

# workers power

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



## Pakistan army clamps down

## Will the people rise up?

**Solidarity with the  
Pakistani people**

### **INSIDE:**

- Open letter for a new workers party
- Respect splits – but why?
- Post workers: stop the sell-out
- October 1917: the insurrection



**League for the  
Fifth International**

## EDITORIAL

# Proved right – the hard way

In September, the Trades Union Council called for a campaign of “co-ordinated industrial action” against the public sector pay restraint imposed by prime minister Gordon Brown.

Pressure from below forced unions, such as Unite, GMB, Unison, CWU, PCS, NUT and college union UCU, into balloting to reject the pay offer.

What happened?

The teachers' union NUT put back their ballot until January.

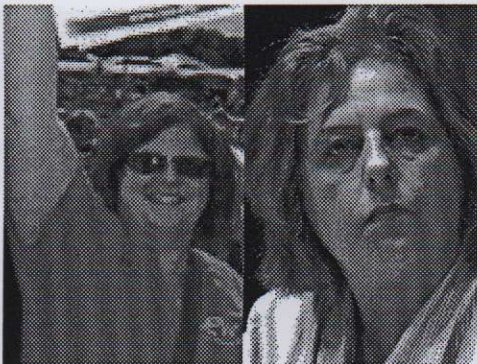
Unison in the NHS said that their offer was the “best that could be achieved without industrial action”. The union leaders put out a leaflet supporting the deal and threatened branches and activists campaigning for a “no” vote with disciplinary action. The result was to accept the offer.

Unite and GMB balloted their members in local government over the slightly revised offer of just under 2.5 per cent (still a pay cut) saying, “It is the best that can be achieved without industrial action.” The offer was accepted.

Unison in local government last month voted: 74,631 members (or 51.6 per cent) for action, and 70,088 (48.4 per cent) against, on a 24.4 per cent turnout. Unison's national joint council endorsed a statement that read: “However, in all the circumstances, including the narrowness of the majority and the size of the poll, this result does not constitute the basis for viable industrial action to break the government's pay policy.” So it accepted the offer.

In the civil service union PCS, 68 per cent voted in favour of action on a 34 per cent turnout. The leadership voted not to call national industrial action, despite admitting the “Cabinet Office has so far refused” to rule out compulsory redundancies.

So both the PCS and Unison members voted



**While the pro-Labour union leaders have provided a buffer between workers' anger and Gordon Brown's government, Jane Loftus and Janice Godrich of the SWP and Socialist Party respectively have covered for left union bureaucrats Hayes and Serwotka**

for industrial action but their leaders called it off - so much for democracy!

Meanwhile, the CWU leadership is selling a deal that is the exactly what the management wants, and what the members rejected back in April (see page 6).

So what happened to the concerted public sector fight back? It was undermined and defeated by the trade union leaders.

And what is the left saying?

Janice Godrich, president of the PCS, is a member of the Socialist Party, which also dominates the Department for Works and Pensions group that is most under attack. Instead of criticising the calling off of industrial action in the PCS, Godrich signed up to it. The SP has even gone on to say: “On May Day, successful PCS strike action shocked the govern-

ment and was a warning of further action if cuts continue.” (The Socialist) But it hasn't, the union leadership caved in, with the SP supporting the decision.

Meanwhile, in the CWU, Socialist Workers Party member and union president Jane Loftus voted against the union leadership's acceptance of Royal Mail's rotten offer (see pages 6 and 7) - but then refused to campaign against the deal among the membership!

And following the capitulation of the SP and the SWP, other parts of the left say that to fight more effectively, we need more members in the unions and better shop stewards organisation. OK we agree. But workers join unions when they fight.

What is really needed is to break the stranglehold of these union leaders who block action even when the members vote for it, and who basically do managers' job for them. Militant workers and the socialist groups need to break with the idea that all we need to improve our unions is to elect more militant leaders. This policy of focusing entirely on electing left officials (known as broad leftism) ignores the need to keep elected officials under control, so that they can't sell out even if they try. It means, as well as electing better leaders, we need to start fighting for rank and file membership control of the unions.

Workers Power has argued consistently for committees of public sector workers to organise joint strike action and for a rank and file movement to wrest control of the unions from the unaccountable leaders. The Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party need to take this on board and stop covering for the union leaders in the civil service and the post.

This autumn's events have shown again that Workers Power is right on this - but it has shown it the hard way.

## Storm clouds gather – hard rain is going to fall

The global financial crisis is deepening. After a summer marked by a credit crunch, in which central banks in the USA, Europe and Asia pumped billions into the system to keep key banks afloat, and when queues formed outside Northern Rock in the first run on a UK bank in decades, now more major banks are holding urgent crisis meetings.

Citigroup, the biggest bank in the USA, lost billions in the credit crunch and has seen its share price plummet. Its chairman and CEO, Charles Prince, was forced to resign. Another major UK bank - Barclays has been repeatedly mentioned - is rumoured to be planning to access the Bank of England's special bailout fund.

And these are not the only major instabilities and imbalances in the world system today. The oil price has risen to as much as \$96 a barrel, its highest ever, bringing the threat of mounting inflation around the world and putting US consumers under greater pressure. Already home repossession rates are rising in the USA, and house prices are falling there - just as they are starting to go down in the UK too.

Finally, the dollar continues its long decline in value against other currencies - and it has been revealed that Japan and China in August stealthily began disposing of billions of their dollars in attempts to limit their losses.

Capitalism doesn't collapse on its own, but

every seven to 10 years it goes into cyclical crises, some of which are sharper than others. This looks like being a serious one. Whereas the deflationary effect of cheap exports from China has allowed the USA to bail itself out of sharp recessions in 1998 and 2001 by credit-fuelled bubbles based on cheap money, now rising inflation in China and the east could be bringing this period to an end. That means the USA may not be able to stave off recession without inflation making the situation even less stable. So a hard landing looks likely in the year or two ahead... and workers need to prepare to resist even greedier, more desperate, more aggressive bosses.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### FRENCH PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE

Massive strike action in France against Sarkozy's plans to slash the pensions of public sector workers shows that workers still have the stomach to fight. Transport workers in Paris paralysed the Metro and brought many continental trains to a standstill. They were joined by other public sector workers, including from the gas and electricity companies.

Although the action was supposed to be only a token one-day protest, many workers voted to carry on the strikes for a second day.

### FIRES EXPOSE CLASS DIVISIONS

The rich (white) evacuees of Malibu in California are getting treatment that the victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans could have only dreamt of. *The Washington Post* reports that 7,500 people in the Qualcomm stadium have "cots and tents, plenty of water and a variety of foods, arts and crafts for children, crisis counselling, meditation, yoga, acupuncture, and AA meetings for adults."

Only 9% of the population of Malibu lives below the poverty line compared to 28% in New Orleans, where – even now – only one of the hospitals is fully open and four are still closed with no sign of being restored.

### MIAOW?

In a very long document of 3 November, the Socialist Workers Party responds to criticism of its role in the split up of Respect. Turning their ire on George Galloway, the SWP leaders suddenly inform their readers that Gorgeous George earns in the region of £300,000 a year. "Some tribune of the people!" they exclaim.

Quite right too... but hold on a minute. Didn't the SWP resist the proposal at Respect's founding conference that its MPs should earn the average wage of the workers they represent? All the SWP's sudden criticisms of Galloway were known to them years ago – but they turned a blind eye when he was still their best mate.

### STOP THE WAR AGAINST IRAN

The Stop the War Coalition has called for two days of action on 22 and 24 November in protest at the planned attack on Iran.

Workers Power will be helping organise direct action on the Thursday. Contact us to join in.

## IN THIS ISSUE

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## NEW WORKERS PARTY

## OPEN LETTER

**W**orkers Power has launched an open letter calling for a renewed commitment to build a new working class party in Britain. Most socialist groups and individuals, and increasing numbers of workers and trade unionists see a political space to the left of Labour that can be filled.

The question is how to fill it. With the recent crisis in Respect (pages 12–13) leading to another wrecked unity project, there may be some who are thrown into doubt about the prospect of building a new party. Workers Power argued that Respect was flawed from the very beginning: a cross-class project that gave ground to

the reactionary prejudices and ties to private property of middle class Muslim community leaders. The unravelling of the Respect project is the fault of the opportunist policies of the SWP over the last few years in adapting to non-working class forces, and systematically undermining the importance of socialism as the core political basis for a new party.

The current sell out in the CWU (pages 6–7) also underlines the importance of a political leadership within the working class that can help to organise the fighting sections of the class, not only against the bosses and the government, but as a challenge to the trade

union leaders, when their pro-Labour, pro-capitalist loyalty leads to dramatic sell-outs, like the one we are seeing in the postal strike.

Finally, November is the month of the Russian Revolution. The latest article in our series on 1917 (pages 20–22) shows the importance of a revolutionary party in the struggle for socialism. We understand that revolutionaries are in a minority today, but our open letter is designed to help open up a renewed dialogue between reformists and revolutionaries on the key political task facing the working class in Britain – how can we build a new party that fights for the interests of working people?

**To:**

Communist Party of Britain (Morning Star)

Labour Representation Committee

Scottish Socialist Party

Socialist Party

Socialist Workers Party

Solidarity

Fire Brigades Union

Public and Commercial Services union

Rail Maritime and Transport union

all branches of unions in conflict with the government or in favour of an alternative to Labour

**Dear comrades**

Gordon Brown's decision not to call an election has opened up a new period in British politics, especially working class politics. For at least the next 18 months, we will face an increasingly anti-working class Labour administration. In every one of the battles ahead, the need for a new, mass party of the working class will become ever clearer.

Brown's first 100 days in office have ended in shame. His bellicose stance on Iran and Afghanistan more than overshadows any troop re-deployment from Iraq. He has continued to cut taxes for the rich, at the expense of decent wages, pensions and public services for the rest.

His open siding with Royal Mail in the postal dispute, his plans to further erode civil liberties and his embrace of chauvinist slogans, like "British jobs for British workers", all prove he

is no friend of the working class but an outright capitalist politician, a bosses' man and a warmonger - a true successor to Tony Blair. No wonder he invited Thatcher to Number 10.

It is no coincidence that Brown's continuation of Blair's neoliberal policies was accompanied by a further and very significant shutting down of democracy inside the party. The abolition of "contemporary motions" - the eight slots available for policy debates and votes on resolutions submitted by affiliated unions and constituency parties at Labour's annual conference - removes the last vestige of internal democracy. From now on only the leadership can make party policy (they long ago grabbed the right to write the manifesto and ignore party policy).

The de-selection of Bob Wareing, engineered by new Labour apparatchiks, served as a reminder that almost all future MPs will be

careerist supporters of the leadership, and any left MPs will be hounded from their seats. Even as it now stands, barely 29 Labour MPs nominated John McDonnell in his failed leadership bid. Since any new MPs would be overwhelmingly pro-leadership, a future challenge by the left is all but ruled out. The Labour Party cannot be won by the left.

**Our constituency**

On the other hand, there are many reasons to be optimistic.

Millions of natural Labour supporters have already stopped voting for Gordon Brown's party and can be won to a fighting, socialist alternative. Over half the 400,000 members of the party (1998 figures) have left new Labour. Two of its founding trade union affiliates, the RMT and FBU, have chosen to operate outside its ranks rather than bend their knee to the pro-capi-

- **Brown's course opens a vast space for new workers party**
- **The project of "reclaiming Labour" for the left is a dead-end**
- **The Respect Coalition is breaking up**
- **Opportunist and sectarian shortcuts have failed**
- **The real solution cannot be postponed any longer - we need a real step now towards the formation of a new mass party of the working class**



talist leadership, and thousands of post workers are opting out of the Labour Party clause in the CWU's political fund. The RMT is actively considering standing against Labour in next year's London elections. The massive anti-war movement will also take to the streets again in the increasingly likely event that Brown backs an American attack on Iran. Anti-privatisation campaigns continue to resist attacks on the NHS and comprehensive education. Last but not least, millions of workers are considering strike action in the public sector (Unison local government workers, civil servants, prison officers, BBC, etc.) against the government in the near future.

We believe that a campaign for a new workers party, appealing to these forces for support, would tap into this real opposition to new Labour and prove immediately attractive to workers, youth and progressive people across Britain. We appeal to you to launch such a campaign now with a view to setting up a new party in a democratic conference in the spring of 2008.

#### Opponents and lessons

Of course there remain opponents to such a move, especially among the trade union leaders. But these pro-Labour leaders are currently on the back foot, deflated by the (highly predictable) actions of the man they have backed for prime minister for many years. Their position only remains viable because "there is no alternative" to Labour. Indeed, this has become their mantra. By launching a campaign for a new party, we would begin to undermine this position.

We are also aware that other initiatives to build a left alternative to Labour exist. While they have shown the potential for a break from Labour, we believe that none of them can make the breakthrough on their own, as currently constituted. The Scottish Socialist Party has split in two and both parts lack real mass support. More importantly, they do not offer a British-wide alternative to the government and the state. The Socialist Labour Party remains tiny because of Arthur Scargill's bureaucratic grip and the expulsion or resignation of all opponents of his personal control. Respect has failed to grow and is currently involved in a semi-public feud. This is a direct consequence of its cross-class project, which attempted to reconcile socialists to middle class Muslim community leaders rather than appealing on a class basis to workers and youth of every ethnic group, of all faiths and none.

We are also aware, as comrade Rob Griffiths of the CPB has pointed out in the Morning Star, that some of the Labour Left are not yet convinced that the time is right to launch such a new party, even if they agree that the means for capturing Labour have disappeared. John McDonnell has counterposed to a new party the idea of building the social movements and forming alliances. But while these are essential means of opposing new Labour, neoliberalism and war, they have one important defect: they cannot present a systematic alternative to the existing parties, i.e. they cannot challenge for power. Only a party can do that.

#### Our proposal

If we form a new party in the next six months, we will be in a position to stand against Labour in the next general election with a real mass base, and to give direction and strength to the struggles against Labour over the coming 18 months. We will be able to put the goal of socialism back on the agenda.

We propose:

- That a meeting be convened of all those who want to build a political alternative to new Labour, including those (LRC, Respect, SSP, Solidarity, RMT, etc.) who may not yet be convinced about forming a new party, but want to discuss how to resolve the crisis of working class leadership
- That this meeting should discuss democratically whether we should launch an initiative to form a new party and vote on the issue
- That those in favour and wishing to continue should decide on the details of the campaign for the launch of a new party, including preparation of a democratic debate on the programme and organisation of the party, how and when a founding conference should take place.

We agree with Rob Griffiths' proposal in the Morning Star that every socialist group and trade union should openly discuss the programmatic basis for forming a new mass party of labour. As is known, Workers Power will propose that the new party adopt an action programme, aiming to connect the struggles of today to socialist revolution. If after a full debate we were to remain in a minority, then provided a democratic mass party had been formed we would continue to build the party and to argue within it for a revolutionary programme. We call on all other organisations to take a similar approach, issuing no ultimatums but arguing for their true opinions within the framework of a common party.

Rising tensions on the international sphere, as well as in Britain, are raising new challenges for the working class movement. A new party in Britain can be part of a new process of political rearmament, which is taking place around the world. It can capitalise on the mounting disgust for the three main parties among the British working class. Now is the right time to take this step. To prevaricate and postpone the task once more risks losing an important opportunity.

**Workers Power Central Committee**  
26 October 2007



## POSTAL DISPUTE

# Why postal workers should reject this deal Union leaders swallow Royal Mail business plan

Communication Workers Union leaders have cut a terrible deal with Royal Mail that sells out the recent strikes. A *CWU workplace rep* outlines the case for rejecting it

Postal workers have fought hard to defend our wages, pension, working conditions and jobs. More than 90 per cent supported the strikes and 5,000 new members joined the union. In early October two 48-hour strikes shut down the network, and built up a mountain of undelivered mail. Wildcat strikes spread like wild fire and threatened to get out of control.

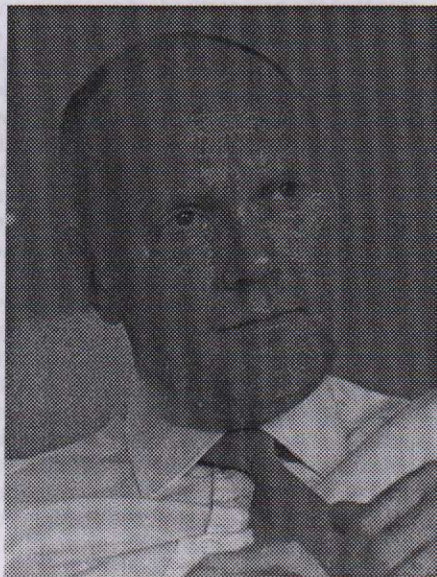
Labour ministers, including Gordon Brown, condemned the strikes and demanded a return to work on Royal Mail's terms. Then on Friday 12 October a high court judge banned the next three days of strikes. Instead of defying this blatant political judgement, CWU postal deputy Dave Ward and general secretary Billy Hayes bottled it.

They betrayed their members with a sell-out deal – the Pay and Modernisation Agreement – and suspended further strikes. The postal executive (PEC) also caved in, with only five voting against the deal.

### Three reasons to reject the deal

Ward and Hayes say the agreement “reflects the best possible negotiated settlement” with “considerable gains” that put the union “at the centre of dealing with change at national and local level”. Yet much more was achievable. Accepting the demands would wreck jobs and the union.

On pay we are offered 5.4 per cent for the rest of this year. But it isn't backdated, so it is worth half that: 2.7 per cent, compared with the original offer of 2.5 per cent! The £175 top up



Allan Leighton, Chairman of Royal Mail

is in fact already ours, from the ESOS bonus scheme!

All in all, a princely 65p a week has been “wrung” from Royal Mail since April, while next year we only get 1.5% if workers accept total flexibility. Other cuts (loss of overtime, unsocial hours payments, and so on) will lose us far more than the pay “rise”. In short, it remains a pay cut.

On flexibility and cuts Ward, Hayes and the PEC have caved in to Royal Mail's key demands: later start times, long and short days, where we “owe” up to half an hour if we finish early, and work later for free when there's more to do, being moved to another job or office at a moment's notice. In January trials will start on covering workmates off sick for free, and annualised hours: longer shifts in winter, shorter in summer, again cutting overtime.

All in all it adds up to a back-breaking workload when postal workers already account for one in 10 of the UK's musculoskeletal injuries.

Pensions: Ward and Hayes have agreed to close the final salary pension scheme for a career average one, and raise the retirement age to 65. This will add five years to the end of our working life, then axe thousands from our pension entitlement, while new starters will get an inferior scheme – sold out before they're in the job!

### Union against the workers

Before we were condemning these proposals. Now Royal Mail's spin has become the CWU's official line! What's more, there is not a word in the deal about dropping disciplinary charges against reps, reinstating sacked militants, or stopping mail centre closures.

Ward and Hayes say local reps and offices can negotiate the details. But where there is no rep or the union is weak, the changes will simply be rammed through. Of course, there will be some local resistance, as workers react to the attacks, but it will be piecemeal. Many offices will go under, while union strongholds such as Liverpool and Oxford may hold out, they will soon be isolated and eventually picked off.

Everyone knows Royal Mail can bus in managers to scab on local strikes and transfer mail to weaker offices. With the experience they have gained during this dispute, they could open scab mail centres with newly trained agency staff and lock out those that resist. That's why we must restart the national strikes now.

Twice now Dave Ward and Billy Hayes have undemocratically suspended the strikes – just at the point of real success – and allowed the



Billy Hayes, General Secretary of CWU

backlog of post to be cleared. In truth, our leaders do not want to win our demands but rather to “downsize” our needs to fit those of Royal Mail. As soon as they realised that Gordon Brown would intervene on management's side, not theirs, the leaders abandoned their own membership rather than take on the Labour government.

The union bureaucracy merely want the cuts to be “negotiated”, not imposed, with a role for themselves. This means collaborating with Royal Mail in imposing “modernisation” on the workforce in order to make it fit for privatisation.

### Reject the deal – restart the strikes – reform the union!

We need to campaign for a massive “No” vote to reject the deal, and demand that the PEC immediately restarts the strikes.

From now on, all negotiations and all industrial action must be under the control of the workers in dispute, through elected strike committees at local and national level, not under the control of a bureaucracy that does not share our wage levels, our conditions or indeed, our sacrifices.

We need to transform the CWU into a democratic union that fights consistently for the interests of members, where all officials are regularly elected, fully accountable, instantly recallable by the members they are supposed to represent, and earn the average wage of a worker in the postal industry.

For more Workers Power articles and leaflets on the CWU and the postal dispute:  
[http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?cwu\\_union](http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?cwu_union)  
For more on the Campaign for a “No” Vote:  
<http://cwurankandfile.wordpress.com>

# Organising for a massive 'No' vote Campaign to stop the sell-out

On 27 October the CWU Campaign for a "No" Vote was founded. *Workers Power* supporters in the CWU sent us this report of the meeting that launched the fightback

**A**nger swept across the mail centres and delivery offices as details of the deal emerged. Within hours of area and workplace reps being told, RoyalMailChat.co.uk, the unofficial rank and file website, had 11 pages of irate comments from militants slating the deal, while 81 per cent rejected the deal in its online poll.

But this high level of militancy has no permanent organised expression in the CWU. Twice the CWU bureaucracy - that caste of over-paid officials, whose function is to act as go-betweens for the capitalist managers to the workers - came to the rescue of Royal Mail and Labour, calling off strikes for secret talks. While the wildcats could escalate the strikes, they did not have an independent organisation to overcome the leaderships' demobilisation tactics.

The importance of the London meeting on Saturday 27 October was that it could start such a rank and file organisation. As Dave Chapple (Bristol and District) said:

"We haven't had an activists' network in the CWU for some time. There's 30 people in this room, but we represent 20... 30... 40,000 [who reject this deal]. We should set up a permanent network and immediately reconvene if we get a "No" vote to campaign for resumption of the strikes. If not, we should still campaign to make sure it doesn't happen again - ever."

Those attending came from some of the most militant and best organised sections of the union: London, Oxford, Cambridge, and Bristol. In addition, activists from Leeds, Coventry, and Essex all spoke, while apologies were received from Scotland, Newcastle, Stockport and Luton. Liverpool was a big absence, hopefully due to the short notice. Dave Warren (south-east London), one of only five members of the postal executive (PEC), who voted against the deal, also addressed the meeting.

A steering committee was elected and a leaflet agreed to expose the spin behind the deal and show the facts - now this is online and being distributed to as many areas as possible before branch and workplace meetings to discuss the deal take place. The campaign will also try and convene regional meetings - essential since branches loyal to the leadership, and those that simply write in to the CWU head office in Wimbledon will be allocated a pro-deal speaker. Dave Warren explained: "Even if I was the only PEC member available to do the meeting, they still wouldn't ask me to do it."

No one was under the illusion that this would be an easy fight, far from it. There was a working atmosphere to the meeting as comrades put forward suggestions and asked questions about how to maximise the "No" vote. The cam-



paign will go to Organising For Fighting Unions (OFFU) and the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) to ask for assistance.

## Where was Jane Loftus?

While there were several Socialist Workers Party militants at the meeting, Jane Loftus, President of the CWU, a PEC member and SWP member, was not. Andy Young (Leeds) rightly demanded that she openly campaign for a "No" vote. Dave Warren suggested this would now be difficult, since the union rules stipulate that executive members can only subsequently campaign against majority decisions if they immediately registered their dissent. Only he and Phil Brown (Newcastle) of the PEC minority had done so.

## No one was under the illusion that this would be an easy fight, far from it

Loftus' cowardly refusal to break ranks with the sell-out merchants so far shows the weakness of the SWP's uncritical approach to the union bureaucracy and the cheerleading of lefts. Throughout the dispute, neither Socialist Worker nor any of the party's leaflets have openly criticised Dave Ward or Billy Hayes. While some articles have demanded more action and warned against the sell-out, not once has the SWP warned that the union bureaucracy will sabotage the struggle or called on the rank and file to take control.

Similarly their supposed rank and file paper *Post Worker* was simply dropped during the strike. Now a new issue will appear - thanks to the new campaign, rather than the SWP. All those taking part must demand an open, democratic editorial board, if *Post Worker* is to become a real rank and file paper.

## Vote "No" and restart the strikes!

The "No" campaign is now up and running. Every effort must be made to ensure it wins. Support groups should put their resources at the disposal of the campaign, leafleting, for example, the 150 main delivery units where there is no CWU rep.

The campaign has to be linked to calls to restart the strikes. Indeed, even while the meeting took place, wildcat strikes were off the leash in Carlisle and Belfast. More are inevitable. While the meeting agreed to support unofficial strikes, however, it did not endorse our call "to act without the approval of Billy Hayes, Dave Ward and the executive where necessary".

Activists thought this was not necessary because we have the constitutional right to campaign for a "No" vote. Fine. But every rank and file group sooner or later has to decide whether to fight without - and against - the union bureaucracy, or submit to its diktat.

We are confident that, together, we can build on the CWU's magnificent tradition of official and unofficial action, and provide leadership to the rank and file, so that the next time we bring Royal Mail to its knees, the members - not the bureaucrats - are in control. From there, we can go on to establish a rank and file movement that can transform the CWU into a democratic and fighting union, one worthy of its members.

## BOOK REVIEW

# The end of tolerance – Racism in the 21st Century

By Kuldip Bajwa

The rise of Islamophobia under the guise of the “war on terror” and the increased racism against asylum seekers as a response to global inequities are the subject of Arun Kundnani’s book, *The End of Tolerance – Racism In the 21st Century*.

Kundnani sets out to chart the changing nature of racism as it is used as a rationale and justification for modern imperialism. He correctly states that any analysis of 21st century racism is defined by globalisation.

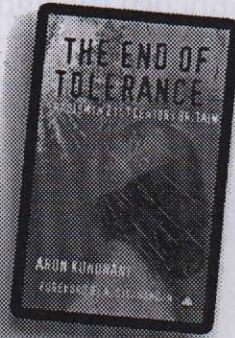
With an economic system where Western multinational corporations have assumed unfettered power over many national economies, the West portrays its own civilisation and values as superior to all others. Consequently, Western governments have arrogated to themselves the right to openly intervene anywhere in the world.

The notion of the sovereignty of nation states has been eroded but in turn this has led to an inevitable resistance to the new structures of power. Anger is no longer confined within national boundaries as was demonstrated by 9/11.

It is the refusal of Western governments to acknowledge their own role in creating a world of inequality and injustice that has paved the way for the new narrative of the clash of civilisations where fanatical Islam is the arch enemy to the liberating forces of the United States, Britain and their allies.

Similarly, the millions forced into migration around the world are seen, not as a consequence and as victims of the crimes visited on their countries, but as aliens, culturally inferior and a threat to Western values and a way of life. The history of the West’s exploitative ties to the rest of the world and the underlying causes of disease, famine, corruption and “failed states” is never told.

Kundnani charts the rise of the new racisms over the past 15 years and what he sees as the decline of antiracism and multiculturalism. He uses interviews to give examples of the impact of the new poli-



cies, highlighting the effects on people, their families and communities.

He laments the rise of identity politics and the breakdown of solidarity among black people of all races pointing out the state’s cynical pro-

motion of faith based community leaders to serve their own ends.

The main weak point in Kundnani’s otherwise excellent book is in his conclusions.

While correctly criticising secularists on the left who want to deny Muslims the right to express their religious beliefs through such things as the wearing of the hijab he looks to India, where he claims the principles of religious freedom and social reform mean no one religion is privileged. This is simply not true: look at Kashmir; look at the Hindu chauvinist BJP.

Kundnani hopes a new solidarity can be built that struggles against racism, based on a fight for universal human rights, and against the vast economic and political inequal-

ities that exist. He suggests that a common struggle in defence of civil liberties can be used to build such a solidarity, pointing to the antiwar movement as an example.

But after identifying imperialism and globalisation as the reasons for the new racism of the 21st century Kundnani fails to raise the need to challenge capitalism itself which is at the heart of this system.

To eradicate racism and build the genuinely integrated and cohesive communities that Kundnani wants the struggle against racism will have to be one part of a wider, class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system that divides humanity into rival, and unequal nation states, and to emancipate the whole of humanity.

## No to new attack on abortion rights

By Rebecca Anderson

The anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act, which made abortion legal within a limit of 28 weeks into the pregnancy (since lowered to 24 weeks) and with the permission of two doctors, has sparked off another debate within parliament. The majority of a parliamentary select committee has come out in favour of small improvements in women’s access to abortion, while Tory MPs have demanded greater restrictions.

Yet the argument for women to have full control over their own bodies and free access to abortion isn’t going to come from within parliament. We need to organise within the workers’ movement for all women to get unrestricted access to contraception and abortion, and for the right to control our bodies.

As part of a discussion and report from the House of Commons science and technology committee on abortion, health minister Dawn Primarolo, stated that: “The medical consensus still indicates that, while improvements have been made in care, at the moment that concept of viability [24 weeks] cannot constantly be pushed back.”

The committee’s report went further than this, arguing that women should not need the signatures of two doctors to be allowed an abortion, that nurses and midwives should be allowed to perform early abortions and that women should be able to have the second stage of an early abortion at home.

All these measures would improve women’s access to abortion but don’t go far enough and establish an unequivocal right of a woman to control her body. The debate has been limited to the viability of a foetus – whether it can survive outside the womb – which is the argument anti-abortion MPs and organisations have been focussing on for the past few years, attempting to prove the pro-life argument that the foetus is a person in its own right. Nadine Dorries – an anti-abortion Conservative MP – has pushed for the time limit on abortions to be lowered to at least 23 weeks because there is an 11 per cent chance of survival.

Most of the pro-life lobby are against any abortions mainly for religious reasons but are now using scientific arguments to erode women’s access to abortion. But the debate should focus on a

woman and her rights – not on the foetus. Women do not use abortion as a form of contraception and no woman wants to go through the surgical procedure of a late abortion, but many women have to for several reasons – from medical risks to simply not wanting a child.

Furthermore, a report in the Lancet last month showed terminations are declining around the world as the right to contraception and abortion improves. The report, which is the most thorough-going study since 1995, found that for a number of reasons women will continue to seek abortions, whether they are legal or illegal. The best way to reduce abortions is not to outlaw them – this only endangers women’s lives – but to make contraception free and accessible for all, the report says.

Any restrictions on a women’s access to abortion – legislative or financial – is a restriction of women’s rights. A working class women’s movement, rooted in the trade unions and communities, needs to be established. One of its pressing tasks would be to answer the anti-abortion lobby with a fight for free abortion on demand and free contraception for all.



## ANTIRACISM

# Labour and Tories whip up anti-migrant racism

Another month, another series of attacks on foreign-born workers, *Kam Kumar* reports

Labour's pandering to nationalist and even racist prejudice has made opposition to immigration a "respectable" policy once again. First, Gordon Brown used his speech to the party conference to promise "British jobs for British workers", previously a slogan only of the extreme right. Then, the Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, apologised for undercounting the number of migrant workers in the UK. The figure of 1.1 million was revised up to 1.5 million. Now the media are reporting – or, rather, whipping up – "outrage" at a report that more than half the new jobs created under Labour since 1997 have gone to foreign workers.

Since the Home Secretary's apology, more cabinet ministers have been toughening their anti-immigrant rhetoric. Although migrant workers only make up between 7 and 8 per cent of the whole workforce, immigration minister Liam

Byrne is proposing tough new laws: compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals, new border police at airports and harbours. Next year, Brown is to introduce a points system for migrants wishing to work here.

Already, restrictions are in place for Romanians and Bulgarians wishing to work here, even though they joined the European Union in January and should have the same rights as other EU citizens. Labour has announced that only 20,000 will be allowed in – and only to work in food processing and agriculture. Such restrictions force vulnerable people into the black economy and sweatshops, with appalling pay and conditions of work. Migrants are ten times more likely to be paid less than the minimum wage than the average worker and over a quarter have no contract of employment.

Labour's anti-immigration rhetoric has allowed Cameron to take

up the issue, safe from accusations of "extremism" – after all, "even the government now accepts that immigrants are a problem". He admitted in a BBC interview that immigration had been "good for the economy" because migrant workers do the jobs that others don't want. In other words, British bosses have got rich because they can force migrants to work for lower wages. Now, he wants them to make the same profits by getting rid of migrants and forcing British-born people into low paid jobs by restricting welfare and social security rights.

Throughout history, migrants have been demonised to justify the introduction of unpopular policies. Labour tried to step up racism in the education system by encouraging teachers to spy on Muslim students; this backfired when teachers united to defeat such a racist measure. But elsewhere racism is still rampant.

Migrants who commit crimes must do their time in special prisons for foreign inmates, and then be deported to the country from which they fled. Why should there be a special law and special prisons for foreign nationals? Why not treat all criminals the same under British law?

Recently, Liam Byrne gleefully announced that an immigrant is deported "every 8 seconds". These deportations are a shocking condemnation of Labour's asylum and immigration policy. Deportations even continue to countries which Brown has labelled as tyrannical regimes worthy of sanctions.

- No to racist citizenship tests
- Open the borders
- Down with all immigration controls
- Tax the rich to provide new housing, education and health facilities for all

## Justice for Jean Charles de Menezes

By Keith Spencer

On 22 July 2005, Jean Charles de Menezes was shot several times in the head by armed police at Stockwell tube station in south London.

Last month, the Metropolitan Police were fined just £175,000 for endangering public safety.

Not a single officer police has been imprisoned, fined, sacked or demoted for the killing of Jean Charles. Worse still, beyond the court exposé of police failure and indecision was a far more sinister story. A cover-up that set out to defame a dead man.

The police leaked to their friends in the press that Jean Charles ran in the tube and jumped the barrier. He did no such thing. Witness statements were released saying

that he was wearing a bulky jacket with wires coming out of it. Again, totally false. He was accused of fighting back against the armed officers, but in fact he was wrestled to the ground from behind and then shot on the floor while incapacitated. In court, the police were accused of doctoring a photo of Jean Charles to make him look like terror suspect Hussein Osman. And then the police claimed, with no evidence, that he had a dodgy passport and took cocaine – as if this was a reason to shoot him.

And no one is to blame! Jean Charles de Menezes was murdered. The police used the new powers granted to them under New Labour's anti-terror laws to kill him. Now, the declaration of an emergency seems to be enough to suspend normal rules and pro-

cedures, and to execute a suspect on the street.

While London Mayor Ken Livingstone has come out in support of Met commissioner Sir Ian Blair, some establishment figures have called for his sacking. In particular, the Tories have formally called for him to go. But let's be clear; they want him out because they see him as too "progressive" on some issues. They want to see a more "traditional" cop in charge of the country's most powerful police force. We want to weaken the police in order to make it easier for the working class smash them.

- We say:
- Sack Blair and put the police murderers on trial
  - Disarm the police and disband special units such as SO19
  - Repeal all anti-terror laws

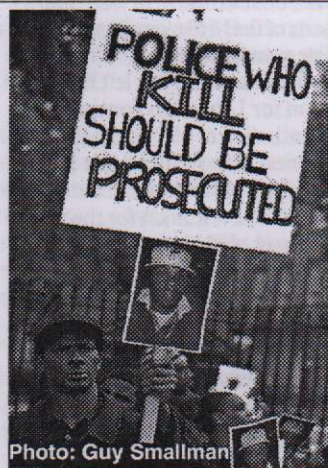


Photo: Guy Smallman

**Over 200 – mainly black – people marched with United Friends and Family on 27 October to protest against deaths in police custody. Needless to say, the cops provoked the demonstrators and a few scuffles broke out. Nevertheless, the protesters maintained their dignity and delivered speeches outside Downing Street and Parliament. Over 600 people die in police custody each year but, to our knowledge, only one officer has ever been convicted.**

## BROWN'S BRITAIN

# How Labour bleeds the National Health Service

The NHS is celebrating its birthday just as the government is trying to kill it, writes *John Bowden*

The NHS trust which has been at the heart of a scandal when 90 people died from infection by *Clostridium difficile* bacteria has agreed to a £250,000 payoff package for Rosie Gibb, who was chief executive of the trust at the time. This is on the back of a Healthcare Commission report that the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals had a shortage of nurses so dire that staff did not have the time to wash their hands between patients and left elderly patients lying in their own faeces.

The report blamed the trust's board for paying too much attention to balancing the books and meeting government waiting-time targets, and too little to patient service and infection control. Yet the health minister Lord Ara Darzi has the cheek to say that hospital superbugs, such as MRSA, are a result of poor leadership not excessive cost cutting or selling off parts of the NHS to profiteering private companies.

This assertion has left the door open for Labour to continue the privatisation of the National Health Service. Alan Johnson, the health secretary, has announced the opening up a new market for the management of NHS services worth up to £70 billion. He has approved a list of 14 private companies that would be available to help primary care trusts in England evaluate the health needs of local people and buy appropriate services.

The firms include four big US healthcare corporations: Aetna, Humana, Health Dialog Services and UnitedHealth, the Minneapolis-based company whose European division is headed by Tony Blair's former senior health adviser. Although it is a watered down version of a proposal made last year and would deny the companies any role in running the services they help to commission, they are likely to gain influence over decisions about which treatments to ration and which hospitals to close.

Without question, the last ten years of the Labour government has seen more privatisation and



frontline cuts than at any point during the proud history of the greatest demand won by British workers. An institution built upon the premise of "free healthcare on the point of demand" has already seen billions of pounds of contracts and property sold off to profit-making corporations which will, if not stopped in their tracks and reversed, turn the NHS into merely a logo through which health services are bought and sold.

## New Labour cuts

The most visible effects of Blair and Brown's health policy have come in the form of cuts – cuts to beds, cuts in frontline staff and, most visible of all, closures of entire local hospitals and critical departments in city centres. Last month, local newspapers have indicated 1200 hospital workers in Nottingham and 50 mental health workers in Torbay, Devon are under threat of the sack. Two thousand people have signed a petition against ward closures in Cambridge, and hospitals in Worthing and Chichester are under threat along with a neurosurgery department in Aberdeen. A long-serving neurosurgeon at the Scottish hospital explained that the closure would "cost lives".

Last year, Patricia Hewitt, acting Health Secretary, ordered every health authority in the country to balance their books. The budget deficit was used as an excuse to sack thousands of staff and shut many wards and important units across the UK, sparking public outrage

and many passionate local protests. The government created the artificial deficit by withholding hospital money from trusts, then giving it back later to claim that the crisis was suddenly over – just after long term budget slashing initiatives were actioned, effectively speeding up government plans to reduce expenditure. A cheaper health service is a more appealing one for potential contract purchasers.

Yet saving money was not the main objective of government policy when dealing with private businesses. The Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) pushed forward by the Labour government have been proven to waste money – under these schemes private corporations, after tearing down the old hospitals

and building new ones, rent these sites back to hospital trusts at ludicrously high commercial rates.

The government claims that the reduction in hospital capacity has been dealt with by outsourcing to private companies. Independent Treatment Centres (ITCs) are carrying out simple and profitable operations for up to 40 per cent more money than operations carried out within the health service – paid for by our taxes. The first wave of ICTs carried out 50,000 less operations and treated less than 50 per cent of the number of patients than the Department of Health expected.

Out and out privatisation has also wreaked havoc on the NHS. Last year NHS Logistics, the award-winning arm of the NHS responsible for supplying hospital equipment, was sold off to DHL, part of the American Novation Group giant while Novation was under enquiry by the US senate for muscling out smaller competitors for contracts in the US and using its market position to supply goods of an inferior quality for a higher price.

## Free, quality healthcare for all

Over 60 years ago the National Health Service bill was passed into law by a Labour government scrambling to repair social cohesion and avert a political uprising in an impoverished Britain after years of devastating war. Now 60 years on we are fighting a Labour government in an attempt to preserve the tattered vestiges of what should be a right for all – free universal quality healthcare.

This month thousands gathered in London to march against the privatisation of the health service. Yet thousands more are queuing for hospital beds and outside the few remaining NHS dentist surgeries desperately hoping for treatment. It's time to revolutionise healthcare as a service for needs of the many, not the greed of a few. We need to fight back now against privatisation before the vast queues outside UK dentist surgeries become the example for the rest of our healthcare system to follow.



## EU CONSTITUTION

# Brown denies democratic process on EU constitution

Gordon Brown is terrified that if the EU constitution is put to the vote it will lose. *Joy Macready* explains why working class people should oppose this neoliberal charter

Gordon Brown has ignored the democratic process for the second time since becoming prime minister (the first being his unopposed coronation). By denying the British people a referendum on the European Union Reform Treaty, despite 75 per cent wanting one, he is forcing through the 2000 "Lisbon agenda" to "Americanise" Europe with devastating effects on the working class, the youth, and the poor. This treaty is considered to be 90 per cent the same as the European Constitution voted down by the Dutch and French masses in 2005.

With the Royal Mail workers still in dispute, and public sector workers balloting to strike against Brown's March 2007 pay limit, Brown has decided to weather the storm. Instead of calling an election now, he hopes the public will forget his betrayals when one is called. It's easier to risk unpopularity by refusing a referendum, than to gamble on an embarrassing likely defeat.

The Tories are calling for a referendum, not because they fundamentally oppose the treaty, but to score points against Labour by pretending to defend democracy. A section of the party is completely against the European project, promoting Little England chauvinism against the other European imperialisms. And although the Liberal Democrats' acting leader Vincent Cable favours a referendum on the European Union as a whole, Lib Dem leadership contenders Nick Clegg and Chris Huhne said they would not back a referendum on the treaty.

Workers Power supports the call for a referendum and would fight for a "No" vote within it. However, we do not subscribe to the xenophobic, anti-European sentiments of many Tories or the protectionism of the Lib Dems; we fight for a constitution based on workers rights and a restructuring of society – a Socialist United States of Europe.

We are not against European unity; we believe that bringing together workers from across national boundaries makes the working class as a whole stronger. We must fight together to further working class interests, such as quality healthcare, free education, decent wages and working conditions, decent housing and a future for all.

Europe's so-called democrats will never allow the working class to have its say in the political future of Europe because they know that that they would never get their commitment to capitalism, privatisation, social cuts and racist laws through an assembly made up of workers representatives.



Angela Merkel with Gordon Brown

Brown's blustering that the new treaty has nothing to do with the failed constitution is a lie. The Reform Treaty, to be signed in December, ratified by all 27 member states in 2008 and brought into force in 2009, is part of the neoliberal Lisbon Agenda 2010, setting out the way forward for European capitalists and big business to make the EU as economically competitive as the US within ten years. It is a project to see through the formation of a new united impe-

**The Lisbon Agenda called for wholesale privatisation and deregulation – telecommunications and transport, employment policy, health and pensions, all had to be opened up to market forces.**

rialist superpower.

The Lisbon Agenda called for wholesale privatisation and deregulation – telecommunications and transport, employment policy, health and pensions, all had to be opened up to market forces. And the workers must work five years longer with retirement being postponed until 65.

The Treaty is being used to circumvent the democratic process across all the EU countries; only the Republic of Ireland will hold a referen-

dum on it. Brown was crystal clear when he said that the focus over the next period would include "the new priorities" of jobs, competitiveness, prosperity, climate change and security "so that Europe can play a far stronger part in the competitive economy of the world and be a leader and success story in the new global order".

So although the overt symbols of a European super state have been dropped like the flag, motto and anthem, it has kept a number of reforms that bring forward European political and economic union: a new president of the European Council to serve 2.5 years, a new EU foreign affairs chief, a reformed voting system and scrapped vetoes in 40 areas. It amends, rather than replaces, existing EU treaties.

Brown argues that the UK's "red lines", in foreign policy, tax and benefits, criminal justice and an opt-out from a charter of fundamental rights, have been secured. Yet the Prison Officers' Association plans to be the first to contest government claims that the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights is not enshrined in British law, in a move which could unravel Brown's "red lines". The POA will demand the right for its members to strike by challenging the legality of Britain's opt-out and Brown will fight it tooth and nail.

### A workers' constitution

Through the European Social Forum process, a number of initiatives have tried to come up with an alternative constitution – one that reflected the needs of the working class, the poor and immigrants of Europe. After the successful "No" campaign in France in 2005, French activists focused their energy on a petition aimed at getting "a million signatures for a social Europe". The Italians implicitly counterposed this to developing a "Charter for another Europe", including peace and security, citizenship, equality and difference, workers' and social rights, democracy and participation, the environment and public services.

What Workers Power proposed was completely different: active working class internationalism, a class struggle that recognises and respects no borders. The working class, together with the anticapitalist and other social movements, needs actively to oppose the imperialist project and fight for another Europe – one based on the political power of the workers and control of the economy through social ownership.

With both we can build an economy, an environment, a society fit for human beings. We can achieve equality and freedom. That is the Europe that we are fighting to build – a socialist United States of Europe.

## RESPECT

# Respect splits: Socialist

Respect is in the process of splitting. The populist coalition is holding two rival conferences on the same day this month. **Richard Brenner** argues that the split will be along class lines, but that the SWP will have a hard time explaining away its opportunist role in the affair

Members of Respect have received emails from both sides in the dispute that is tearing their coalition-cum-party apart, with each blaming the other for “splitting Respect”. On one side stand George Galloway MP and the majority of the delegates on Respect’s national council. They claim that the Socialist Workers Party - Respect’s largest single component - is splitting Respect by encouraging four councillors in Tower Hamlets, East London to resign the whip and, allegedly, to stand against official Respect candidates.

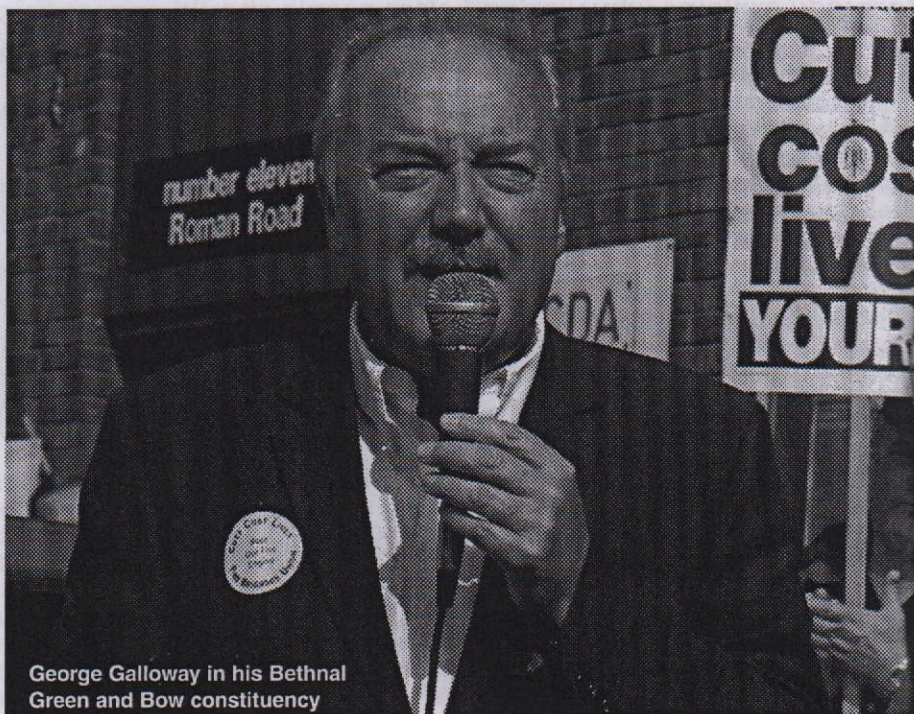
On the other side is the SWP, the biggest socialist group in Britain, which provides most foot soldiers for Respect and controls its national office. The SWP is promoting an open letter to “Save Respect”, signed by around 900 people. It rejects Galloway’s allegations and claim that socialists are being subjected to a witch-hunt in Respect. It accuses Galloway himself of organising a split, especially by calling a rival conference rather than recognising the official one (at which the SWP expects to have a majority).

Aligned with the SWP is a small number of independent activists, including councillor Oliur Rahman in Tower Hamlets. With Galloway is a large part of the non-SWP membership and leaders, including Linda Smith of the Fire Brigades Union, Muslim activists Salma Yaqoob and Yvonne Ridley, Stalinist journalist Victoria Brittain, and left wing filmmaker Ken Loach.

What has become (accurately) known as the ‘Businessmen’s Faction’ in East London, comprising local Muslim petit-bourgeois loyal to Tower Hamlets councillor Abjol Miah, is also firmly behind Galloway and, unsurprisingly given their class nature, vehemently anti-SWP. Two leading members of the Fourth International in Britain, Alan Thornett and John Lister, are also backing Galloway against the SWP.

New to the Galloway camp is a gaggle of renegades from the SWP, whose clarity of class thinking had been eroded by years of unprincipled collusion with reformist allies in Respect - something the SWP had been encouraging up to a matter of weeks ago. These people include Nick Wrack, brother of FBU leader Matt Wrack. Galloway proposed him for a powerful new role in Respect as a manoeuvre against the SWP. Despite a party instruction not to do so, Wrack accepted and crossed over, being quite justifiably expelled by the SWP in the process.

In the short term the Galloway wing will be significantly weakened on the ground, and will be ever more dependent on the “community leaders”, whose wheeler-dealing characterises its vote-gathering activity in local elections. But maybe Galloway will start to attract back-



George Galloway in his Bethnal Green and Bow constituency

ing from broader sections of the Labour left and left wing union leaders like Bob Crow and Matt Wrack, whose unions are now outside the Labour Party, but who were repelled by the SWP’s heavy influence.

The SWP itself is in real trouble. Coming under attack from the right can make a left wing group stronger, providing a clear platform to explain your politics and criticise your opponents. But for the SWP there is a terrible problem. They put themselves in this position; only yesterday they argued passionately against the very arguments they use today; they are hoist with their own petard.

In 2003, the SWP argued that Respect’s predecessor - the Socialist Alliance, of which Workers Power was a part - should be transformed into something less socialist. It dropped the Alliance’s programme in favour of a handful of populist policies, and reduced the goal of socialism to nothing more than a word in the Respect acronym.

Above all, the SWP angrily denied that by striking agreements with middle class Muslim community leaders they were constructing an unprincipled cross-class bloc. They accused their critics - including Workers Power - of being opposed to organising Muslims. But they ignored and misrepresented our real argument: that organising Muslim workers and youth for socialism means fighting the influence of the middle class leaders.

Now suddenly the SWP has recognised the

problem. Its leaders are denouncing middle class businessmen, community leaders, and careerists, who join Respect from Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Is this because the SWP leaders, like John Rees and Lindsey German, suddenly decided to subject Respect to a basic class analysis? Sadly not.

The SWP was forced to face reality by the actions of their opponents. First it faced, in Birmingham and East London, opposition to the selection of SWP members as council candidates from organised blocs of Muslim members. Then Galloway launched his attack.

Thornett, Nick Wrack and other unprincipled socialists may loudly protest at the SWP’s “over-reaction”, but it is absolutely clear that Galloway’s letter was an assault on the SWP and a defence of some of the worst aspects of Respect’s class collaboration. Galloway’s letter singles out two Respect initiatives that the SWP promoted for special criticism. One was Respect’s float on the lesbian and gay Pride march this year (not something designed to accommodate conservative Muslim forces!) This was a principled, if belated step on the part of the SWP.

Another target for Galloway’s criticism was Respect initiating the Organising for Fighting Unions conference, a significant event attended by hundreds of union representatives. Galloway regarded this as a distraction: union business is for the union leaders; Respect’s job as a political party is to get votes. A clearer expression of the electoralist, i.e. the completely bour-

# Workers Party in crisis

geois view of politics, one could not hope for.

The SWP is of course not blameless. As anyone who has worked in any of its campaigns will know, it behaves in a bureaucratic manner, exercising organisational control from behind the scenes. Doubtless this will have alienated potential allies and exhausted the patience of some of its own members.

Rees replied to Galloway's open letter in two forms - one internal (it was promptly leaked to the internet), and one public. The internal response sought to prepare SWP members for the unexpected: suddenly, they were amazed to hear, there was a right wing in Respect, one they would have to defeat this at the conference in November. As a result, large numbers of previously unseen SWP members turned up at Respect meetings (not that the business wing is averse to sudden packing of meetings, of course!) The SWP commanded greater numbers than Galloway and the councillors could muster. It became clear that the SWP would win the conference.

Galloway, Linda Smith and their wretched attorney Thornett (whose group has gone over to Galloway in the most supine manner - the latest in a long history of accommodation on the part of the Fourth International) declared that the SWP would pack the conference, and are holding their own conference on the same day - in effect a split.

In his last polemic against the SWP leadership before his justified expulsion, Nick Wrack argued:

"Respect is not a classical united front. Nor is it helpful to describe it as a united front of a special kind... Respect is a broad political organisation that contests elections. It puts forward a comprehensive political programme. It is not a union of forces for a temporary fight on a single or several limited demands but a permanent formation around a wide-ranging political manifesto... To the wider world and to most people who join it, it is a party."

Now this is partly true, though Wrack draws entirely the wrong conclusion from it. Respect is most certainly not an example of the classical united front, which, as advocated by VI Lenin and Leon Trotsky, involved revolutionaries criticising their allies' policies, not adapting to them. But is it impossible for the united front tactic to take the form of a party, as Wrack suggests? It is not impossible.

Lenin and Trotsky saw the need for communists in a range of circumstances to build new parties of the working class, drawing in reformist and syndicalist forces. The point however, was to struggle within such parties against its adoptive reformist policies or programme.

But it is this that Wrack leaves out. Because Respect is a party, he believes it is not a united front and therefore... he believes it must have a programme that all the participating components can agree to. This means the policy of the party is agreed by the lowest common denominator, resulting in a reformist programme and thus: a reformist party. The idea of building a new party and openly fighting within it for rev-



## Respect has effectively split in two

olutionary policies is completely missing.

It will be difficult for the SWP to resist this haemorrhage to the right. It has had to expel former loyalists Rob Hoveman and Kevin Ovensden for applying the policy that Rees and German devised. Well known activists like Jerry Hicks and like Gary MacFarlane have also resigned, going over to the Menshevik "broad party" model of organising. More will follow.

At the same time there is a large rump of members who never liked Respect. These people, it has to be said, never fought Rees and German. They are unlikely to provide much of a base for an angular 180-degree turn towards activist "building the SWP on the streets, on the estates, in the workplaces".

The SWP is therefore today in its worst crisis since its foundation in 1977. It will have to adjust to being a smaller, weaker group. If it tries to provide itself with some political coherence

by lurching leftwards, it will find its own words being quoted back to it. The fact that it will be denouncing the consequences of its own opportunism will undermine its case and the patience of anyone listening.

The answer is not to move to the right, nor to swing towards sectarianism. It is to reject the opportunist concept of the "united front of the special type", in which revolutionaries are supposedly required to suspend criticism of their allies. It is to reject the cross-class basis on which Respect was built. But it should avoid the equal and opposite error of sectarianism, in which all the party can say to the class is: "Here is the party - it is us. Join us."

A left faction is needed in the SWP to make a serious re-assessment, to embrace the real revolutionary use of the united front tactic; and to apply it today in the fight for a new mass workers' party and a revolutionary programme.

## A new reformist leadership?

The SWP-led Respect majority on the national committee says it wants to launch a paper, pay more attention to the working class and pursue its discussions with the RMT transport union, the Communist Party of Britain (Morning Star) and Bob Wareing, the deselected Labour MP, who aims to stand against the new Labour.

But the CPB hates the SWP like sin, and Galloway has been writing in the Morning Star a lot lately. And the RMT has vehemently denied the SWP wing of Respect's claim that its London Region is backing Lindsey German for London Mayor.

Clearly John McDonnell's failed campaign for the Labour leadership and Brown's anti-democratic rule change at Labour Party conference have convinced the CPB and a small number of Labour lefts that a new party could - or some sort of left reformist political unity project - could get off the ground, and they are lining up a new reformist leadership to run it.

In this context, revolutionaries need to avoid both opportunism and sectarianism.

Revolutionaries need to call on all the working class forces opposed to the war and government attacks at home to call an open conference and commence a democratic debate on the political programme that could form the basis for a new party (see out Open Letter, page 4).

This would replace bureaucratic manoeuvres and opportunist stitch-ups a democratic debate. It would replace the Labour left's strategy of taking over Labour and Respect's strategy of cross-class alliances with a policy of working class political independence.

Only by proposing unity in a party while fighting openly for a revolutionary programme, can we thwart both the attempts of the reformists to cohere a new bureaucratic leadership in waiting, and the centrist policy of opportunists, like Rees, German and Thornett, to replace open political struggle with manoeuvring into positions of organisational strength whilst accepting the reformists' proposals on all programmatic points.

## MIDDLE EAST

# US increases the pressure on Iran as a prelude to war

US imperialism wants to get its hands on Iran's natural resources, but that is easier said than done, argues *Marcus Halaby*, not least because of the repercussions any attack would have on the region

A US Senate resolution designating Iran's Revolutionary Guard a "terrorist organisation" and imposing sanctions on companies that do business with it underlines the White House's drive to a military strike on Iran. This measure will affect European companies doing business in Iran, and so puts pressure on France, Germany and Russia to choose sides in George W Bush's latest adventure in the "War on Terror".

The pretext for a strike, as with Iraq, will be "weapons of mass destruction", meaning Iran's controversial nuclear energy programme. Despite the efforts of the European imperialist powers to resolve this diplomatically, and the dismissal of Iran's nuclear weapons capacity by international observers, Iran has been targeted with sanctions and military threats. While Bush has avoided advocating "regime change", Tony Blair's recent US speech comparing Iran's regime, with its sponsorship of "terrorism", to the threat posed to Europe by Hitler's Germany, demonstrates the thinking of one of his key allies.

In fact, a strike on Iran has become a strategic necessity for US imperialism, something that unites "neo-con" hawks with more "pragmatic" voices like Democrat presidential hopefuls Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. The only debate now is over how to deal with Iran. Vice President Dick Cheney favours a military strike before the end of the Bush administration, while State Secretary Condoleezza Rice prefers the semblance of a multilateral approach.

The context is the failure of the occupation of Iraq to create a stable pro-US regime. This goes alongside the likely withdrawal or redeployment of US forces, and growing problems for the US-British occupation of Afghanistan. With oil around \$93 per barrel, the pressure on the world economy, and US imperialism's consequent dependence on its Arab allies, is becoming intolerable.

This alarm has spread across the Middle East, with Bush's Jor-



Iranian Revolutionary Guard, now classified as terrorists

danian, Egyptian and Saudi allies panicking over the threat posed by a "Shia Crescent", constituting the Iranian regime, the Shia insurgency in Iraq, and Iran's regional allies Syria and the Lebanese Hizballah. Iran is also blamed for supporting the Hamas administration in Gaza.

President Bush needs to cut Iran down to size before any major change of US policy in Iraq, to prevent Iran benefiting from a situation, which has seen it emerge as the strongest regional power after Israel. This began with the removal of Saddam Hussein, whose "containment" of Iranian power was behind US support for him in the 1980s and US toleration of his regime's existence in the 1990s.

The failure of Israel's 33 day bombardment of Lebanon last summer damaged Israel's regional prestige. It also strengthened Hizballah, reversing the hopes expressed by Bush and Blair that Lebanon's "Cedar Revolution", which led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops after a 30-year presence, would allow for Lebanon's evolution into a pro-Western "democracy", able to act as a buffer state between Israel and a recalcitrant Syria, and capable of signing a separate peace with the Zionist state.

Naturally, the drive to war against Iran therefore has regional symptoms. In Iraq, this has taken the form of the much-vaunted "surge", directed mainly at Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr's "Mehdi Army", coupled with attempts at reconciliation

with former Sunni insurgents, and US pressure on Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki to reduce his government's dependence on pro-Iranian factions.

Lebanon has seen a crisis over the successor to pro-Syrian president Emile Lahoud, with rival factions arming in preparation, and supporters of pro-US prime minister Fouad Siniora accusing Syria and Hizballah of being behind the assassination of pro-government political figures.

Israel's recent air strike on a "suspected nuclear site" in the north of Syria near the Turkish border signals Israel's preparedness to use its military strength against Iran's allies in the event of US action against Iran. The peace talks with the corrupt

Fatah leaders in the West Bank are of crucial importance to Israel now; they must tame the Palestinians there in order to concentrate again on Hizballah and Iran later.

Bush's willingness to alienate Turkey, a key regional ally, to preserve support for the US occupation of Iraq by the Kurdish nationalist parties, shows how serious the situation is. The US's refusal to support Turkish attempts to suppress Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) separatists operating near the Iraq-Turkish border is pushing Turkey and Iran closer together.

## Repercussions

US policy is therefore in a bind. Striking Iran could destabilise Iraq and the whole region. On the other hand, not striking could lead to a slow and painful defeat for the neo-conservative project of re-dividing and dominating the Middle East. While it is easy to pin the blame for this on the unhinged views of "hawks" within the Bush administration, it is driven by the objective interests of US capitalism and its multinational corporations. Pacifist appeals to logic and reason will not prevent war any more than they did with Iraq. Only a class-based struggle against capitalism at home and imperialism abroad will do that.

## How to stop an attack on Iran

On 8 January 2003, two Motherwell train drivers refused to move supplies destined for the Gulf to the giant Nato weapons store at Glen Douglas, saying they were opposed to the war. None of the other drivers covered for them. The cargo of destruction never moved.

Four and a half years later, on 8 October, 5,000 students defied a police ban and marched on parliament.

The spirit of resistance in our movement is still alive.

Unfortunately, the Stop the War Coalition has settled into a routine of annual demonstrations, teach-

ins and set-piece debates in parliament. All legitimate tactics, but not enough.

We should approach workers in transport, the civil service and the armaments industry and urge them to summon up the spirit of the Motherwell Two - and refuse to move supplies to the front.

Let's not wait for Iran to be attacked - let's call meetings in every town and city to discuss the impending war and prepare for walk-outs and strikes on an even bigger scale than happened in March 2003, when thousands of school students abandoned classes and occupied town centres.

## ARGENTINA

# New president prepares next round of attacks

The elections in Argentina have established the Kirchners as a new ruling dynasty in Buenos Aires. *Tim West* looks at the coming struggles against the national unity project

Argentina elected a new president last month. Cristina Kirchner will succeed her husband Nestor next May. It was a surprise that Nestor stood way for his wife, but under the Argentinean constitution a president can only serve for two terms.

The next presidential term will be marred by a worsening economic situation, and therefore Cristina Kirchner will bear the brunt of this. Then in 2011 Nestor will return with the political capital he still has stored up, and complete the task of restoring the bosses to the position they enjoyed in the neoliberal 1990s. At least, that's the plan.

In 2003, Nestor Kirchner became president. The government's strategy has been to call for "national unity" to rebuild the economy and encourage a social pact between capitalist and worker, which included some reforms for the working class to alleviate the suffering of the early 2000s.

In 2001, Argentina's banking system collapsed after a three-year recession provoked by unsustainable debt levels, and the loss of spending power caused by the austerity measures needed to repay those debts. This crisis came about because of the 1990's neo-liberal binge of privatisations and spending cuts backed by IMF loans.

Widespread fury at the bourgeoisie led to rioting and the popular demand "out with them all!" A revolutionary crisis opened up which saw a 36-hour general strike, nationwide demonstrations and five presidents come and go.

Through this crisis, Kirchner's predecessor and then ally Eduardo Duhalde came to power, on the basis of being a Peronist populist who could appease a radicalised working class. The Peso was devalued and fell to 3:1 with the dollar, ruining savers who had paid in when the rate was 1:1. Massive inflation resulted and poverty reached record levels.

Politically, the government promised to end the "culture of impunity" by prosecuting the perpetrators of the 1976-83 dirty war carried by the military dictatorship, and reforming the security services. For example, groups such as the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo (mothers of the disappeared) have been invited regularly into the presidential palace and courted as close allies of the government.

These human rights credentials lie in ruins, however, because of the disappearance of Julio Lopez, who was due to give evidence against soldier Miguel Etchecolatz, on trial for human rights abuses. Lopez disappeared in September 2006 and has not been seen since, and serious



The new president, Cristina Kirchner

doubts have emerged over the quality of the police investigation. The cause of Lopez has repeatedly mobilised tens of thousands of protesters demanding his immediate re-appearance and justice against those responsible. The most recent one, in September, directly blamed the state for failing to ensure Lopez's safety. Despite government rhetoric about ending impunity, right-wing death squads still operate and the security forces are widely suspected of collaboration. Therefore on one of its main platforms, the government has failed dismally to deliver.

Cristina won't find the economic situation any more comforting: inflation is running at around 14 per cent. This renders fairly modest the 19 per cent annual wage increase agreed between pro-government businessmen and the unions, and has an even worse effect on those half of workers whose employers do not belong to that pact and receive far lower wage rises. The result is that only a fifth of workers have recovered the buying power that they had in

2001, before the economic crisis.

Devaluation caused a "high-dollar" model of economic development whereby Argentine producers and foreign investors take advantage of the resultant cheap labour. In turn, the demand from richer countries for these "competitive" goods and services results in them becoming ever more expensive for the Argentine worker: so workers get third world wages but pay first world prices.

As a result class conflict is intensifying. There have been wildcat actions by tube workers; their union responded with an attack on the more radical shop stewards. Nationwide teachers' strikes have rocked the country and been met with heavy repression; chemistry teacher Carlos Fuentealba was killed by a rubber bullet fired from point blank range by the police on one demonstration. Solidarity action over the killing brought the country to a standstill. This represents a rebirth of militant workers' action after the revolutionary crisis of 2002-3 and, after the crushing of the movement in the dirty war of the 1970's, the coming to power of the military dictatorship which laid the basis for the neoliberal reforms. Now the employed working class has experienced a huge upsurge in militancy as it demands a return to the living standards it experienced before devaluation.

The tasks of rebuilding the strength of the workers' movement after the failure of the 2002 revolutionary struggle is already under way, but to really begin to make gains and make inroads into the privileges of the Argentinean bosses, the workers must consign the lies of national unity to the dustbin of history. The task of creating a new mass workers party which will fight for a socialist revolution and a collectively owned economy under workers control must come to the fore in the struggles ahead.

## What is Peronism?

Cristina Kirchner has been likened in the media to Evita Peron, wife of General Peron who swept to power as president in 1946. His support was particularly strong among the working class where he carried out pro-worker reforms as labour secretary before being dismissed in 1945. As president, Peron nationalised several key industries and continued improving the standard of living of workers. However, he created a tightly controlled party and trade union movement that crushed any left-wing dissent and in which supporters of

fascism operated. This unstable alliance of bosses and right-wing labour came unstuck in the post war crisis of the early 1970s and was overturned by the military coup of 1976.

But the legacy of Peronism lives on in both Kirchners. The bosses' brought back Nestor Kirchner to deal with the uprising of 2002-03 by repression and with some reforms. And it is the tradition of Peronism within the workers movement that the current wave of struggles will have to defeat. That is why revolutionaries must call for a break with Peronism and its traditions, and for the unions to build a workers party.

## CHINA

# 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China

## Hu Jintao signals change

*Peter Main* looks at the recent congress of the Chinese Communist Party and finds that, underneath claims of a harmonious society, Chinese capitalism is becoming more unstable

Beijing has confirmed an important change of policy at the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which met in mid-October. The change was signalled by acceptance of President Hu Jintao's policy that economic development must be guided by a "scientific outlook" in order to build a "harmonious society". For "scientific outlook" read, "greater party control". This represents a shift away from the policy of Hu's predecessor, Jiang Zemin, which encouraged capitalists to expand production as fast as possible, by virtually any means.

By attracting investment, especially from the "overseas Chinese" of Taiwan and Hong Kong, and providing a range of tax breaks, hidden subsidies and state investment in infrastructure, China has achieved very high growth rates in export industries since the turn of the century. However, allowing economic growth to be determined by individual capitalists' priorities has created a range of problems both at home and abroad. The most important of these is a historically unprecedented level of investment that Beijing has been trying to reduce but which is still above 45 per cent of GDP.

Now that China dominates world production of many goods, profitability is no longer a question of undercutting countries with higher production costs, especially wages. Now, companies in China are increasingly competing with each other. To capture market share and to reduce wage costs when wage rates are rising and skilled labour is scarce, they scramble to extend factories and install more efficient machinery. Hence the uncontrollable level of investment.

### Boom and bust

These are classical capitalist boom conditions: output increases, the prices of individual commodities goes down – average prices for consumer electronics are now 25 per cent lower than two years ago – but, inevitably, there is pressure on profit margins too. To bolster profits, firms turn to speculation in real estate or the stock markets. Today, on average, one-third of Chinese company profits come from speculation, not from production. Not surprisingly, the Shanghai stock exchange has risen by 400 per cent in the last two years.

Party leaders are well aware of what follows the high point of a boom. That is why they now want greater control over development. In his report to Congress, Hu listed the problems flowing from unbridled investment, in particular the "excessively high cost of resources and



Voting takes place for the new Central Committee at the Communist Party congress

(damage) to the environment and the imbalance between urban and rural areas". He also recognised "difficulties in the administration of justice and public order". In plain language that is acknowledgement of the scale of mass protests, some of which have developed into armed clashes with the police and paramilitary forces, over illegal land seizures and workers' rights.

The party leadership is fearful that these will become uncontrollable unless there is a big turn towards development in the interior and more resources go into health and social security provision. Whether the Party has the power to achieve that, however, is questionable. The policy of encouraging the return of China's capitalists, as well as subsidising the creation of a whole new class of bosses within China, has created a dynamic that will not easily be channelled into promoting the Party's objectives. The Party has been trying to reduce the scale of investment for several years through taxation, banking regulations and planning controls but without success.

### Illegal markets

The degree of independent power of the capitalists can be seen from the discovery of a completely illegal and unregistered banking operation based in Shenzhen, neighbouring Hong Kong. In August, it was reported that the bank had been in existence for at least eight years and that in the last 18 months alone it had handled business worth \$544 million. One academic study suggested such underground banks were lending as much as \$100 billion per year to help clients avoid government controls.

The formal adoption of Hu's goal of a "harmonious society" suggests that the Party is prepar-

ing for a political offensive against those capitalists who are not willing to accept its economic policies. It will present itself as the defender of the "national interest", fighting to overcome inequality between rich and poor and between the coastal provinces and the interior. This is complete hypocrisy, of course. The real objective is to stabilise the rule of the Party and we can expect the most reactionary propaganda campaign. Central to this will be the whipping up of chauvinist ideas and reliance on the most backward elements of traditional culture.

### Order and stability

One indicator of this is the amendment of the Party's own constitution to include its principles for guidance of "religious affairs". In practice that means promoting those religious movements, most clearly the Buddhist temples, which agree to accept the Party's leadership and the suppression of those that do not.

China's boom has also created dangers at the international level. To secure open access to the most lucrative markets, China had to sign up to World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules. In the short term, this guaranteed the feverish growth of the export industries that Beijing now wants to dampen down but it also created the world's biggest foreign currency reserves. These now stand at \$1.44 billion, the greater part in US dollars, and the decline in the dollar is making them a wasting asset – except in the US. An obvious strategy would be to take advantage of the approaching downturn in the US economy to buy up US assets but this will stir strong protectionist forces that could undermine continued exports.



**US decline**

Moreover, the US decline is itself a threat to China; the World Bank, in its latest quarterly review, suggests that every 1 per cent reduction in US consumption could mean as much as 0.5 per cent off China's economic growth. To counter this, China is giving greater attention to the EU market, two-way trade grew by 25 per cent in the last year. That, however, is already provoking calls for protectionist measures from countries such as Italy whose own production is threatened. Worse still, the terms of trade with the EU are far worse for China than with the US because the yuan is effectively tied to the dollar and has lost 40 per cent of its value against the euro since 2000.

At the same time, the WTO's rules were not drawn up to help poor countries but to remove obstacles to US corporations. The short transitional period China was allowed has ended and the biggest corporations on the planet are now planning their strategies for conquering "the last great untapped market on earth". This is not just a matter of increasing sales of up-market consumer goods, as has been the case until now. Far richer prizes are at stake: postal and distribution services, health services, educational provision and, above all, the financial sector including merchant and retail banking, insurance and accountancy.

Hu's policy shift is a recognition that China is entering a period of economic and political

turbulence in which the Party's rule will be challenged on both the national and international fronts. Particularly in the run up to the Olympics, repression will be increased against the working class and poor peasants who are fighting to defend their rights and living standards. But Beijing is already wary of any disruption to the Games – that is why less combative positions have been adopted on Darfur and Burma. There will not be a better opportunity for the workers and peasants of China to make their voices heard by building their own independent and democratically controlled organisations and, above all, a party committed to the overthrow of the CPC's dictatorship, the expropriation of all large scale capital and the creation of a workers' republic.

## Olympic exploitation, Olympian oppression

By Mark Booth

The Olympics mean big profits for big business, particularly the global sportswear brands and, with less than a year to go, China's capitalists have been trying to squeeze the maximum profits from this bourgeois carnival of elitism and chauvinism.

Play Fair 2008, an alliance of NGOs, trade unions and campaigning groups, has produced a damning report on the working conditions in factories producing goods for the Olympics. Investigating just four factories out of the hundreds producing goods, they found violations in working hours, pay scales, the hiring of minors and children, and health and safety conditions.

Violations of health and safety standards already mean a death sentence for many workers. In 2005, over 127,000 industrial deaths were recorded. A recent report estimated that as many as 200 million workers suffer from one sort of occupational disease, while at least 700,000 have incurred some form of disability due to work injuries.

**Employer abuses**

In all the factories examined, workers were forced to work in excess of 13 hours a day, 7 days a week and were paid on average 50 per cent less than the required minimum wage, which itself is wholly inadequate. In two factories, workers were instructed to lie to inspectors when they came to the factory and were given detailed instructions on how to do this, along with fake documents like doctored wage slips to fool auditors.

Lekit Stationery hires primary and secondary school children to work in its factories during the holidays and forces them to work 13 hour days alongside other workers. The company hired children as young as 12 to package Olympic brand stationery products, regularly working them from 7:30am to 10:30pm daily. When auditors visited the company, they were simply assigned to jobs outside the warehouse that the auditors did not visit.

One 13 year old girl working at Lekit told the investigators: "I worked from early in the morning until 2am the next day! This happens not just once, but 2 or 3 times a month. I was exhausted but I was still required to go to work as usual the next day."



None of the workers at Lekit were ever given a contract. None of the companies investigated allowed female workers any maternity leave and all imposed unhealthy working conditions on the workers, ranging from extremely long hours with no breaks, to exposure to toxic chemicals with no safety equipment. Yet, all the companies investigated were licensed to produce products by the International Olympic Committee and one also produced goods for famous sportswear brands like Puma, Adidas, Nike and major sporting organisations like the NBA and NFL.

**State repression**

Alongside massive violations of workers' rights, the Olympics is also providing China with a reason to crackdown on dissent and introduce repressive and draconian laws in the name of "stability and security" ahead of the Games.

Ethnic minorities, religious organisations and activists have all faced massive repression. Human rights activists have been regularly

placed under house arrest and subject to police surveillance, many of those who have been protesting against the demolition of homes by the Beijing government to make way for stadiums and Olympic facilities have been arrested and charged with subversive behaviour. Many tenants are being violently evicted to make way for planned Olympic developments and have received little, if any, compensation.

**Organise for struggle**

For the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Games represent not only an international recognition of their status as the leaders of a world power but an opportunity to whip up a chauvinist and patriotic campaign to strengthen their grip at home. Faced with the prospect of a further increase in inequality, further suppression of their rights and further erosion of their security, the workers and poor peasants of China should take the opportunity to organise themselves and raise their own demands while the whole world is watching.

## PAKISTAN

# Down with the military Forward to democracy and socialism!

Joint statement by  
*Revolutionary Socialist  
Movement (Pakistan) and the  
League for the Fifth  
International,*  
3 November 2007

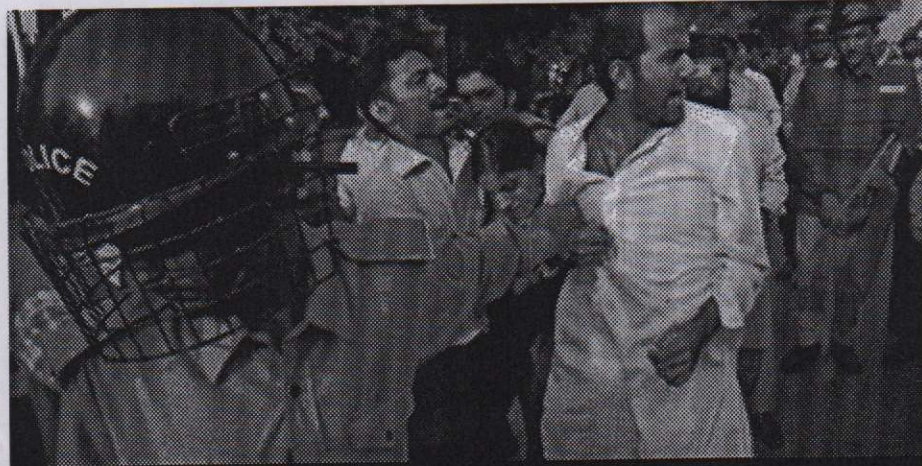
General Pervez Musharraf today announced a state of emergency in Pakistan. All private news channels have been shut down and military personnel are tonight patrolling the streets of Islamabad. The Supreme Court is now under occupation of military personnel and Supreme Justice Chaudhry, re-instated following his suspension by Musharraf this year, has been told that his services are “no longer required”. The 1973 constitution has been suspended and Musharraf has issued a “provisional constitutional order”, passing all power into his hands.

Musharraf first seriously threatened a state of emergency in March, at the very beginning of the lawyers’ movement that challenged his rule. His decision to declare the state of emergency now comes as the Supreme Court is about the rule on whether his “re-election” in October for another five-year term was legitimate. It seems more than likely that Musharraf has taken this move in the knowledge the Supreme Court were to rule against him. Tonight Musharraf has sworn in a new Chief Justice, Abdul Hameed Dogar, to replace Chaudhry - who has no doubt promised to be a pliant servant of the military dictatorship.

## Opposition to the regime

The military has also this week suffered devastating defeats against Islamic militants in Waziristan and Swat. They are reported to have lost thousands of troops in fierce fighting over the last two or three months, and have this week been forced into signing a ceasefire. Even today militants are reported to have captured two police stations from the military forces and have paraded 48 captured paramilitary personnel - bringing the total captured to more than 300.

While in no way politically supporting the Islamists, we are opposed to this reactionary military offensive, which is designed to install conditions on the population suitable for impe-



- Defy the state of emergency
- Mass demonstrations now against the state of emergency
- Workers, peasants’ organisations, lawyers and all democratic forces – call a general strike now to bring down the military regime. Form popular committees to co-ordinate the resistance
- Army rank and file – put down your weapons, don’t enforce this state of emergency and form your own committees, independent of your officers
- International solidarity - urgently

rialist superexploitation. Musharraf is waging this war on behalf of American imperialism. Like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is unwinnable and can only bring further destruction and suffering - the sooner the US and its allies are defeated, the better for the world’s people.

Musharraf also faces a continuing wave of working class resistance. The West can portray the resistance to Musharraf simply as Islamists all they like - but the truth is very different. Just as Musharraf and his regime slavishly follow the “war on terror” diktats of Washington, so too they pursue its neoliberal economic agenda. Just this week, across the country workers in Pakistan International Airlines have downed tools, in Karachi 200 doctors at the hospital began an indefinite strike, and 300 workers and activists have protested against killing of a textile workers leader. They join teachers, Unilever workers, and students, who have all this year opposed the government’s neoliberal agenda.

The state of emergency is a desperate act by a regime that is losing control of Pakistan. Before

it was shut down by military personnel, the Supreme Court called this state of emergency “illegal and unconstitutional” and asked civil servants and army personnel not to take the “oath”. The head of the Supreme Court Bar Association, who has now been arrested, has issued a call for mass demonstrations of lawyers and others on Monday 5 November.

A spokesman for the Pakistan Muslim League N (PML-N) has said, “The whole nation must resist these extra-parliamentary actions.” So far, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) has only condemned the actions, stating that it is “trying to build institutions, not destroy them”. Indeed Musharraf’s state of emergency completely exposes the reactionary nature of the PPP’s strategy - any “democratic deal” with the Pakistani military is utopian and reactionary. But the bourgeois parties fear the mobilisations of the masses on the streets. Just this week the PML-N, which has posed as “democrats” throughout this crisis, have called on the general staff of the army to break with Musharraf -

# regime! Pakistan: balanced on a knife edge

but is this not the same corrupt general staff that must be brought down?

These bourgeois parties fear the mobilisation of the masses because they know the revolutionary overthrow of the military regime will create huge pressure from below for an anti-neoliberal, anti-imperialist government.

## Call to action

Musharraf and the military are now extremely isolated, but we know cornered beasts become dangerous. They may now move to make mass arrests of opposition activists and impose martial law on the streets. There must not be any prevarications by democratic forces at this critical hour. We must be prepared to defy these actions with all the power and militancy the movement of lawyers and other people showed in resisting the Karachi massacres in May.

We support all the calls to defy the state of emergency and mass actions to resist it. Crucially, we call on workers, peasants' organisations and all democratic forces to organise a general strike against the state of emergency. We must be ready to defend our demonstrations from attack by the military - we must organise for this now. We call on workers to organise factory and neighbourhood committees, and peasants to organise in the countryside the resistance to the military government.

To the rank and file of the army - worn down and demoralised by fighting an imperialist war for the United States - our message is clear and unequivocal: do not turn your weapons on the people, do not enforce this state of emergency.

We say, not only that all state forces should refuse to observe the "PCO Oath", but they should form their own rank and file committees to defy - in action not just words - every decree and action of the military regime.

## Significance of struggle

The drive to crush the opposition in Pakistan comes at a time when the US and its allies prepare to plunge the Middle East into a new and terrifying war against Iran.

The struggle against the military regime in Pakistan is a key struggle for all those resisting the "war on terror". We call for urgent international solidarity with the people of Pakistan. We must build demonstrations and pickets outside Pakistan embassies the world over.

This corrupt military junta must be shamed abroad and overthrown at home. It is this critical struggle that we in the Revolutionary Socialist Movement, sympathizing section of the League for the Fifth International, are now totally focused on.

We call for elections, with full voting rights for all men and women, to a sovereign constituent assembly, in which we will fight for a workers and peasants' government.

We can bring down this military regime, and open the road to a socialist revolution against capitalism and imperialism.

*Luke Cooper* fills in the background to the current crisis

General Musharraf's determination to remain in office as president has been a constant factor in Pakistan's ongoing crisis. In March, faced with the prospect that the courts would rule that any re-election was unconstitutional, he suspended Chief Justice Chaudhry. This triggered protests by lawyers and their demonstrations quickly attracted mass support. The scale of the demonstrations revealed the depth of opposition to the regime that had overseen a massive privatisation programme and rewritten the labour code to restrict workers' rights.

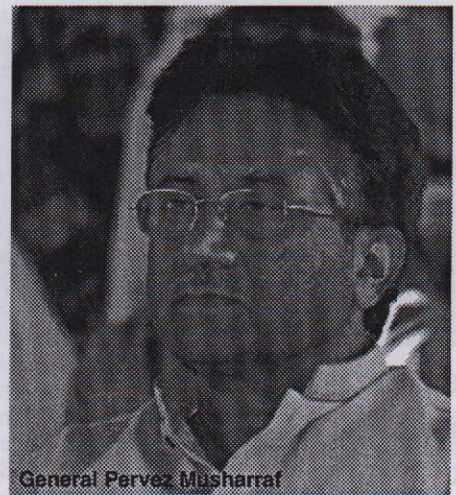
At first, the government attempted to suppress the demonstrations but when these proved inadequate they mobilised fascist thugs to break them up. After four days of street fighting, in which over 50 people were killed and hundreds injured, Musharraf announced he would seek re-election from assemblies set up after rigged elections in 2002.

In May, the bourgeois opposition parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of Benazir Bhutto and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) of Nawaz Sharif called a general strike, which paralysed the cities. At that time, Musharraf backed down, recognising that, during a general strike, martial law could not be guaranteed to work. Musharraf's tactics demobilised the strikes and gave him time to prepare his next steps.

By letting it be known that negotiations were taking place with the PPP, Musharraf was also able to exploit widespread illusions in the party and its leader, Benazir Bhutto. Eventually a compromise was agreed; Musharraf would stand down as head of the army before seeking re-election as president, but would change the constitution to remove his power to dissolve parliament and to allow Bhutto to stand for a third term as prime minister. The deal also proposed a general election with the implication that this would lead to a sharing of power between Musharraf and Bhutto.

As a means of demobilising the movement, Musharraf's tactics worked. Much smaller protest demonstrations greeted his "re-election" in September, even though he had not stood down as head of the army. The prospect of a general election in the New Year channelled political activity away from the streets and into the much safer channels of electioneering.

But, as the suicide bombs that greeted Bhutto's return showed, the deal had done nothing to weaken the other constant factor in Pakistani politics: the Islamist forces, originally supported by the military, but now under attack. The



General Pervez Musharraf

Islamists had already achieved two victories over the Pakistani army in the "tribal areas" of the Northwest Frontier in 2003 and 2006. If, as is widely believed, the suicide bombers acted on behalf of the jihadists and disaffected elements within the intelligence service (ISI), this marked a dramatic escalation, taking the war from the mountains into the cities.

The willingness of the jihadists to plunge the country into civil war shows how high the stakes are. The shoddy deal agreed by Bhutto and Musharraf confused and demoralised many who believed that the PPP leader would not stoop to such tactics. It strengthened the Islamists' claim to be the only principled opponent of Musharraf.

As we go to press, the bourgeois opposition parties have called for defiance of the state of emergency and mass demonstrations. Working class militants and anti-imperialist youth will support these mobilisations and should use them to build their own politically independent organisations and, above all, a revolutionary working class party.

The issue now is not to manoeuvre for some supposed electoral advantage in the future but to organise the mass of workers and poor peasants to bring down the regime, convene a constituent assembly and to fight for a workers and poor peasants' government, based on their own organisations throughout the country, and defended by their own armed militias. Only such a government can finally resolve Pakistan's social and political conflict, remove a crucial support for US imperialism in South Asia, and open the way to the revolutionary transformation of the entire region.

For more on Pakistan see:  
[www.fifthinternational.org/](http://www.fifthinternational.org/)

1917–2007

# The October

Our series on the Russian revolution reaches its climax this month with the Petrograd insurrection, which took place on 7 November (25 October in the old Julian calendar). Despite the bourgeois and reformist lies about the Bolsheviks, the events demonstrate that the uprising was no coup, but had mass support, and that it was the White Guards that used terror and broke agreements. This article was written by *Dave Hughes* and *Mark Hoskisson* and was first published in *Workers Power* in November 1987

**I**t was Leon Trotsky and Yakov Sverdlov who perfected the means of achieving the proletarian seizure of power that VI Lenin was urging on the party. That means was to be an armed insurrection organised by the Petrograd Soviet's Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC), timed to coincide with, and therefore pass power to, the Second Congress of Soviets. The remorseless struggle of Lenin and the party rank and file was now set to bear fruit.

Lenin had favoured a rising led by the Northern Region Congress of Soviets in mid-October. His impatience was leading him, if anything, to underestimate the task of preparing for the rising. His major allies against the vacillators were Trotsky, Sverdlov, Antonov Ovseenko, Andrei Bubnov and Grigory Sokolnikov – but they stood against him on the question of when and how to stage the rising.

While Lenin had sensed the mood of the workers for a rising and acted on it, those comrades, who were in more direct contact with every sector of the masses, grasped the conditions under which they would actually stage and support a rising.

Their plan from the outset was to deliver power into the hands of the Second All Russian Congress of Soviets, through a rising organised in defence of that Congress against the Provisional Government's attempt to crush it – and with it the revolution. They subverted the authority and military power of Alexander Kerensky, which created the conditions for a certain victory on the 24–25 October. So clear was it that the masses wanted soviet power, and so successful were Sverdlov and Trotsky in their campaign to rally the soviets for the struggle for power, that Lenin was obliged to acknowledge the correctness of their line.

The first shots in the campaign for the rising were fired during the garrison crisis that began on 9 October. Kerensky tried to move the bulk of the garrison out of Petrograd, since it had largely gone over to the Bolsheviks. The move, rightly suspected as a means of preparing a counter-revolution, was greeted with outrage. A meeting of the Egorsky Guards Regiment on 12 October resolved that:

"The pulling out of the revolutionary garrison from Petrograd is needed only by the privileged bourgeoisie as a means of stifling the revolution."

The meeting went on to call for soviet power. The Bolsheviks used this crisis,

over the next week, to establish the Soviet's own Military Revolutionary Committee. Its task was to defend the revolution. The MRC was staffed by Bolsheviks, anarchists and left Socialist Revolutionaries (Left SRs who supported soviet power and were a split from the main peasant party). But as the crisis deepened it was obvious that the Bolsheviks, and in particular Trotsky, led it.

The relationship between the Bolsheviks' own Military Organisation and the MRC, was a vital factor in the success of the insurrection. Trotsky effectively won the argument that the MRC was the appropriate organ of insurrection at the Central Committee on 20 October.

In relation to the Military Organisation it resolved: "...all Bolshevik organisations can become part of the revolutionary centre organised by the Soviet."

Lenin was fearful of the rightist inclinations of the Party Military Organisation. It wanted to delay the rising for two weeks. He supported the view that the MRC should organise the insurrection and set out to convince Bolshevik military leaders Nevsky, Podvoisky and Antonov to accept it.

The Bolshevik party did not liquidate itself into the MRC. A precondition for victory had been Bolshevism's conquest of leadership in the mass organisations of the revolutionary working class. Through Trotsky, the party led the MRC, and through Sverdlov the organisations of the MRC and those of the Bolsheviks were intertwined.

## The "Day of the Soviets"

Once the MRC had consolidated its ties with the 25,000 Red Guards and the garrison, the Bolsheviks stepped up the action. On 22 October, a mass "Day of the Soviets" was staged in Petrograd. Huge meetings in every proletarian centre in the city rallied to the call for soviet power. In the People's House, Trotsky urged the masses on to the last battle after a vote for soviet power. His words were noted down by a Menshevik leader, Sukhanov:

"Let this vote of yours be your vow with all your strength and at any sacrifice to support the Soviet that has taken on itself the glorious burden of bringing the victory of the revolution to a conclusion and of giving land, bread and peace!"

A frightened Sukhanov saw the reaction of the crowd to Trotsky: "The vast crowd was holding up its hands. It agreed. It vowed..."

**On 22 October, a mass "Day of the Soviets" was staged in Petrograd. Huge meetings in every proletarian centre in the city rallied to the call for soviet power**

90<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

# Insurrection

On the previous day, 21 October, the MRC had declared that no orders to the army were valid unless countersigned by the MRC. This was an act of mutiny that Kerensky, if he was to survive, could not tolerate. Indeed, when the MRC delivered this directive to the military chief in Petrograd, he threatened to arrest their commissars. It was an empty threat. The garrison's units all trusted the MRC, while Kerensky had only officers, cadets and the women's battalion under his command.

As the MRC launched this mutiny, the Baltic sailors, under the leadership of Bolsheviks like Pavel Dybenko and Fedor Raskolnikov, were preparing to back the rising. On the pre-arranged signal of "Send regulations", battleships laden with revolutionary sailors were to come to Petrograd. A participant recalls the scene when the order came through on 24 October:

"What did the Gulf of Finland around Kronstadt and Petrograd look like then? This is conveyed well in a song that was popular at the time:

From the isle of Kronstadt  
Toward the River Neva broad  
There are many boats a sailing  
They have Bolsheviks aboard."

Kerensky was well aware that a rising was imminent. Knowing that the Soviet Congress would sound the death knell of his regime, he attempted to move into action. On 24 October he ordered the arrest of the MRC and of recently released Bolsheviks, and the closure of the Bolshevik press. His few loyal troops were ordered to raise the bridges that separated the government buildings from the workers' districts.

With calm resolution, Trotsky ordered the MRC into action. The Bolshevik print shop was re-opened by troops and Red Guards. Smolny, the headquarters of the Soviet and MRC, was turned into an armed camp.

Two figures symbolise the fate of the revolution at that critical point. Kerensky, full of bombast, posing incessantly, pleaded for support from yesterday's bourgeois institutions the Pre-Parliament and the officers "in charge" of Petrograd.

Lenin, still on the run, made his way to the Smolny discussing events with a conductress on a streetcar. A few hours later, Lenin was addressing the Congress of Soviets, the new power in the land. Kerensky was on the run.



Red guards check passes at the Smolny, headquarters of the MRC

## The insurrection under way

Beside himself with impatience, Lenin had arrived at the Smolny to discover that the insurrection was under way at last. Victory seemed more and more certain as the morning of the 25 wore on. Stations were swiftly occupied. The mere shining of the cruiser Aurora's arc lights across the Nikolaevsky Bridge put its guards to flight. Two hundred workers and sailors immediately secured the bridge. The telephone exchange, state bank and all the key junctions were taken by the forces of the MRC. By 10am on 25 October the MRC declared:

"The Provisional Government has been overthrown. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, the Military Revolutionary Committee, which stands at the head of the Petrograd proletariat and garrison."

In fact the government was cowering in the Winter Palace. The remainder of the day was like a tense waiting game. More and more insurgents gathered at the Palace. The Congress of Soviets prepared to open. One last push was necessary. The Winter Palace had to be stormed. Kerensky himself slipped away in search of support outside Petrograd. The palace was defended by the Women's Battalion and a few ad hoc units of counter-revolutionaries.

After a series of delays, including comical ones such as forgetting to bring along the red lantern which had been agreed on as the signal for the attack, the Palace was taken with virtually no bloodshed. A

force of Red Guards and sailors stormed the Palace after the Aurora fired her blank shells.

The counter-revolutionaries gave up without a fight. Revolutionary discipline prevented any looting and a bourgeois reporter was compelled to admit that no members of the Women's Battalion suffered physical or sexual abuse at the hands of the insurgents.

With the Winter Palace secure, the rising was complete in Petrograd. Victory in the whole of Russia followed.

That it did so was due to the steadfastness of the Bolsheviks and the decision of the Second Soviet Congress to accept the transfer of power into its hands. It did so in recognition of the fact that the MRC had acted to save the revolution. Its vote was a vindication of Trotsky and Sverdlov's tactics and of Lenin's guiding strategy.

## THE IMPOSTORS LEAVE

The last of the compromisers, the Menshevik Internationalist leader Julius Martov declared the rising to be a Bolshevik coup against the soviets. The workers, soldiers and peasants answered him with catcalls and hoots of derision as he walked out of the Soviet.

Rebutting their claims that the Bolsheviks had usurped power, a young soldier jumped to the platform and stated:

"I tell you now, the Lettish [Latvian] soldiers have many times said 'No more resolutions! No more talk! We want deeds.' The power must be in our hands! Let these impostor delegates leave this

**As the  
MRC  
launched  
the mutiny,  
the Baltic  
sailors  
were  
preparing  
to back the  
rising**

## 1917-2007

Congress! The Army is not with them." With that, hundreds of working people began to sense the power they held and the correctness of the Bolshevik proposals.

The seizure of power by the MRC was no coup d'état. The absence of major "disorders", damage to public buildings and so on was not because the rising lacked a mass character, as ignorant bourgeois reporters suggested. Rather, it was because the insurrection was a well planned and highly disciplined action carried through by an apparatus that had mass support. The initial absence of bloodshed and "disorder" in Petrograd was a reflection of the weakness of the bourgeoisie. However, it would be entirely wrong to conclude from the events of the 24 - 25 October in Petrograd that the insurrection was peaceful.

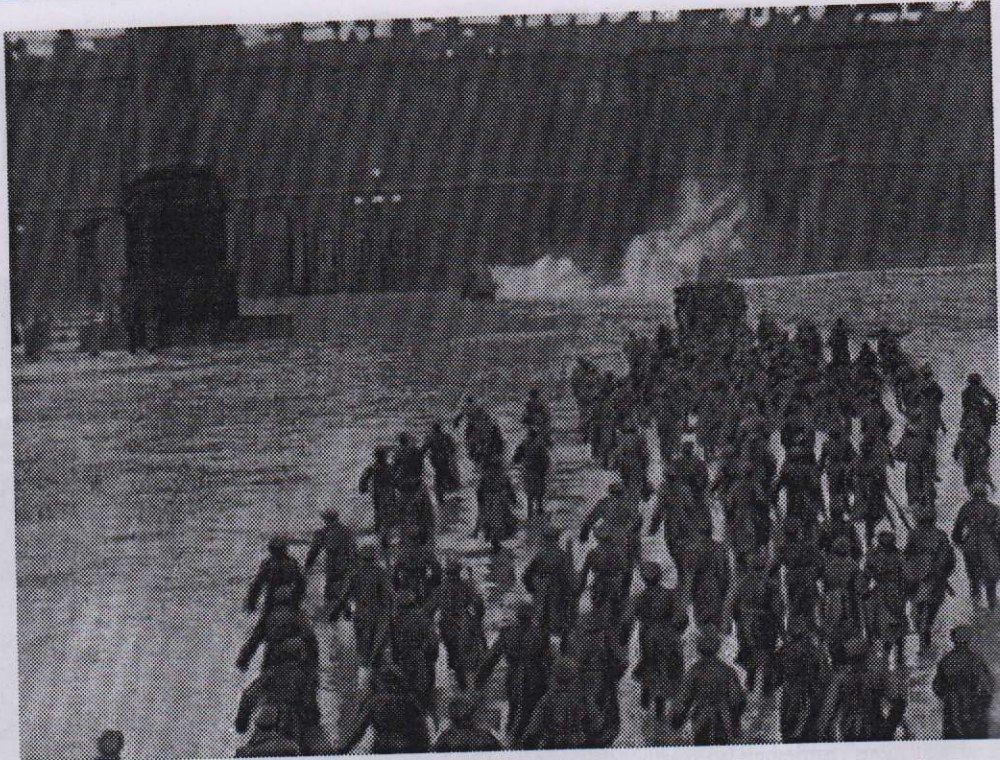
Immediately after the rising the counter-revolution mobilised. With a force of battle hardened Cossacks, under the leadership of generals Pyotr Krasnov and Nikolay Dukhonin, Kerensky ordered a "March on Petrograd" on 27 October.

He followed this force on a white horse, as it stormed Gatchina, 27 miles away from the centre of Petrograd. Meanwhile, the Bolsheviks released all the cadets captured at the Winter Palace. The revolution was generous and trusting to a fault.

It learnt of the bloodthirsty perfidy of the bourgeoisie in battle. The cadets immediately seized the telephone exchange in Petrograd and arrested the Bolshevik Antonov Ovsenko. Bitter fighting began in the city. Some 200 people were wounded or killed.

A "Committee for the Salvation of the Country and the Revolution" was established. At a public meeting it held in Petrograd, one of its speakers called for the crushing of the Bolsheviks and the Soviet Government "without mercy". The very same people, who were spouting about "democracy" for all they were worth, were fantasising about the violence they could inflict on the working class, its party and its government. Significantly, it was not only the open parties of the bourgeoisie who joined the counter-revolutionary conspiracy. The Mensheviks and right SRs, confirming Lenin's assessment of them in July as counter-revolutionary parties, joined in the attempts to physically destroy the soviets that they no longer led.

Any doubt about the mass support enjoyed by the new regime was dispelled as Krasnov and Dukhonin advanced. On 28 October, a state of emergency was declared in Petrograd. Thousands upon thousands of workers, soldiers and sailors rallied to the defence of the city. They erected an impassable barrier to the advancing Cossacks. Then, hav-



Re-enactment of the storming of the Winter Palace in 1920 (no footage of the original event exists)

**Bloodlust, mindless, spiteful acts of brutality were the preserve of the bosses and their military and political defenders**

ing caused the White Guards to halt their advance, the Red forces struck. At Pulkovo Heights on 30 October, workers and Red artillery troops hammered the forces of the counter-revolution. Two days later a truce was signed. Kerensky disappeared into oblivion. Petrograd was secure. And yet again the revolution trustingly released its enemies. General Krasnov was set free. He immediately headed south to rally forces for the civil war the bourgeoisie now knew it had to launch.

#### The Moscow rising

In Moscow the rising itself was a bloody affair. The Soviet voted overwhelmingly in support of the Petrograd MRC's actions. Immediately, the bourgeois parties and the Mensheviks and SRs established a "Committee of Public Safety" with 10,000 troops at its disposal. This force proved more effective than the Petrograd counter-revolutionaries had. It trapped the Red forces in the Kremlin.

After being assured that there would be no reprisals, the pro-Soviet forces reluctantly surrendered. They learnt a bitter lesson. Despite giving the "word of a gentleman" that they would not be harmed, the bourgeois officers immediately led their gangs into action. Red Guards coming out of the Kremlin were set upon and beaten to death. All over the city, Bolsheviks were being rounded up and shot. These were the actions of the forces of "democracy". What a contrast they were to the actions of the proletarian democrats. When reinforcements came from Petrograd, the

Red forces in Moscow were able to turn the tide. The White Guards were forced out of every quarter of the city and were themselves surrounded in the Kremlin. Red gunners pounded them relentlessly. Eventually they surrendered. The Bolsheviks assured them there would be no reprisals.

The capitalists and their wretched reformist apologists frequently bled on about the horrific violence preached by revolutionaries, and the peace loving democratic methods they themselves use. Let them consider the Moscow events. Military violence played its role in the service of the revolution. We revolutionaries recognise the importance of that role. But bloodlust, mindless, spiteful acts of brutality were the preserve of the bosses and their military and political defenders.

The repeated outbreaks of such violence by the forces of the counter-revolution as 1918 wore on taught the Bolsheviks the necessity for a Red Terror, for the suppression of those, who were determined at all costs to destroy the workers' state. But the Red Terror was a means of ensuring that the peasants kept their land, the workers their control of production, the soldiers their democratic rights. The White Terror had only one objective: to restore the rule of the few over the many, in the name of profit and greed.

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**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.

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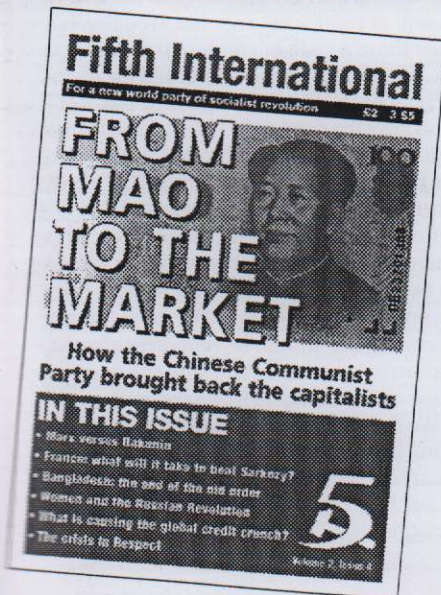
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## Unions and workers' control

By Jeremy Dewar

Politicians, employers and journalists all agree. Strikes are a throwback to the 1970s. They're a French disease. They're a conspiracy of privileged, lazy workers.

If unions have a role at all, so these people reckon, then they are there to work "in partnership" with business, to help workforces "manage change" and cope with "modernisation". Unions that hold onto the old model of confrontation are "dinosaurs".

Marxists, on the other hand, are not at all surprised by the re-emergence of strikes. Nor the fact that unions that take industrial action recruit new members. The RMT, and PCS are among the most militant and fastest growing unions in recent years. Over 5,000 postal workers joined the CWU in the summer - to go on strike and defend their jobs and conditions.

This is because, far from being a socialist invention brought in to frustrate the capitalist market, unions are an essential product of that market. Wherever capitalists suppress or ban unions, they re-emerge. They are the means by which workers try to preserve the price of their only product - their labour power - and the conditions under which they are prepared to sell it. Every other seller tries for the best market price and conditions of sale, so why not the worker?

The real reason the bosses hate the unions is because of the unique commodity workers bring to the market: the ability to work. This is the only commodity that, when used, creates more value than it costs. This surplus value is the source of all profit. When the reactionary papers scream that the unions are "holding society to ransom" what they mean is that they are interrupting the creation and flow of surplus value and hence profit. By holding down pay, raising hours and speeding up work, the bosses boost their profits; when unions win better pay and conditions, it reduces profits.

Faced with strike action, capitalists often claim that they "can't afford" to meet workers' demands, that lower profits could ruin the company. To a reformist union leader, this means the action has to stop. To a Marxist, it just shows that, under capitalism, the interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable - that to do away with exploitation, we will need to do away with production for profit on the market, and replace it with public ownership and a democratic plan of production for need.

Today, the postal workers' union leaders have accepted the logic of Royal Mail's business plan and are therefore backing a sell-out deal. Communists have a different approach.

We say: open the books; let's see where the money's gone. If there's not enough work for all to do, then great - we can cut the hours, not the jobs. This should be with no loss of pay - cut the profits and the over-inflated salaries of the top managers instead.

Is this unrealistic? Won't every company go bust? Not at all. There is no need for enterprises to deliver a profit to a rich parasite. If a boss retaliates by closing down or cutting jobs, the company should be nationalised with no compensation to the former owner, and run under workers' control. Workers should occupy the workplace and keep production going, demanding that the government act.

The point is not to create islands of socialism within the capitalist system - these will

**"Left" bureaucrats, like Mark Serwotka of the PCS and Bob Crow of the RMT, as well as right wing ones like Tony Woodley of Unite, share a code of conduct that protects the whole caste from the rank and file members**

always succumb to competition - but to develop workers' resistance into a direct challenge to the capitalists, and to open the road to socialism.

When union struggles become serious, capitalists turn to the law, which is there in the last analysis to support capitalist property. Just look at how the bosses tried to cripple the postal workers' dispute. On 12 October a high court judge on a six figure salary banned three days of planned strikes.

Under the anti-union laws, union must give bosses seven days notice of a strike ballot and then a further seven days notice of where and for how long the strike will take place. Bosses can then go to court and argue that there are grounds to believe this information may not be 100 per cent accurate, or that pickets may hinder their business. Once the judge agrees, any union or worker that strikes or pickets may be fined millions, or imprisoned.

Further laws prohibit picketing of other workplaces, being used to break the strike, and prevent other workers from taking solidarity action. But the bosses can recruit scabs,

lock out workers, even open replacement sites.

In the face of this, reformists give in. Communists, by contrast, argue for escalation, and confronting with the state - a battle that workers can win, if their leaders are not afraid of the consequences. We call for the unions to defy these laws. If any union has its funds sequestered, any official or workplace rep is fined or imprisoned, the whole movement should show its solidarity. This means all out together - a general strike.

This is the most powerful weapon in the trade union arsenal, because it does not simply challenge the authority of this or that employer, but the whole ruling class. It poses the question directly: who should be the master, the workers or the bosses?

During the 1926 general strike, JH Thomas, the right wing leader of the railworkers, saw this: "What I dreaded about the strike, more than anything else, was this; if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened... God help the country if the government does not win!"

He consequently wound up the general strike, which was getting stronger every day, in double-quick time. Because the alternative was revolution.

Thomas, like Dave Prentis, Tony Woodley, Billy Hayes and Mark Serwotka today, was part of a bureaucratic caste, ruling over their unions like a boss. These bureaucrats see their job as go-betweens, skilled at negotiating compromises - but always on terms the employer can live with. That is why they utterly failed to unite their unions in struggle this autumn against Brown's 2% pay restraint.

Of course, there are "left" bureaucrats like Serwotka of the PCS and Bob Crow of the RMT, as well as right wing ones like Woodley, but they share a code of conduct that protects the whole caste from the rank and file members. That's why Bob Crow of the RMT renounces the right of the National Shop Stewards Network that he sponsors to "interfere in the internal affairs of unions or the TUC" - even when the workers are being sold out.

Communists call for the dissolution of this bureaucracy. It is entirely possible for unions to be run democratically by leaders fully accountable and controlled by the members. Every official should be *regularly elected*, *instantly recallable*, and paid the *average wage* of the members they represent.

We fight for a rank and file movement to bring about these reforms not just because we are democrats, but so that the unions can at last be transformed into organisations of struggle.