, even if this means having the Labour whip withdrawn. They should support every strike, demonstration and campaign against Labour. They should call for action committees to unite the struggles and bring down the government.

Rather than fear disunity in

Labour ranks, McDonnell and co. should forge unity with the great mass of working class militants who are already sick of Labour's policies and are willing to break Blair or Brown. Unfortunately, for all his extraparliamentary campaigning, McDonnell and the rest of the Labour left will not make such a break. Because they see the class struggle only operating within the framework of bourgeois democracy, the unity of the parliamentary Labour Party appears paramount.

As revolutionaries, we see this self-limitation as completely unnecessary, indeed counter-productive: a diversion from what socialists should be focusing on, a new working class party, based on a revolutionary action programme and organised to combat capitalism in every arena, from parliament to the picket lines.



## RACISM

# Tabloid press stokes up racism against immigrants

By Dave Stockton

"Halt the tide of EU migrants" *Sunday Express*, 20/8/06

"Immigrants to flood in" *Daily Star*, 24/7/06

"East Europe migrants help take jobless to six-year high" *Daily Mail*, 17/8/06

"Migrants get Brits' pay slashed by 50 per cent" *The Sun*, 18/8/06

In August the government revealed that around 400,000 people from the countries in Eastern Europe, which joined the European Union in May 2004, have found work in Britain since that date. The total number is closer to 600,000 if self-employed workers are included. Twenty-two per cent of the workers coming to Britain are from Poland, many of them young building workers. Politicians and the press immediately linked these figures to the fact that there will be new EU accession states in January 2007, Bulgaria and Romania.

This was enough to set the right-wing tabloids headlines screaming.

Firstly, the figures record those entering Britain are not set against those leaving it. In fact large numbers of young workers, particularly from Scotland and the North of England, have left to seek work in Europe.

Secondly, migrant workers do not have access to British benefits system.

Thirdly, since they came to work, they pay taxes and national insurance, therefore making a substantial net contribution to the coffers of the British state.

Fourthly, at the moment, wages are rising overall not being slashed. The annual growth rate was 3.9 per cent in June 2006; including bonuses, this figure was 4.3 per cent. This is no surprise - we are at the peak of the expansionary phase of the industrial cycle and there are skilled labour shortages in many sectors.

However it is certainly true that unemployment is rising. In July, employment figures were up 0.3 over the quarter and up 0.7 over the year. The unemployment rate was 5.5 per cent, which equals 1.68 million. But there is no evidence this is due to displacement by immigrant workers. It is a product of the remorseless decline of certain industries and the failure of British capitalism to replace them "at home" - a product of the globalisation, which jour-

**Migrants get Brits' pay slashed by 50 per cent**

**Halt the tide of EU migrants**

**East Europe migrants help take jobless to six-year high**

**Immigrants to flood in**

nalists and politicians praise as the basis of western values.

The most that can be said is that the large numbers of Polish building workers drawn in have offset what would otherwise have been a greater rise in wages in this sector. Of course this is precisely the reason that Britain's bosses did not join in the hue and cry about immigration from Eastern Europe as they have always done over asylum seekers and Commonwealth (i.e. black, migrants).

By contrast Labour ministers like John Reid, the Home Secretary, warned: "The momentous scale of transition from static to mobile populations makes mass migration and the management of immigration the greatest challenge facing European governments, in my view." He claimed it had "brought insecurity into the heart of communities", explicitly linking immigration to the threat of terrorism.

Ruth Kelly chimed in, claiming that "global tensions are being reflected on the streets of local communities", that the new migrants have "fierce loyalties" to their countries and Muslims "feel the reverberations from the Middle East". "As a result," she went on, "there are white Britons who do not feel comfortable with change. They see the shops and restaurants in their town centres changing. They see their neighbourhoods becoming more diverse."

In fact what Labour is pushing is the idea of "managed migration" - letting

in the skilled labour that employers require to prevent wages rising in their sector and to avoid them having to train more workers themselves or pay the state to do it. At the same time, they will continue to harass and deport asylum seekers and "economic migrants" from outside of Europe.

The racist character of this is plain to see, as well as the eagerness to meet the needs of the bosses for cheap and unorganised labour. At the same time people like Reid and Kelly are

only too willing to play the anti-Muslim card (i.e. Somalia and Afghanistan refugees and those who protest against UK occupation of Iraq are potential terror-

ists). They fuel the "debate" on immigration, denouncing "political correctness", i.e. those who point out that the whole terms of this debate are racist to the core. They repeat far right propaganda about the fears and alienation of "white working class people" etc.

Of course white workers, black workers, and Muslim workers have real and justified fears about growing unemployment, the shortage of affordable housing, and under-funded schools and hospitals. But socialists understand that these are produced by capitalism, intensified by the privatising, free market period of globalisation.

Passing the blame onto migrants, with a heavy dose of racism, is designed to cover up this fact and divert British workers' anger onto their brothers and sisters. It's the old story of divide and rule.

We have to play our strongest card - unite and resist. Resist the privatisation and slashing of public services. Resist closures and shifting factories to low wage and unorganised workforces. Resist the run-down and sell-off of council estates. Resist the growth of social inequality by fighting to raise wages.

We have to unite workers born here with those who come seeking work by welcoming them into the unions and working class political parties, by fighting the vile racism aimed at asylum seekers and migrants, and demand their right to work, too.



## DEBATE ON THE LEFT

# Scottish Socialist Party splits

*Luke Cooper* looks at Tommy Sheridan's move to a new party in the aftermath of his court case

A day after a Scottish Socialist Party rally in a Glasgow hotel launched its 2007 election campaign before 300 faithful members, Tommy Sheridan booked himself into the same hotel and told twice as many recruits that he was founding a new party called Solidarity.

The Herald, which has been lapping up every drop of the party infighting, dryly commented, "Solidarity wins on decibel count". We do not share the cynicism of the bosses' gossip rags. Although, unlike many on the left, we never viewed the SSP as a model for left unity to be followed, its acrimonious break-up has not helped the working class struggle at all.

## COURTING DISASTER

The immediate reason was, of course, Sheridan's court case against the News of the World, which he won, despite sacking his own legal team, and having a series of SSP members speak against him in court.

The jury voted 7-4 in favour of Sheridan, and awarded him £200,000 in damages. He also picked up another £25,000 from the Scottish Record for his side of the story.

But he leaves his former party in ruins. Faced with the possibility of perjury charges, the United Left majority of the SSP leadership accused Sheridan of lying to the court, and defended those that had testified against him. Sheridan, though he later regretted it, labelled these same witnesses, "political scabs". A split was clearly inevitable, and the SSP's ratings slid to lower than 1%.

The court case has been a disaster for the SSP.

Of course, the News of the World's stories were an attempt to smear Sheridan and through him the SSP. Rupert Murdoch is about as anti-working class as one can imagine. His papers have, from the great miners strike onwards, always sought to poison the working class with racism, sexism and bigotry.

Without placing any trust in the bosses' courts, any working class party has the right to use them to expose the true nature of the press and to educate the class.

However, to do so, the party must first of all ensure that it is united in the tactic. This unity was missing. Tommy Sheridan went to the executive and they refused him their backing, arguing that it would mean asking SSP members to lie in court and risk charges of perjury



being brought against them. The majority on the executive claim that Sheridan had already admitted to them that the "libels" were substantially true.

Sheridan should never have proceeded against the News of the World when he knew that this would become a sideshow for the real drama: Scotland's most left wing party imploding on the stage of the crown court.

Both sides should have seen from the outset that the compromise struck between the SSP Executive and Sheridan that allowed him to continue his libel action if he resigned as party convenor

would inevitably lead down this path.

What was really lacking was the political bravery to confront the bourgeois pseudo-moralist hacks of the News of the World with the argument that, whether the accusations were true or not, adultery is a private matter and the SSP would get on with fighting the class struggle. They should have stood firm and said, "So what? Who cares? Why don't you confront the real moral outrages caused by the British occupation in Iraq, the deportation of asylum seeking children to war zones, the robbing of workers' pension funds?"

## Fighting for a revolutionary party

In a recent polemic with Workers Power, SSP member Graham Cee attacked our position of calling for a united front of all forces in Britain that want to fight for a new working class party while criticising left organisations regrouping around reformist political programme and identifying themselves as a ready made alternative. Graham argued that the SSP was the most advanced expression of a campaign for a new working class party in Scotland.

But left regroupment on reformist programme is not the same as a principled united front

around an issue, on which heterogeneous political forces can unite. The question of fighting across Britain for a new working class party, raising it in the trade unions, making it a demand on the union leaderships and linking it to the struggle for rank and file organisation, remains a real burning question for the working class.

From the outset, Marxists must be clear, that revolutionary politics and a revolutionary programme are the only solutions to a world gripped by imperialist war and crisis in the Middle East, neo-liberal offensive on our social gains and a rising tide of racism.



**POLITICAL CONFLICT**

But behind the court case is the political conflict that has been raging inside the SSP since 2003. In that year, on the back of the huge antiwar protests, the party got six MSPs in the Scottish parliament. Suddenly they went from being a party of activists to one that had a national profile, and could play a role in parliament.

Sometimes this role has been to disrupt proceedings and carry out protests; on other occasions they have put through legislation, which has helped working class people, such as Sheridan's bill to prevent warrant sales.

But at the same time the pressure of being in parliament began to tell. Rather than brush aside the News of the World allegations as a private matter, and go onto the offensive about the filthy immorality of British imperialism at home and abroad, the party asked and Sheridan agreed to step down as national convenor. In doing so, it allowed the News of the World to change the party's leader.

Alan McCombes stood for the post of convenor and was architect of the Independence Convention. He offered a brazen adaptation to Scottish nationalism. He was beaten by

Colin Fox, who concentrated on parliamentary bloc-building, with the SSP gaining respectability, through advancing reformist legislation.

Since then, the party's standing in local elections has fallen, while its internal life has become crisis ridden and factional. Following the trial, Sheridan made his move.

But why does Sheridan believe in a new party, which, in the words of Colin Fox, has "an identical political programme"? He may have thought the SSP was not worth reclaiming.

**SWP: TOO MANY HEROES?**

Certainly, the Socialist Worker platform has used the crisis from the outset to seek to garner support for a Respect-type project north of the border. They stated that the 3 September meeting "must be open to Muslim organisations". As early as November 2004, Respect MP George Galloway described the prospect of Sheridan and himself uniting in the Scottish elections as a "dream ticket".

In *Socialist Worker* (02/09/06) Chris Harman has the delicate task of explaining why they are now throwing all their weight behind Sheridan, whom they formerly criticised. Harman disarmingly draws

the parallel with George Galloway and Respect.

He tells us that, "Often when a new movement is developing, certain figures emerge who seem to many new activists to embody what it stands for" and cites an incongruous list consisting of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Tariq Ali, Fausto Bertinotti and José Bové. Surely, he asks, there is a danger of elevating such leaders above their parties? Maybe, he answers himself, but -hey - nothing ventured, nothing gained.

Since the SWP built the Respect coalition around Galloway, with not an ounce of democratic accountability, why not try the same method north of the border? The principles of working class democracy, of Leninist democratic centralism? The music of the distant future at best.

Careful readers will observe that the method of the SWP can be paraphrased thus. When founding movements or parties, it is essential to start with someone who already has a high public profile. This charismatic figure will then rally the mass membership.

Later on, Harman suggests, these members will "discover their capacity to take control of things without relying on individuals". Thus the SWP is throwing itself behind Solidarity "not because we have suddenly joined some Tommy Sheridan fan club, but because together we can draw in the forces for a new movement [what new movement?] that is powerful and confident enough to value the talents of individuals without bowing down to them."

Well, we will see. The history of the workers movement shows that charismatic and uncontrollable leaders - Ferdinand Lasalle in Germany, Kier Hardie or Ramsay MacDonald in Britain - did quite a lot of damage. We old fashioned Marxists thought a party had to be founded on a programme, one thoroughly debated and collectively agreed. This formed the strategy and principles, which all the party members are obliged to fight for. The SWP clearly believe they have found a short cut that makes all this unnecessary.

Indeed part of the very problem of the SSP was that it was, in an important sense, a "Tommy Sheridan fan club", just as Respect is a George Galloway fan club. We wish the SWP comrades the best of luck with two prima donnas in the opera house. We fear, however, that this too will lead to a smash up, which will demoralise the militants drawn into this unprincipled adventure.

The CWI platform (sister organisation of the Socialist Party) at least wants the new party to call itself socialist, but will duck the key questions of the capitalist state and of bourgeois property, preferring a warmed up list of reforms.

But both these centrist organisations may find the concessions they have made to Sheridan are in vain. It seems that he has the support of the Highlands and Islands and the Borders, but none of the other regions, including the central belt of Edinburgh and Glasgow. He had originally stated that he wanted to win 32 branches out of the SSP's 70 to take it over. His launch of a new party is an admission that he was nowhere near this figure.

**WHY A SCOTTISH PARTY?**

Meanwhile, the SSP majority has pointed the finger of blame at Sheridan and his "London backers" (the SWP and CWI), and have made a turn again to Scottish independence. Colin Fox told the BBC that Sheridan's splitting showed his abandonment of Scottish independence, while Kevin Williamson, writing in the *Scottish Socialist Voice*, announced his departure to the Independence First campaign, saying "Sheridan will soon have to dance to the CWI/SWP line on independence or be dumped by them."

Indeed, this is the logic of forming a separate party for the Scottish working class. Marxists have always argued for an international party of the working class, while recognising that the task of smashing the capitalist state and seizing power demands that this party is broken down into national sections.

But Scotland, though a nation, does not have a national state. Its army, police, judiciary and so on are loyal to the British state. The Scottish working class cannot be liberated without overthrowing this state, a task for which they need complete unity with their English and Welsh sisters and brothers.

The problem with the SSP and the newly formed Solidarity is that neither party takes this task seriously. Workers Power believes that SSP members and supporters, the vast majority of whom had no say whatsoever in the break-up of their old party, should learn the lessons of adaptation to nationalism and bourgeois parliamentarianism, and join us in the fight for a new working class party across Britain, and win it to a revolutionary programme.

# The problem of left regroupment

The SSP was conceived and developed as a classic left regroupment unity initiative. In uniting various left forces around a left reformist political programme it hoped to be able to make strides forward amongst the class by appearing as a ready made "mini mass party" that shared the same left reformist politics as workers increasingly disillusioned with Labour's lurch rightwards.

This, on the one hand, meant presenting an inadequate programme for the class that could not achieve socialism, while, on the other, it meant a false unity between different political forces pulling the project from the outset in different directions.

Without the pressure of significant forces of the working class within the

party, to which the different trends can address with their programmes, and demonstrate through struggle their necessary or erroneous character, then the party is left addressing the mass forces outside of its ranks with an inadequate reformist programme.

An example of this was the fall out between the SWP and Sheridan's former platform, the International Socialist Movement, over the firefighters' dispute. The Socialist Worker platform correctly criticised the leadership of the firefighters over the sell-out of the deal. However, the ISM and most of the SSP executive committee covered up for the bureaucracy, because they saw the growth of the party being dependent on winning trade union leaders.



## SEVENTH CONGRESS OF THE LEAGUE FOR THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL

# A world in crisis and the tasks of communists

By Joy MacReady

As Israel's brutal assault on Lebanon raged into its third week, delegates to the League for the Fifth International's seventh congress met in Prague. The main theme was the economic, political and military offensive of imperialism, and the rising tide of resistance to it. Far from globalisation being a period of stability, expansion and social peace for capitalism, it is one full of revolutionary potential.

For one week, 25 delegates from Britain, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden, plus 10 observers analysed the situation across the globe, assessed the forces involved and planned our tactics in relation to - and as a part of - these resistance movements. We unanimously agreed that our central task remains to rally forces within the vanguard of the working class, which recognise the necessity of international organisation and new workers parties, and win them to the creation of a revolutionary Fifth International.

We are living through a period of growing political disequilibrium - which has had repercussions within our own ranks. Between our sixth (2003) and the seventh congresses we have witnessed a level of internal struggle unprecedented in the history of the League, including splits and significant losses.

Most damaging in scale was the loss of 40 per cent of Workers Power Britain. Amongst the splitters were some of the League's long-term leaders. To this can also be added the loss of the small Australian section and three individual members in Ireland.

At the core of this struggle lay a criticism of the League's analysis that the world has entered a pre-revolutionary period, in which we have more opportunities and therefore the obligation to agitate directly among the class for militant, mass action and for new forms of organisation: rank and file movements in the unions, action committees and new workers parties.

The faction wanted to deny this perspective and limit our activity to routine trade unionism. This provided a rallying point for passive propagandists and "party defeatist" elements right across the League. In the end, the faction had no stomach for a hard argument at the congress and planned to split on its eve, hoping this would spoil our preparation.

Fortunately, their unprincipled plans were exposed in time for us to reorganise.

As a result, congress proved very fruitful, not least because the League has also had some notable successes over the last three years. These include: youth work in UK and Austria, developing links with Indonesian Revo, trade union work in Germany, raising our profile in the European left and workers movement, improved web presence and our new the-

eral candidate Felipe Calderon, tried to steal the election.

The importance of seriously assessing periods and situations is to correctly estimate the potential they hold for mass struggle. Any revolutionary organisation worth its salt needs to know when it is possible to raise revolutionary slogans, mass agitation, not merely as general propaganda addressed to the few.

The League's position on nuclear power also produced an internal discussion. A majority voted to keep our position from the last congress: not to call for the immediate closure of nuclear power plants but for workers-controlled funded research into other forms of energy production.

## We are confident that the growing instability of global capitalism will increasingly throw up crises and revolutionary situations

oretical journal.

The Austrian section came to the congress fresh from an excellent intervention in the Stop Bush campaign where they led a school strike and a contingent of 400 youths against the warmonger.

So, although we need to learn from our mistakes, we also have to learn from our successes. In short, the League must hold to its course, adopted in 2000 and 2003, despite our reduced forces. We will be helped by in this by the excellent quality of the young comrades, who have joined the League, along with the older cadres, who remained loyal to our tradition and programme.

The loss of the faction did not mean that political debate at the congress was absent. On the contrary, it was raised to a higher level, because, instead of having to defend our basic analysis, we could probe more in-depth problems.

### PERIODISATION

An extensive discussion took place around the distinct phases within the new period that opened up in 1999. There was a consensus that a rising tide of struggles culminated in the mighty antiwar movement of Spring 2003, after which a lull occurred. But by early 2005 the French rejection of the neoliberal European constitution, the revolutionary movement in Bolivia and the growing resistance in Iraq heralded a new upturn in the class struggle.

Since the congress this has been confirmed by the revolutionary situation in Mexico that opened up after the neoliber-

### OUR TASKS

Although we will have to effect an orderly retreat at the level of resources because of the splits in our sections (the number of fulltimers, attendance at international gatherings, size of publications, etc.), we decided to staunchly defend our top priorities

- Campaigning party work, especially to build Revolution, the socialist youth movement, to recruit new members
- Regular propaganda and a quarterly international theoretical journal, so we can educate our periphery and members
- Education and training of the new and young comrades, so we can rejuvenate our leadership
- Strengthening our international democratic centralism, giving more leadership to the sections, an essential element of revolutionary organisation that the faction wanted to weaken.

We will continue to intervene in the international anticapitalist and anti-imperialist gatherings and mobilisations, in particular against the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in June 2007. We will seek to build a fighting left wing of the movement and enter into discussions with leftward moving organisations, groups and individuals, like the Anti-imperialist Space that emerged at the Athens ESF this year.

We are confident that the growing instability of global capitalism will increasingly throw up crises and revolutionary situations, and that the L5I will rise to the challenges ahead. What we lack in material resources and numbers, we make up for in programmatic clarity and energetic dedication.

**Forward to the formation of the Fifth International!**



## IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

# Lebanon: who will win the 'peace'?

By Marcus Chamoun

After 33 days of fighting Hezbollah won a clear victory over the Zionist state. Israel was unable to smash it nor force its disarming. Israeli ground forces were able to occupy only an insignificant portion of Lebanon's territory. Even the "kidnapped" Israeli soldiers were not released or recaptured. This has made Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, a hero across the Arab world.

But this victory was won at a huge human and material cost.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) fought a dirty war, targeting farms, hospitals and electricity generators. They destroyed irrigation canals, fish farms, dairies, farm equipment and warehouses.

The vast majority of the 1,300 killed and 4,000 injured were civilians, around 45 per cent of them children. Up to a million people were displaced. Lebanon has suffered \$3.6 billion in material losses from Israeli bombings, including the destruction of 15,000 houses and up to 80 severely damaged bridges and roads. Another Israeli legacy is the hundreds of cluster bombs Israel dropped in the last 72 hours before the ceasefire. They are already killing and maiming returning refugees.

UN Resolution 1701, which allows for the deployment of French, Italian and other troops, has been carefully phrased not to give them a specific mandate to disarm Hezbollah. It leaves that job to the Lebanese army. Nevertheless the European imperialist troops are there to hamper and pressurise Hezbollah to cease all resistance to Israel.

Prime Minister Fouad Saniora has said that while his government's soldiers "are not the enemies of Hezbollah," he will tolerate no other armed presence in the South, and that "no area will be off limits to the army". That he can talk tough at all is due in part to Hezbollah's agreement not to carry weapons or wear uniforms in public.

Nevertheless any attempt to disarm Hezbollah against its will would unleash a sectarian civil war.



Lebanese flash the V-sign for victory and hold up Hezbollah flags as they drive through the rubble of buildings in southern Lebanon

The Lebanese people have shown deep repugnance to being dragged along that road. Hezbollah's prestige is still too high for most Lebanese whatever their sectarian affiliations. They are aware that Hezbollah defended the country whilst the army stood helplessly by.

Another result of the war is that the chief protagonist of last year's "Cedar revolution", the Maronite Christian middle classes, has become bitterly disillusioned with its results. It has become clear to them that their economic and political privileges were safer under the hated "Syrian occupation" than they are in a post-Syrian Lebanon in which Hezbollah is the main armed force. The patron of the "people power revolution," the United States, showed that when the chips were down, it was happy to let Israel smash up the results of years of reconstruction without a thought for their Lebanese supporters.

Nothing demonstrates this better than the political comeback of Michel Aoun, the leader of the biggest Christian opposition party. This Maronite former general once headed a military government that

was deposed with Syrian help. He was a vocal advocate of Hezbollah's disarmament. He returned from exile in France in April 2006, only after Syria's withdrawal.

Today he is Hezbollah's main political ally, calling for the resignation of Saniora's government for its abject failure to defend the country, and receiving Hezbollah's support in his call for a national unity government. How long this alliance will last is another question, the fact that Hezbollah needs it exposes the limitations of its politics.

For all the militancy and heroism of its guerrilla fighters, for all its leaders anti-imperialist rhetoric, Hezbollah is a bourgeois party. It fiercely defends the rights of private property, limiting its social radicalism to charity and welfare programmes.

This means that it can never lead, nor does it seek to, unite the exploited and oppressed classes against all those who exploit and oppress them - Lebanese as well as American or Israeli. Instead it seeks to build a multi-class alliance, largely within the confines on Lebanon's Shia community. This is inevitable given

its Islamist political ideology.

Instead of demanding that the costs of reconstruction be financed by expropriating big capital, Hezbollah has to rely on Iranian and Syrian finance. Likewise Hezbollah's highly trained guerrilla forces have become so effective thanks to Iranian weaponry. But he who pays the piper calls the tune. As long as Iran and Syria face US intransigence they will arm and finance Hezbollah. Nevertheless they will doubtlessly pressure it into some sort of deal within Lebanon that entrenches their interests.

This could well include the absorbing of Hezbollah into the reactionary confessional states political structures and its fighters into the Lebanese army. If any serious deal is on offer from US or EU imperialism Syria and Iran will happily sacrifice Hezbollah's freedom and any active support for the Palestinians to continue the struggle against Israel.

That is why the working class needs to act independently of Hezbollah and all confessional and religious parties, even where they can unite in action against imperialism and Zionism. What Lebanon and the Middle East needs is a revolutionary communist party able to offer consistent anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist leadership in the struggle for a Socialist United States of the entire region. The struggle for democratic rights in the region can be politically pushed into a fight for workers power and socialism, but this will only happen if a party is built that can implement that policy.

What the international working class and antiwar movement must do is demand the immediate ending of the Israeli blockade, the ending of all occupation of Lebanese territory, and all violations of its airspace. We must demand that the Zionists and their US and British backers be forced to pay full reparations for the destruction of Lebanon. We must fight to blockade the blockaders; for workers sanctions and a total boycott of Israel. We must campaign for the immediate and total withdrawal of the UN peacekeepers.



## IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

# US imperialism at

By Jeremy Dewar

At the fifth anniversary of the devastating attack on the World Trade Centre, 9/11, US foreign policy is looking shakier than ever. Not many commentators at the time would have predicted that the US, five years later, would be isolated on the world stage, with more than 150,000 of its troops pinned down by lightly armed guerrilla forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

George W Bush cuts a beleaguered figure these days. Most Americans disapprove of his performance, and a CNN poll last month showed 60% opposed the war in Iraq, while 48% believed the US would eventually lose the war. More than one in four Americans wanted all American soldiers withdrawn by the end of the year.

These ratings are far worse than polls taken at the equivalent stage of the Vietnam war. If the war is this unpopular after 2,500 US troops have been killed, what will happen if, as in Vietnam, the body count rises above 50,000?

Predictably, though, Bush has fought back by re-committing himself and the US to the "long war". He told an audience of former soldiers in Salt Lake City, "As veterans you have seen this kind of enemy before. They are successors to fascists, to Nazis, to communists and other totalitarians of the 20th century. And history shows what the outcome will be. This war will be difficult. This war will be long. And this war will end in the defeat of the terrorists." He added that this war would be "the decisive ideological struggle of the 21st century." The message is: we have to sacrifice some freedoms in order to defend Freedom; what we are doing now may be unpopular, but the alternative is unthinkable.

### QUAGMIRE

When the doors are closed and the microphones turned off, Bush and Blair's conversation must sound a lot different. As can be seen from the facts on this page, the US and Britain are clearly losing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The resistance to their occupations is growing stronger and more sophisticated; the territory that they control is shrinking, not expanding; the morale of their troops is vanishing.

The Pentagon's four-yearly review last April tacitly recognised the inability of the US to invade and occupy countries



and install stable pro-imperialist regimes on a hostile population. It planned to put more resources into fighting wars by proxy. Israel was the first test of that policy. It failed spectacularly.

But it would be a grave mistake to assume from this that the threat posed by imperialism in the region is likely to diminish. On the contrary, US and UK will act more viciously than ever before. Of course, in strictly military terms, an attack on Iran in the near future would be foolish in the extreme. But it cannot be ruled out. The push towards imposing economic sanctions shows the direction US policy is moving in.

Such actions may not appear rational, but, from imperialism's point of view: what is the cost of the alternative, of doing nothing? Loss of prestige will encourage open disobedience across the globe, as poorer capitalist regimes calculate that now is a good time to wrest some control over their economies and policy back from the West.

Look at what happened in the immediate aftermath of Israel's defeat in south Lebanon. Iran showed a long-range missile test in the Gulf on live TV, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad offered to debate George Bush, again on live TV, and proceeded with the country's nuclear programme in defiance of the UN. Further a field, Hugo Chavez cemented his alliance with Iran and Hizbollah, raising the spectre of an independent alliance of oil-producing nations.

A defeat for imperialism does not simply result in the status quo; it shifts the balance of forces in the class struggle towards the oppressed nations and the global working class.

Also, imperialism's policy is driven not just by greed alone (though this is, of course, a characteristic of the ruling class), but by the economic weakness at the heart of its system, capitalist competition and domestic politics. The US economy is the largest in the world, but its advantages over Germany, France and Japan will not last



# a turning point

forever. The growing threat of China should not be overestimated, but it too is a powerful spur to aggressive US foreign policy.

Finally, Bush and Blair - the chief protagonists of the "long war" - are approaching their sell-by date. Neither has more than, at most, two years to achieve some kind of result. Four or five years ago, they may have hoped to have achieved more, but they remain determined to at least entrench their policy, making it extremely difficult for any successor to reverse it.

In short, America has a limited window of opportunity to make a grab for the strategic area of the globe that is the Middle East. This, even more than oil, is their aim. The new Middle East that Bush and Blair talk about is one in thrall to Anglo-Saxon imperialism, where any regime that does not display complete subservience to its masters must be removed.

Israel is the key to this new Middle East. Its invasion of south Lebanon fully aided and abetted by Britain and the US, who stopped the United Nations even calling for a ceasefire so long as it looked like the Israelis might succeed, was conceived as attack that would disarm Hizbollah and deal a double blow to Iran's ambitions as a regional power and Syria's ability to resist.

## SO WHERE NOW?

The global antiwar movement must build on this summer's victories and make it impossible for imperialism to return to the offensive.

• First we must openly solidarise with all those forces resisting imperialism and its Zionist watchdog. If anyone was in any doubt that a victory for the resistance would have a powerful, progressive impulse across the region and beyond, then Hizbollah's success should have dispelled it.

In Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Lebanon, we support all those who are fighting against occupation.

• Second, we must demand the unconditional and immediate end to imperialist and Zionist aggression. End the occupations now! All occupying troops - be they US, British, Israeli or UN - must be driven out.

At the same time, we demand the

breaking of all economic blockades, designed to wear down the people of the Middle East, until they are incapable of resisting. Break the blockade of Lebanon and the elected Hamas authority! No sanctions against Iran! We support the right of Iran to develop nuclear energy, and even obtain nuclear weapons. Israel has an estimated 100-200 nuclear warheads and is a known aggressor. To demand that Iran cannot develop its defences against this constant threat is pure hypocrisy.

• Third, we should prepare to stop any more wars with all the power at our disposal. Any attack on Iran or Syria must be met with mass demonstrations and civil disobedience, but most importantly walkouts. School students on a mass scale, and some workers here and there did take strike action on 20th March 2003, the day the war broke out in Iraq. But the union leaders, who graced Stop the War platforms in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square failed to give a lead. This time we demand that they call their union members out as soon as any military action is proposed or launched.

This highlights the importance of working class action in the anti-imperialist movement. The working class is the only social power across the world, whose interests lie in the defeat of imperialism. The working class also has the power to threaten imperialism's rule in its homeland. This makes it uniquely placed to deliver solidarity by breaking sanctions and blockades, boycotting Israeli goods and services, and disrupting supply lines to the imperialist armies.

More than this, the working class movement must reach out and make a special effort to support all those trade unions and working class community organisations that are resisting imperialism in the Middle East. This is the best way to encourage the anti-imperialist resistance, not just to drive out the imperialist and Zionist armies, but to seize control of their economies and use the enormous wealth of the region for the benefit of the people.

Such a setback for imperialism would not just rock the Middle East, but threaten its dictatorship over its own working class.

## Iraq

General George Casey, top US commander in Iraq, received a public dressing down from his president last month for suggesting that US troop levels in Iraq could be reduced by 30,000 by the beginning of next year. Such is the tension between the political and military command of the US occupation. The army knows it's being beaten and needs to retreat; the administration knows it's being beaten and needs to advance.

The killing of al-Qa'ida operative, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in June was heralded as another breakthrough. It was nothing of the sort. In July, according to the New York Times, "The number of roadside bombs planted in Iraq rose in July to the highest monthly total of the war... Along with a sharp increase in sectarian attacks, the number of daily strikes against American and Iraqi security forces has doubled since January."

The paper quoted a senior Defense Department spokesperson: "The insurgency has gotten worse by almost all measures, with insurgent attacks at historically high levels." The latest US offensive has been aimed at Baghdad. Following a pattern established several

years ago, this has merely led to the resistance refocusing its efforts elsewhere. For example, the strategic oil city, Mosul, is now reportedly half under the control of an advancing anti-US militia.

The Baghdad offensive has been dressed up in Western media as a drive against sectarian cleansing. Its target has been Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi army. While sectarian attacks on both sides have occurred, they only account for a small minority of all military attacks.

John Pilger reported in the New Statesman: "In Iraq, in contrast to the embedded lie that the killings are now almost entirely sectarian, 70 per cent of the 1,666 bombs exploded by the resistance in July were directed against the American occupiers and 20 per cent against the puppet police force. Civilian casualties amounted to 10 per cent"

The real reasons behind US attempts to take out the Mahdi army are al-Sadr's closeness to Iran and his proven ability to mobilise mass forces in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles, like the 100,000 that responded to his appeal for a Million Man March in Sadr City in support of Lebanon.

However, as General Casey knows, it will remain a futile attempt. But it will be a bloody one, with many thousands of deaths. And therefore one that we must end now.

## Afghanistan

Blairite thug, John Reid, when he was Defence Secretary, sent in 3,300 UK troops into Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, and said he hoped they would stay for three years, "without a shot being fired".

Since that decision, the number of soldiers deployed has crept up to 4,000 and the number of those killed to 31. Lt Gen David Richards, the most senior British officer in Afghanistan and commander of all the Nato troops, described the situation as "the worst and most sustained fighting since certainly the Korean War and perhaps World War II... We can't expect soldiers to be handcuffed in what amounts to open warfare in the same way as they had previously been in Iraq."

This plea by Nato's commander is to allow occupation forces to be granted full license to kill - a far cry from his previous assessment that troops would be able to parade in soft hats, winning hearts and minds! Taliban leader Mullah Salahuddin more accurately described their role:

"We have confined the British to their barracks where they are anticipating their deaths and having sleepless nights. Their position is weakening daily." (Sunday Independent 03.09.06)

Unfortunately in the main it is Afghans and working class British soldiers who are paying the price for Reid's bluster and Richards' call to arms. That's why we say, get the troops out now, and put their war criminal leaders in the dock.



## IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

# Palestine: one state for all

By Simon Hardy

Despite the ceasefire in Lebanon, Israeli Defence Forces have continued the cynically named Operation Summer Rain in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This consists of a massive bombardment of homes, workplaces and infrastructure and constant low flights to terrorise the civilian population. The actions of the Israelis constitute a cruel collective punishment, in breach of the Geneva Conventions, and international law. The silence from governments around the world is deafening.

### ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

The election of the Hamas government in Palestine was seen by both the USA and the European Union as a revolt against their "Road Map" settlement. No matter that Israel had already torn up the map and was making its own unilateral settlement by building a wall to seize yet more land still in the possession of its original inhabitants. So swift and brutal economic and military punishment followed.

For all their talk of creating democracy in the Middle East, as soon as the Palestinians elected a government that refused to recognise Israel, the US and the EU pulled the plug on millions of dollars and euros in funding, deepening the poverty of one of the poorest areas of the world. Under cover of the invasion of Lebanon, the Israelis arrested several Hamas MPs and ministers: a demonstration that the Palestinian statelet is completely powerless against them.

Many saw the withdrawal from the Gaza strip as an enforced retreat. In fact the Israeli ruling class calculated that, by returning a small and overcrowded strip of land to the Palestinians, they could obtain international support for their land grab in the West Bank. They are constructing of a 703 kilometre long wall to extend and defend illegal settlements that exist on Palestinian land. 47% of the West Bank will be annexed to Israel upon its completion. 27,000 Palestinians then on the Israeli side will require permits to travel from their homes to their places of work.



Palestinian children march against the war on Lebanon in the Rafah refugee camp, Gaza strip

Under the guise of the "war on terror" and "security", the Israelis are seeking to eliminate the possibility of a viable Palestinian state. The fact that the United Nations is doing nothing to prevent this should come as no surprise; the UN created Israel and defends it in the final analysis against the struggle of the Palestinians to return home.

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

All democrats, socialists and trade unionists should take action to force Israel to stop its attacks on Gaza and the West Bank and withdraw its troops, to lift its air, land and sea blockade, to release its thousands of Palestinian prisoners and to recognise the democratically elected Palestinian government. We need to expose the racist settler state and its plans to ethnically cleanse most of Palestine, turning what is left into open air prison camps.

Just as, in the 1980s, the campaign against the South African regime helped turn it into pariah state, we need to do the same now. To encourage and support the

Palestinian resistance we must organise an international boycott of Israel. We should include all goods and services provided or produced by the Zionist state, plus sporting and academic exchanges. The international workers' movement should take action not only against Israeli trade, but those western corporations which support Israel.

### ONE STATE SOLUTION

Israel, the fifth largest military power in the world, armed with nuclear weapons, is the principle regional instrument of USA for dividing and exploiting the Arab world. Despite muted rivalry between the US and the EU for domination of the region, all the imperialists gain from this division and subordination. Any imperialist peace is aimed not a justice for the Palestinians but at reducing and eliminating resistance. Events in Iraq and Lebanon show, however, that, despite the overwhelming military power and economic stranglehold of the imperialists and the Zionists, this is a futile task.

But resistance is not enough.

Alone, it will condemn generation after generation to suffering. This suffering can and must be ended. Israel - a racist settler state that is expelling the Palestinians from their land - must be destroyed.

How can this be done? Just as the apparently hopeless resistance to Israel has survived by mobilising the masses, Israel can be destroyed in a revolution, by mobilising the Arab masses of the region and drawing to its side those progressive forces that exist within Israel itself.

Some on the left argue for a two state solution, under capitalism. This is reactionary and utopian.

First, it denies over five million Palestinian refugees, in camps across the Middle East their right to return to the land, from which they were ethnically cleansed. A return only to the West Bank and Gaza however would double the population of Palestine at a stroke and lead to its rapid economic collapse.

Second, the Israeli state is dependent for its supposed Jewish national identity on its role as regional gendarme for US imperialism, which subsidises it to the tune of billions of dollars a year. If this stopped, so would the subsidy.

Third, Israel can only preserve its Jewish majority by drawing in settlers and expanding into Palestinian territory.

The only progressive way forward for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples is a bi-national state. Even then, such a solution under capitalism is utopian. The working classes of the region have to come to the head of the struggle against Zionism and its American and European backers. If they do so, why should the Palestinian workers and peasants settle for a market economy, one bound to be subservient to imperialism?

The answer is to create a workers state, where collective control of the economy allows Hebrew and Arabic speaking workers and farmers to run the factories and cultivate the soil for the common well being of all. This must form an integral part of a United Socialist States of the Middle East. This can only come about through a revolution, but it must happen if the people of the Middle East are to escape poverty and achieve liberation.



## EUROPE

# Next steps for the class struggle in France

By Marc Lasalle, Paris

The anti-CPE struggle in France in April showed the world how to organise the fightback against neoliberal attacks on jobs, education and rights. This movement shook the Villepin government to its foundations. It defeated a vicious class enemy.

But it also showed how to build democratic structures, within which the leadership was accountable, and fighting unity between workers, youth and immigrant communities - important steps towards combating the misleadership and betrayal of the tops.

But the anti-CPE victory was only a temporary respite in the struggle. The onslaught that would follow a victory for the right in next year's presidential elections - the most likely candidate being the racist and arch-neoliberal Sarkozy - would be even more ferocious.

On the "left", the reformist Socialist Party, the Communists and the Greens would be normal coalition partners. But the SP's front runner as presidential candidate is Ségolène Royal, who openly calls herself a Blairite. The League Communiste Revolutionnaire likewise hoped to form an electoral alliance with the Communist Party. Like Lutte Ouvrière, the other main far left group, it is planning to stand its own candidate, Olivier Besancenot.

We must be clear that a Socialist victory will not mean an end to neoliberal attacks, just as it did not under SP "left-winger" Lionel Jospin.

How can revolutionaries ensure that the magnificent movements of last year and this - the revolt of the *banlieues*, the fightback of public sector workers, the anti-CPE mass movement - find adequate political expression?

First, there must be a mass, open and democratic debate about what sort of party French workers need. This is also the best way to involve the new forces from the anti-CPE struggle, who are essential for any future victory.

Second, this debate must foster unity in action but not unity based on unprincipled electoral pacts. Such unity can only be built if all the forces involved - including revolutionaries - openly advance their own slogans, tactics and programmes. After this, it may be possible for the forces to agree on key objectives of struggle, an action programme, whilst putting forward their own full programmes for their own candidates.

Embodied within an action programme would be a plan to put the unemployed to work, tackle racism and end the policy of "throwaway immigration", which is based on annual work and residency permits. The participants would decide how many new housing units, what repairs to the existing projects, how many schools, hospitals,



Apologies to Delacroix

youth clubs and leisure centres, parks and bus and rail links are needed. How to pay for it? Make the rich, the corporations, the banks, pay!

In this way a revolutionary programme links the fight for reforms to the struggle for power, and the need to expropriate the expropriators and seize their enormous wealth.

League for the Fifth International members in France believe that a working class party that is anticapitalist and internationalist will also need to be revolutionary. Two hundred years of working class struggle confirms that we can only clear the way for a new, socialist society by overthrowing capitalism.

We will argue that it can only reach its goal of emancipation and working class power by declaring for revolution, and adopting a programme of struggle that can make revolution a reality.

## Vote WASG but organise the fightback

Martin Suchanek, Arbeitermacht

“Der Anfang ist gemacht ...” (A beginning has been made) is one of the main slogans of the PDS election campaign and shows its intention to continue the SPD-PDS after the local council elections on 17 September.

But what has been the record of this coalition in Berlin? The privatisation of 120,000 flats in the last four years (more than all other local governments put together since 1990); privatisation of the water supply, gas and electricity, leading to 10,000 job losses and increased prices; up to 15 per cent wage cuts in the public sector; introduction of 30,000 1 euro jobs for the unemployed; and 200 evictions since the introduction of Hartz IV.

But the PDS and SPD aren't going to stop there. They have announced plans to privatise the remaining 270,000 flats owned by the

communes or the city; tens of thousands of jobs are to be cut in the public sector; public transport will be privatised; and several thousand jobs are under threat in the hospitals.

This explains why the WASG Berlin decided to stand its own candidates in the elections, and in particular express the mass discontent among the unemployed and low paid sections of the working class. The WASG's programme is itself reformist, but it is the only party standing against the neo-liberal attacks and organising a fightback. It is getting 3 to 5 per cent at the polls, with votes mainly coming from former PDS voters or non-voters. Because of this, the PDS has started a slander campaign against the "utopian" and "irresponsible" demands of the WASG.

Nationally, the WASG Berlin is part of an emerging left opposition that does not want to fuse with the PDS at all costs. For the national leaderships of the PDS and WASG, their support for more neo-liberal attacks and their struggle

against the WASG in Berlin is also a test for the future. They are preparing a unified, utterly reformist "united left" for an eventual place in a national government with the SPD and the Greens after the next national elections. Lafontaine, Gysi and their hacks want to get rid of any opposition.

Arbeitermacht, the German section of the LFI, supports the WASG candidates and is standing two of its own in Spandau in Berlin. It campaigns around its own electoral platform (published in the coming issue of Fifth International), and fights for the formation of a left opposition in the WASG fighting for revolutionary politics. We believe this is crucial if we want to realise the potential to create a working class party which will not be a left replica of the SPD or an extended version of the PDS - but a fighting party of the unemployed, workers, youth and migrants. A party taking on not only neo-liberalism, but also the whole capitalist system.



## MEXICO

# Masses must take power

By Keith Spencer

Over the past few months Mexico has entered a revolutionary situation. In March strikes by copper miners and steel workers erupted. In the state of Oaxaca, a 70,000 strong teachers demonstration in May led to a mass occupation of the main square calling for better pay and state aid for poor students.

On June 14 the permanent encampment in the main square was brutally attacked by police. This provoked a huge demonstration of 400,000 people and the next day a Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), was founded consisting of 170 delegates representing 85 organizations, trade unions, peasants organisations, human rights groups, NGOs. The strategy it adopted was to prevent the state government from carrying out its executive functions. Now the city and the state is in a situation of dual power

After the presidential elections, on July 2 it was announced that Felipe Calderon, candidate of the right-wing neoliberal party (PAN or National Action Party) had won by a wafer thin margin. The supporters of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), a left populist party angrily refused to accept this. They were convinced the election had been stolen.

A series of huge mass demonstrations began. On July 31 three million occupied the streets and squares of Mexico City - seven million in the country as a whole. Under pressure from the masses, the electoral commission recounted 9% of the votes, declared that Calderon would still have won by about 400,000 votes, and refused a full recount. However even the Financial Times commented, "Watergate is child's play compared with what went on here. But the authorities don't want a full recount because they are going to find many irregularities." (21 August)

Obrador has said he will "rule from the streets" and has called for a general convention of "a million delegates" on the 16 September to discuss the way forward. Mexico is moving swiftly towards a crisis where the question - who rules - is posed point blank. The mass mobilisations confront the as yet



intact state forces, though the latter have not yet been called on to exercise bloody repression. Will the revolutionary situation turn into a revolution? That depends in large measure on the strategy and leadership that the masses can find, can create, in the weeks and months ahead.

## THE OAXACA PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY

The struggle in Oaxaca is so important because of the form of organisation that has emerged there. The Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca has become an embryonic soviet that could develop into a real instrument to establish of working class rule. In August it initiated a state-wide forum to discuss an alternative constitution and popular involvement - mirroring some of the debates in the Venezuelan revolution.

It has overseen an upsurge in popular control and politics and manages food and support for blockades, camps and occupations, and acts as a political centre including boosting the role of women. For example, last month, 3,000 women banging pots and pans, took over the national TV centre in Oaxaca and made an address to the whole country. Demonstrators have fought with paramilitaries and the army to keep control of radio

stations; in mid-June they had only one, now they control 10.

The forum coincided with a state-wide strike for 18 August called by the teachers and supported by many other unions and civil organisations. The movement has polarised the state and isolated the dictatorial and reactionary governor Ulises Ruiz. Small businesses have sided with the movement while big business is threatening its own strike against inability to control the APPO and strikes.

But the movement's mass character also means that it is politically amorphous, with a large strand of indigenous politics (Oaxaca has the highest indigenous population in Mexico), reformists, bishops, NGOs, plus the teachers union, which sparked the whole crisis. Since May, the demands have shifted to the left from purely demands around teachers pay and conditions to ones about getting rid of Ruiz and changing the state constitution and taking control of the local wealth. But any solution at a state level can only succeed within the context of a national and even an international movement.

## THE OTHER CAMPAIGN - A DIVERSION

Meanwhile the Zapatistas are continuing their "other campaign" in

the rural areas. They have also carried out protests in Mexico City about the repression in Atenco - a rural community - involved in a struggle over land - and last month issued a statement after a conference on the Yucatan peninsula.

However, the other campaign is in an important sense a diversion. Their mobilisations have been a few thousand rather than the millions in Mexico City or hundreds of thousands in Oaxaca. Their message that the election was a diversion - consistent with their anarcho-populist view that "taking power" is irrelevant or downright dangerous - has left them on the sidelines when the masses were deeply concerned with the fate of the elections.

Their statement from the Yucatan conference is replete with appeals to the ancient gods, to an indignism that ignores the mass of the working class, and even statements of support to Oaxaca and Atenco are empty of any suggestions for taking the struggles forward. Whenever the class struggle reaches any degree of intensity the question of political power is posed - shall the masses submit to the coercion of the state or shall they overthrow its forces and smash its apparatus of repression? Anarchism and its post-modern hybrids like Zapatism, quit the battlefield



when this question is posed.

#### WHERE NOW?

The coming month will see more huge social mobilisations in Mexico, greater numbers on the streets and more violence from the state. Obrador called for a general convention of “a million delegates” on the 16 September to discuss the way forward but already there are differences on what the assembly is for. Some say it is just a protest against Calderon and at best will inaugurate Obrador as the true president. Others are calling for it to become an organising centre to continue the protests. Others have called on the convention to become an alternative centre for power inspired by the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO). A million people cannot be a deliberative and executive body but it could carry the message to create such bodies to every corner of Mexico. That is the call that needs to go out.

Meanwhile the forces of reaction will not wait and see. The Mexican bourgeoisie and the United States have since the late 1980s overseen the liberalisation of the economy, imposing ever greater exploitation of workers and driving the peasants of the land. They have created sprawling shantytowns on the edge of the cities and a huge supply of cheap labour for US corporations. Mexico is a bulwark of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),

The USA needs a neoliberal government in Mexico as a barrier against the populist sweeping across Latin America. The US is not going to lightly allow a “peoples power” revolution to topple the PAN. Even though Obrador, in himself is no radical, probably nearer to a Lula than a Chavez, if he were swept to power by a popular revolutionary upheaval like Chavez, this could change. For this reason Bush is certain to throw all influence he can muster to support Fox and Calderon.

The masses are therefore just not fighting over an election but they are fighting for the future of their country and their continent. But to fight against both the US and Mexican bosses, the masses need clear revolutionary class politics not the bourgeois populism of Obrador, the petty bourgeois anarcho-populism and indigenism of the Zapatistas or the corruption and bureaucracy of trade union leaders. They need revolutionary politics and a revolutionary action programme, one that can map out a path for the



masses themselves to take power.

The burning question of the movement is how to throw Fox, Calderon and his party out of power. For this something more than mass demonstrations, even by millions is necessary. An all out and indefinite general strike is needed. This is already needed to defend workers already in struggle against the bosses such as the sacked copper miners, to make the bosses feel the full strength of the workers. But any general strike which is more than a one day demonstration will paralyse the economy and pose the question to the ruling class: who rules? If the workers and the peasants can create a nationwide network of popular assemblies, such as the one in Oaxaca, then the answer can be - we do.

Such assemblies must be built in every village, town and city. These assemblies should be delegate-based and involve unions, factory committees, peasant organisations. They must become alternative centres of political power, i.e. soviets, challenging capitalist property and the right of the bosses state to rule, distributing food, and carrying out necessary work such as operating radio and TV stations.

The popular assemblies must arm the masses against the state forces and bosses' hired killers, must create a militia to defend strikes, occupations, and TV and radio stations and other amenities under popular control. They can make it well nigh impossible for the government to use the police, the army to shoot down their brothers and sisters or if they try, to win over the rank and

file soldiers to side with the people.

The call for a general strike must be placed on the union leaders. But workers must fight to take control of the general strike themselves, not to let it stay in the hands of the corrupt bureaucrats - tied to the main bourgeois parties. This would ensure its betrayal and defeat. This is true of the pro-Obrador union leaders too, who called off a general strike of four million workers before the elections. Workers must build strike and factory committees to organise mass picketing and initiate workplace occupations and link up with strikers in other factories offices and mines.

The popular assemblies and general strike must raise the call for a sovereign constituent assembly and oversee elections to it. Such an assembly should debate what sort of government should replace the rotten constitution and the stolen election. Furthermore the constitutional assembly should take measures that encroach upon the rule of the bosses and their property, nationalise factories and put them under workers control and encourage the peasants to occupy and takeover the landed estates.

The popular movement should also call for international solidarity especially within the huge Latino population in the United States which this year has taken to the streets in their millions to protest for citizen rights. A call to the millions that marched in the US would paralyse any attempt of Bush's administration to intervene in support of their favourite candidate Calderon.

#### THE NEED FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

But none of these vital tasks will happen spontaneously, they constitute a strategy, a programme of action, that must be fought for. To organise this fight a mass revolutionary party must be formed - urgently. Such a party can be built from the militants in the unions and strike committees and from the most revolutionary elements in the popular assemblies.

Such a party must fight for the arming of the masses and fraternising with the army. It must fight for a mass popular uprising, an insurrection which can smash the repressive power of the capitalist state and install a revolutionary workers' government, answerable to the peoples assemblies.

To win the broadest masses to this perspective it is vital to fight misleaders like Obrador who talk left but who will mislead the opposition into compromise or will do the dirty work of the multinationals and US imperialism when in power.

The stolen elections may have been the reason for millions coming out onto the streets. But the intransigence of the electoral commission, of Fox and Calderon has raised the question how to get rid of them? The answer is to fight for the power of the working class and the poor peasants. This power does not need an Obrador, must not stop at bourgeois populist reforms. It is inseparable from the struggle for socialism and international revolution.



## SPANISH CIVIL WAR

# How the people's front saved capitalism

By Andy Yorke

The Spanish civil war stands as one of the great working class revolutions of the twentieth century. Seventy years ago, workers and peasants blocked a fascist coup with an uprising that left power in their hands. Workers' militias controlled the streets and revolutionary committees arose in the factories, mines, and on the land. They showed, like in Russia, that workers can run society without exploitation and oppression.

Unlike in Russia in 1917, there was no revolutionary party in Spain. The leading forces in the workers' movement, the anarchists, did not apply the lessons of the Russian Revolution. Being against all authority, they would not centralise the thousands of revolutionary committees into a workers' government, one able to stand as an alternative authority to the capitalist government. The capitalist state rebuilt its power and suppressed the revolutionary workers.

This is another reason for the significance of the Spanish Civil War. Just as the great Russian Revolution of 1917 proved that Marxist ideas were capable of overthrowing capitalism, the Spanish Civil War showed that anarchism could not do the same.

### STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Across Europe, the 1930s saw economic crisis hit. Fascist dictatorships took power in Italy and Germany and crushed workers' resistance. The question was not one of democracy but of socialism or fascist barbarism. Revolution or counterrevolution would prevail.

Spain too was in the throes of crisis, and in the elections of February 1936 the Spanish workers and peasants voted the Peoples' Front government into power, to end the repression of the previous right wing government. It was a coalition of Republican parties, the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the Stalinist Communist Party. Even revolutionary groups like the POUM and anarchists supported the Peoples' Front in the elections, though they recognised that it was a capitalist government.

However, the new government's moderate programme of reform could not fulfil the burning demands of the mass-

es. Five million peasants had insufficient land or none at all and lived in miserable poverty, and over a million workers were jobless. They did not wait for the government to take action. They broke open the prisons themselves. Peasants invaded the estates and seized land en masse. Workers went on strike for their demands and against fascist street attacks. From May until July a strike wave escalated until it had reached revolutionary proportions, with over a million out.

The government tried to repress the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist union leading the strike wave, but the mass of socialist workers supported the anarchists, making such a measure impossible. They refused to allow their leaders to join the government, rightly thinking this would be used to force them back to work. The capitalists drew the conclusion that the government could not be used to demobilise the workers' movement and repress its revolutionary wing. That road blocked, they turned to the military and the fascist movement to organise an uprising.

Fascist rising and workers' revolution

General Franco ordered an uprising by the military, beginning among troops in Morocco and spreading quickly to Spain. The Peoples' Front government, more frightened of the workers and seeking to find some compromise with Franco, refused to arm the workers and withheld news of the scale of the uprising. This would have meant a quick victory for Franco.

Luckily the workers seized the initiative. The rank and file of the Socialists, Anarchists and POUM seized arms directly. Workers elected committees to run the factories and reorganised production to produce arms. Peasants occupied the land and collectivised food production. This process went the furthest in the region of Catalonia, the heart of the revolution, where power was with the workers' militias and committees, and a central committee of antifascist militias was set up to coordinate the military struggle and, increasingly, aspects of the economy.

Two powers stood side by side. The capitalist government still existed but it was left without its own police or army, which had gone over to Franco. The workers were armed, they patrolled the towns and their militias held the frontline against Franco's troops. What held the workers

back from simply taking power was the non-revolutionary policies of their leaders.

The Socialists and Stalinists voluntarily subordinated the committees they controlled to the people's front government. The Bolsheviks in 1917 also faced a capitalist government, but they demanded "All power to the soviets!" and no support for the capitalist government. In contrast the Stalinist party in Spain called for "all power and authority to the people's front" and tried to subordinate the revolutionary workers' committees to the government.

The Stalinists pointed to the fascist military successes and advance. They put forward the irrefutable argument that it was necessary to centralise the military struggle and economic production to win the war. But the question was, to centralise the militias and factory committees under workers' control or the control of the capitalist government?

War is also a political question. The Peoples' Front government would not call for the peasants to seize the land or for the independence of Morocco, a Spanish colony, because it was a capitalist government. Yet Franco's base was in Morocco, and his army was made up of poor peasants. More than any military measures, these demands would have destabilised Franco's army and weakened his support, which was strongest in the deeply religious rural areas, and opened up another front against him in Morocco. The Stalinists, committed to the people's front government, could not support such demands.

### ANARCHISM AND THE POUM FAIL THE TEST

The anarchists and the POUM were revolutionary in their words, but let the capitalist government continue to exist alongside the revolutionary committees, rather than seeking to overthrow it. They argued to centralise the military struggle and economic production under workers' control, but this remained an empty slogan. In Russia, the Bolsheviks had faced the same task and had built the soviets (revolutionary committees) of workers, peasants and soldiers into an alternative workers' government, able to take final binding decisions on matters of national importance. This was the only possible way to organise the defence and advance of the revolution.

But in Spain, the anarchists rejected



the need for soviets and a workers' state, and the POUM tailed them, despite its formal adherence to Marxism. Hence no such bodies were built, though the POUM could have initiated them itself, with its 30,000 members. Instead, the crisis deepened and the left leaders, without an alternative to deal with the crisis, drifted into collaboration with the only central power that did exist - the capitalist state. Left Socialist leader Largo Caballero accepted the post of prime minister on 4 September, and the Communists joined the government. The POUM and anarchist CNT soon after joined the regional government in Catalonia.

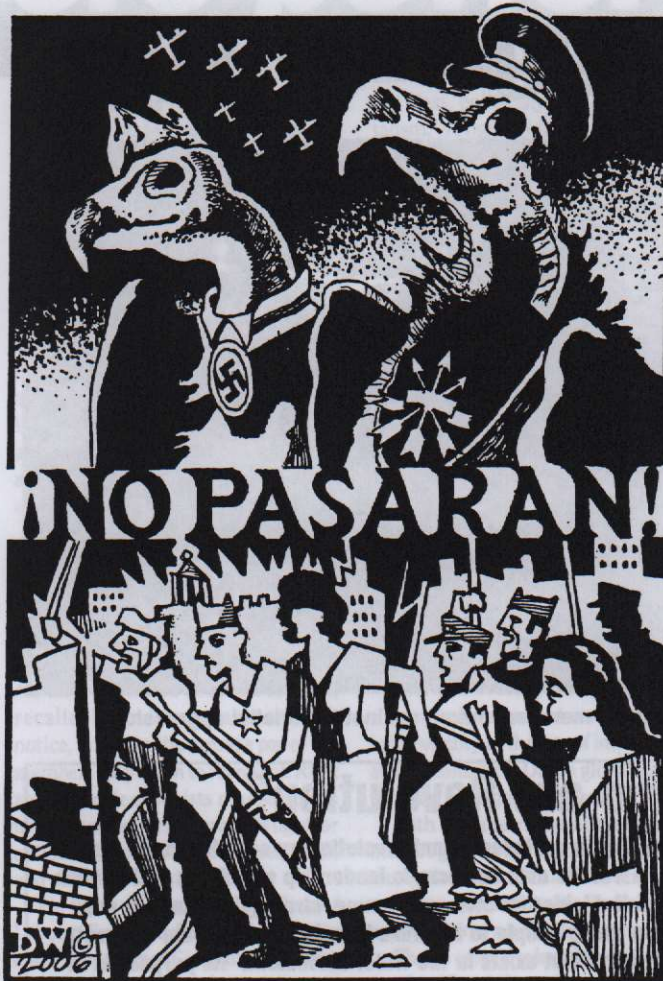
With the workers' leaders alongside them for cover, the people's front government moved to scrap the independent workers' and peasants' militias and disarm the workers. It passed decrees, limiting the peasants' land seizures and workers' control in the factories. In Catalonia the government dissolved the central committee of antifascist militias and local revolutionary committees. The state, with the help of the Stalinists, rebuilt its police force and recruited a new, professional army under the control of loyal officers to defend capitalist property.

The anarchists and POUM accepted these decrees, did not mobilise their members in defence of their revolutionary gains, and remained within the government. Once the job was done and they were no longer needed, the POUM was expelled in December at the initiative of the Stalinists. The Anarchists followed in 1937.

#### COUNTERREVOLUTION SWINGS INTO ACTION

The Peoples' Front had weakened the workers' committees. But the workers were still armed and controlled key points. In May 1937 the government ordered an attack on the anarchist-occupied telephone exchange in Barcelona. The workers, roused by this threat, threw up barricades around the city until the capitalists controlled only the city centre. They could have been crushed with ease.

Yet the Anarchist CNT and then the POUM, when the government offered them a compromise, called for barricades to be dismantled. Once this happened, the government broke its promises. Assault guards massacred militants and occupied key buildings and opposition offices. Caballero, no longer needed, was replaced by right wing



Socialist Juan Negrín, with Communist Party support.

In the counter-revolution that followed, the POUM was banned, its leaders arrested and murdered. The government brutally suppressed workers' committees in the factories and peasant occupations.

Franco's armies advanced implacably in the next year until they cut Republican Spain in half. With nothing left for the masses to fight for, the republic lost its self-sacrificing energy and heroism. Only the industrial workers and mass of poor peasants had the social weight and material interest to defeat fascism; the "democratic" capitalists could, in the end, surrender democracy and continue to profit from exploitation. By destroying the workers' revolution, the Stalinists ensured the victory of fascism in the war.

By 1939, the revolution was dead and it wasn't long before the republic, an empty shell, fell after it. "Democratic" Britain and France recognised Franco's Spain though the republic still held one third of Spanish territory. In March a capitalist National Defence Junta was formed. It expelled the Communist

Party from Peoples' Front and then negotiated surrender to Franco.

With Spain, fell the hope of a new wave of revolution rolling across Europe, breaking the fascist expansion and opening the road to socialism. Fifty years of dictatorship was the harsh price paid by the Spanish working class for the treachery of their leaders.

#### THE POUM & THE TROTSKYISTS

Slandered, denounced as Trotskyists and fascists, hunted down, suppressed and murdered by the Stalinists... the POUM were the most vilified and persecuted party of the Spanish revolution, and banned in June 1937. They organised some of the most committed fighters for socialism. Unlike the reformists, Stalinists and anarchists, they argued clearly that the fate of the war and the fate of the revolution were intertwined, that the defeat of the one could only mean the defeat of the other.

At the onset of the Civil War the POUM was larger than the Stalinist organisation in Catalonia. Its 8,000 membership quickly quadrupled in the first weeks, due to their relatively high degree of polit-

ical training and their heroism in leading the land and factory seizures. The POUM built up considerable power by recruiting over 10,000 members of the workers' militias in the first months of the war. The reason for the POUM's defeat lay in its politics and programme. They were not Trotskyists, but centrists, vacillating between revolutionary positions and reformist policies.

Instead of denouncing the Peoples' Front, the POUM called for an "authentic government of the Peoples' Front". It failed to build democratic workers' councils that could have become an alternative centre of power to the Republican government. Instead, its leader, Andreas Nin, entered the government in Catalonia, becoming Minister of Justice.

The POUM vacillated, depending on whether it was in or out of government. Whereas, on 7 September 1936, Nin had raised the call, "Down with the bourgeois ministers", within 10 days the POUM said it was "willing to leave the question open" as to capitalist representatives sitting in the cabinet.

When out of government, it tailed the anarchists. Even at the height of the fighting in Barcelona in May 1937, when the CNT leaders abandoned their own rank and file, the POUM failed to criticise them and demand that they form a common front to defend the workers' gains from the government. What is more, POUM leaders instructed its members to abandon the barricades while the fighting was still in progress.

This opportunism towards the right wing went alongside extreme hostility to the left. When the POUM's largest section, in Barcelona, voted along Trotskyist lines in April 1937 for the building of workers' councils (soviets) as alternative centres of power, Nin responded with bureaucratic repression. He banned factions, recalling dissidents from the front and summarily expelling them from the party.

From these expulsions a genuine Trotskyist organisation was founded, the Bolshevik-Leninists, Spanish section of the Fourth International. A month later it was the Bolshevik-Leninists who, together with the left wing split from the anarchists, the Friends of Durruti and the Libertarian Youth, were agitating on the barricades in Barcelona for a general strike against the government and for working class power.



## REVOLUTION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# Major struggle on way forward

By Josh Davies and Luke Cooper

At the end of July, 18 Revolution delegates from the UK, Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Australia and Sweden gathered in Prague for the second international conference (unfortunately our Swiss and Indonesian sections could not make it for school and financial reasons respectively).

The conference met at a time of major social and political upheavals. The previous year had seen youth-led uprisings against neo-liberalism in Greece, Italy, Chile and France. US imperialism's 'war on terror' in the Middle East was in crisis as resistance continued to plague its occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Even neo-liberal Globalisation's golden child, China, had seen rising levels of social and political unrest, and a full-scale revolution had erupted against the feudal monarchy of Nepal. In the United States millions of migrants mobilised fighting for their rights and across Latin America, the social movements swelled in size and power, but were increasingly under the sway of the left populist presidents.

This was without doubt a year of intensified struggle that saw young people come to the fore. Over the last three years Revolution had argued that the next step for the struggles was the formation of a revolutionary youth international uniting young people fighting for revolution and socialism. The task document brought to the conference sought to generalise the successful areas of work by strengthening the international leadership allowing Revolution to build its national sections better and win new sections too.

It was this political background and set of tasks, supported by League for the Fifth International members within Revolution, that led to a major political battle at the conference over issues including the relationship of Revolution to the League and the repercussions of the split in the League within Revolution.

During the debates, five comrades walked out of the conference declaring it undemocratic and later formed a tendency called Independent Revo (iRevo) at the German



Revolution members march against imperialist aggression

### Who are Revolution?

**Revolution is an independent revolutionary socialist youth organisation with its own democratic leadership structures and publications. It decides its own programme, strategy and tactics and allows young people to organise themselves free from the youth oppression that exists in the wider movement. Its purpose is to attract the thousands of young people who are radicalised by neo-liberal attacks, wars and occupations, racism and sexism, and win them to revolutionary socialist politics and the fight to destroy capitalism.**

Contact us on 07951 493 232 or email [info@worldrevolution.org.uk](mailto:info@worldrevolution.org.uk)

and Czech Revocamp held in early August. The Revolution International Council have since called for them to come back into the international organisation, respect its democratic structures, and unite around tasks key to the fight for a revolutionary youth international.

#### The way forward for Revolution

The majority of delegates proposed a democratic centralist leadership with a functioning bureau tasked with winning new sections and ensuring that the work of existing sections was bringing new contacts, while the group that was to form iRevo proposed a federalist structure. Behind this lay a real difference as to how the work should be carried out. The German Revolution group in particular wanted to focus on producing a paper, with little systematic campaigning work.

Although iRevo has since stated that it is in favour of democratic centralism in Revo - a methodology

where everyone must enact the majority decision - the federalist structure they proposed was a step backwards and would allow each Revo group to pursue its work in autonomy from the rest of the organisation, risking errors we can't afford at a time of such opportunity.

#### The Permanent Revolution Tendency

The walkout was prompted by the decision of the majority of delegates to de-section the Australian Revolution group. The leaked emails from the minority international faction of the League had made a series of references to 'pulling back from Revolution except where needed internationally' and 'causing mayhem' at the international conference. At the conference, the delegate from Australian Revolution - a PR member - refused to renounce these comments. It was clear to the majority that in order to be granted rights and responsibilities in Rev-

olution's international organisation they had to show in practice they were going to build it, and until they did they should not be recognised as a section. Unfortunately, this led to five delegates walking out of the conference.

#### The relationship to the League

The three German and one Czech delegates that walked out raised the issue of Revo's relationship to the League, erroneously viewing democratic centralism as simply 'control' by the League's secret faction. The majority argued against this that fighting alongside the League in the anti-capitalist and antiwar movements was vital to Revolution's future, since it was the only other group fighting for the correct revolutionary Marxist programme and strategy for the movement.

Political solidarity doesn't mean that Revo is not free to make its own decisions and choose its way forward. But this political solidarity came under question: as an amendment to the constitution, iRevo proposed that the solidarity with the L5I be taken out in favour of the meaningless pledge of solidarity with all (unspecified) groups sharing the same (unspecified) aims. The leadership of German group then went further by excluding L5I members in Revo from its internal communication and then latter expelling two of them for raising criticisms of the leadership.

#### Conclusion

Since the conference iRevo has continued to refuse to recognise the conference decisions despite not bringing forward any political criticisms of the tasks document that the conference passed. The International Council have continued to call for unity and propose concrete work around which this can be done, e.g. the G8 protests in Germany. We have reinstated the expelled members of German Revolution but this has not been recognised by the German Revolution leadership. This must change. Revo will come out of this stronger but only if it seizes the opportunities that lie ahead of it. Only the perspectives and tasks agreed by the international conference provide a way of doing this.

All the documents and debate from the conference can be read at [www.worldrevolution.org.uk](http://www.worldrevolution.org.uk).



# workers power

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

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

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

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

We fight racism and national oppres-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CONTACT

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## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

### TIME TO GO DEMONSTRATION

Called by Stop the War Coalition  
1pm, 23 September  
Albert Square  
Manchester  
See [www.stopwar.org.uk](http://www.stopwar.org.uk) for transport details

### TIME TO GO ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE

10:30-6:00pm, 24 September  
Roscoe Building,  
University of Manchester  
Brunswick Street, Manchester

### DRIVE IMPERIALISM OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Lunchtime fringe meeting  
Called by Revolution  
1:00pm, (depending on timetable)  
24 September  
Room 1  
Manchester University Students Union  
Oxford Road  
Manchester

### London

**DRIVE BUSH AND BLAIR OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST**  
Revolution meeting  
3:00pm 10 September  
Dublin Castle, Parkway  
London NW1

### TIME FOR BLAIR TO GO

Workers Power meeting  
7:30pm 14 September  
The Plough, Museum St, London WC1

### Leicester

**ABORTION: A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE**  
7:30pm 21 September  
Secular Hall

### END THE OCCUPATIONS PICKET

5:00-6:00pm Thursday  
Called by Palestine Solidarity Committee  
Clock tower  
City centre  
Leicester

### Birmingham

**OUR NHS IS NOT FOR SALE**  
March 12:30 noon Saturday 9 September  
Victoria Square, Birmingham  
Rally 2:00pm Carrs Lane Church Centre

### Leeds

**REVOLUTION**  
Meetings every Saturday  
Phone 07716-373 918 for details

### TIME TO GO

Workers Power meetings to prepare for the 23 September demo. All welcome  
6:00pm every Friday  
Cafe Nero, near Leeds railway station  
Phone 07716-373 918 for details

### Manchester

**REVOLUTION**  
Topic of meeting to be announced  
5:00pm 22 September  
Room 1, Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester  
Phone 07737-355 411 for details

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## Revolutionary defeatism

### Turning imperialist wars into workers' rebellions

By Richard Brenner

“During a reactionary war a revolutionary class cannot but desire the defeat of its own government.” With these words, the Russian revolutionary and communist leader V.I. Lenin summed up of the most important Marxist policies: revolutionary defeatism.

Unless the working class movement in Britain is guided by this policy, there can no possibility of a successful struggle against imperialist war, and no possibility of overthrowing capitalism, the system that causes war.

The British state, locked into its alliance with the USA, is pursuing a series of wars, which are wholly reactionary in nature. Despite the permanent war propaganda of the British and American media, millions around the world - including in Britain itself - have understood that the warmongers are in reality motivated by sheer self-interest. The huge numbers of people on demonstrations against the Afghan, Iraqi and Lebanese wars prove this beyond doubt.

The occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the threats and war cries against Iran, the huge boost to military spending and recruitment into the armed forces, the shameless backing of Israel's murderous bombing of Lebanese civilians: all these phenomena are only explicable if one understands that the USA and Britain are engaged in an attempt at military conquest of the Middle East and the reshaping of the region in the economic interests of the big Western capitalists.

A communist policy in Britain today therefore takes as its starting point recognition of the reactionary character of the war being pursued by the British ruling class. But it then goes further than all the various pacifist and liberal opponents of the war, who limit their opposition to calls for ceasefires, negotiated withdrawals and the imposition of United Nations “peacekeeping forces” under the military direction of this or that Western imperialist power. The policy of revolutionary defeatism means that the working class movement should actively strive to defeat the warmongering governments in London and Washington. This can only mean

to help bring about their defeat in war and to use the crisis engendered by the war to overthrow them.

In the context of the hue and cry against “terror”, it is necessary immediately to explain what this does not mean. It does not mean blowing up aeroplanes and civilians, or any of the other desperate terrorist actions which only help the government to fool the people, to distract them from the real meaning of their wars, to introduce new swathes of repressive laws, surveillance, detention without trial and so on.

It does mean mobilising a mass movement in solidarity with the forces struggling to expel the US, British and Israeli invaders from Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Pales-

ceasefire and playing football in no-man's land. At the time it too was called “treason” - it brought a death sentence.

British workers have more in common with our fellow workers in “foreign” countries than we have with the millionaire ruling class at home. The very act of showing solidarity with the victims of “our” war is called treason by the ruling class. Communists return the compliment in the following way. All those in the working class movement who support our ruling class and its war, in any way, are committing “high treason” to the workers of the world. Those who oppose the war in words but do not strive for the defeat of the imperialist powers are - whatever their intentions - adapting to these capitalist ideas, putting British patriotism before class solidarity.

What of the fate of the soldiers? Surely we cannot strive for their defeat if that means greater bloodshed and death, greater suffering for the young men of the British Army, who may have volunteered but who are more often than not effectively conscripted by poverty and boredom?

Our answer is simple. It is not the working class movement that has sent young British men and women into danger of mutilation and death. It is Blair, it is the generals and the top brass, it is the mandarins in the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence who have backed these unwinnable wars, who have thrown away thousands of lives, who have treated their soldiers - as they always do - like dumb pawns to be sacrificed in the interests of profits in the City of London and in New York. That is why it is the revolutionary defeatists, and never the reactionary “supporters of our boys”, who call for soldiers to have rights, to be allowed to meet and discuss, to refuse to carry out orders when they recognise that they are unjust, to rebel against their officers. Our aim is to turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

Only the policy of revolutionary defeatism provides a consistent guide to the working class in Britain today. It alone brings the possibility not only of the bringing the war to the swiftest possible end but of bringing down the warmongering government of Tony Blair and opening the road to a struggle not only against war but against capitalism, a system of war without end.

**The policy of revolutionary defeatism means that the working class movement should actively strive to defeat the warmongering governments in London and Washington**

tine. It means campaigning for a workers' boycott of all military supplies headed for the occupying armies. It means rejecting a single penny of military spending. It means calling on British troops to refuse to fire on civilians, bomb villages, carry out acts of brutality and torture. It means struggling to bring down the government that has launched these reactionary wars.

Of course, the imperialist governments, the billionaire press that supports them and even the so-called “centre-left” will call this policy “treason”. They have always done this. Today liberals may become dewy-eyed when watching documentaries about British and German soldiers in the First World War fraternising at Christmas, exchanging gifts, observing an unofficial