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**It's a
battle
on
two
fronts**

WAR



PFI

BLAIR HAWK DOWN

**Who do you
think you're
kidding,
Mr Poodle?**

Global capital's drive to war - p6

Firefighters can strike out Blair's plans

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is balloting for strike action to secure a pay rise that will take their members' wages up to £30,000 a year – an average wage for professional workers.

The firefighters' strike will gain enormous support from the labour movement and the British people generally. The dangerous work they undertake, the expertise and professionalism of their job and the importance of the service they perform for the whole community more than justifies their claim.

At the moment firefighters are so low paid that many have to claim working families tax credit to top up their wages.

Blair has denounced this claim as "unrealistic" and has set up an "independent" (actually a government appointed) review of the entire service which aims to link any pay rise to "modernisation", which is Blair's code word for privatisation or job cuts.

Yet Blair regards as perfectly realistic the huge pay rises that Fire Service bosses have just awarded themselves. Bernie Cahill, boss of the Derbyshire service for example, has just pocketed a £14,000 increase taking his wages to £95,000 a year. Yet his workforce – the men who risk their lives actually fighting fires – are not worth £30,000.

New Labour's review is a provocation. It demonstrates that the government wants to fight and smash the firefighters. That way Blair hopes he can push through his modernisation and privatisation agenda for the whole public sector, at the expense of our wages, our jobs and our working conditions.

This is why Blair has switched 3,000 troops from preparing to set fire to Iraq to preparing to break the strike of those who put fires out in Britain.

But the FBU has the power, organisation and support to scupper Blair's plans and



Firefighters demonstrating for more pay, June 2002

spearhead a public sector revolt that will leave Tony and his cronies wondering what has hit them. The campaign so far – huge demos, road blockades, occupations of local fire service authority meetings – has shown that FBU members are not only up for a fight but are willing to use militant tactics to wage it.

And when the FBU strike starts solidarity will pour in. The signs are that this solidarity will not come from the TUC, however. They proudly endorsed the appointment of one of their former presidents, Sir Tony Young, to the fire service review despite protests from the FBU. Sir Tony then informed people that he knew next to nothing about the fire service but said of the FBU's pay claim, "I don't believe anybody imagines that will be accepted."

It is vital that the left wing union leaders, Bob Crow, Mark Serwotka, Mick Rix, Billy Hayes, Derek Simpson, Paul Mackney, Jeremy Dear and FBU leader Andy Gilchrist, organise their unions into a solidarity

alliance within the labour movement to ensure this strike wins and to co-ordinate future solidarity for strikes that each of their unions wage.

Bob Crow's announcement that he would bring out London Underground and other rail workers in support of the firefighters is brilliant news. And it has sent Labour and the bosses into panic mode. After all, this sort of solidarity was what the anti-union laws were meant to put an end to.

Every worker in every sector should be combing their health and safety regulations to see if they can pull action on a similar basis. Solidarity action alongside the firefighters will bring a rapid victory.

French firefighters and rail workers who work at the channel tunnel have also promised that no trains will run from their side of the channel during any dispute.

But solidarity short of strike action is vital too. In every area local trade unionists, Socialist Alliance members, anti-capitalist

Continuous or discontinuous strike action

The FBU conference on 12 September agreed to ballot for "discontinuous action". In other words the strike will not be – at least to begin with – an indefinite strike. This is not surprising. There hasn't been an all out indefinite national strike by any section of workers for over a decade in Britain. But this is largely to do with the cowardice of the union leaders.

Why are partial strikes a problem for trade unionists who want to win?

- Discontinuous action lets the employers know how long they will face disruption – they make contingency plans and simply sit things out until work is resumed and things go back to normal

- Discontinuous action can end up wearing out the membership – with each separate strike more and more workers start asking, "what's the point?", and the action starts to lose support

- Discontinuous action risks unnecessarily prolonging the dispute, costing firefighters a lot more in lost pay over a long period than they would lose in a short sharp, well organised and well supported all out, indefinite strike.

Continuous action could bring Blair and

the employers to their knees in no time. The cost of their scabbing operation will be a huge drain on their finances. They won't want to prolong that, especially given the war plans.

The fact that most people would see the strike as justified and solidarity would be widespread would place responsibility for any tragedies that occurred as a result of a strike – emergency cover notwithstanding – at the door of the government. That is something Blair wouldn't want to shoulder for very long.

An indefinite strike would bring the whole membership into concerted and determined action, would demonstrate to the employers and the government that the union is deadly serious and could inspire other workers to take action forcing the government to retreat from its "modernisation" agenda.

The commitment of Blair to beating the FBU means that in order to win the full claim indefinite action is very likely to be needed in the not too distant future. Militants should start campaigning for it now so that when the time comes the membership are prepared for it.

youth, student activists and other community campaigners should go to their community fire stations, contact the FBU there and discuss ways of organising practical support for the FBU strike.

We can run systematic collections for a strike fund, set up picket rotas to help build mass pickets against the full scale army scab operation being planned, build for local demos, occupations, fundraising events and stunts. The framework for support com-

mittees can be built now.

But the most effective form of solidarity, as one firefighter told us, is for other public sector workers "to bring forward their claims, organise their ballots and all strike together". We can begin to build for this by using the firefighters' dispute to help create rank and file public sector alliances to co-ordinate action and work towards a public sector strike against low pay, modernisation and privatisation.

Tube strikes: don't believe the papers

Misery for Londoners. Tube chaos. Travel hell. Commuters struggle to work. Strikers ate my baby.

These are the headlines the papers have ready and waiting every time London Underground workers go on strike (okay, so we made the last one up).

The truth is the tube strikes are popular with London's workers. They know that Labour's plans to privatise the underground system will be a disaster – a real recipe for permanent travel chaos in the capital. And they know that the tube workers are dead set against this harebrained scheme.

The recent strikes show that the workers have the potential to stop privatisation altogether. Two days of action in September and October cost the bosses over £100m and closed down the system entirely (with only 20

odd scabs out of a workforce of over 10,000). The unions are currently discussing future strike plans.

The strikes are over pay. London Underground has imposed a 3 per cent deal on the workforce and has refused to negotiate. It says its pay award is not up for negotiation at all.

The unions are demanding 5.7 per cent and a move towards the 35 hour week and have offered to take the matter to arbitration. The bosses say there is nothing to arbitrate. They will not budge from 3 per cent.

They had offered 3.2 per cent but withdrew this when the unions rejected the one condition the bosses insisted on – a no strike deal.

A victory over pay will increase the confidence of every underground worker for the fight against privatisation.

Local government: London weighting fight continues

Members of local government unions across England and Wales have now ratified a two-year pay deal that promises average increases of 7.8 per cent between now and spring 2004. But the dispute over the London Weighting (cost of living) allowance, which spearheaded the industrial action by Unison members, is still on the boil.

On 1 October, Unison, GMB and TGWU members walked out for the day at all 32 local councils across the capital. The action marked the fifth one-day strike by council workers in Unison since 14 May in support of the joint union claim for £4,000 weighting across the capital as a whole.

The "stop-go" pattern of strike action and the national deal have taken a toll on support in some sections, but in other areas the

strike action at the beginning of the month was the most effective yet. In Camden, for instance, three secondary schools were completely closed by the action – more than during the national strike on 17 July.

The 1 October walk-out was the prelude to sustained strikes by strategic groups of workers in revenue-generating sections of councils.

From 7 October traffic wardens in eight London boroughs will be on strike – a move that will no doubt prove popular with many motorists. The following week members in Council Tax and other financial service areas in many councils will be striking.

Further London-wide action is likely to take place in November. The aim is to co-ordinate such a strike with action over pay

by staff and lecturers in further education colleges and with a threatened strike by NUT members in the capital over their weighting allowances.

The strategy of selective action by strategic groups extracted some significant concessions from local authority bosses in Scotland in 2000, but the London employers have thus far refused to offer a penny in response to a claim lodged in July last year.

There is a clearly a need to intensify the pressure on the employers and the argument for a united London-wide strike over public sector pay that would also embrace FBU, RMT and ASLEF members is compelling. To get this we need to start building local rank and file public sector alliances now.

Victory for Greg Tucker

"Over a year after I was downgraded from driver to ticket collector, the Employment Tribunal has now found in my favour. Their findings clearly exonerate me and are a damning indictment of South West Trains management.

The unanimous decision of the Tribunal is that "the complaint of unfair dismissal is well-founded". Commenting on the original cause of my discipline they "see no pattern of recklessness or general disregard for the rules and think that the case is best categorised as one of minor inadvertence". They go on to assert: "We are entirely satisfied that (notwithstanding the exceptional wording of the speeding charges) the Applicant's errors did not cause the train or its passengers any danger."

Instead, they are forthright in declaring that it was my trade union activities that led to my downgrading. "In circumstances where no other coherent explanation suggests itself, the excessive form of punishment, the absence of any credible explanation for it and the numerous unsatisfactory features of the Respondents' (i.e. South West Trains) case combine to point very clearly, in our view, to the Applicant's past trade union activities and the prospect of his engaging in such activities in the future as being the true cause."

Instead they turn the spotlight on South West Trains management. Of the manager who took the original disciplinary hearing they comment, "The mental processes which Mr Cook claimed to have followed disclose as clear a case of unfair dismissal as one could imagine. We found him a deeply unimpressive witness who appeared to give his evidence without regard for truth and solely with an eye to where the advantage lay. We found much of his evidence implausible, and even absurd."

The senior manager who subsequently took the appeal fares no better. "Mr Marsden struck us, like Mr Cook, as a witness with no regard for truth, willing to say whatever he thought might improve his own position. Like that of Mr Cook, and in striking contrast with the frank and straightforward testimony of the Applicant, we found much of Mr Marsden's evidence incredible, and some of it risible."

Summing up the evidence the Tribunal concludes: "Those factors also suggest to us that the dismissal was part of a concerted manoeuvre involving several influential members of the Respondents' management."

South West Trains now has 28 days to come up with an agreeable form of restitution. We will continue to press for my full reinstatement as a driver.

Thanks to all those who have supported me in the campaign against SWT victimisation."



Labour Conference

Calm before the storm

The Labour Party conference was a relatively quiet affair. But in the Labour Party and outside debates are raging about war, globalisation and privatisation all with the potential to build a mass opposition to Blair, writes Mark Hoskisson

Blackpool has staged plenty of stormy Labour Party conferences in its time. This year's wasn't one of them. Paul Boateng got slow hand-clapped while defending PFI and the top brass lost the vote on the issue – only its second ever conference defeat since the ascension of the Blessed Tony to party leadership.

A rock solid 40 per cent voted against the war and there were protests at the rigged debate on Iraq in which many anti-war speakers were shamefully and deliberately not called.

Despite this the mood of the conference remained relatively calm. Yet the relative absence of drama on the conference floor should not be taken to mean that dramatic developments are not under way – they are. There is real tumult not just inside the party but inside the labour movement as a whole.

There is opposition of epic proportions in the country at large to both the impending war against Iraq and the record of PFI. So much so that there is a real possibility that in the course of the next two years a combination of war and economic crisis could provoke a major split in the Labour Party.

The debate over PFI gave a hint of what is to come. The vote was 67.2 per cent in favour of a review of PFI with 32 per cent against. Among the union delegates the vote was 11 to 1 against PFI. Labour's chair, Charles Clarke concluded: "This debate reflected the difference of approach between consumer and producer within the country and the party."

Speaking on BBC's Radio Four he suggested that the split between the constituencies (the consumers) and the unions (the producers) was something that every serious Labour politician had to take account of.

You don't have to be an Enigma code-breaker to know what Clarke is really saying – consumers equal New Labour middle class supporters, producers are old Labour workers. And the Labour leadership unequivocally sides with the former. Stuff the workers.

The one-time great hope of the trade union leaders, Gordon Brown, made clear where he stood town on the future of public services. PFI, he insisted, was the only game in town.

Creeping privatisation, a two-tier workforce and the "mortgaging of the public sector to make the fat cats fatter", as Mick Rix rightly put it, is integral to Brown's strategy.

That is why, immediately after the vote calling for the review Brown made clear that there would be no review, no change of policy, no suspension of the PFI projects:

"If we retreat from PFI and still say schools and hospitals have got to be built we will end up with all the old quick fixes and retreat into unsustainable borrowing. That I am not prepared to do."

No matter what conference democratically decides the New Labour leaders are going to press ahead. In the future that can only mean a major clash with the unions, because PFI will strike at the heart of public sector trade unionism.

The Economist, in an article calling for more PFI, pointed out: "Three-fifths of public sector employees belong to unions, compared with a fifth in the private sector. The unions fear that greater private provision will erode their power."

It will and, moreover, their members' wages and rights at work. And yet at the conference Brown has said that this is exactly the course Labour is set on.

If the unions were in any doubt after the debate Tony Blair's speech less than 24 hours after the PFI vote should have alerted them to the impending clash with Labour over this issue.

"We are at our best when we are at our boldest", said Blair. This was vintage Blair. Forthright. Eloquent. Gripping. And meaningless. The man is a master of doubletalk. Behind the sweet turns of phrase, like "post-comprehensive", like getting rid of a "one size fits all" welfare state, like "paternalistic benefits" and the need to create an "enabling state" lurks the sour reality of further privatisation and the break up of the welfare state.

Blair made it clear that he would support the setting up of Foundation Hospitals – private hospitals outside the NHS.

His "post-comprehensive" schools, which will concentrate on the "individual", will actually be pre-comprehensive: a return to selection, inequality, sink schools for the working class, grammar or private schools for the middle classes. And these too will welcome in the private

contractors with open arms.

"The monolithic provision of services has to depart from the public sector," Blair told conference. Decoded this means the welfare state is to be broken up into thousands of pieces – not in order to place it under the control of the workers and users, the better to serve them – but in order to hand it to private capitalists.

So the Blairite agenda has been set out. Privatisation and the break up of the welfare state. This goes beyond the wildest dreams of some of the most right-wing Tories. No wonder Michael Portillo – a guest speaker at a Blairite fringe meeting – was able to criticise the Blairites from the left!

The question is, can Blair get away with it. On some issues he will face opposition from within his camp – notably from

The task, if we want to fight Blair, is to organise and strengthen rank and file organisation in the unions. Only this can create a powerful pole of opposition to Blair through forging an alliance of unions committed to fight and through that to force the issue all the way to a split with Blair and the creation of a new working class party.

Brown over the extent to which government control over welfare provision can be relinquished.

But this is not fundamental to his project. Breaking the power of the public sector trade unions – smashing the "producers" as Clarke contemptuously refers to them – is central.

It is this that will open up a potential split in the Labour Party. But only if the unions are prepared to wage a life and death struggle with Blair – and Brown.

One thing was clear from this conference. The leaders of the big battalions – Edmonds of the GMB, Morris of the TGWU and Prentis of Unison – have little stomach for a fight. Edmonds is a feisty talker, but he is short, very short on action. And all of them did their best to minimise the clash over PFI by dropping their demand for a moratorium and meekly asking for a review.

They won't get the review, despite winning the conference vote. They have been told that. Yet they haven't even got the bottle to call a national demonstration against the PFI projects that are corroding our services and undermining the pay and conditions of their members now.

The chances of this lot organising a serious fight with Blair in the party are negligible. The chances of them organising effective strikes to beat PFI on the ground are non-existent.

But opposition could come from the new layer of left union leaders, some of whom are outside the Labour Party, like Mark Serwotka and Bob Crow, some of whom are in, like Mick Rix and Billy Hayes.

The problem is that these leaders, even the best of them, are subjected to enormous pressures by virtue of their role as trade union bureaucrats. They will take a fight further than Morris ever would. But do they have the vision, political strategy and commitment to real working class democracy, to organise the sort of class-wide battles that will be necessary to defeat the Blair Ditch public sector project?

The answer is – only if they are forced to by a militant, well organised, independent rank and file capable of subjecting them to control and to the needs of the class struggle. It is not excluded that some of the new leaders will go with the rank and file. But nor should we rely on this.

The task, if we want to fight Blair, is to organise and strengthen rank and file organisation in the unions. Only this can create a powerful pole of opposition to Blair through forging an alliance of unions committed to fight and through that to force the issue all the way to a split with Blair and the creation of a new working class party.

This is now a possibility. The upsurge of strikes, the rising tide of militancy and – beyond the workplaces – the powerful anti-war and anti-capitalist movements,

are all converging into a mass opposition to Blair.

The Labour left – for so long weak and irrelevant – is finding a new voice through these movements, particularly in the struggle to stop the war on Iraq. This left too could be forced to split with Blair, particularly if he tries to silence them when the bombs rain down on Iraq.

It was probably the recognition of such a possibility that led to such a muted conference. The left, the MPs and the unions leaders, are scared of such a development because the emergence of a new party would open up a huge debate inside the movement over what such a party should be – left reformist or revolutionary, with the revolutionaries enormously strengthened in the eyes of the rank and file workers by our willingness to fight Blair on every front.

But however muted the conference, the next year will be stormy and noisy. The war on Iraq could be the catalyst for huge struggles. There will be a struggle against the war itself. But, if it goes ahead and Blair emerges on the winning side he will find himself in a position similar to Thatcher after the Falklands/Malvinas war – determined to fight the enemy within, bolstered by his defeat of the enemy without.

Remember, Thatcher waited until after her South Atlantic victory before embarking on her onslaught on the miners.

The class enemy recognise this as a real possibility. *The Economist* wrote:

"The best hope for Britain is that Mr Blair's Iraq policy is a success, for he might then turn to domestic affairs with new vigour. That, after all, is what happened with Mrs Thatcher. Her most active period of reform came after she defeated aggressors abroad and doubters at home over the Falklands in 1982."

We must drive this message home everywhere. Fight Blair on every front – PFI, the war, racism, civil rights, union rights, pay, – you name it. And in that fight don't flinch from the political imperative that each struggle will pose – the need for a new party.

And in turn, in the fight to win ever more workers to support such a party, we need to build support for it to proclaim at its founding conference the clear call for socialist revolution, class war on the enemy and the complete abolition of capitalism.

Support the Ahmadi's fight to return to the UK

The Ahmadi family were victims of Britain's racist asylum laws and of racist Blunkett's personal mission to prove to the *Daily Mail* that he hates refugees more than it does.

They were seized from the sanctuary of a West Midlands mosque and deported to Germany, pending deportation to Afghanistan where the family had been tortured.

But two weeks ago Mr Justice Scott Baker ruled in court that the Home Office acted illegally when it deported the Ahmadi family to Germany. He did not, however, allow the family to return to the UK to exercise their "in country" appeal. This must now be carried out via a video link from the asylum camp in Munich.

The judge's decision followed a Home Office declaration that the family would be placed in detention in

Harmondsworth immediately if he ordered their return.

The ruling has badly affected Feriba Ahmadi, who is close to complete collapse. The situation has been worsened by a witch hunt in the *Daily Mail* denying the trauma the family suffered and saying they live in luxury in Germany.

The Home Office also issued a statement making clear that the Ahmadi's have been made to suffer in order to deter other refugees from seeking sanctuary in the UK.

The Ahmadi's need sanctuary in the UK. They have only temporary admission to Germany and face return to Afghanistan. They have family in the UK and none in Germany. They were unable to make the kind of community links in Germany which they have made in Lye, West Midlands, where they found safety and secu-

rity for their children and an atmosphere where Farid and Feriba could recover from their trauma and torture.

The family will now have second-rate justice. An appeal hearing by video link does not allow an adjudicator to really assess the family, to see them in the flesh, and the family cannot speak freely about conditions in Germany from within an asylum camp in Munich.

The Home Office can, at any time, change its mind and exercise powers under the Dublin Convention to hear Ahmadi's case in the UK. It could also give the family exceptional leave to enter the UK indefinitely.

What you can do

● Contact immigration minister Beverley Hughes and your own MP to express your concern about why the Ahmadi family is being persecuted rather than assessed

as individuals with real human needs.

- Ask your MP to contact the campaign to offer support for the family's fight to stay in the UK.
- Contact your trade union branch, faith group, community organisation etc. and ask people to sign a statement of support (see address below for statement).
- Ask them to contact the Home Office to express concern and support for the family, to attend lobbies and help us raise money for the campaign.

Financial appeal

Help the Ahmadi's win their appeal to stay in the UK. Please send contributions to the Ahmadi Family Campaign, c/o Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers, BCM Box 4289, London WC1X 3XX. Cheques payable to the CDAS

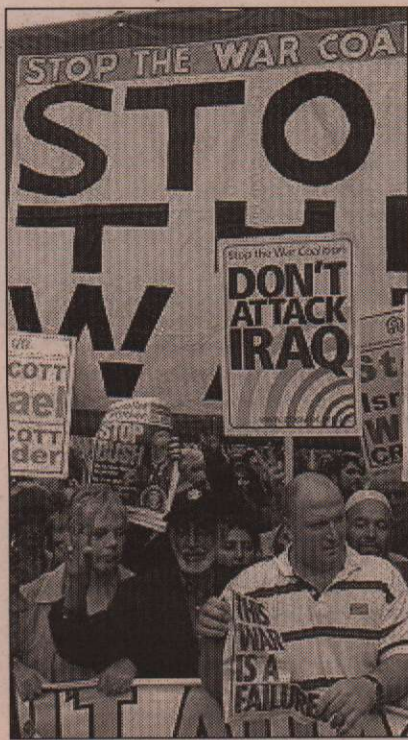
War: reasons to be fearful

Rehka Kaur reviews, **War Plan Iraq: 10 Reasons Why We Shouldn't Launch Another War Against Iraq**, by Milan Rai

Milan Rai is a long-time peace activist and writer. His latest work, *War Plan Iraq*, exposes the hypocrisy of the US/UK's "War on Terrorism" and counters the propaganda and lies that are being churned out by the Bush Administration and regurgitated by Blair.

The book opens with reflections from the relatives of victims of September 11. Instead of calling for revenge they call for peace and understanding. They ask Bush to examine the reasons the attacks took place not to create new reasons for future attacks.

Milan explains that there is no evidence for the claims that American Intelligence sources have made stating that "Iraq's secret banking system may have been used to finance (al Qaeda) operations." The key, piece of evidence used to support the alleged links was the meeting of Mohamed Atta, one of the hijackers, with an Iraqi agent in the Czech Republic in 2001. Milan exposes this evidence as a complete lie. The Mohammed Atta involved in the September 11 attack was confirmed to be somewhere else at the time of this "meeting" in the Czech Republic.



Even though the story of the alleged meeting was carried by most British newspapers when it was being used to link Iraq with al Qaeda, only one, the *Daily Telegraph*, carried the story of the collapse of the "evidence".

Milan does, wrongly, favour the sending in of UN Monitoring inspectors as an alternative to war. But in arguing the case for this he does reveal the extent to which Iraq's supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) - the pretext for the impending attack - had already been more or less removed by the inspectors before they left Iraq in December 1998.

Bush and Blair don't actually want the inspectors to return. They are worried that the inspectors will discover nothing and remove any pretext for military action. Milan explains how the US did everything it could to undermine the efforts of the first UN weapons inspection agency, UNSCOM, by ignoring its recommendations to lift sanctions even after Iraq had complied with internationally supervised disarmament of its WMD and had accepted a long term monitoring plan.

He uncovers evidence that shows how

UNSCOM was infiltrated by the CIA to gain intelligence on Saddam Hussein, presumably in order to assassinate him.

A reason why the Iraqi leader is reluctant to allow the inspectors back, perhaps? But not one you will read about in any of the British papers or see reported on television!

Milan also exposes the current efforts by the US to undermine the new inspectorate, UNMOVIC, by deliberately jeopardising negotiations to secure its return to Iraq. Bush and Blair do not want to send in inspectors because their report could well undermine the USA's plans for war.

The major flaw in this book is Milan's projected solution to the Iraqi question which is "not to change the leadership of Iraq, but to ensure an effective and continuous inspection and monitoring system". He argues that "this is the only way you can ensure that Iraq does not develop WMD in the future."

The problem is that this concedes a major point to the US and UK - that Iraq is the main problem. It isn't. US aggression, backed by the UK, to secure its global interests is the main problem, acutely so in the

Middle East today. The permanent monitoring and inspection of weapons in Iraq will not get rid of this source of aggression and, besides, is a violation of Iraq's elementary national rights.

Indeed Milan doesn't mention the word imperialism in the book. He makes no connections between the developing threat to Iraq and the continuing - and intensifying - struggle in Palestine.

Yet it is imperialism that is planning to wage the war against Iraq and that stands behind Israel in its war against the Palestinians. It is imperialist interests that will be served by victory over Iraq. And it is imperialism that will go on to launch further wars, on flimsy pretexts, if they are able to beat Iraq.

That is why it is crucial to say clearly that imperialism has no business invading Iraq and that any regime change in that country must be brought about by the masses themselves not by the bombs and bayonets of the US and UK armed forces.

Despite these criticisms, however, the facts, the evidence and much of the argument in the book are an invaluable resource for anti-war activists.

WITH THE DEATH OF Duncan Hallas the Socialist Workers Party has lost another of the key leaders who founded their tendency in the late 1940s and built up their organisation as the predominant force on the far left in the late 1960s and 1970s. That it still holds this position today it owes in no small part to the work of Duncan Hallas.

Though not himself one of the founding theoreticians of the movement, like Tony Cliff, Michael Kidron, Nigel Harris and later Chris Harman or Alex Callinicos, he nevertheless played a critical role as a writer in the organisation's papers and publications - International Socialism and Socialist Worker. Here Hallas was a lucid propagandist for the fundamental ideas of Marxism as well as the specifics of the State Capitalist theory of the International Socialists, which became the Socialist Workers party in 1976.

But Duncan Hallas was most impressive as a speaker and educator. He was a natural teacher. His presentation was lively, full of wit and humour, studded with interesting information and observations, often including unacknowledged ironical quotations from the bible.

Hearing Duncan speak was to be put in touch with the pre-and post-war generation of Marxists with all their enormous strengths and culture. These he sought to transfer to a new generation of young militants after 1968. Firstly there was the fact that he was, like so many of that generation, a true working class intellectual and professional revolutionary.

Born of working class parents in Manchester, he had considerable experience as a trade unionist - starting from his years as an engineer at Metro Vickers, Trafford Park, Manchester from 1939, till he was drafted into the forces in the last years of the war.

Attracted to Trotskyism in 1943-44, he joined the Revolutionary Communist Party, the British section of the Fourth International (FI). Duncan saw military service in France and Belgium before being drafted to Egypt where, as an NCO, he participated in leading a soldiers' strike, for which he served three months in prison. In the years 1947-51 he became a close supporter of Tony Cliff as the latter developed his theory of State Capitalism.

Unfortunately these years were the years of the crisis and break up of the RCP and the political degeneration of the Fourth Inter-

national. The FI, disoriented by the failure of Trotsky's perspective of a post-war revolution which would propel the Fourth International into a leading mass force, was unable to understand the survival and expansion of Stalinism.

The FI's forces either adapted to Stalinism or proclaimed it a new form of capitalism. Cliff's "State Capitalism" represented one side of this false development: the so-called orthodox Trotskyism of James P Cannon, Joseph Hansen, Michel Pablo, and Ernest Mandel represented another.

It also saw the triumph within British Trotskyism of the malevolent figure of Gerry Healy. In 1949-50 Healy managed to expel or drive out of politics most of the talented

by the TUC which gained their release took place at this time too. Two victorious miners strikes, strikes and workplace occupations by postal workers, steelworkers, carworkers, shipyard workers and the tremendous crisis that brought down the Heath government were the culmination of this period of industrial revolt.

Alongside Cliff, Duncan was by far the favourite speaker at public meetings of our branch, which he visited many times. During his visits, quite as important as his public speeches were his conversations with the branch activists and with trade union militants attracted to our meetings. These ranged widely around the tactics and strategy to be pursued in the ongoing strug-

gles, where the lessons of the 1920s - the general strike, the need for councils of action - were invaluable to us. In Stoke in 1973 we actually built an action council with convenors of the two biggest factories in the city - Michelin Tyre Co, Rists Wires and Cables - and with senior shop stewards from the pottery industry and from the Building Workers Charter.

To the student members Duncan's intransigent rejection of most of the fashionable "Marxist" theory, then peddled by *New Left Review* and "left" Stalinists, led to many a lively debate. As national secretary he was always very approachable and (in this respect unlike Cliff) he was a good listener as well as a good talker. Indeed he went out of his way to draw people into discussions, especially anyone that was remaining silent or reticent. This was of inestimable value in the early days when we over-voluble students or former-students could thoughtlessly block the way to the increasing numbers of worker members of IS.

Also Duncan actively encouraged the discussion of differences. He did not stamp on dissent. In fact when a group of

Marxist tradition. Duncan, in those early days, encouraged us to read Trotsky, and the documents of the Communist International, more so than Cliff and the other intellectuals in the IS leadership did.

It is to be hoped that those of us who learnt this from figures like Duncan (and from great comrades like Harry Wicks from an earlier generation) will transmit these lessons to the young militants now flooding into the revolutionary movement once again.

■ Duncan Hallas born December 23 1925 - died September 19 2002.

■ With acknowledgement to the obituaries by Jim Higgins in the *Guardian* and Alex Callinicos in *Socialist Review*

Duncan Hallas 1925-2002

An appreciation of his life, by Dave Stockton

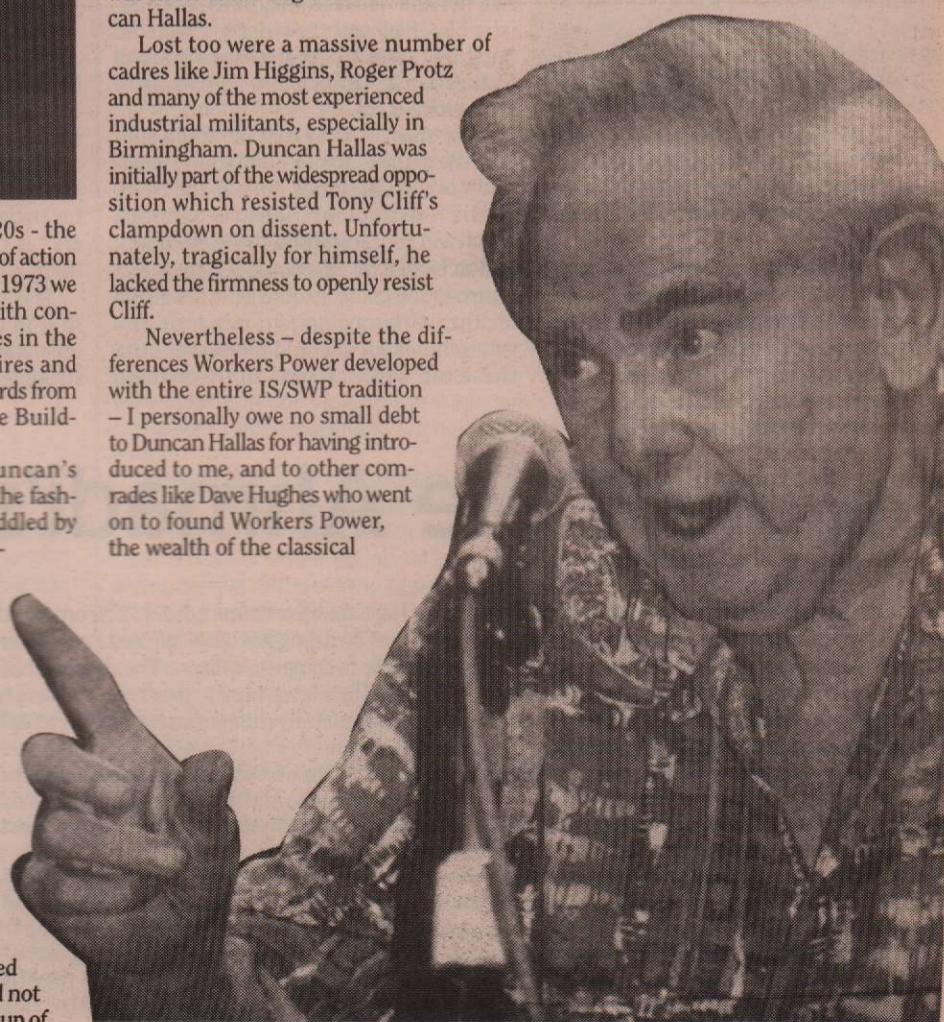
leaders of the RCP - Jock Haston, Ted Grant, Roy Tearse, and Tony Cliff. Hallas joined the thirty-three strong Socialist Review Group led by Cliff in 1950. But he dropped out of activity for personal reasons in the 1950s and for most of the 1960s.

In these years he became first a tutor-organiser for the National Council of Labour Colleges in Glasgow and then, after going to Edinburgh University, became a teacher (and militant NUT member) in Wandsworth, South London. In 1968 he rejoined the then renamed International Socialists and rapidly became a member of its leadership.

My personal memories of Duncan Hallas stem from this period, from 1968 until the Left Faction of IS was expelled from IS in October 1975. For most of this period I was a branch activist and organiser in Stoke on Trent - not a big or prestigious branch; we had from 20-30 members in this period. Duncan was national secretary for much of this time.

This was a period of enormous industrial and political upheaval. It saw the "Kill the Bill" days of action, where hundreds of thousands of workers took openly political strike action.

It was also the time of the imprisonment of the dockers in Pentonville, spontaneous mass strikes and the threat of a general strike



THE WAR ON IRAQ



The United Nations sounds nice. All the nations of the world get together to sort out their problems. Jaw, jaw not war, war and all that. Except of course it's all too good to be true as *Bill Jenkins* shows

From its founding in 1946, real power in the United Nations (UN) was wielded by a cabal of the rich and powerful. Intended during the Cold War to arbitrate between the US, UK and their allies in the imperialist bloc and the post-capitalist nations led by the Soviet Union it has now become, in the unipolar world, a tool to implement the plans of the US, its UK client and their allies, full stop.

At the core of the UN is the Security Council, made up of the five permanent members: the US, UK, France, Russia and China. Anyone of these nations has the power to veto the decisions of the UN. Why? Because the US, UK and France were the three largest imperialist nations on the winning side of the World War II. Russia led the Soviet bloc and China, which joined in 1970, was the other major post capitalist nation.

The Security Council makes the decisions that form the basis for international law. Its members are not neutral, they do not act for the greater of good of humanity, their power is one of the spoils of war, their seat is a mark of their continuing economic or military power. Justice, peace, love and harmony don't come into it, they never have and they never will.

International law is the law of the oppressors against the oppressed. They decide what it is and if and when it is implemented. Any casual examination of the UN's record exposes its consistent failure and refusal to act in the interests of the poor and oppressed – see Rwanda, Somalia, Srebrenica and Palestine.

But the UN as a cold war arbiter faces an acute problem in the new world order of globalisation and US hegemony. US hawks always questioned the value of the UN, even during the cold war. Paralysed by the contradiction at its core, between the imperialist and post-capitalist blocs, the UN was unable to act consistently in the interests of its most powerful member the US. Now freed from that contradiction, the US discovers that even the limited power of restraint, granted to its rivals through the structures of the UN and in particular the Security Council, are intolerable. Why should it let them tell it what to do?

In 1991 a UN coalition drove Iraq out of Kuwait. They did so to make a point, that



THE UNITED NATIONS

no nation could launch unauthorised invasions of its neighbours. Iraq had earlier offered to withdraw from Kuwait, if its withdrawal was part of general Middle East peace conference.

Following their victory the UN introduced the "most comprehensive" regime of sanctions in its history, to effectively disarm Saddam's regime. Alongside these sanctions UNSCOM, the UN weapons inspectorate, was allowed unfettered access to Iraq in order to destroy its weapons of mass destruction – its long range ballistic missiles, chemical and biological

weapons and its nuclear programme.

The sanctions and weapons inspectorate were not designed to bring about Middle East peace. The UN's fine words in its original resolution about disarming the whole region, which includes Israel, were quickly forgotten. They were there to demonstrate to the world who were the bosses in the new world order. The sanctions prevented the import of anything that could have what the UN regarded as a dual use, or be potentially used in a weapons programme.

The sanctions covered pencils, which contain graphite, cancer treating medicines

and equipment, both a potential nuclear threat. UNSCOM was incredibly successful in its mission. It destroyed Saddam's entire Scud missile force, barring two missiles unaccounted for; it blew up his nuclear programme and rendered useless his stocks of chemical and biological weapons. Even the British government's own dossier *Iraq's Weapon's of Mass Destruction* concedes, "Between 1991 and 1998 UNSCOM succeeded in identifying and destroying very large quantities of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles as well as associated production facilities. The IAEA also destroyed

the infrastructure for Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and removed key nuclear materials."

Dick Cheney, the US Vice President explained: "We don't have all the evidence we have 10 percent, 20 percent, 30 percent. We don't know how much. We know we have a part of the picture. And that part of the picture tells us that he [Saddam] is, in fact, actively and aggressively seeking to acquire nuclear weapons."

Actually this reveals clearly that they don't have the evidence and they don't care, because that's not what it's all about.

So the UN has disarmed Iraq and served its function. Now it must do as the US wants or get out of the way. The US will settle for nothing less than a UN resolution framed to prevent Iraq meeting its demands whatever they do. At least they're honest. As Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser put it: "Let's be very clear that the absence of resolutions is not the problem, nobody is going to negotiate anything with this regime."

The US has used September 11 to free itself from the constraints of the post-war consensus upon which the UN was built – the outlawing of pre-emptive, first strike, assaults attacks, or wars. The US is now committed to a new pre-emptive strike doctrine and the UN has to like it or lump it.

The demand for the return of the inspectors was always a chimera. The US never wanted it to happen. It was merely the pretext for a new war. As soon as Iraq agreed the unconditional acceptance of UN demands, the US refused them.

So who needs the UN now? Not the US who will accept its support as long as it does what it's told. Not the workers and oppressed, the first victims in any conflict authorised by the UN.

No, the people who need it are those who want to maintain the fiction of the "international community" – the reformists in the imperialist heartlands who need it as a cover when they call on the workers to support each and every bloodbath their rulers embark upon and the weaker imperialist states, fearful but powerless in the face of the US drive towards world domination. They may not be able to rely on this fiction for much longer.

Israel flouts UN resolutions

"Iraq persists in violating resolutions of the United Nations Security Council by continuing to engage in brutal repression of its civilian population ... threatening international peace and security in the region." George Bush 2002.

Tony Blair hammers home a similar message. In his speech justifying the war drive at the recent TUC congress poodle Blair argued, "... no more undermining of the UN's authority. And let it be clear that should the will of the UN be ignored, action will follow."

Both statements by these imperialist warlords reveal a level of hypocrisy with regard to the "authority of the UN" that beggars belief. Their protestations about Iraq's violation of UN resolutions can be answered by one word – Israel.

Israel is the one power in the Middle East armed to the teeth with weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear missiles. Israel maintains a permanent regime of terror against millions of Palestinian civilians. Israel repeatedly invades its "neighbours" (the strips of land granted to the Palestinians) in defiance of international law. And Israel is in breach of far more UN resolutions than Iraq.

Here are a few:

Resolution 111: "... 'condemns' Israel for a

raid on Syria that killed fifty-six people".

Resolution 256: "... 'condemns' Israeli raids on Jordan as 'flagrant violation'".

Resolution 517: "... 'censures' Israel for failing to obey UN resolutions and demands that Israel withdraw its forces from Lebanon".

Resolution 592: "... 'strongly deplores' the killing of Palestinian students at Bir Zeit University by Israeli troops"

Resolution 672: "... 'condemns' Israel for violence against Palestinians at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount.

Resolution 673: "... 'deplores' Israel's refusal to co-operate with the United Nations."

The above are a random sample of the UN resolutions that Israel – with US backing – has ignored, acted in defiance of and generally treated with contempt. The resolutions against Israel run into hundreds. Those against Saddam number 23.

Why the double standards? Simple – Israel is a US ally and can do no wrong. Saddam is in the way of the USA's drive towards global domination. And the UN? It hasn't lifted a finger to implement its resolutions against Israel because the US won't let it.

Don't be fooled by Blair's attempt to use the UN as a fig leaf for aggression.

UN and the massacre at Srebrenica

In April 1993 United Nations Security Council Resolution 819 established Srebrenica, part of the former Yugoslavian Bosnia, as a "safe area". They "guaranteed" protection for Srebrenica by "all necessary means, including the use of force", stipulating that "all military or paramilitary units would either withdraw from the demilitarised zone or surrender all their arms." This included Srebrenica's Bosnian Muslim defenders. Two years later, in July 1995, Srebrenica became the scene of the worst massacre in the Bosnian war.

The familiar warning signs of UN betrayal were all there. By 1995 Srebrenica was protected by just 600 Dutch infantry. Fuel and food were running out. The Bosnian's remained disarmed and the city's population was swelled by tens of thousands of refugees fleeing the Serb offensive. On 6 July 1995 Serb forces began shelling Srebrenica. It was evident a major Serb offensive was underway.

But the UN failed to increase their defences and refused to return weapons to the Bosnian militia. On 9 July the Serbs attacked Dutch observation posts, taking about 30 soldiers hostage. UN Commander General Janvier refused Dutch requests for air support. The Dutch commander told town leaders that Nato planes would launch massive air attacks against the Serbs if they had not withdrawn from the safe area by 0600 the following morning.

The Serb forces did not withdraw. At 0900 the Dutch were informed that their request

for air support had been submitted on the wrong form. At 14.30, two Dutch F-16 Fighters finally dropped two bombs on Serb positions surrounding Srebrenica. The Serbs responded with a threat to kill their Dutch hostages and shell refugees, further strikes were suspended.

That evening, General Mladic, the Serb commander, demanded the Muslims must hand over their weapons to guarantee their lives. He didn't know the UN had already disarmed them.

All men from ages 12 to 77 were separated for "interrogation for suspected war crimes". In the next 30 hours around 23,000 women and children were deported. Hundreds of men were held in trucks and warehouses. About 15,000 Bosnian Muslim fighters had attempted to escape from Srebrenica overnight and were shelled as they fled through the mountains.

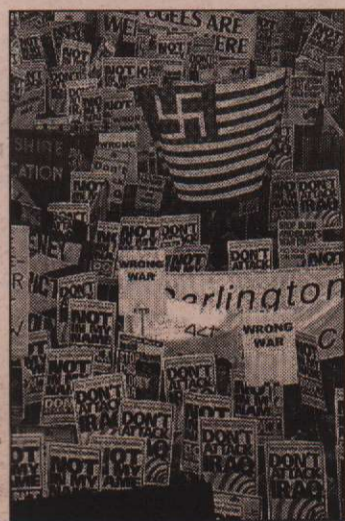
The first killings of unarmed Muslims took place in a warehouse in the nearby village of Kravica. In return for 14 Dutch peacekeepers the UN surrendered 5,000 Muslims who had been sheltering at the Dutch base at Potocari.

Reports of massacres were now emerging. Even so, successful UN negotiations for the release of the Dutch forces continued. In the five days after Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica, more than 7,000 Muslim men are thought to have been killed.

The Dutch "UN peacekeepers" meanwhile reportedly shared a toast with the murderers.

US SETS OUT ON PATH OF

The war against Iraq is phase two in the war that George Bush declared after 9/11. It has as its ultimate aim, says *Dave Stockton*, nothing less than world domination



The USA enjoyed relative domination as the sole superpower during the reign of Dubya's father and then under Bill Clinton. This came as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. What George the Second is trying to establish is absolute domination.

The Bush administration is bent on subordination of both its imperialist and semi-colonial allies, as well as breaking the spirit of resistance of its actual or potential enemies. The attack on Iraq, a regime change and the installation of a US puppet government will be an enormous boost for this project. The unilateral power of US imperialism will be there for all to see and all to bow down before.

This is why old and new allies alike – the European Union, Russia, China, Egypt and Saudi Arabia – are doing everything they can, via the UN and the international diplomatic circus, to divert Bush from this course of action. Even Tony Blair – though slavishly loyal to Bush in words – is seeking to embroil the US administration in the United Nations procedures, so that it does not force him to choose between supporting a naked unilateral US attack or joining in the chorus of disapproval of all the other major world powers.

This is not only because these states have serious economic interests – loans and investments – in Iraq and in the surrounding countries, which might be lost in a US attack and occupation of Iraq. It is also because all these powers do not wish to see the USA establish the world order it is striving for.

This world order is one where even powerful imperialist countries would be fully subordinated to a USA that acts unilaterally against whoever threatens its interests; that refuses to submit to any "international law" it has not made itself; that will observe no treaty unless it serves its interests; and that will preemptively attack those who it thinks threaten its security.

Last year's war in Afghanistan was a drive to expand US bases and client regimes in Central Asia and to ensure a dominant role for the US – military and economic – on the central Asian land mass.

The US goals were military-strategic: to gain air bases, client regimes and the weakening or surrounding of potential enemies like Russia and China. They were also economic: gaining access for US-dominated consortiums to the region's unexplored or untapped oil reserves.

Iraq represents an even bigger prize. If it becomes a US satellite it will dominate the entire Gulf region. Once its oil industry is rebuilt this will deal a deathblow to any hope of OPEC dictating the price of oil.

The self-proclaimed architect of the destruction of Communism Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, has, during the 1990s, become the advocate of a new geostrategic project, the establishment of a fully global American "empire". This will be a "benign" not an "evil" empire, of course. But nevertheless he insists it must be based on overwhelming military force. America's over-arching objective, he

says, "should be to maintain our vassals in a state of dependence, to ensure the docility and dependence of our tributaries and to prevent the unification of the barbarians."

Bush Jnr's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, revealed the administration's reasoning very candidly. September 11 introduced a "new period in history", she said, similar to the situation which faced America in 1945-47. It presented Washington with an incredible opportunity to "seize the moment and refashion the world."

This is also the view of Vice President Dick Cheney, national defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, and a series of unofficial advisers close to them such as Richard Perle.

OPPORTUNITY

September 11 did indeed present the US ruling class with a golden opportunity. It could shed all pretence of both traditional Republican isolationism, and traditional US Democrat "multilateralism". These will be replaced with an aggressive unilateral pursuit of US interests on every continent.

Virtual ultimatums are presented to enemies and allies alike. The Iraqi's must undergo "regime change". The occupied Palestinians must "reform" their administration and choose a new leader amenable to the USA, the IMF, and to Israel. Ariel Sharon, the bloodhound of Sabra and Shatila, is unleashed on them until they comply.

The United Nations itself has been put on notice of *de facto* dissolution. Bush told it to legitimise what the USA wants or be relegated to the status of the pre-war League of Nations – the rubbish heap of history.

"Those who are not for us are against us", Bush warns. Russia, China and France risk the USA's high displeasure should they dare to use their vetoes in the UN Security Council. Germany has been told that its relations with the USA have been "poisoned" by Schroeder's public refusal to support an attack on Iraq. Rumsfeld has made clear that in any post-war division of the Iraqi spoils those who did not support the invasion will be left out; their existing debts, contracts and investments will be torn up.

The EU countries that have expressed criticisms of Israel have been subjected to an orchestrated campaign by the US media, accusing them of anti-semitism for daring to protest Ariel Sharon's bloody onslaught.

The new "Bush doctrine" affirms the US's right (in fact privilege) to wage a "preventive" war wherever and whenever it judges a clear and present threat exists to its national security or economic interests. Of course, it will use the cover of the United Nations, NATO, or ad hoc coalitions where this suits it. But in no sense will it let itself be restrained or bound by these bodies' views or resolutions. This amounts to a tearing up of the entire post-1945 ideology of international law.

Russia and China, because of their size,

The world's oil: a means to a

One of the slogans that will be raised on demonstrations against the USA's planned war on Iraq is "No blood for oil". It links the greed of the multinational corporations with the militarism now rampant in the White House. But, as *Frank Kellerman* explains, the USA is setting out to control more than just the Middle East's oilfields.

United States energy policy was codified in May last year. The report, *National Energy Policy*, points out that rising oil prices "act like a tax by foreign oil exporters on Americans". It says "US energy and economic security are directly linked" and that "a significant disruption in world oil supplies could adversely affect our economy and our ability to promote key foreign and economic policy objectives."

It recommends that George W Bush "make energy security a priority of our trade and foreign policy". The author of the report was vice-president Dick Cheney. And the current threat of war against Iraq shows that Bush has followed his advice.

Both Bush and Cheney are former bosses of US oil companies. Two subsidiaries of Cheney's company, Halliburton, racked up \$30m worth of business with Saddam's Iraq between 1997 and February 2000, according to UN records, though Cheney himself denies knowing about it at the time, and they were later sold.

Despite this, the majority of business being done between Iraq and the international oil industry is with non-US firms. Companies from 12 countries, including UN Security Council members France, Russia and China, have signed agreements in principle to explore or redevelop in Iraq. The sticking point is UN Security Council Resolution 1284.

When passed, in 1999, this resolution represented a weakening of the sanctions. It contains the provision, one hundred days after weapons inspectors are admitted, "for involving foreign oil companies in Iraq's oil sector, including investments, subject to appropriate monitoring and controls". In other words, a green light for those oil companies

who have already signed deals with Saddam.

Speaking on the BBC's *Newsnight* (18 September), Dr Leo Drollas of the Centre for Global Energy Studies, pointed out the direct economic interest US oil firms have in the non-implementation of 1284, and in regime change: "Of course the American companies are very behind the stakes, so is BP for obvious reasons – for political reasons, and the French are in pole position. But if there's a regime change this might change and someone else might be in the pole position."

On 15 September, the *Washington Post* reported Ahmed Chalabi, the leader of the US-funded opposition group the Iraqi National Congress, as favouring the creation of a US-led consortium to rebuild Iraq's oil facilities. "American companies will have a big shot at Iraqi oil" said Chalabi.

But while oil is crucial this is not just a "war for oil". In pursuit of global domination the US aim to redraw the strategic map of the entire Middle East and redrawing the map of oil power is a key part of that strategy.

Iraq has the second biggest known oil reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia. But its known reserves of 112bn could be topped-up to 200bn – almost equivalent to that of Saudi Arabia – if Iraq's western desert were explored.

Like Saudi oil, Iraq's oil is potentially cheap to extract. Its southern and western oilfields are close enough to tanker transport to place the price of production in the region of the \$2 a barrel it costs Saudi Arabia. But Iraq produces a fraction of its potential. Due to sanctions and unilateral action by Saddam, it currently exports less than 1m barrels a day. Its OPEC





F GLOBAL DOMINATION

possession of nuclear weapons, UN Security Council seats, do retain a position as "major powers" as do the largest EU states. Together they form the G8 of today and (with China) the G9 of tomorrow. That is why their annual meetings are so important. The US is obliged, in Brzezinski's terms, to regard these states as its chief vassals. But none of them could stand up to the USA militarily.

Below them is a longer list of countries: the larger and more developed semi-colonial states, like Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Nigeria, South Africa, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan and India. They hold their rank because of their economic or military importance, in some cases the possession of nuclear weapons.

They are vying with one another to become sub-imperialist hegemonies of specific regions or licensed military gendarmes of the US empire. The USA intends to keep all these states in a strictly subordinated role. Here, as Brzezinski says the task is to "ensure the docility and dependence of (...) tributaries."

Below them come the bulk of the small weak countries of the world – the "barbarians" in Brzezinski's terms. At the very bottom of the pile is the category of "rogue" or "failed" states – Afghanistan, North Korea, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen the ex-Yugoslav states and, of course, Iraq. These are liable to intervention and the reduction to the status of colonies in all but name.

The US drive for global empire is the political and military expression of the cor-

porate globalisation that has dominated the past 10 years or more. But, contrary to propaganda by the globalisers, this is not a description of an accomplished fact but the objectives of a campaign in progress. This campaign – waged by Clinton and Bush, Major and Blair, Yeltsin and Putin, – is not openly contested by any of the major ruling classes of the world.

But the drive of the USA for total domination will most surely drive the major powers of Europe and East Asia to seek combinations of forces that can check and thwart it. To some extent this can be seen today in the diplomatic dance around the UN Security Council.

FEAR

Few dare openly clash with the USA, absolutely blocking its attack on Iraq. But most fear a totally US dominated Middle East. Japan, South Korea and China too fear that the USA, which still garrisons 350,000 troops in East Asia, will start to establish its direct overlordship in their region too by picking a fight with North Korea – another "rogue" state.

A major component of US policy is to prevent rival powers from combining against it on the diplomatic front. The other major powers can still damage the US by forcing it to act unilaterally. And that is why the test of Iraq is so important. It is a real crossroads. Will the states opposed to US intervention dare to deny it UN legitimacy?

If they do, will Bush and the US ruling class go ahead with a completely

unilateral attack? Wars are not waged only by armies. They require support, or at least passive acquiescence, from the population at home. Can the US and poodle Blair face down a world-wide movement of protest against this war?

But now, and for the period ahead, the USA has only one rival to fear – the European Union. It is no immediate threat militarily. US spokespersons laugh at the Europeans as military weaklings and economic fossils. The EU's development into a United States of Europe capable of rivalling the USA has been obstructed and delayed by the fact that the EU has no single united capitalist class.

Until and unless this development takes place, the USA will remain the "world hegemon", the "hyper-power", the "rogue colossus" as fearful non-US bourgeois commentators have dubbed it. But what is certain over the decade ahead is the consolidation of blocks against the US hegemon, in the EU certainly and in East Asia too, if Bush turns his attention to "rogue states" there.

This whole process would be accelerated by an economic crisis and prolonged stagnation in the heart of the system. It would be accelerated by crises in the weak

links of the chain of world economy and imperialist power – the major semi-colonial countries. If crises in Argentina are followed by crises in Brazil, in South Africa or in India, even the IMF and the US rapid deployment forces will prove helpless.

But the US "empire" cannot be fought by waiting for or supporting an EU or an East Asian counter-hegemon, a system of states allied against the USA. This will simply lead, inexorably, to a third imperialist war of unbelievable destructiveness. Nor is there any hope of a revolution of "the periphery against the centre", of "the countryside against the town" – such as 1960s third worldists hoped for.

What can challenge and ultimately defeat the power of the US, its EU rivals and their agents in every country is a world revolutionary movement. One which mobilises the "enemy within" in every "province" of global capitalism's "empire". Only such a movement can decisively weaken and finally overthrow imperialism. This war can only be fought as a struggle of the working people and their allies, world wide.

Today some of the most militant mass

struggles are in the semi-colonial countries hit hard by the capitalist crisis post 1998. In Argentina, Brazil, in South Africa or South Korea massive and militant strikes have erupted, challenging the local élites. In Europe the anti-capitalist movement reached truly mass proportions in Genoa. And the anti-war movement in Britain, after the 28 September demo, is developing into a mass movement too.

The USA's billionaire rulers also have an enemy within. The industrial and service workers, the great mass of the Black, Latino and other communities and the scornfully mis-labelled "underclass" all together form a huge majority of the US population: these are the natural "enemies within" who can fight and defeat George Bush and his corporate raiders.

The rapacious and aggressive policies of Bush and Blair are ripping the facade of peace, prosperity, and universal democracy from globalisation and the New World Order, at every level. Vast masses of people are coming to hate this system. Revolution against it is on the agenda once again.

The terms capitalism and imperialism, are on people's lips once again. But what is still lacking is a clearly understood alternative and a strategy to achieve it. We need to know not only that another world is possible and necessary. We need to know what that world is. Now we need to put the terms socialism and class struggle on the lips of millions once again.

But no better conditions can exist to do this than the developing massive movements of today.

The US drive for global empire is the political and military expression of the corporate globalisation that has dominated the past 10 years or more

n end for Bush and friends

quota is just under 3m and its physical potential – once the industry is rebuilt – considerably more than that.

OPEC's pricing power comes from two things: the relative unity of its major producers over the target price of oil – currently \$22 to \$28 a barrel – and the key role of Saudi Arabia as "swing producer". That is to say, the low cost of production of Saudi oil means it is easier for Saudi to turn on the taps when higher production quotas are agreed.

Since the oil price is maintained by a system of limiting production, the resurgence of Iraqi oil production – under any regime – would inevitably depress the price. But a pro-US regime in Baghdad would do more than depress the price.

For the USA, both price and continuity of supply, are issues for energy, foreign and security policy – as the Cheney report makes clear. Four major oil producers have strategically hostile or ambivalent relationships to the USA: Iran is on the "axis of evil"; Libya barely off it, Venezuela was the subject of a US-inspired failed coup less than 12 months ago, and Saudi Arabia's monarchy veers between the pressure of a radical Islamic middle class and US arm-twisting.

The impact of a pro-US regime in Baghdad on this situation would be profound. It could at the very least place downward pressure on the OPEC price target. At best – in US eyes – it provides a strategic counterweight to Saudi influence in the Middle East. Three to five years further down the line, it would have the leverage to fracture OPEC, reducing or destroying its power as a cartel. As part of a military alliance including Israel and Turkey, a re-armed and pacified Iraq could revert to the role it played between 1980 and 1988 – a bulwark against Iran to the east and fundamentalist Islam in the south.

But still this conflict is not reducible to oil. Oil is a major means to a bigger end. America has declared war on terror – "World War IV" according to CIA

chief James Woolsey. And this is how the scenario goes.

A "democratic Iraq" – presumably some form of militarised democracy in which parties hostile to the USA are banned and repressed – gives the USA a future secure cheap source of oil and a counterweight to any threat from Iran. It also allows the USA to spread this new style "democracy" throughout the Arab Middle East, an ideological offensive against radical Islam. The major risk to such a strategy now would be destabilisation of the Saudi monarchy. Today the al-Saud dynasty cannot be allowed to wobble – let alone topple. It must be shored up against Islamic fundamentalists and quasi-democratic oppositionists alike.

Once a pro-US regime is consolidated in Iraq, the oil industry redeveloped and the taps turned on, the USA can risk a move against the money and people it sees as responsible for 9.11 – and both are traceable to Saudi Arabia.

The neo-conservative right in the USA truly believes "democracy" is a weapon against its main enemy in the Middle East. Samuel Huntington, whose ideas on the "clash of civilisations" between Islam and the West have fuelled this new strategy, has been candid about the relationship between human rights and the interests of the USA.

"Many of the groups arguing against repression in those societies are fundamentalists and anti-American. We saw this in Algeria. Promoting democracy and human rights are very important goals for the United States, but we also have other interests," he told the *Observer* (21 October 2001). "Nobody ever mentioned the idea of trying to promote human rights in Saudi Arabia, and for a very obvious reason."

A US-friendly oil power in Iraq would remove the "obvious reason". The risks involved in disrupting the status quo in Saudi Arabia would be cut in half by the existence of a pro-US Iraq. Saudi Arabia is not named

in the chilling paragraph of the new US National Security Strategy that promises to "hold to account nations that are compromised by terror, including those who harbour terrorists" but it is an implicit subject of this threat.

Before 9/11 the USA's attitude to Saudi Arabia could be described as "insuring against disaster". Since the grassroots support for groups like al Qaeda was clearly significant, the contingency to plan for was the Islamic overthrow of the Saudi monarchy. But now a different scenario is in play. Saudi Arabia is to be sidelined, neutralised, because it cannot contain – nor

A "democratic Iraq" gives the USA a future secure cheap source of oil and a counterweight to any threat from Iran.

has it the will to contain – Islamic radicalism.

This is how Ted Galen Carpenter of the Washington based right-wing Cato Institute describes the situation: "Saudi Arabia enlisted in the fight against terrorism only in response to intense pressure from the United States following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Even then, its co-operation has been minimal and grudging... If Washington is serious about [its] policy, it ought to regard Saudi Arabia as a prime sponsor of international terrorism. Indeed, that country should have been included for years on the U.S. State Department's annual list of governments guilty of sponsoring terrorism."

The next assertion comes from Daniel Pipes – self-appointed scourge of the Arabs who is held in such high regard on the US right that he was invited to write the influential op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal* on 12 September 2001. This year he wrote: "U.S. intelligence sources have concluded that Saudi princes are

spending millions of dollars to help large numbers of al-Qaeda and Taliban members escape the American dragnet. One source told *Middle East Newsline* that the money flow to al-Qaeda continues from members of the royal family." (*New York Post*, 15 April 2002)

What do the Saudis say? Intelligence chief Prince Nawwaf told the *New York Times* in January 2002: "Some days you say you want to attack Iraq, some days Somalia, some days Lebanon, some days Syria. Who do you want to attack? All the Arab world? And you want us to support that? It's impossible. It's impossible."

The official line of the Bush administration is that Saudi Arabia has been "co-operative" in the war on terror. This line sounds rather like the "vote of confidence" a football manager gets from the board of directors just before they sack him.

So the attack on Iraq will be part of a war to seal the USA's strategic dominance in the Middle East, to deny freedom of action to any sovereign state seen harbouring resistance to the only global superpower.

To understand this is to understand that the attack on Iraq will not be the last battle of "World War IV" but the first. It is about oil because oil is the only weapon the "enemy" can use to threaten US strategic interests, and because oil revenues are seen as having been used to educate and train a generation of middle class Arab men hostile to the US and enabled them to strike deadly blows against it.

This is why the White House has just codified an explicit doctrine of unilateralism. The new National Security Policy of the USA is clear that while it will seek allies, "we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary to exercise our right of self-defence by acting pre-emptively".

Terrorism as the main threat; draconian repression and pre-emptive militarism as the solutions; a war to overturn the geopolitics of the Middle East as part of a drive for unfettered world domination. That is the new strategic stance of the USA's rulers.

THE WAR ON IRAQ



The attempt to install a puppet regime in Iraq represents a major step on the road to world domination by the USA. For this very reason it has provoked enormous world-wide opposition. Already a truly global anti-war movement is mobilising.

This movement must beware those "anti-war" leaders who try to get it to adopt the position that US-UK military action against Iraq would be justified "with the approval of or under the control of the United Nations." Bush and his British messenger boy Blair are already hard at work threatening and bribing the members of the Security Council who possess a veto.

We need to give no recognition to any UN-bestowed legitimacy. The Security Council is truly a thieves' kitchen. If Russia is given a free hand in Chechnya and China in Tibet and Xinjiang, if the IMF and the WTO make the price right, Bush will get his way.

The "UN pacifists" of today will be tomorrow's warmongers - just as they were in 2001. Their job is to round up as many spontaneous but unwary anti-war people as possible and then, when the UN gives the green light for war, convince them of the necessity of following the "international community" to war.

Our position has to be "US and UN hands off Iraq!" We did not demand or support the return of the UN weapons inspectors. We do not deny Iraq the right to possess deterrents that Israel, not to speak of the USA, already has in enormous quantities. We recognise and support Iraq's right to defend itself against imperialism

and its creation, Israel. We demand the immediate lifting of all UN sanctions.

We demand that all American and British land and air forces get out of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states; all their warships out of the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. We demand the closing down of all US and UK bases right across the Middle East and in central and south Asia.

We seek to stop this war by mass mobilisations that will shake the system to its foundations and topple the warmongers. We support mass intifadas across the Arab and Muslim world against the USA and Britain and against all the regimes that support them. We call for demonstrations and direct action against the bases and symbols of imperialist power and their corporate investments around the globe.

Above all this must happen in the imperialist countries themselves. When fighting breaks out we must call clearly and unequivocally for the total defeat of the imperialist invasion and victory for the Iraqi resistance to it. We must demand that the trade unions take action - boycotts, strikes, demonstrations against the war.

The members of parliament of the Labour, Socialist and Communist parties must force debates and votes, and themselves vote against the

war, disrupt the normal business of the talking shops and summon workers to resistance.

These actions alone distinguish anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and

revolutionary opposition to the war from those who simply call for "peace" based on UN intervention or mediation. The reformists will oppose us on the grounds that support for Iraq's resistance against a US-UK attack means supporting Saddam Hussein, just as they claimed that defeatism in the Afghan war meant support for the Taliban dictatorship.

For us only the Iraqi people - both Arabs and Kurds - have the right to overthrow Saddam's brutal dictatorship and at the same time ensure the independence of their country. To be colonised by the USA and Britain would be a terrible disaster for them.

Liberation can only be achieved if the workers and youth of the cities rise up and replace the Ba'athist and military regime with a democracy based on workers' and peasants' councils.

But only if they do so from the basis of defence of their country, of its independence from the imperialists, will it be possible for there to be a democratic let alone a socialist outcome to their struggle. On this basis alone can the carve up of the region imposed long ago by imperialism be progressively overcome by the spread of socialist revolution. Only along this road can the liberation of the Palestinian people be assured.

Together, on the bedrock of international working class solidarity, Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Iranians and the other peoples of the region can create a socialist united states of the Middle East - free of imperialist exploitation and of all national, religious and gender oppression!

Down with the so-called war against terrorism. Stop the aggression and invasions of the US, the UK or the European Union everywhere in the world!

Down with the IMF and its economic war against the poor!

Revolutionaries must begin the fight for workers' sanctions and strikes against the US and UK war preparations. This should include targeted boycotts of US and UK corporations and businesses and demonstrations against military bases.

The key slogans of resistance today are:

- No Blood for Oil! No war for the US Empire!
- Hands off Iraq! Halt the war preparations!
- All imperialist forces out of the region! US bases out of the Middle East and Gulf, the Indian Ocean and South/Central Asia!
- Stop Sharon's slaughter of the Palestinian people. Victory to the Palestinian intifada!
- If the invasion takes place - Defeat for the US-UK armies: victory to Iraq!
- Turn the "war against terrorism" into a class war against the exploiters!
- Down with global capitalism and imperialism!

WHAT WE SAY



Who are the Iraqi opposition?

The US promises the Iraqis, not that they have any say in the matter, a new future led by members of the Iraqi opposition. This opposition consists of various members of the Iraqi ruling elite who, for one reason or another, have fallen out with Saddam.

It's not that these are unprincipled people of course, but the condition for their defection is US-funded hospitality and a continuation of the generally indolent and pampered lifestyle to which they have become accustomed under Saddam. So who are the leaders of Iraq's future?

General Nizar Al-Khazraji

According to the US state department he has a "good military reputation" and "the right ingredients" to be a future leader in Iraq. Al-Khazraji was Saddam's chief of staff from 1980 until 1991, leading the army through the eight-year Iran-Iraq war and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

According to many human rights groups, he is the field commander who led the 48-hour chemical weapons attack which poisoned and burned 5000 Kurdish civilians in the northern town of Halabja in March 1988. He also, alleges one credible

eyewitness who testified in video-taped evidence earlier this year, kicked a little Kurdish child to death after his forces entered a village during the height of the Iraqi repression in 1988.

Brigadier-General Najib Al-Salihi

Salihi heads the CIA-sponsored Iraqi Free Officers Movement. He played a significant military role in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and crushed the uprising against Saddam's rule that followed the defeat. This repression caused 1.5 million people to flee their homes. In meetings at the British Foreign

Office in March, he was described as a "rapidly rising star" of the Iraqi opposition.

Ahmad Al-Chalabi

Chalabi leads the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella organisation created in 1992 with the assistance of the CIA. Regarded by INC officials as the future president of Iraq Ahmad al-Chalabi fled to London from Jordan in 1989 amid allegations he had embezzled millions from the bank he used to own.

Although he denies any wrongdoing, the collapse of the Petra Bank left thousands of

its customers in penury and earned him comparisons with Robert Maxwell.

Said K Aburish, a respected Middle Eastern writer and biographer of Saddam Hussein, remarked about the opposition "I examined my notes of the interviews I conducted with 82 Iraqi opposition leaders, and began identifying those on my list whose thinking resembles Saddam's. To my horror, I decided 75 of the people I interviewed were men who would kill to achieve their goal."

But they may not have to, the UK and US will do it for them. Unless we stop them.

US peacekeeping - Somalia style

A striking fact about all of the USA's recent military adventures, with or without UN approval, is how the same names keep cropping up. Colin Powell, now Bush's Secretary of State, approved the attack on Somalia in 1993 when he was head of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, the leadership of the US military apparatus.

US oil companies, Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips had secured billion-dollar concessions to explore and drill large portions of the Somali countryside during the reign of pro-US President Mohamed Siad Barre. Conoco's Mogadishu office housed the US embassy and military headquarters. UN involvement began when Barre was ousted by Somali warlord Mohammed Farrah Aidid. A well documented series of articles by Mark Bowden of the Philadelphia Inquirer, which formed the basis for the film Black Hawk Down, described the US operations thus:

"Task Force Ranger was not in Mogadishu to feed the hungry. Over six weeks, from late August to October 3, it conducted six missions, raiding locations where either Aidid or his lieutenants were believed to be meeting. The mission that resulted in the Battle of Mogadishu came less than three months after a surprise missile attack by U.S. helicopters (acting on behalf of the UN) on a meeting of Aidid clansmen... the missile attack killed 50 to 70 clan elders and intellectuals, many of them moderates seeking to reach a peaceful settlement with the United Nations."

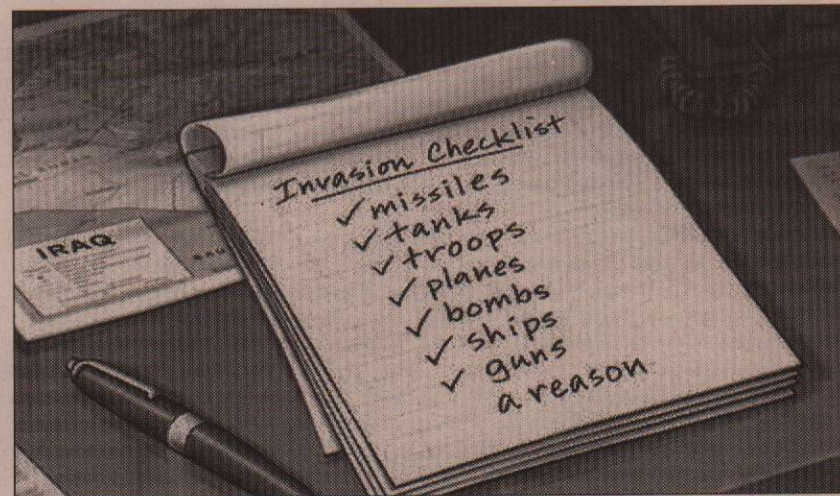
Marine Lt. Gen. Anthony Zinni, the Bush administrations 2002 "peace" negotiator between Israel and the Palestinian authority, commanded the operation. He informed the press that "I'm not counting bodies... I'm not interested."

The operations formed the background to the Battle of Mogadishu, where the US military,

attempted to free to US pilots captured by General Aidid. This attack saw the largest number of US dead in any of their recent operations, 18 US Special Forces soldiers were killed in the final Mogadishu firefight, which included the downing of a US helicopter.

Estimates of Somali casualties range between 500 and 1000 dead and countless wounded. The Task Force Ranger commander, Maj. Gen. William F. Garrison, testifying before the Senate, said that if his men had put any more ammunition into the city "we would have sunk it."

In spite of the massacre of Somalis, the world's television screens were filled with the scene of one dead US soldier being dragged through the streets by Somalis. Clinton immediately called off the operation. US forces left Somalia in disgrace. Some 19,000 UN troops remained for a short period, but left shortly afterwards..



George Bush alleges close links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. "The danger is, is that they work in concert," Bush says. He adds "the danger is, is that al Qaeda becomes an extension of Saddam's madness and his hatred and his capacity to extend weapons of mass destruction around the world."

The US administration repeats reports from Czech diplomats that September 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta met an Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague in April 2001 to discuss the September 11 attacks.

This claim was refuted by subsequent CIA investigations, which found that the so-called 'Atta' was an entirely innocent used car dealer who used to meet an Iraqi diplomat friend for lunch.

The Czech source for the allegation were Prague restaurateurs trying to impugn a competitor whose establishment was used for the supposed meeting.

So much for George Bush's intelligence.

What now for the Palestinians?

Bush and Sharon's solution to the Intifada will not remove any of the causes that sparked it, argues *Mark Robbins*

In the West Bank and Gaza strip the intifada, on its second anniversary, remains under siege. Palestinians are paying an enormous price for their heroic resistance to Israel's re-occupation of most of the towns and villages.

More than 1,800 people, mainly unarmed youth, have been killed by Israeli troops. Homes are routinely bulldozed, especially those of the families of suicide bombers. Roadblocks prevent travel between villages. Unemployment is more than 50 per cent.

A 24-hour curfew has been imposed on many towns for the last 100 days, including Nablus where 170,000 people are allowed out for three hours every four days to get food. Israeli snipers cut down children who break the curfew. While the whole of the West Bank has become an open air prison camp, six thousand Palestinian political prisoners languish in Israel's jails.

This repression, authored by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, is designed to stop Palestinians taking the struggle against the occupation to Israel itself. For the last year dozens of suicide bombers inside Israel have reminded Israelis that there is a price for their racism, brutality and denial of Palestinian national rights.

So ferocious has been Israel's recent onslaught that it has largely succeeded in stemming the attacks inside Israel.

But the intifada will not stop, because the reasons that gave rise to the uprising in September 2000 persist: Israel's continued expansion into the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian National Authority's bankrupt strategy for resisting it.

These two elements came together in 1993 when PLO leader Arafat made a disastrous decision to co-sign the Oslo declaration of principles with Israel and the subsequent detailed agreements which set out the range of the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) powers and the security commitments it gave to Israel.

At Oslo Arafat agreed to legitimise Israel's redeployment of its occupying troops to those parts of the West Bank and Gaza that allowed it to defend Jewish settlements and secure the natural resources and



roads that enable them to function.

Around 59 per cent of the West Bank was put officially under Israeli civil and security control. Another 23 per cent was placed under Palestinian civil control, but Israeli security control. Barely 18 per cent was ceded to the territory governed by the PNA.

In return for this, and recognition of the PLO, Arafat recognised the state of Israel. The fate of settlements and East Jerusalem were left for further negotiations during the "interim period".

But in the years following this "settlement" Israeli expansion continued, making a mockery of the Palestinians' hopes for a viable sovereign state. In September 2000 all the contradictions of the post-Oslo peace

process exploded and the second intifada began.

After the September 11 attacks on New York and the Pentagon last year George Bush gave Sharon the green light for ever more brutal repression of the intifada in the name of the "war against terrorism". US intervention was confined to securing a unilateral ceasefire by the PLO/PNA and to exert pressure on Arafat to arrest and crush the non-Fatah resistance fighters (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP).

In late February Sharon went far beyond the assassination of "suspected" activists and bombing of targeted PNA or PLO/Hamas buildings that had characterised Israel's bloody oppression up to then.

The resistance movement responded by greater use of suicide bombs inside Israel, more daring raids on Jewish settlements and finally more effective attacks on the occupying Israeli army.

In late March Israel launched a full-scale invasion of areas controlled by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with the intention of destroying the PNA infrastructure.

With Israeli elections next year what does Sharon aim to achieve? In early September Sharon announced that his government renounced the Oslo accords. Sharon would dearly love to negotiate a deal on pre-Oslo terms with a post-Arafat layer of PLO leaders – in other words he wants a military defeat of the intifada to lead to a political retreat by the PLO leadership and a further dilution of their ambitions for statehood.

He wants the Palestinians to renounce the refugees' right to return, concede more "security zones" for the IDF and the presence of settlements into perpetuity. In other words, a UN-backed "state" without sovereignty over the air, borders or much of the interior of PNA controlled lands.

The USA backs Sharon but needs to be seen to do something to address the Palestinians' desire for statehood if it is to get Arab states to support its impending war against Iraq.

Bush wants a revamped PNA security apparatus under the effective control of the CIA in collaboration with Israel, and a Prime Minister appointed to take power away from Arafat. In return Israel should withdraw its troops to pre-September 2000 boundaries. Then, next year, a Palestinian "state" would be established with temporary borders and without any undertakings on the fate of Jewish settlements. Indeed, settlements and outposts would continue to expand as they have done throughout the intifada. In 2004 final status accord talks would resume between Israel and the Palestinians.

But what kind of "peace" can be imposed on a defeated PLO and PNA? Arafat has brought the Palestinian people to the brink of catastrophe. The mix of guerrilla strug-

gle, bourgeois diplomacy, corrupt patronage and brutal repression of opponents has ensured that his "leadership" over the Palestine people has resulted in a complete failure to secure self-determination for them.

But any "peace deal" that does not remove settlements from the Gaza strip and large parts of the West Bank will simply guarantee further explosions. Any attempt by Arafat to legitimise their existence and growth in any "final settlement" which recognises a Palestinian "state" would probably cause civil war among Palestinians.

Two states living in harmony and justice is a chimera. What we have now is, de facto, the two states solution that is compatible with the existence of the state of Israel as an exclusively Jewish state. The only just solution must encompass equal citizenship rights for Jews and Arabs and the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their land of origin. This means a state in which Jews and Arabs are equal, not a state that defines itself specifically as "Jewish" or "Arab".

Otherwise the continued existence of an Israeli-Jewish state, even alongside a Palestinian state, would depend on the maintenance of racist citizenship laws and the exclusion of millions of Palestinians from the territory. Far from providing the basis for a lasting peace, this could only condemn the region to further cycles of repression and war.

The destruction of the Zionist character of the present state of Israel – an exclusionist, expansionist, anti-democratic state – is the only basis for a just settlement to the present conflict. Without it there can be no right of Palestinians to return and no end to the cancer of settlements within the body of Palestine.

Only a socialist secular republic of the whole of Palestine – which has rights for all and privileges for none, based on the unity of the Jewish and Arab working class and small farmers, the nationalisation of land and the expropriation of big business and finance – can bring peace and justice to Palestine. Without justice there can be no peace.

US Longshoremen locked out by bosses

The "war on terrorism" is used as a pretext to attack west coast dock workers, writes *Lesley Day*

More than 10,000 dock workers in nearly 30 ports from Seattle to San Diego in the west coast of the USA were locked out by their employers on 3 October. Most of those are members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) based in Los Angeles port, the centre of a dispute since May over renewed contracts.

The west coast ports handle more than half of the nation's trade, around \$300 billion worth of cargo each year – or more than 7 per cent of the total gross national product.

The Pacific Maritime Association, the port bosses' organisation, has said the loss of revenues and wages is running at more than \$1bn a day.

Many businesses stocked up on supplies in the three last four months in anticipation of a strike or a lock out, but others are facing crippling shortages within a week. Air freight can be 20 times as expensive as ocean freight.

At a time when US company earnings are taking a dive this can only be bad news for US bosses and be to the advantage to the ILWU.

The Bush administration indicated in August that it will seek to block a West Coast dockers' strike by any means necessary. Claiming national security and the "war on terrorism" as a pretext, Bush is looking for any excuse to add a strategic victory over "the enemy within" – as Margaret Thatcher used to call the British workers' movement – to his hoped for victory over Saddam Hussein.

The dispute is a real problem for the many companies that rely on just-in-time production and goods that pass through west coast ports from Asian-Pacific suppliers.

Because of their strategic location the dock workers on the west coast have a traditionally strong union and a negotiation system covering 29 ports right along the west coast.

The shipping companies plan to install new technology that will eliminate many jobs. The union wants to ensure the new technology is run by existing union members and ensure that newly created jobs are then included in an ILWU-negotiated contract.

Two months ago, the ILWU revealed

LETTER FROM STAN WOODS, ILWU LOCAL 6

Dockworkers have played a key role in recent labor and anti-capitalist movement protests, including participating in demonstrations and taking strike action during the Seattle protests at the World Trade Organisation conference in 1999.

The ILWU's President Jim Spinosa is not one of them. He is defying the long left anti-war stance of the union by backing George Bush over the "war against terrorism". Spinosa even coined the reactionary slogan "fight terrorists not American workers".

Many in the union however oppose a war with Iraq, including the top leadership of Local 6, Local 10, the San Francisco Longshore local, and the leadership of all the Canadian locals in British Columbia.

that a Labor Department official, Andrew Siff, issued threats on behalf of the administration to ILWU union officials. In the event of strike, Siff said, Bush was prepared to mobilise the National Guard to take over ports, bring in Navy personnel to move cargo and petition the US Congress to declare the ILWU a monopoly, thereby legalising the break-up of the union into 29 separate bargaining units for each port.

The President of "the land of the free" has considerable powers under the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947, better known as the Taft-Hartley Act. He can ban a strike or lockout for 80 days and impose arbitration. All he needs is to proclaim that it would "imperil the national health or safety."

In fact the people of the USA would not go short if the ports were to be shut. All that would be "imperilled" would be the profits of the shipping companies and the retail companies who import goods. This, of course, to a capitalist is a "national" emergency.

By showing such eagerness to intervene, Bush has emboldened the shipping com-

panies to refuse to meet the union's demands.

Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) the largest of the dock employers has systematically blocked negotiations between the ILWU and the PMA. SSA wants to move as much dock work away from unionised sectors as possible. It has moved several hundred ILWU jobs off the west coast docks in recent years.

Bush and the employers clearly want to smash the ILWU just as Ronald Reagan smashed the air traffic controllers union Patco in 1981. That defeat was a terrible blow for the whole US labour movement. It led to nearly twenty years of falling real wages and shrinking unions.

American labour has only just begun to recover from this over the past few years. Now Bush wants to use recession and war to knock them down again.

Dockers, wharfies, longshoremen – whatever the name – have played a key role in international solidarity over the last decade. All workers around the world should organise a massive movement of solidarity with the ILWU now the lockout has started.

Lula vote rocks

John McKee surveys the Brazilian class struggle as the masses prepare to exploit a victory by Lula's Workers Party

IN THE LAST year the currency in Brazil, the real, has plummeted by 30 per cent. Like Argentina, Brazil is on the edge of a major economic crisis, and as before with Argentina, not long ago the IMF was congratulating Brazil for achieving a "virtuous circle" by following Washington's economic and fiscal policies.

This is the second major crisis of Fernando Cardoso's two presidential terms. In 1998 the currency collapsed and Brazil avoided defaulting on its debts only with the help of a huge IMF loan. June this year saw a repeat performance. A two month long run on the currency saw the IMF roll out the largest loan in its history – a \$30bn drawing rights agreement.

Cardoso's centre left coalition of the PSDB and PMDB, fêted by Blair as a model of "Third Way" politics in the Third World, has, by following the IMF policies, stunted economic growth, increased unemployment and indebtedness and brought the country to the edge of a catastrophe.

According to official figures Brazil's unemployment rate stands at 7.5 per cent but this is just the tip of the iceberg. It is estimated that 35 per cent of Brazil's production lies in the "grey economy" outside of official figures – in the teeming shanty towns and favelas where underemployment and dire poverty are rife. The official minimum wage for the officially employed is a mere \$60 a month.

High interest rates used to defend the currency have slowed growth and investment, which has declined from 4.5 per cent in 2000 to an estimated 1.5 per cent this year. The Brazilian debt has grown enormously over Cardoso's terms. In 1994 it represented 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, today it is 60 per cent – or \$250 billion dollars.

Much of this debt is linked to interest rates and the exchange rate with dollar. As "business confidence" goes down, inter-

est rates go up, the real goes down and debt servicing costs shoot up. It is this scenario that leads to concern in international financial circles. A Brazilian default coming on top of the crises in Argentina and Uruguay could shake the foundations of the international financial system.

It is little wonder then, given the record of the governing coalition, that its presidential candidate, Jose Serra, is trailing in the polls over 20 points behind the Workers Party (PT) candidate Lula. It was the realisation in May/June that the PT had a real chance of coming to power that set off the run on the currency.

This was initiated by a concerted campaign of the US banks and finance houses in response to the good poll ratings of the PT. "Warnings" were issued to investors by the likes of Merrill Lynch and Morgan Moody, the US investment agency, altered Brazil's rating from "stable" to "negative"; foreign investment started to slow, credit for Brazilian companies became more expensive.

The campaign orchestrated from Washington had two purposes. Firstly, through provoking a crisis, to warn off the Brazilian electorate from being foolish enough to elect a "dangerous socialist".

Secondly, if this did not work, to force the PT to reassure the markets and tie a Lula presidency to carrying out IMF dictates. Lula duly obliged in June, joining the other two major candidates in declaring his commitment to stick by the strict IMF fiscal agreements, to respect the rule of law and honour the foreign debt obligations.

The \$30bn IMF stand-by arrangements commit any incoming government to run a 3.75 per cent government fiscal surplus in order to pay back the debts. Such a policy effectively vetoes any major government initiatives to use public works programmes to tackle mass unemployment, the housing crisis, poor education, or the dire sanitary and health needs of the people.

In a further move to reassure the business community, at home and abroad, the PT leadership struck a cross-class alliance (popular front) with the small Liberal Party (PL) led by Jose Alencar. Alencar, now Lula's vice-presidential running mate, is a millionaire textile factory owner whose party has close connections with a Protestant evangelical sect.

The PL's representation in congress, where the PT is weak, gives the PT greater access to national TV, which has been one of Lula's justifications for striking this deal. But more importantly the PT leadership see this as an alliance with a sector of the "progressive manufacturing capitalists". It is an alliance that fits in with the PT's programme for government.

The PT's programme makes no mention of the word "socialism". Indeed the PT leadership has made it clear since the mid-1990s that it considers that socialism is not on the agenda in Brazil. Rather it is a programme for "a different model" (of capitalism); one that is more democratic, that eschews neo-liberalism and is committed to "growth".

Growth is to be stimulated by a reduction in interest rates, a competitive import substitution programme and government promotion of exports. For their working class supporters the PT promises 10 million new jobs, national agrarian reform and land distribution, and a "zero hunger" programme.

It is little wonder that the *Financial Times* labelled the US banks' reactions to a potential Lula victory a "mistake", pointing out that in many Brazilian cities where the PT had been in power for years "they have proven to be good administrators".

In September, with victory for the PT apparently unstoppable, the PT pointed out that "Lula has moderated his anti-capitalist rhetoric and adopted many mainstream policies" while noting that "many investors remain concerned".



Landless peasants battle for justice

Sem-terra, the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), burst onto the political scene in the 1980s. It was a response to a decade or more of rapid change in Brazilian agriculture.

Increasing use of machinery, fertilisers and pesticides and hybrid seeds to increase yields benefited those farmers who could afford the inputs and keep up with the bank loans. A few benefited, millions lost out; small peasant farmers went bankrupt in their thousands.

Between 1985 and 1995 this process speeded up with the numbers employed on the land falling from 23 million to under 18 million. Neither was moving to the cities a viable option – jobs in manufacturing also fell by 34 per cent between 1991 and 1997.

The MST grew out of this crisis on the land and a series of land struggles aided and organised by local priests influenced by lib-

eration theology. In 1984 they set up a national organisation to organise mass occupations of land under the slogan "Agrarian reform by law or by force". Much of the land they occupied was lying unused or was "owned" by landlords with dubious titles.

The MST's tactic was to organise hundreds of landless families to seize a large farm or piece of land, demand the state agrarian reform ministry give the settlers the land and defend the occupations against forcible eviction.

The land occupations were hugely successful in placing land hunger and rural poverty under the national spotlight. It exposed the enormous disparities in landholdings. Brazil's richest 88,000 farmers own 20 per cent of all registered land in the country and account for 60 per cent of all farm income. At the same time millions of small farmers are on the verge of bankruptcy and hundreds of thousands of rural

workers are completely landless.

In the 1980s and 1990s serious clashes took place, especially in the state of Para, east of the Amazon basin. In 1996, 19 Sem-terra supporters were killed by local police who opened fire with machine guns, injuring many others. President Cardoso was forced to condemn the actions of the police.

Today Sem-terra has about a million members. It has forced the government to recognise many of its occupations and built over 800 farming "settlements" controlling five million hectares of land; an area equivalent in size to three quarters of the Irish Republic, but still only one per cent of Brazil's registered land.

The MST worked with the CUT, the left-wing trade union, providing joint training schools for organisers. It also co-operated closely with the PT especially during the 1989 election when Lula spoke at mass MST rallies and promised a PT government would carry out radical land

reform. The defeat of the PT was a severe blow to the movement and it suffered considerable repression under the Collor government of the early 1990s.

As the MST has grown and consolidated it has developed into a cross between a peasant/rural workers' movement and a political party – heavily influenced at times by the politics and agrarian policies of Cuba. Its MST settlements have posed concretely what policies it will adopt in relation to land question. After a failed experiment to "collectivise" its farming settlements on the Cuban model in the 1990s, the MST has fallen back on self-organised co-operatives based on the peasant model.

With Cardoso's success in opening Brazilian agriculture to the world market and the growing grip that multinationals like Monsanto have over key sectors of Brazilian agribusiness, such a strategy is utopian unless it is linked to a real struggle to expropriate the major landholdings

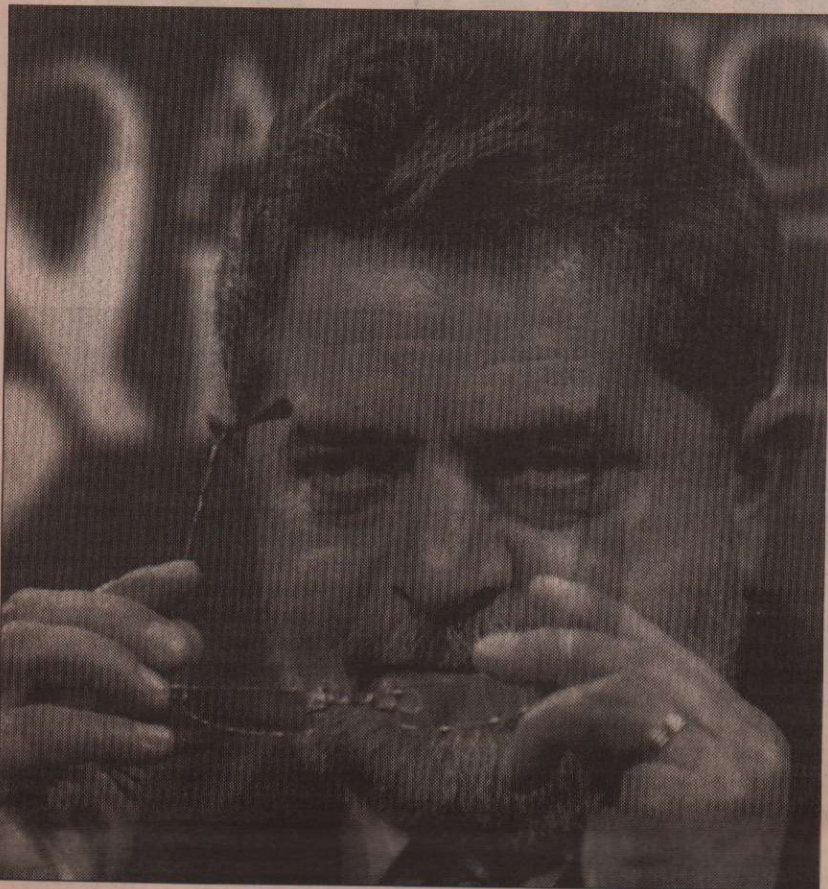
and monopoly agribusinesses and place them under the control of a government of the workers and small farmers. To develop and provide a decent living for the rural masses Brazil's agriculture needs an agrarian revolution not a retreat back to self-sufficient peasant communities.

The MST has become increasingly critical of the PT as the Workers Party has moved right, suspecting rightly that a PT government will try to renege on its promises of a radical land reform. In the midst of the election campaign the MST provocatively occupied president Cardoso's estate – an occupation that was immediately condemned by Lula.

The MST has correctly demanded that any PT government immediately proceeds with mass re-distribution of land. If the PT leadership prevaricates the MST should launch a new wave of land occupations and appeal to the mass base of the unions and PT to support it.

IMF

Lula (below) leads the polls. Currency traders (left) lose their shirts - while car workers (below left) maintain massive illusions in the Workers Party



From strikes to suits

The PT was formed in 1980. It emerged out of a series of mighty industrial struggles that shook Brazil in the late 1970s, struggles which hastened the end of a long period of dictatorship.

The PT was formed as a militant socialist party committed to

replacing the old corrupt capitalist system in Brazil and placing power into the hands of the masses. It drew its strength from the growing workers' movement; particularly from the Central Workers Union (CUT), from the "grass roots" organisations in the shanty towns, from the radical catholic organisations and

later from its alliance with the rural workers' organisations, especially the MST.

But the PT has moved a long way from its radical beginnings. By the late 1980s it had dropped much of its socialist and revolutionary rhetoric as it was elected in municipalities across Brazil.

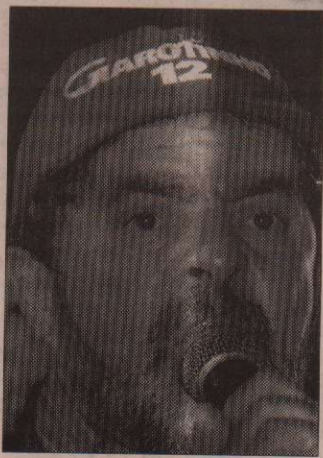
Whereas in 1981 the PT had been arguing that "participation in elections and parliamentary activity will be subordinated to the objective of organising the

exploited masses and their struggles", by 1989 its Mayor of Sao Paulo, Luisa Erundina, was collaborating with the city's capitalists and seeking to break a municipal workers' strike for better wages by keeping services running.

The 1990s saw the party develop into a reformist party on the European model. The struggle for socialism was relegated to an indeterminate future, the key task became "broadening democratic spaces and popular participation". This was to be done by reforming the existing structures of the federal state and municipal governments.

A layer of party and elected representatives came to dominate the PT, which was significantly bureaucratised. In the early 1990s some tendencies on the left of the PT were expelled as the reformist leadership consolidated its control.

The PT is clearly incapable of providing the leadership the Brazilian workers need to tackle the effects of the coming crises. But out of the struggles ahead, within and outside the party, a new revolutionary workers' party can be forged which could lead such a struggle to victory.



Lula: when didn't wear a suit

LUIS INACIO DA SILVA'S last campaign rally before the first round voting began on 6 October was held before an audience of the industrial workers of Sao Paulo, where, as a metal worker and union leader, he led a series of illegal strikes 25 years ago.

Walter Geronimo, a worker at the Ford assembly plant said: "If he wins, we'll have one of us in Brazil. We will recover many of the conquests we have lost in recent years."

Geraldo Bras, a welder at the Volkswagen plant, echoed the illusions in the Workers Party leader. "Lula is the only hope for the poor because he was once poor himself," he said.

At the same rally, according to the *Financial Times*, while the mass ranks of workers hung on Lula's every word, when he introduced his running mate and textile millionaire Jose Alencar, the crowd greeted the vice-presidential candidate with "muted applause". This scene perfectly expresses the illusions the mass of workers have in Lula and the PT and the distrust and hostility towards his bourgeois minder. Revolutionaries who want to break workers' attachment to the PT need a tactic in this election grounded in this reality.

Despite its reformist degeneration the PT has retained the loyalty of the mass of workers and landless labourers who desire socialist change in Brazil - the vast majority of the Brazilian vanguard. After a series of setbacks in the 1990s the party made an important surge forward in the municipal elections of 2001.

It controls six state capitals, has mayors in 187 cities and is in power in 17 major municipalities. It controls much of the huge industrial belt around Sao Paulo and is estimated to have 600,000 members. It is supported by the CUT, the major union federation, and is closely associated with the MST, the powerful landless labourers' movement. Despite the expulsions of the 1990s it is still possible for the left to organise openly within the party, and the PT has a number of organised tendencies.

Tens of millions of organised and unorganised workers will vote for Lula and for real change. The masses, faced with an accelerating crisis, will expect the PT to deliver a better life. The unions will expect more jobs and an end to poverty wages, the landless movement the MST is already demanding an immediate radical redistribution of land, the masses of the favelas will expect improvements in housing, health and education.

All will expect a PT government to stand up to the IMF and Washington and to defend their interests. This is what the international banks and investors are really worried about - will the PT be their reliable agent or will it be driven by its mass base to take actions against them?

Whether the millions of PT supporters impose their will on the government will depend both on the depth of the crisis and the leadership they are given in the struggle to combat it. Immediately militants in the PT should fight for the leadership to break its alliance with Alencar and ally themselves instead with the unions, the MST and other workers' organisations.

But in opposition the PT leadership can continue to pose as the champion of the poor and the landless. Revolutionaries fight to put the PT to the test of office so as to more easily break work-

ers' illusions in it. Wherever it is possible in the congressional/state elections we argue that workers should vote for PT candidates but not for candidates of the Liberal Party (PL) with which it is in alliance, even if this invalidates the ballot.

In the Presidential election we advocate crossing off the name of Vice-Presidential candidate Jose Alencar of the PL. Our aim is to indicate that militant workers and revolutionaries should vote for Lula to put him to the test of office but on no account should we vote for a bourgeois candidate or party.

We demand that Lula break with the bourgeoisie and carry out the demands of the militant rank and file of the PT, MST and CUT to repudiate the debt - paid already many times over to the imperialist banks through crippling interest rates; to initiate a massive redistribution of land, legalise current land occupations, and renationalise all privatised companies.

We do this in the context of fighting for a revolutionary action programme to mobilise the workers in struggle - with the PT/CUT/MST leaders when they fight, without them when they retreat. Such a programme has to have answers to mass unemployment, the appalling lack of housing, the poor education, non-existent health and sanitary services in the shanty towns.

To provide these basic services demands an emergency plan of public works financed by the government - training and employing tens of thousands of workers at a living wage set by the trade unions and under the democratic control of the workers and communities.

To meet the basic needs of the working class - a decent minimum wage, unemployment benefit, a free health service and so on - demands that the government introduces steep progressive taxation and a large wealth tax on the super rich of Brazil - one of the most grossly unequal societies in the world.

To provide the resources for and control of such a programme all the basic utilities - electricity, water, gas/oil, transport and so on - need to be brought back under state ownership, renationalised without compensation and placed under to control of the workers and users.

The same should happen to any firm trying to reduce output or make its workers redundant. The growing numbers of landless and impoverished small farmers need to be addressed by the expropriation of the large landowners and the redistribution of land to the landless. The small farmers need to be provided with cheap credit, machinery and fertilisers and co-operatives, backed by the government, need to be organised.

Such measures would only be the start of a real transformation of Brazil. Even then they would provoke an immediate reaction from the international capitalists and their agents in Brazil. The workers would face financial sabotage, investment strikes, mass closures, international blockades and mobilisations by the employers against a government that dared take such measures.

Only a revolutionary workers' government, one prepared to rely on, and arm the masses, one determined to destroy the very system of capitalism that condemns the mass of Brazilians to poverty, could hope to defeat such an onslaught.



The Brazilian left and the Lula phenomenon

Criticism of the PT's moves to the right has come from both inside and outside the party. The Socialist Democracy current (DS) and its journal *Em Tempo* represents "the tendency of the Fourth International supporters in the PT", part of the same international grouping as the French LCR.

The DS has criticised the alliance with Alencar. Heloisa Helena, a leading figure of the tendency, resigned as candidate governor in the state of Alagoas in protest at the alliance being imposed on the PT against its wishes. But the DS current is not a rallying point for an intransigent struggle against Lula and the leadership - indeed as the PT leadership has moved right so has the DS.

A recent statement by the DS on the elections, (*International Viewpoint* 344) while criticising Lula for spending his time "calming the markets" places no sharp demands on the leadership, nor does it present an alternative fighting programme that could rally the rank and file.

Its view of a "socialist Brazil" merely reflects the reformist views of the PT - "A left government in Brazil would open new possibilities for the struggle for socialism. The strengthening of national sovereignty, the non-signature of the Free Trade Association of the Americas agreement, a project for economic development breaking with dependency, a vigorous movement

of popular participation, public and democratic decision taking on all questions, would be the initiatives which would sketch the contours of another model."

The struggle for socialism, to break the power of the capitalists, to smash their army and state - replacing it with a workers' council state - is replaced by a programme of democracy with a dash of third world nationalism.

The DS cannot even bring itself to criticise the PT leadership's retreat from the demand to cancel the debt. Raul Pont, DS member and ex-mayor of Porto Alegre was asked point blank by a journalist from a Porto Alegre daily "Are you in agreement with the new orientation of the PT leadership on the need to negotiate the external debt rather than stop paying it?" Pont replied: "When we used to say 'don't pay the debt', it was much more within the feeling for a moratorium, of warning that the country would be placed in danger with so much money going to service the debt. To call for not paying was the simplification of a slogan. ... That's why the party decided to put forward the call for an audit of the external debt and the call for its re-negotiation, to reduce the impact that the thesis of non-payment was causing."

This is how the DS covers up for the leadership's dumping of key demands of the struggle. This interview was proudly reproduced in IV343 with Pont referred

to as "one of the more important politicians in the PT's socialist left".

Two left organisations are standing against the PT. The Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), presidential candidate Jose (Ze) Maria, and the Workers Cause Party presidential candidate Rui Pimenta. Ze was expelled from the PT ten years ago and is a member of the CUT national executive.

In the last presidential elections the PSTU got one third of one per cent, about 200,000 votes out of an electorate of 119 million. The PSTU sought an electoral alliance with the PT last year that came to nothing as Lula preferred to link up with the Brazilian Communist party and Alencar. The PSTU could improve on their position in these elections but it remains a small centrist party with a few roots in the vanguard.

The task for revolutionaries in Brazil in these elections is to relate to the majority of the vanguard and the tens of millions of workers who want Lula in office. The bigger the vote for the PT, where this can be done without voting for the PL, the less excuse Lula will have in the eyes of the masses for sticking to his agreement with the PL. Voting for a small centrist party with inadequate policies does nothing to bring nearer the day when the masses and the vanguard make a revolutionary break with the PT's reformism.

For more see: www.workerspower.com/wpglobal/PTBrazil.html

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Mass defiance to stop mass murder

George W Bush is set on war. He will not let anything get in his way. Not Iraq's agreement to let weapons inspectors back. Not the United Nations meddlesome attempt to let diplomacy work to disarm Saddam Hussein.

He will try to bully France, bribe Russia and berate China to get the UN Security Council to back his war plans. If not, he will push on regardless, aided every step of the way by poodle Blair.

Israel's Foreign Minister has been briefed by the US administration to expect the attack on Iraq to start between late November and mid-December.

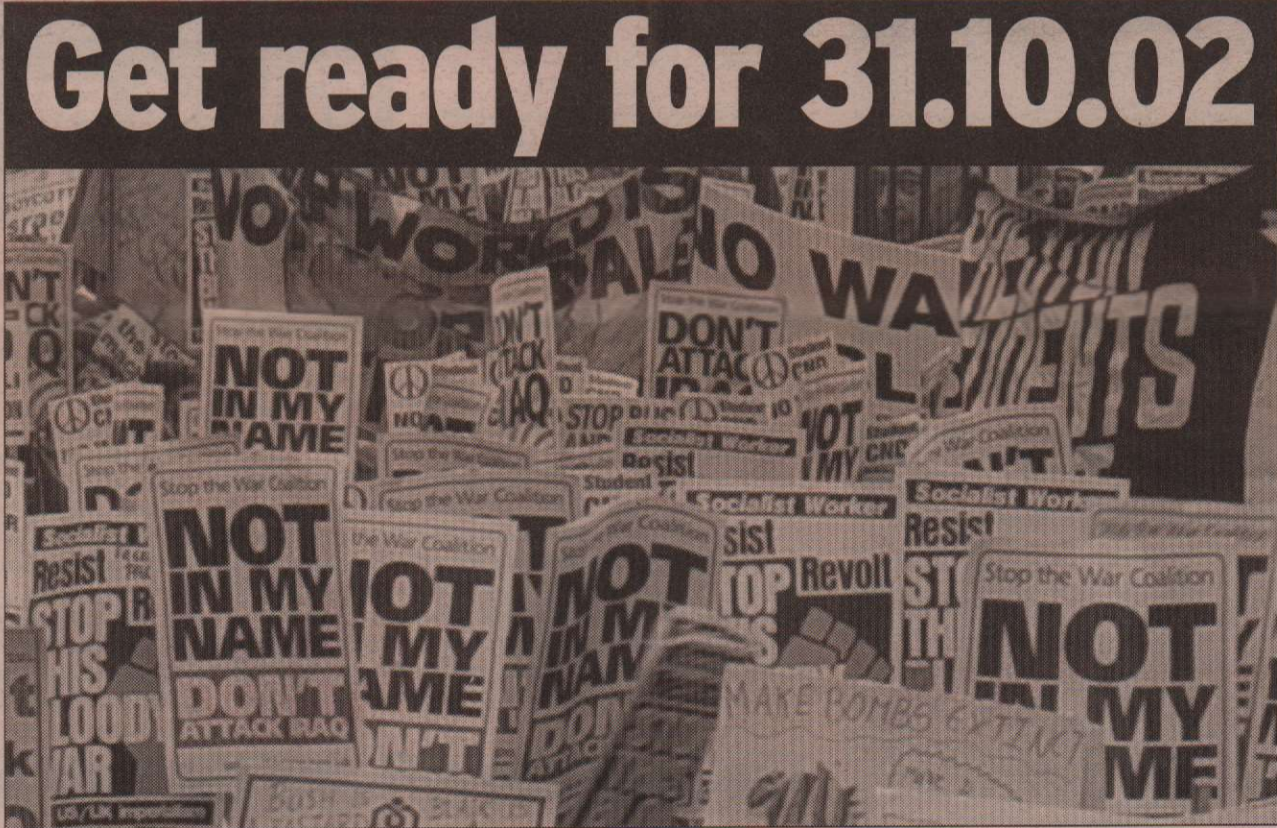
All that remains is to build up the military forces in the Gulf, prepare the US public for war and choose which "provocation" will best serve as an excuse for launching the bombs and missiles.

The US is determined to have Saddam's head on a plate.

Then US oil giants can get their hands on the country's huge reserves. But more importantly Washington will have taken out one of the handful of governments that question the USA's right to rule the world. After the Middle East, North Korea, South Asia? And beyond, Europe?

Overwhelming military superiority will be used to enforce compliance with "free markets" (US multinational domination of the economy) and "open government" (compliant pro-US regimes) throughout the world.

US imperialism - backed by its UK junior partner in crime - is on the march. In a world that is sceptical of, or openly hostile to, the USA's warmongering Bush can count Tony Blair as his one true ally. As the chief executive of UK PLC which takes a quarter of all US foreign investment, Blair is little



more than US Ambassador to the European Union.

He claims that in return for his slobbering obedience Bush listens to what he has to say. But when Blair presses for an international conference on Palestine to get at the source of Arab hostility to the US and Israel, Bush dismisses the idea out of hand. "It's Iraq, stupid."

The only thing that Bush or Blair will

listen to is a mass, angry anti-war movement. One that takes to the streets and stays there. The demonstration on 28 September in London was utterly brilliant. More than 400,000, from all parts of the country from all parts of the community.

It was the biggest anti-war protest since the anti-Vietnam demonstrations of the late 1960s - possibly the biggest ever in Britain - and like that international movement it

can force the USA to retreat in disarray.

On 31 October we have the chance to take the movement onto another level of militancy and visibility. The Stop The War Coalition has called a day of protest - "Stop Your City, Stop The War".

Local coalition meetings are taking place everywhere to discuss how to make the day of action a success. Get to these meetings.

Everyone who went on the London march should organise a meeting at work with anti-war speakers and a local march if possible. Colleges should be occupied and teach-ins held. In the evening all city centres should be brought to a halt with sit-downs. Public buildings should be occupied for the day. Pro-war newspapers should be picketed.

If possible we should get stoppages in the workplace, and if we can't get stoppages we should at least try to get dinner time meetings and rallies.

The protest on 31 October needs to be so massive and so widespread that the media and politicians cannot ignore it. It needs to be militant to show Blair that our movement is determined.

The stronger we are on the streets the more backbone we can give to the Labour opponents of war in parliament, encouraging them to disrupt parliament unless and until a vote on whether war is declared is granted. And we must follow this up at the ESF in Florence, fighting to commit it to call European-wide action on the day the war starts.

Already a majority of people in Britain do not back the plans for war. They know the pretext of Iraq's connection to al-Qaeda is a lie, that the threat posed by Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, is a thin excuse and that the dictator Saddam got into power in the first place with British and American help.

Blair is prepared to make the Iraqi people pay the "blood price" for the USA's global ambitions. We must make him pay the political price for his support for Bush.

Take the streets to stop the war on 31 October!

"We should stop the buses, stop the trains, stop the schools." Tony Benn

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