

# workers power

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

## BROWN SLASHES PAY AND JOBS



# UNITE AND STRIKE!

**Post, civil service, NHS, schools:  
for indefinite public sector strike!**

### INSIDE:

- 8 page pull out for the G8 protests
- Force unions to fight Gordon Brown
- Israel's revenge • Pakistan explodes



**League for the  
Fifth International**



## EDITORIAL

# USA and Israel behind Palestinian infighting

By Marcus Chamoun

On 24 May, Israeli soldiers seized 33 Palestinian leaders, including education minister Naser Eldin Alsha'er. All were members of Hamas, the party that was democratically elected to office in January 2006.

These arrests followed a week of aerial bombardments on the Gaza strip, that killed 40. The Israeli Defence Force also launched a major ground offensive into northern Gaza and invaded at least 45 communities in the West Bank.

Even more disturbing was the Palestinian infighting between Hamas and Fatah, which claimed the lives of at least 52 during the same week.

## Imperialism's bloody hand

But the latest round of infighting is a direct result of US and Israeli interference. Despite starving the Palestinian government of funds, they have funnelled \$26 million and thousands of weapons towards re-arming Fatah against Hamas.

Iran's continued defiance of the US over its nuclear power programme and the temporary setback to plans to strike at the country directly have led the enraged US neo-conservatives to seek to use Israel and part of Yasir Arafat's Fatah movement to strike at Iran indirectly, by neutralising the most militant wing of the Palestinian resistance and the Hamas government.

The same policy is being pursued in Lebanon. The Lebanese army, which totally absented itself from the defence of the country last summer, has now turned on a Palestinian refugee militia called Fatah al-Islam, supported by Syria and, by association, the USA's number one enemy, Iran.

Whether this latest attack against Iran through the backdoor succeeds or not will depend in part on whether Fatah's mass base supports its war on Hamas. It will also depend upon the Palestinians adopting methods of mass struggle, linking up with the anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal struggles of the whole region, across the



Palestinians protest the arrest of the mayor of Nablus by Israeli forces

divides of geography, sectarian affiliation and national origin.

For this, however, it will need a different leadership from that provided by Hamas – one basing its power on the organised working class as the leader of the struggles of all the oppressed.

The tension between Fatah and Hamas has erupted in gunfire in the Gaza Strip, which is a walled-off home to 1.5 million Palestinians – effectively an open air prison. While pundits muse on the outbreak of lethal Palestinian “factional violence” as a demonstration of some ingrained Arab unsuitability for “peaceful” democratic politics, Israel's hand in this conflict is all too clear.

## Ousting Hamas

Immediately after Hamas' victory January 2006, Israel announced that it would not negotiate with a Hamas-led government, and has since withheld \$850 million of tax revenues gathered on the Palestinian Authority's behalf.

The US and the European Union also imposed sanctions on the new government, cutting off humanitarian aid until Hamas recognises Israel, accepts the agreements made by the defeated Fatah regime

and renounces “terrorism”.

As well as showing contempt for the democratically-expressed Palestinian will, these moves were an incitement to eject Hamas from government – by fair means or foul.

Hamas had to govern in the face of international isolation, a mounting economic and humanitarian crisis, and obstruction by the PA bureaucracy. An attempt in May 2006 to offset the armed power of the Fatah-led security forces by creating a militia under the control of the Hamas-led Interior Ministry led to an armed stand-off in Gaza with PA police units deployed by Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, the elected PA president, to “restore order”.

Hamas' agreement to withdraw this militia from the streets, however, did not stop the cycle of abductions and assassinations, culminating in security forces firing on a Hamas rally in Ramallah in December 2006, shortly after an attempt to assassinate prime minister Ismail Haniya.

The next day Abbas called for early elections in an attempted coup to remove the elected government. After fierce fighting, an accord reached in Saudi-brokered talks in Mecca in February 2007 led to a ceasefire, and to Fatah joining a new

government the following month. However, a breach of the ceasefire has led to renewed clashes.

Why is this happening now? It would be a mistake to look for an explanation solely in the “bad blood” between Fatah and Hamas, important though this is. Much of the violence from Fatah's side has been inspired not by Abbas, but by Gaza security chief Mohammed Dahlan – dubbed “Palestine's Pinochet”. Dahlan's Force 17 militia is the main recipient of US and Israeli funds.

For their part, Israel and the US have motives aplenty to keep the intra-Palestinian violence at boiling point. The surge of 30,000 US soldiers to Baghdad, intended to be the one last push before an “honourable” US withdrawal, has failed to create a stable Iraqi government under US hegemony, and led to intensified attacks by the Sunni and Shia Iraqi resistance. Israel's botched summer war in Lebanon led to victory for Hizbullah, who, while failing to remove Fouad Siniora's pro-imperialist Lebanese government from power, have not yet been cut down to size either.

## For a single workers' state

The latest bombardment by Israeli troops on the Gaza Strip shows the bankruptcy of a two-state solution based on Palestinian “bantustans” – isolated statelets with no national defence, no freedom of movement and no control over their airspace. This is not a nation state. The pressure that Israel can bring to bear on any Palestinian government means that it cannot be sovereign.

But, on the other hand, the policy of Hamas, which would reduce the Jewish population to a powerless minority, would be equally reactionary.

Workers Power fights for a single, secular state, the right of return of all Palestinian refugees to their homeland, no privileges or discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religious belief, and for the working classes of the region to rise up and begin the struggle for the united socialist states of the Middle East.



# Fifth International

Journal of the League for the Fifth International £2 €3 \$5



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Whatever happened to the anticapitalist movement?

The resolvable rise of German imperialism

Review: Permanent Revolution, Latin American left, China and workers' resistance

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# OUT NOW!

The summer issue of our journal, Fifth International, is now available. Since the appearance of the last issue of Fifth International in February events have continued to bear out the perspectives of our tendency; the world situation is one of mounting instability, caused both by attacks by the ruling class and stiffened resistance from those coming under attack. The third element of the situation is a severe crisis of leadership within the resistance movements.

In this South Asia special, Luke Cooper examines the background to the mass opposition to the regime of Pervez Musharraf, while Simon Hardy looks at the underlying reasons for the renewed war in Sri Lanka, and how a new strategy is needed if the Tamils are to win their freedom and link up with the workers of the majority community fighting back against neoliberalism.

There's plenty here also for those attending the anti-G8 protests. Martin Suchanek looks at how German imperialism is planning to take the lead in getting the project of an imperialist superstate back on the rails. Dave Stockton traces the mounting crisis of the anticapitalist movement and what measures are needed to overcome it.

We also publish extended reviews on Marta Harnecker's *Rebuilding the left*, a book on the Latin American movements and Sheila Cohen's *Ramparts of resistance*, which chronicles the ups and downs of the American and British trade unions. Shorter reviews of the anthology, *100 Years of Permanent Revolution: Results and Prospects*, and Timothy Cheek's *Living with Reform: China since 1989* are also included.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### DOCTORS ON THE DOLE

Junior doctors have been protesting over the Labour government's ruthless inefficiency. Ruthless because job cuts have left 5,000 newly qualified doctors with no placements in the NHS; inefficient because the application system is so badly designed that it failed to allocate places to thousands of doctors.

Thousands of junior doctors took to the streets of Glasgow and London to protest - while Blair claims his work for the NHS will be remembered for a generation. He's right there!

### DEFEND GAY RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Gay rights campaigners marked the 14th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Russia by calling for the right to hold a Pride March in Moscow. But when 100 activists, including Italian MEP Marco Capatto and Outrage! organiser Peter Tatchell, took to the streets, they were violently attacked by gangs of neo-Nazis and orthodox Christians, chanting, "Death to homosexuals!"

The police finally moved in and arrested... the victims! Demo organiser, Nicolas Alexeyev, remains under arrest as we go to press. This is another example of the growing Bonapartism of Russian president Vladimir Putin - and an issue that should be raised at the anti-G8 protests.

### VOTE CRUDDAS?

Unite general union leader Derek Simpson is backing Jon Cruddas in Labour's deputy leader race. "He alone is calling for a change of direction in order to reconnect with the Labour Party's core supporters." Unite's joint general secretary Tony Woodley and Unison's Dave Prentis agree.

If Cruddas is so close to the workers why was he one of 318 Labour MPs to nominate pay and pension grabber Gordon Brown for leader? Why did he not join the 139 Labour MPs, who voted against the Iraq invasion in March 2003? Why was he Tony Blair's trade union adviser from 1997 to 2001?

In other words, Cruddas is straight out of the John Prescott mould. If elected, he will talk as if he were a trade unionist, but walk like a neoliberal. He's a faker: no vote for Cruddas.

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## LABOUR PARTY

# Turn Brown's first 100 days into a

Gordon Brown is to become prime minister despite Labour's appalling election results.

*Jeremy Dewar* calls on union leaders to greet his "coronation" with strikes and mass action

**M**ay saw another major collapse in the Labour vote. Many workers rightly withdrew their support from Labour and, as a result, the Tories made gains in the north of England for the first time in over a decade and are resurgent in the South East.

In 2006, Labour lost 319 councillors, their worst result for 30 years. In 2007, they lost a further 505. They lost control of eight councils, including Sheffield, Blackburn and Oldham.

They won only 27 per cent of the vote. The party lost their majority in the Welsh Assembly and fell behind the Scottish National Party north of the border.

This is a serious blow for Labour. The bosses will warn Gordon Brown that if he puts a foot wrong – gives an inch to the unions, makes a mistake on the economy, or does not battle for British imperialism's interests on the international stage – then there is a premier-in-waiting, David Cameron.

### Union leaders ignore majority

The big union leaders – Tony Woodley and Derek Simpson of Unite, Dave Prentis of Unison and Paul Kenny of GMB – will no doubt use this as yet another excuse not to resist Labour. Their tacit support for Brown was based on their assumption that only he could win back the middle class and well-off workers – and stop the Tories.

But for many, Brown is a disaster. More than 12 million workers – a fifth of the population – live in relative poverty; 1.5 million are unemployed.

Of the 1.5 million migrants, who have come to work in Britain in the past three years, the vast majority slave under intolerable conditions in factories, agriculture, the hotel, catering and building trades. Those without work permits are even more vulnerable.

Families living on neglected, sub-standard housing estates face daily discrimination from employers and harassment from police and the

authorities. Pensioners fight a weekly battle to find the money to pay for food, heating, rent and travel.

It is to these workers and youth that we unashamedly turn to lead resistance to Labour. For them Brown's 58 months of uninterrupted "economic growth" have not brought security or prosperity. For them the danger of the Tories returning to office is not the immediate one – three more years of hard Labour is. For them there is no alternative but to fight today's battles.

Gordon Brown may regret "massive unemployment in Iraq", but he won't pull the troops out or undo the rip-off oil and gas contracts secured by BP, Shell and co. He will continue to impose the 2 per cent real pay cut on public sector workers, while handing out tax breaks for the mega-corporations. He will tie any funding in services to market "reforms", privatisation and cuts. Hiving off 85 post offices to WH Smith and shutting 2,500 more: this is what Brown's policy means in practice.

The union leaders want Brown to do a deal with them, a second Warwick agreement, so-called after the accord signed in 2004, which guaranteed union support for Labour's election campaign the fol-

lowing year in return for minor reforms, most of which Labour reneged on. We don't need another worthless deal. We need to bust Brown's policies.

### 100 days to shake Brown

Gordon Brown wants to start his premiership with 100 days of policy announcements and initiatives. Since they are virtually all a continuation or worsening of Blair's attacks we need to fight to get the unions and the antiwar movement to turn this into 100 days of struggle.

We need a united strike across the public sector to smash the 2 per cent pay cut. Dave Prentis has suggested to other unions, "where there is industrial action we coordinate where possible such action". Fine, but it must not be limited to one-day strikes, and then called off for "new talks". We must fight for all out and indefinite action until every section has won.

Most unions are committed by conference decisions to opposing to the war in Iraq. Yet Brown supports the war. Unions must demand publicly and unequivocally that Brown pulls the troops out now. When he refuses they must declare war on him. We need to fight to get unions to boycott all work related

# Scotland: call a referendum now!

**T**he Scottish election revealed that there is a significant section of society – across all the classes – who want more power for the Scottish parliament or independence.

The huge vote for the SNP indicates a sharp rise in support for Scottish independence. The cause of this is two-fold. First and most important is Labour's neoliberal policy, which continues to alienate its working class base.

Second is the collapse of the Scottish Socialist Party, which previously commanded the support of a significant layer of advanced workers, some of whom migrated directly to the SNP because of the SSP's support for a "little Scotland" solution.

It is essential that a referendum is held on the simple question, "Should Scotland separate from the United Kingdom?" so that the

Scottish people can decide this question.

Communists would call for a "No" vote as we wish to see neither the creation of a multitude of small capitalist states nor the further division of the British working class movement.

But we would insist that Westminster recognise and implement the outcome of such a referendum. The duty of workers in England and Wales would be to fight by all means necessary to ensure that, if they so choose, the Scottish people should be freely able to exercise their right to separate.

### Scottish Socialist fall out

The collapse of both the Scottish Socialist Party rump and Tommy Sheridan's Solidarity is mainly down to the unprincipled and apolitical split in the party. Apart from Sheri-



Tommy Sheridan: soiled goods?

dan's vote (4.11 per cent), which may be challenged and possibly result in his election, Solidarity polled around 1.5 per cent and the SSP just 0.6 per cent. The SSP scored 6.7 per cent in 2003. Put another way, in 2003 the SSP gained six MSPs; in

2007, the splinter groups gained one councillor apiece.

The result is a slap in the face for the idea of uniting the far left on a reformist platform and accommodating to bourgeois nationalism, as well as the strategy of placing elections over and above any other form of class struggle.

Capitalist workers' parties, like Labour, are founded on the principle that the leaders should be unaccountable to the membership; that is how they manage the contradiction between their bourgeois policy and their proletarian base. That centrists like the Committee for a Workers International and Socialist Workers Party fell for Sheridan's charms and uncritically followed him into Solidarity speaks volumes about their inability to chart an independent, revolutionary course.



# hot summer

to the war, to halt the movement of supplies to war zones. The unions must be won to strike action to prevent any attack on Iran.

Unite and the GMB general unions have started to organise migrant workers. Now they must support their demands for citizenship rights and work permits for all and to stop deportations.

## Organise from below

Of course Prentis, Woodley, Simpson and co. have no intention of fighting Brown. They still hope to the government and the employers to enter into “partnership” with them. To this end they are ready to accept job losses, factory closures and outsourcing. Of course they will protest. They know full well the new jobs on offer will be less secure and worse paid. All they care about is that they are consulted and are able to “negotiate” away their members jobs wages and conditions.

That's why, as well as demanding that the union leaders do the jobs we pay them for, we must pile on the pressure from below and, crucially, organise the battle against Brown without and against them when they fail to do so. In the coming weeks and months, rank and file workers and activists need to build

up their own organisations so that they can fight Labour and the bosses – and resist any attempt by the union bureaucracy to limit or sabotage our struggles.

Every section of workers under attack should organise workplace and branch meetings to discuss tactics and strategy to smash the 2 per cent pay limit, to defend jobs and to halt and reverse privatisation, cuts and closures – and to elect *strike committees* to run the dispute.

Unlike the officials, these committees should be fully accountable to and recallable by the members. By linking up nationally they could provide an alternative strike leadership, one more closely in tune with the members. They could provide the basis for a *rank and file movement* dedicated to transforming the unions and freeing them from bureaucratic control.

In every town and city, we need to organise public meetings with representatives from every workplace under attack and from community campaigns fighting to save schools, hospitals and services – in order to co-ordinate the fightback and set up *committees of action* with delegates from every sector and area. If the union leaders won't forge a united front, we should build fighting unity



Gordon Brown: organise from below to stop his attacks

from below, making it more difficult for them to sign separate deals and leave others in the lurch.

Finally, we should not abandon “big politics” to either Labour or the union tops. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the neoliberal onslaught on our jobs, benefits and services and the slew of repressive laws attacking our democratic rights and civil liberties – these are our business, too. We need a *new working class party* based in the unions and won to a revolution-

ary programme.

Throughout the struggles ahead, the crisis of working class representation must not be forgotten. The lack of a working class party hampers us in our daily battles and prevents us from launching a real struggle for power, so that we can abolish the capitalist system that Brown so admires.

If you agree with this course of action, then you should contact us, work alongside us and *join Workers Power*.

## John4loser: where now for the Labour left?

Just 29 Labour MPs nominated John McDonnell for leader of the Labour Party. These figures are a damning indictment of the idea that Labour can be “reclaimed” – or even that its left wing can channel working class discontent into an effective challenge against the right.

But there could not have been a better time for a left leadership challenge. The longest period of Labour government – 10 years – has proved to millions that Tony Blair and his right-hand man, Gordon Brown, are bosses' politicians through and through. From Labour's wars in Serbia, Afghanistan and Iraq through to support for big business and private profits, they serve the rich and stamp on the poor.

McDonnell and his supporters had other advantages. Their John4leader campaign started in July 2006, giving them plenty of time to organise among the rank

and file in the party and affiliated organisations to pressure the careerist MPs and bureaucratic union tops. In the final week, the centre candidate, Michael Meacher, withdrew and called on his supporters to rally to McDonnell.

Almost unanimously they refused to do so. Five members of the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs – Dave Anderson, John Austin, David Hamilton, Bob Marshall-Andrews and Austin Mitchell – did not nominate McDonnell either. Cowards and careerists the lot of them!

Finally, McDonnell had an opportunity to turn the massive movements against Blair and Brown into a movement for a left challenge: the anti-war movement, the public sector pay revolt, the campaigns against privatisation and cuts in the NHS, schools, council housing and so on.

McDonnell could have organised rallies and meetings across the country to stimulate a debate about

the crisis of working class representation and forge a fighting unity against big business and its backers.

But in the one debate of the campaign, at the Fabian Society, McDonnell praised Brown for having a “brain the size of Mars” and promised to “unite to defeat the Tories” no matter who wins. On accepting defeat, he congratulated Brown and wished him “every success in government”.

Despite previously having called on activists outside of the party to rally to his challenge, McDonnell's parting shot was: “I know how angry many of you are, but I would ask you to stay in the party and fight.”

How despicable! John McDonnell and his supporters should come out of the party and fight. We need direct action, strikes and occupations – not business as usual.

Calls for unity between the left inside and outside the party are in fact calls for people to support the

party even with Gordon Brown as leader. Any other path, the Labour left and union leaders will claim, will let the Tories in.

But it is unity between the left and right inside the party that is letting in the Tories – and in some areas boosting the BNP. Because the reformist left share with the right the strategy of using exclusively parliamentary means for changing society, they will always buckle under when the crunch comes.

For MPs – even John McDonnell, who has defied the Labour whip 135 times since 2001 – this means limiting their struggles so that they are not expelled or do not bring the government down. As elections approach, they become fellow worshippers in the “broad church” of Labour. Meanwhile, every day that the creation of a new working class party is blocked increases the likelihood of a Tory government.



## POST WORKERS

# Vote 'yes' and strike against Royal Mail attacks!

Post workers are balloting for strike action against pay cut and job losses. A *CWU rep* explains why they need better pay and conditions and asks what kind of action will be needed to win

Leaders of the CWU postal workers' union have rejected Royal Mail's derisory 2.5 per cent pay offer and are now balloting for industrial action. The result will be announced at the union's conference on 7 June, with a strike possible soon after.

Royal Mail made the pay offer as complicated as possible in order to confuse people. There is a 2.5 per cent pay rise (worth £8.09 a week!) or £600 lump sum – but only if cuts of £350 million are made. Both of these "increases" are below the rate of inflation – in reality, they are pay cuts. And, as posties are painfully aware from a year of "efficiency savings", cuts mean job losses, turning full-time posts into part-time ones, and making everyone work harder.

Then there are one-off bonuses if your local office makes more cuts than planned (as if!), and a shares scheme that would offer an £800 "dividend payment" if staff meet their local budgets and Royal Mail hits its profit target. This is corporatism: trying to make workers think they have a common interest in the company's performance. It is a trick to bust the union's independence.

To top it all, Royal Mail also wants to make cuts of £350 million each year for the next five years!

## Being a postie: a dog's life

Post workers start shifts at 5am and work most Saturdays. We work for 40 hours a week; and our £310 a week basic plus management intimidation makes overtime compulsory for most. Compared with Adam Crozier's £1 million a year office job, we lead a dog's life.

Yet Royal Mail wants:

- Phasing in 6am starts, thus ending our £10 a week early shift allowance
- Cutting night shifts (and allowances)
- Taking on the rounds of post workers on sick or on holiday during the summer – more work for the same pay. This is a provocation. Royal Mail's demands will not stop until the CWU is busted – or we win. Royal Mail, the government and its pro-privatisation regulator PostComm have all made it clear what they think the future looks like:
- Sorting by machines
- Workforce shifted to a 60:40 full-time

**We need a strategy that does not rely on lobbying Labour but rests on militant action by the rank and file**

## A socialist action programme for the CWU

- **Vote yes in the ballot – no deals!**
- **£400 a week now! For a 35 hour week with no loss of pay!**
- **For an indefinite strike – stop all mail till we win!**
- **A moratorium on further efficiency cuts!**
- **Stop all Post Office closures and cuts – strike together!**
- **Defend the final salary pension scheme for all, including new starters – no changes to contributions or conditions!**
- **Link up with other public sector unions, for all out strike!**
- **Abolish Postcomm, close the postal market!**
- **Nationalise the privateers, like TNT, with no compensation! For a fully nationalised postal company under workers' control!**

to part-time ratio

● Slashing of tens of thousands of jobs. Every postal worker must respond with the fight of their lives: a high turn-out and a resounding "yes" vote, leading to an all-out indefinite strike.

## How we can win

Millions of other public sector workers – NHS staff, teachers, civil servants, local authority workers – are also up against Gordon Brown's 2 per cent pay limit. By striking together we can defeat our individual employers and set back the government's free market agenda.

Millions are alarmed at the accelerating pace of privatisation and cuts in public services, especially the NHS. They can be rallied to our side by the unions initiating an anti-privatisation movement on the scale of the 2003 antiwar movement. An indefinite public sector-wide strike over pay, backed up by such a movement, would be an unstoppable force.

But the CWU leaders do not want to initiate such a movement. They don't want to rally the working class behind such a campaign because they are tied to the Labour Party. Billy Hayes and co. put the interests of Gordon Brown before ours. Their tactics are limited to those that solely go through the Labour Party structures – yet even these structures are abandoned when it comes to the crunch.

CWU postal leader Dave Ward recently resigned from Labour's leading committee, saying "I feel there is a growing conflict of interests between my role in

representing and defending the views of the CWU and continuing to spend time on the Labour Party NEC."

Duh... isn't the whole point of sitting on the NEC in order to carry this fight into the Labour Party? If, as soon as a conflict emerges, Ward resigns and hands Gordon Brown and his would-be deputy, ex-CWU leader Alan Johnson, a clean run, then why is the union still paying for this party? Wouldn't it be better to end the farce of "influencing the government" and use our funds to found a new party?

All this underscores why we need a strategy that does not rely on lobbying Labour but rests on militant action controlled by the rank and file. We need strike committees to control negotiations and run the dispute. These committees should link up with other workers; such as PCS members, who are also fighting the government over jobs and pay.

Postal workers have built up an impressive network of grassroots activists, capable of launching wildcat strikes and defending militants from victimisation. We now need to transform this network into a national rank and file movement that can keep up the pressure on our leaders, step up the action if they attempt to limit the strikes to ineffective one-day protests, and replace them should they attempt to sell us short or call off the strikes.

If we can achieve this in the coming weeks, not only can we win, but we will strengthen the union for the looming battle against privatisation.

**Post workers who want to get involved with Workers Power's CWU campaigns should email us at: WP\_postal@yahoo.co.uk.**

**To read more articles and download our bulletins go to: [http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?cwu\\_z38](http://www.workerspower.com/index.php?cwu_z38)**



## FIGHTBACK

# Civil servants: campaign for an indefinite strike

By Keith Spencer

May Day saw 200,000 civil servants strike for the second time this year over low pay and job cuts. Civil servants have been offered a 2 per cent pay rise – in effect a pay cut – in a sector where one in four earn less than £15,000 and Gordon Brown is cutting a quarter of all posts.

The PCS conference in May came at a crucial time to debate and discuss a strategy to save jobs and win decent pay rises. But all the conference came up with was more of the same: a few more one-day national strikes, coupled with local action.

The dominant faction in the union is Left Unity led by the Socialist Party, whose paper reported, without a hint of irony: “[General Secretary Mark Serwotka] said that despite the government programme to cut over 100,000 civil service jobs, of which 60,000 had already gone, the union’s combative defence of its members’ interests had meant that workers were flocking to join the union.” (*The Socialist* 26 May).

How can a strategy that has seen 60,000 jobs disappear be a success? Membership might be increasing but if the job losses and privatisation continue there won’t be an awful lot to defend. The current strategy leaves workers with nothing to do during the three month gap (!) between strikes, only hits the employers for a day at a time, and allows managers to continue with job cuts.

The Independent Left, a recent split from Left Unity offered another strategy. They called for selective strikes – i.e. calling only one section out at a time – with a national levy and an enforced overtime ban.

This is a rehash of the failed strategy of the Socialist Party’s predecessor, Militant, in the 1980s. Selective action isolates those on strike, leaving most members totally inactive, except for paying a levy, despite them suffering low pay and job cuts.

Both these strategies have one common thread: a lack of confidence in the members of the union and a fear of fighting for what needs to be done. The Alliance for Workers Liberty (which supports the Independent Left) reports: “The PCS Executive... rightly do not believe that members are about to vote for all out action and they are unable to set out what happens next.”

## Indefinite strike

Activists must resist being dragged into the mindset of the bureaucracy. Undoubtedly, in the absence of a campaign to persuade PCS members that they could mount an indefinite strike and sustain it, they are not “about to vote” for it. Officials fear such a campaign because it radicalises workers, creating debates about how the strike should be run, and what its aims should be, in every workplace and branch. It raises the prospect of a rank and file controlled strike – and by extension union.

An all-out, indefinite strike would free up tens



Mark Serwotka: talks left but refuses to campaign for the action needed to win

of thousands of activists to speak to other public sector workers and demand they join the strike. Working class users of their services could be rallied to occupy scabbing Job Centres and tax offices. The strike could become a beacon of defiance for all those under attack from Brown’s government.

Can the argument be won? We don’t know. But we do know that the alternative strategies are deeply flawed and almost certain to lead to defeat. And we know that you can’t win an argument by avoiding it. The point is that it would be a step in the right direction for the most clear-sighted members of the union to organise such a cam-

# Stop the War: Fairford Two show the way

By Kuldip Bajwa

Phil Pritchard and Toby Olditch, the Fairford Two, were acquitted last month by a Bristol Crown Court jury, despite admitting breaking into RAF Fairford on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, with intent to sabotage warplanes.

This latest reprieve for anti-war activists shows that the state still cannot find a jury that will convict those taking direct action to stop the war. Instead the jury agreed that Phil and Toby were seeking to prevent a war crime.

Direct action to bring about the defeat of US and British imperialism is both possible and popular, so why is the Stop the War Coalition watering down its opposition and seeking alliances with pro-imperialist forces?

Stop the War has written an open letter to Gordon Brown calling on him to withdraw British troops from Iraq by October 2007. It has called a national demonstration outside the special Labour Party conference in Manchester, marking his “coronation” as prime minister.

## Courting the pro-war Lib Dems

This demand has been carefully framed to match the Liberal Democrats’ call for a phased withdrawal, despite the pro-war party merely wanting to redeploy troops to Afghanistan – on the grounds that the war there is “winnable”!

By calling for a phased withdrawal, Stop the War sows illusions in the British army and falsely suggests that there is something “progressive” in their occupation of Iraq.

There is not. Every day British soldiers remain in Iraq is another

day of bloody occupation. Stop the War officers should stick to their own conference policy and demand: “Troops out now!”

Stop the War’s tactic of toning down its anti-war message to appease the likes of the Lib Dems has also prevented it from organising the type of militant action that could have stopped the war.

Whilst mass demonstrations display the strength of the movement, by themselves they are woefully inadequate and wilfully ignored by the government.

Workers Power calls for Stop the War and its trade union affiliates to organise strikes and mass direct action against the war machine. These could have brought the country to a halt and prevented the war from taking place in the first place; today, they can help force a withdrawal.

Augustin Aguayo is the latest US

soldier to refuse to load his gun and fight the Iraqi resistance. But, although such courageous resistance is increasingly widespread among the troops, it remains sporadic. The Coalition should call on rank and file soldiers to organise separately from their officers, to disobey illegal and immoral orders, and to refuse to fight against the resistance.

Instead of writing open letters on the Lib Dems’ rotten politics, Stop the War should send out a loud and clear message to Gordon Brown: we’re escalating resistance to the war at home and abroad; either you get the troops out now, or we’ll disrupt big business, sabotage your war machine and foment discontent in your army.

- Troops out now!
- Victory to the resistance!



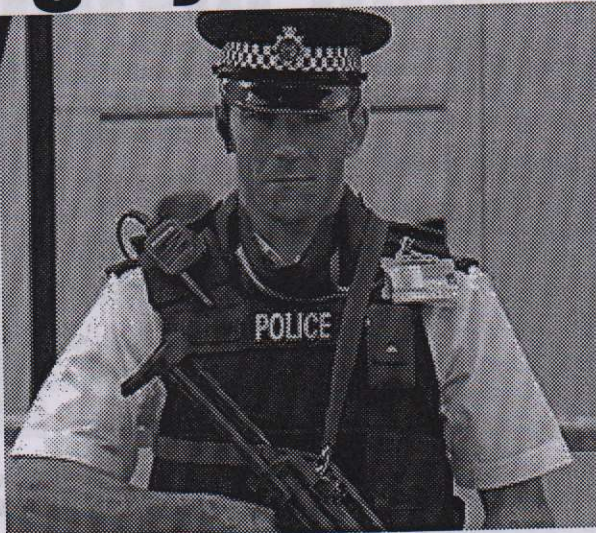
## FIGHTBACK

# 'Tell us where you're going or we'll charge you £5,000'

Outgoing Home Secretary John Reid's parting gift to us is another step towards the creation of a police state in Britain. Under new proposals, police will have the power to stop and question anyone, anywhere, if they suspect any terrorist activity of taking place.

They would be able to take your name and address, and demand to know what you are doing. If you refuse to co-operate, then a £5,000 fine will be issued. These new powers are part of Tony Blair's final legacy: to erode our civil liberties in the name of fighting to defend our way of life. The question is how many civil liberties will be stripped away in order to keep us safe?

Stop and search laws were used heavily in the 1970s and 1980s, and played a major role in provoking riots in Bristol, Liverpool, London and Birmingham, as black youth, who were disproportionately targeted by the police, resis-



"Going to the shops are we, sir?"

ted harassment.

They were called "sus laws back then. Now Reid and Blair want to take away the burden of the police having to prove they are suspicious. Presumably, looking "foreign" will do from now on.

A spokesman from the Muslim Council of Britain pointed out that in 2006 there were 22,700 stop and search cases in London - but only 27 led to a terrorist offences related arrest.

In a thoroughly racist speech Blair defended Reid's proposals, asking why we put civil liberties "even of foreign nationals" before our own nations safety.

The only thing that will make us safer is when Blair and his new Labourite thugs are gone and their raft of repressive laws, regulations and orders is broken up and put in the dustbin of history!

## BNP are still a threat

By Alasdair Byrne

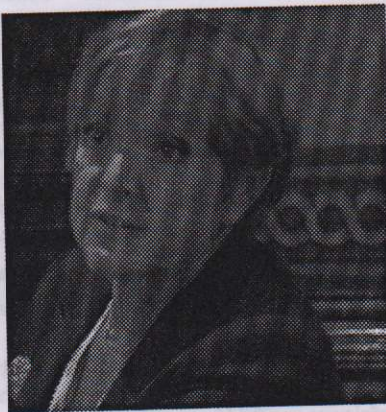
After Labours Margaret Hodge publicly agreed with the British National Party's policy of giving white people preferential treatment, the BBC took full advantage. Its news bulletin showed BNP London organiser Richard Barnbrook delivering a bouquet of flowers to the hapless and racist Labour MP, while *Newsnight* broadcast a "debate" between BNP chairman Nick Griffin and another Labour MP, Keith Vaz.

The whole sorry affair illustrates the importance of trade unionists in the media refusing to compile, print or broadcast stories that give fascists a platform. It also shows that the Labour Party is no shield against the BNP. Workers and ethnic minorities must rely on their own strength to counter the fascist threat.

The BNP looked set to make a breakthrough in the local elections last month after standing over 750 councillors across the country. Instead, although they won ten seats, they only made an overall gain of just two. But this hides the fact that they made significant inroads in certain areas, like Wrexham, where they polled 9.4 per cent.

The BNP is not just about winning seats and votes. It is a fascist party, which seeks to organise its members on the streets. Where support for the BNP grows, so does the number of racist attacks.

The BNP won't disappear, only to roll out the leafleters come the next election. To be a "voting member" of the party



Margaret Hodge: appeasing racists

requires you to have been an activist for two years, contributing at least three hours a week to the party. Nick Griffin has called for these activists to go out and do "community work". He hopes to convert protest votes and the "non-political population" into "fully-fledged nationalists" - by which he means fascists. Griffin explains that the reason for this turn to the community is because it will keep their "bandwagon rolling toward power".

We should reject BNP involvement in local projects. The last thing working class communities need is racist hatemongers! What working people need is a party that helps communities to unite and fight for the resources they need from the big bourgeoisie and the state, and to organise self defence teams to run the fascist goons out of town.

## Obituary: Shirley Goodwin 1945-2007

By Bernie McAdam

On Thursday 14 May Shirley Goodwin died at her home in Birmingham. Shirley had fought a brave battle against cancer - indeed she had spent a lifetime courageously fighting injuries sustained from burns whilst very young. Courage though was a commodity Shirley had in abundance.

As a working class fighter she fought against a system that sickened her sense of fair play and justice. Be it against inequality or discrimination, Shirley would roundly come down on the side of the exploited and the oppressed. She threw herself behind the miners' strike in 1984/85. She was on the picket lines at midlands pits, collected funds on the streets and discussed and made solidarity with the many pickets that were stationed in Birmingham.

Joint work and discussion with Workers Power at the same time also convinced her of the need for a revolutionary answer to the crisis of capitalism. She joined Workers Power and was a member until 1987. Shirley felt unable to retain membership of the group but still remained a friend and valued political ally.

Shirley was also a determined and valued activist within the trade union movement in Birmingham. Her last job was for the National Blood Service where she was highly regarded. She became a shop steward and also a branch secretary for Unison Midlands Region. She will be sorely missed by the local trade union and labour movement and of course by her husband Norman and family to whom we give our deepest sympathies.



# workers power

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

## THE G8 IS THE INTERNATIONAL OF CAPITAL WE NEED A FIFTH INTERNATIONAL: A NEW WORLD PARTY OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

- Imperialist world system heads towards new crises
- G8 leaders plan harsher neoliberal attacks on workers
- Wars and repression as rivalries intensify
- Capital drives towards environmental catastrophes
- Mass resistance on the rise in Americas, Asia, Africa, Middle East and Europe

The G8 leaders are meeting in Heiligendamm behind an eight-foot high steel mesh and concrete fence, topped with razor wire, CCTV cameras, movement sensors and seven miles in circumference. The exclusion zone extends 11 nautical miles into the Baltic and will be enforced by a small fleet, including several German, two US and one British warship. 16,000 police and 1,100 soldiers have been mobilized to defend this fortress. The cost of the whole operation is estimated at 100

million euros (£68 million).

Germany's Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble has announced he will temporarily introduce controls at the country's land and sea borders and at airports "in order to prevent the arrival of potential criminal and violent perpetrators in Germany."

Yet the "criminal and violent perpetrators" will be inside the ring of steel. They are the G8 leaders.

(Continued on next page)



League for the  
Fifth International



## G8 AND IMPERIALISM

# The G8, their world order and the fightback

As the leaders of the G8 group of the world's richest and most powerful nations gather in Germany, *Dave Stockton*, secretary of the League for the Fifth International, examines their plans

**T**heir biggest single crime is the invasion and occupation of Iraq. Between March 18, 2003 (the invasion), and June 2006, 601,027 Iraqis have died. The United Nations Refugee agency estimates 2 million Iraqis have fled their homeland since 2003 and the number of internal refugees is over 1.6 million. The jobless rate is near 70 per cent and 54 per cent of the population is living on less than US\$1 a day.

The war criminals responsible for this horrific situation are first and foremost George Bush and Tony Blair.

In addition, Russian President Vladimir Putin has his own bloody criminal record in Chechnya which runs them close. According to the Russian-Chechen Friendship Society's estimate, the death toll since 1994 stands at 150,000 to 200,000 killed (of whom up to 40,000 are Russian soldiers with roughly the same number of Chechen resistance fighters). According to Amnesty International the "second Chechen war", lasting from 1999 until today, has seen up to 25,000 civilians killed, with another 5,000 missing.

The G8's crimes arise from their role as the leading drivers of world imperialism - a system which inseparably links together economic exploitation and military aggression. A few "developed capitalist countries" exploit and rule the rest.

## Hunger, exploitation and inequality

The crimes of the G8 are not only the destruction caused by their wars but the day to day exploitation that leads to complete human misery: the failure of their system, capitalism, to meet basic human need.

The major component of the world's income inequality (as measured by the global Gini coefficient) is comprised by two groups of countries. The first group has 13 per cent of the world's population and receives 45 per cent of the world's income. This group includes the US, Japan, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, and comprises 500 million people with an annual income level over \$11,500.

The second group has 42 per cent of the world's population and receives only 9 per cent of world income. This group

includes India, Indonesia and rural China, and comprises 2.1 billion people with an income level under \$1,000.

At the G8 the representatives of the tiny minority of "haves" will decide the fate of billions of "have nots".

A central priority for this minority in Heiligendamm is to discuss their control over the globe's resources, raw materials, industries and human labour. They will discuss how to save the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation, which began in 2001 but has stalled at every international meeting since.

They will discuss the dangerous imbalances that afflict the world economy even at the peak of a "boom", with world GDP expanding at around 5 per cent for 2007. They will try to prevent their own mounting rivalries, political and economic, from further destabilising it and tipping it into an economic crash.

They will of course make pretence about concern for the poor of the planet. They would like to see their situation "improved", they say - provided it does not harm the interests of the rich in any way.

## Crocodile tears for the poor

At the meetings preceding the G8 summit at Gleneagles in 2005, the finance ministers agreed to write off the \$40 billion debt owed by 18 so-called Highly Indebted Poor Countries to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the African Development Fund.

In addition the G8 promised to increase global aid by a sizeable £23.3 billion a year. The results were truly pitiful. The OECD said earlier this year that across the G8, aid levels have fallen by almost 9 per cent since Gleneagles. The main culprits are the USA, Canada, Japan and Italy who together contributed \$7.8 billion less in 2006 compared to 2005.

Now, according to the draft common declaration prepared by the German government for Heiligendamm, the G8 will pledge to raise official development aid to Africa to \$25 billion a year by 2010 - as compared to the \$67 billion a year promised in 2005.

On climate change, too, those hoping for a change of heart from George Bush had better not hold their breath. (The criminal position of the G8 on Africa is explained in more depth on page 14, whilst the fail-

ure to tackle climate change is dealt with on pages 12 and 13).

## Renewed rivalries

Beneath the facade of unity, the leaders will present to the public, there are growing rivalries and tensions. Relations between the USA and Russia have degenerated to the extent that large parts of the US media are talking of a New Cold War. This started with the Bush administration's decision at the Prague Summit 2002 to extend NATO membership to the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which then joined it in March 2004.

Putin, correctly enough, sees NATO's expansion as an ongoing policy of weakening Russia and establishing US and European Union hegemony over as much of the former Soviet Union as possible. He recently aptly described the US as a "comrade wolf ready to devour whatever it wanted."

To this must be added the promotion via well-funded US and European "institutes for democracy" and media networks like CNN, of a series of "people power revolutions". These resulted in the removal of a number of pro-Russian regimes. Most sensitive to Russia was the "Orange Revolution" in the Ukraine (November 2004 - January 2005), which ousted pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich in favour of the pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko.

The latest cause of friction is the American decision to take its "Missile Defence System" up to Russia's borders by installing 10 missile interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic.

In Ukraine, President Viktor Yushchenko's dissolution of parliament and attack on Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's government once again threatened major civil conflict between the two halves of the country and their respective "nationalities", Ukrainian and Russian. The "truce" based on new elections on 30 September can only delay this jockeying for power.

Signals from Moscow indicate that Russia believes the USA, with its disastrous embroilment in Iraq, is now entering a period in which its post-1991 global hegemony will come to an end. The US

**In France, Nicolas Sarkozy is preparing to 'do a Thatcher' on the most militant working class and youth**





The G8 leaders meeting in St Petersburg 2006

can be stood up to.

Thus a highly unstable period in international relations is becoming more and more visible, where the USA's unilateral actions produce strong counteractions from various combinations of the other powers including Russia and China. The meeting of the G8 may see attempts to paper over the cracks but this will not last long.

#### Resistance is rising

In Asia, revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations continue to multiply. Last year saw the revolutionary overthrow of the absolutist Nepalese monarchy by mass demonstrations by workers and youth in the cities, coming on top of the Maoist takeover of large areas of the countryside. Yet, in the name of their stages theory - first democracy then, later, socialism - the Maoists have entered a bourgeois government, letting the King 'retire from politics' to bide his time and prepare counterrevolution.

In India, in Nandigram, West Bengal, in March this year, the massacre and brutal repression by police and armed thugs of local people resisting forcible eviction from their land which was to be turned into a Special Economic Zone has turned sections of the working class and peasant movement against the Communist Party of India (Marxist)-led Left Front government.

In Pakistan, repeated demonstrations by lawyers and students over Musharraf's suspension of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Muhammad Chaudhry, led to a bloody massacre where over 40 demonstrators were killed. This in turn has unleashed

general strikes which put the survival of Musharraf's military regime into question.

In Latin America, the rise of left populist presidents - Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia - has continued with the election in Ecuador of Rafael Correa. He has indicated that he is taking the Chavez-Morales road by calling elections to a constituent assembly, promising a constitution which will break the institutional power of the white elite and its North American masters.

In Mexico, in the wake of the "stolen election" of 2006, the neoliberal pro-US president Felipe Calderón only established himself in power thanks to the timidity of the populist candidate López Obrador. There is still militant resistance to the North American puppet, despite the brutal repression of the Oaxaca Commune, and Calderón's programme of assaults on popular rights guarantees further upheavals.

In Bolivia, the continued resistance of the bourgeois and landowning Right centred in Santa Cruz, encouraged by Evo Morales' vacillations, as against the determination of the workers and peasants to make real, substantial gains when it comes to the ownership of the land and the social use of the country's oil, gas and mineral reserves, make further revolutionary clashes inevitable.

In short, Latin America is the centre of mass social struggles. Latin American populism, particularly now that Chavez has pressed it in revolutionary and socialist red, despite the fact that he has not gone

beyond the framework of the bourgeois state and the market economy, is a radicalising force for the entire continent and is clearly exercising a powerful influence far beyond it.

#### Crisis of leadership

A crisis of leadership in the working class and other popular movements is the main obstacle to a qualitative transformation of the struggles on both national and continental terrains, that is to the opening of a new revolutionary period. That is why the present period is a pre-revolutionary one. But the onset of a severe economic crisis, of clashes between the major powers, could rapidly change this in the years ahead.

The existing trade union leaders, the leaders of the parties that claim to represent the interests of the workers and peasants, prove time and again that they cannot lead struggles to victory. On the contrary, they sell them out or sell them short. They let the enemy, the ruling classes, recover when the masses throw back their attacks.

The reason? Quite simply they do not wish to put an end to bloody and exploitative capitalism and imperialism but to save and reform the existing system. With such a programme and leaders, further defeats are inevitable. But such a leadership is not inevitable. They can and they must be replaced.

This leadership crisis is reaching a peak within all the broadly defined mass movements of resistance to neoliberalism and war. On all continents, including Europe, the first wave of attacks by neoliberal

governments in 2003 - 2006 suffered serious setbacks but without workers either being able to drive the right from power or create a working class alternative. Thus in all these cases the attacks have been quickly resumed.

In France, Nicolas Sarkozy is preparing to "do a Thatcher" on the most militant working class and youth on the continent. In the months and years ahead. France will be a key battleground to which workers and youth across Europe and around the world must pay the closest attention: not only observe from the sidelines, of course, but come to the aid of our French brothers and sisters.

In Britain, Germany, Spain and Italy, these attacks have actually come from supposedly "workers' parties", carrying out neoliberal policies.

The paralysis of the World and European Social Forums - with the former dominated by the NGOs and taking a distinctive 'right turn' in Nairobi and the latter not even sure when or where the next forum will be held - is another striking expression of this crisis of leadership.

The main far left forces in the forums (Fourth International and International Socialist Tendency) are frightened of taking initiatives that might lead to a break with these bourgeois forces and in any case are bitter opponents of any actions that might lead to the foundation of a new International. In this they reveal that they are not consistent revolutionaries but centrists, vacillating between revolutionary words and reformist deeds.

In these conditions, the task of creating a fighting 'left wing' of the forces rallied to anticapitalism and anti-imperialism over the last ten years is crucial.

This left wing must openly and unequivocally base itself on a rejection of support for class collaborationist, "popular front" governments, like that of Romano Prodi, carrying out neoliberal measures and supporting Nato or UN wars and occupations. It must openly declare its solidarity with those fighting imperialist occupations and blockades - in Iraq and Palestine, in Venezuela or Bolivia. It must do all in its power to aid the resistance by weakening and breaking our rulers' capacity to wage war and by promoting soldiers' rights to refuse to fight.

Finally it must work towards developing a fighting action programme and the forms of organisation out of which a new world party of socialist revolution - a fifth International - can emerge.



## GLOBAL WARMING

# How can we stop climate change?

The G8 summit will see thousands protesting against climate change. *Joy Macready* outlines a socialist solution to the environmental crisis created by capitalism's market madness

When George W Bush sits down at the G8 summit in Germany to talk about climate change, he won't be thinking about the environment – he will be thinking about US firms like Exxon Mobil, Halliburton, and Citigroup. His sole objective is to protect American big business interests and their profits.

The same man who refused to sign the Kyoto Agreement (weak though it was) and questioned the validity of scientific evidence confirming climate change hasn't changed his tune, but sees the political benefits of sitting at the table paying lip service to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide. But he is not going to agree to anything that will put American companies at a competitive disadvantage. His cronies, Blair, Merkel, Putin, Sarkozy and the rest, are all there for the same reason – how can they position themselves so that their economies make the most money out of the global meltdown?

Under capitalism, our environment and its resources are commodities to be bought and sold. It is the drive of competition between firms, where they either cut costs and increase profits or get driven out of business, that governs the global political, economic and social relations. None can "afford" the luxury of cleaning up their polluting productive processes; many multinationals move into an area, wreak havoc on the environment, and then pack up shop and move to another vulnerable location where they can exploit the resources and the workers.

Karl Marx, writing in the 1860s, identified the destructive nature of capitalism: "All progress increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country proceeds from large-scale industry as a background of its development... the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the worker."

That's not to say that individual companies are blind to the fact they can make a few quid out of "greenwashing" their activities. Recently General Electric announced that its green business has doubled in two years to \$12 bil-

lion. The Financial Times stated that it is "the strongest sign yet that corporate America's drive to respond to climate change is beginning to pay off" And GE says that it is in position to meet its target of \$20 billion in "green" sales by 2010.

Just as General Electric proclaims that "climate change is a critical driver of new business opportunities", Shell remarkets itself as an energy company and says it can't make sufficient solar panels to satisfy demand, while BP has re-branded itself as "Beyond Petroleum" and adopted a sunflower logo.

Yet renewable energy represents 1 per cent of the \$8 billion that BP spends on fuel exploration and production.

Henderson Global Investors (a "socially responsible" investment fund manager) states that Shell and BP alone are responsible for 40 per cent of the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of the leading 100 companies on the FT Stock Exchange listing and have a large appetite for electricity. BP is also at the heart of carbon trading policy formation. BP's products remain massive polluters, generating 5 per cent of the entire world's fossil fuel emissions.

But the market madness doesn't end there – carbon trading is just one example of the way the free market acts to protect the polluter. To absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, landowners possessing large tracts of forest land (generally in poorer tropical countries) are paid not to cut their forests, while major polluters in more industrial parts of the world can purchase these credits as a means to allow them to continue to pollute.

The Thai farmer who gets carbon sequestration credits for not cutting the forest may experience a one-time windfall but no permanent enhancement of the family's standard of living; whereas the US corporate polluter buying credits contributes not only to continued pollution but to an intensified accumulation of capital.

A new sector of carbon brokers and consultancies is rapidly emerging which prospects for carbon dumps to privatise in the third world and which negotiates the price of excess carbon emissions. An "environmental" derivatives market has already sprung up whereby ecological credits are bundled together and sold in bulk to speculative financiers banking on the increased price of already established credits. Other markets for nature credits have emerged for many ecological commodities: biodiversity credits, fishery cred-

its, air and water pollution credits, rare bird credits and so forth.

## Individualism and localism

For many people, the immensity of the environmental problem leaves them feeling powerless. Not least because they are completely excluded from the decision-making process, for instance when Labour decides to spend £5 billion on an M1 road widening project instead of putting the money into public transport that would reduce reliance on private cars; or when Bush and Blair go to war in order to secure its future oil supplies instead of investing resources in renewable sources of energy.

People who are aware of the devastating effect that climate change will have, especially on the poorest regions of the world, want to take responsibility, so they turn to what they do have control of – their personal lifestyle – and choose to recycle, ride their bike to work, and/or stop flying as often. And capitalist governments are quite willing to push the burden of climate change onto the populus because it takes the spotlight off governmental policy and the real polluters – big business. In 2005, under pressure from industrial lobbyists, the Labour government torpedoed an all-party Climate Change Bill that would have increased the state's modest powers of enforcement.

The environmental movement, which includes NGO's like Greenpeace and political parties like the Green Party, also promotes a return to the individual, the local and a "green capitalism". The political slogans that the "greens" have contributed to the movement – "think globally, act locally", "reduce, reuse, recycle", "walk gently on the earth" – emphasise the localism of their politics. However without changes in the behaviour of the big polluters greenhouse gas emissions will continue to grow, no matter how much consumers recycle.

Fundamentally the greens believe that capitalism, as a socio-economic system, works as long as it is done on a smaller scale. In this way, they obscure the internal dynamics of the capitalist system: the drive to competition and monopoly on one hand, which means that small firms compete, acquire each other or drive the other out of business until they become large firms; and the exploitation of workers, which is based on private property and the ownership of the means of production, allowing the accumulation of sur-



plus value by the capitalists, on the other hand. So even if you are a small, local capitalist, you still own the factory and make profits from another's labour.

As political strategies, both methods as end games in themselves are problematic. As individuals, we should try to do as much as we can to improve the environment in our localities by putting pressure on governmental representatives and bodies through demonstrations, lobbying and actions to fulfil their meagre promises. But to answer an environmental crisis caused by global capitalism, we need a global solution. We need to fundamentally change the way the world is organised - politically, socially and economically. In short, we need a revolution that will overthrow the capitalist system and replace it with a democratically organised, socialist society where all the oppressed in today's society are the decision-makers of the future.

**International collective action**

Speaking from the top table at a conference organised by the Campaign Against Climate Change, George Marshall of the Climate Outreach and Information Network ridiculed a socialist intervention from the floor, saying that we were in "cloud cuckoo land" if we thought that we could overthrow capitalism because "it is an incredibly strong system that works".

He stressed that we have only a short time frame to reverse the environmental damage already done and that revolution was just not on the cards.

Instead, we should just ask a bit more nicely for changes from the powers that be.

Well for billions of people across the globe, capitalism isn't working for them. It is not providing them with clean water, a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs or basic medical care. People are dying everyday because the capitalist powers like the G8 nations are bombing their homes and infrastructure. They are dying because pharmaceutical companies worry more about shareholder profits from patents than saving lives. And through global warming capitalism is creating the conditions for mass floods, droughts, and hurricanes. So going cap in hand to the imperialist powers seems to be a dead end strategy.

We need collective action, built democratically from below but with an international, anti-capitalist, socialist strategy. We have to develop a programme that links from where we are now to where we want to be - overthrowing capitalism - and keep the end goal in sight.

The development of a transitional political programme, and a political party to fight for it, is crucial in bridging this gap. As a movement we should be demanding for governmental reforms that reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted - but we need to back up our demands with collective action, such as demonstrations, occupations and strikes. We need to build up our local organisations, whether community groups, trade unions or student unions, and link up with others in different localities.

When the bosses of the polluting firms say that they can't "afford" to change their ways, we say - open the books. Companies across the globe, like BP, Citigroup and Wal-Mart, are announcing the biggest profits ever - these profits should be re-invested back in cleaner technology instead of stuffing the pockets of the fat cats.

We demand dangerous polluting industries be shut down, and severe punitive penalties on repeat pollution offenders. We need to organise a massive shift away from fossil fuel burning and towards renewable energy production.

What Marshall doesn't comprehend is that revolution is not something that just plods along as you win reforms and then somehow society transforms itself gradually into something nicer. Revolution is a seismic change - something that erupts when the majority of people say enough is enough.

Look at recent examples - 2001 in Argentina when the people took to the streets and got rid of four capitalist governments within about a week; revolutionary upheavals in Bolivia fighting for the nationalisation of hydrocarbons; revolutionary situations in Nepal, France, Venezuela, to name just a few.

But in order for a world revolution to be successful, it needs an international revolutionary party to cohere the struggles and build a revolutionary alternative, to overthrow capitalism and create a socialist society internationally. The League for the Fifth International is working to build that party - join us in struggle.





## AFRICA

# G8 and global misery

In 2005, hundreds of thousands of people lobbied the G8 to alleviate suffering in Africa. *Natalie Sedley* looks at how the G8 failed to deliver and how real change can occur

When the G8 summit was held two years ago in Gleneagles, Scotland, the protests were dominated by the coalition Make Poverty History. Its demands for “trade justice”, an end to “unpayable” debt and “more and better aid” were to be achieved by lobbying Blair, Bush et al to get rid of global poverty, or at least take steps in that direction.

But those who supported the demands have been bitterly disappointed.

Gordon Brown triumphantly declared his great debt reduction programme just before Gleneagles, but the debts cancelled by the UK came out of the existing aid budget. As a whole, the G8 agreed to only £2.2 billion of new money in aid, compared to the £33 billion needed to get the UN “millennium goals” back on track.

After the summit, War on Want (one of the more radical NGOs) was

forced to admit: “The G8 have given less than 10 per cent of our demand on debt cancellation. When the moment came to act, the G8 turned their backs on the world’s poor.”

As the leaders met in Scotland in 2005, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding in Niger as a result of drought and locust plagues, leaving around 3.6 million of the country’s 11.5 million population starving.

The G8 sought to deny the scale of the crisis and justified not sending massive amounts of food because it would “destroy their economy” once the harvest came in.

Once again, profit was put before basic human need. In fact, throughout the drought there was food in the marketplaces in Niger yet people could not afford to buy it as a result of the IMF-inspired tax on foodstuffs.

Between 1970 and 2002, Africa as a whole paid back \$550 billion in loans – more than the \$540 billion originally borrowed. Yet it still has debts of \$295 billion.

Far from reflecting the generosity of Western governments, extending credit to developing countries has long been an important way for the imperialist countries to maximise their corporations’ profits.

These loans have also been used as a political tool – corrupt dictators have received and rescheduled repayments in return for keeping their loyalty to the West.

Across Africa and much of the global south, debt repayments take up such a large proportion of government revenue that little is left for health, education or welfare.

For example, in 1999 the Zambian government was made to spend \$14 million more on debt

repayments than on its collapsing healthcare system, just as the Aids pandemic intensified.

Throughout sub-Saharan Africa as a whole in 2001, only 2.4 per cent of GDP was spent on healthcare compared with 3.8 per cent on debt repayment.

The idea of cancelling the debt has never been on the G8’s agenda, and certainly will not be this year. Instead they aim to create a “sustainable debt”, cancelling only what would never be paid and often taking this from existing aid budgets.

In fact most EU and G8 countries have slashed their aid budgets in the past 10 years, despite the pressure of the mass anti-poverty movement.

And the demand for aid “without strings” is not being met as the G8 continues to condone the use of the IMF’s infamous “structural adjustment programmes”.

## African workers fight back

Real change in Africa and the global south is not going to come from handouts but from the action of the working class and the poor. Nigeria in particular has seen some titanic battles in recent years – some seven general strikes in as many years have shaken the country. At the end of May, oil workers won their demand for better pay after taking strike action; they also forced the government to keep a majority share in refineries earmarked for privatisation.

In the impoverished Niger Delta region, youth are involved in continual clashes with the military and armed contractors defending the oil interests of foreign capital. The youth are rightly demanding a share of the oil wealth that is systematically being siphoned out of the country, and have recently kidnapped several foreign oil workers. Fuel price hikes driving up the cost of living for workers have been

the central grievance of the trade unions, too.

In Guinea, workers’ struggles are showing the way forward with four general strikes in the past year. Protests have been harshly repressed, with nearly 2,000 people arrested and over 100 killed. The government has been forced to make some limited concessions, such as reducing the price of fuel and rice and appointing a new prime minister.

On 25 May, tens of thousands of South African workers marched calling for a 12 per cent pay rise for public sector workers. The government is offering only 6 per cent, which barely covers inflation at a time when the economy is booming. In response, Willie Madisha, president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), declared: “We are not baboons, we cannot be given peanuts.” Cosatu is threatening all-out general strike

action from 1 June if their demands are not met.

Workers in Zimbabwe have been fighting Mugabe’s dictatorial regime for more than a decade, including the time when he was a favourite of the West and implemented IMF policies. Activists have been arrested or killed and the demonstrations smashed up.

The workers and peasants have shown heroic resistance against dictators, presidents and neoliberal polices. What has been holding them back is that the unions have been tied to bourgeois parties and politics. Nigerian trade union leaders have undermined attempts to form a workers’ party despite the corruption of the main bourgeois parties; in Guinea, the union leaders handed power back to the president after he made a few changes; and Zimbabwean workers have been tied to the bourgeois Movement for Democratic Change,

which is dominated by western backed NGOs and white farmers and has an economic programme inspired by neoliberalism.

Workers need their own party that can fight for their interests and the overthrow of debt and capitalist misery, in effect a revolutionary party to fight for socialism.

In the imperialist world we must fight for any measures that will improve the lives of African workers and peasants such as cancelling all debts and a huge transfer of funds to their economies. And we must also give solidarity to their struggles and recognise our common interest in destroying the global imperialist institutions like the G8 and the capitalist system itself.

● For more on workers’ struggles in Africa go to [www.fifthinternational.org/index.php?id=212,0,0,1,0,0](http://www.fifthinternational.org/index.php?id=212,0,0,1,0,0)



**STRATEGY**

# Whatever happened to the anticapitalist movement?

The anticapitalist movement has stopped going forward. *Dave Stockton* argues that the left forces within it need to call an international conference and get it going again

At the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, the presidents, prime ministers or chancellors of the most powerful capitalist countries will promote themselves as “saviours of the world.” What they want to secure, however, is their ownership and domination of this world, free access to its markets, labour and natural wealth for their multinationals and their “right” to force an entry if need be.

They will be confronted by thousands of protesters who will march and blockade the meeting to oppose the G8’s policies of poverty, violence and misery.

The summit sieges, which started in Seattle against the WTO in 1999, were a sign of a new movement. This new generation with few illusions in Stalinism and Social Democracy could have been won to the programme of revolutionary Marxism.

But this would be no automatic process - it would be a struggle. The anticapitalist movement brought together in antagonistic unity a range of political forces with distinct programmes, from new social democratic reformism to various brands of Stalinism, anarchism and environmentalism.

Two trends rapidly emerged within the movement. On the one hand are those who want a movement that coordinates and mobilises action. On the other stood those who insisted that the forums be just an “open space” for networking and discussion. The bad news is that the second camp imposed structures on the Forums, which forbid majority decision making, and have paralysed them. The “movement,” in short, is not moving. How did this come about?

**Summit sieges**

The success of the demonstration in Seattle caught the imagination of youth and radical workers worldwide. Soon there was no summit, where the rich and powerful could convene meetings,

without opposition and disruption.

In 2000 it was the World Economic Forum in Melbourne, the World Bank and the IMF in Prague, and the European Summit in Nice that were besieged. In 2001 in Quebec the Summit of the Free Trade Area of the Americas saw youth and trade unionists storm the “wall of shame” set up around it. In Gothenburg and Genoa demonstrators were shot - including the first martyr of the movement, 23-year old Carlo Giuliani. The numbers participating in such sieges rose from 20,000 to 200,000.

They taught a new generation to hate capitalism and its destructive effects. Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide learnt a new vocabulary; “structural adjustment”, “third world debt”, “free trade”, “neoliberalism”, “précarité” and “privatisation.”

**Turn to social forums**

The initiative for a World Social Forum goes back to a meeting in February 2000 between major Brazilian Non-Governmental Organisations and the French journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* and Tobin Tax campaign, Attac. They agreed to hold a gathering of global social movements, to be called the World Social Forum, held at the same time as the World Economic Forum.

It was planned to take place the following year in Porto Alegre, Brazil. This was a conscious move away from the idea of summit sieges and militant clashes with the state. However the World and European Social Forums gave activists space to come together to discuss the political basis and issues around which they were struggling.

The European Social Forum in Florence launched the call for the February 15 2003 anti war demonstration in which 20 million participated globally.

But, Florence in retrospect was an exception that proved the rule: despite the hundreds of thousands attending them the ESFs and



**Assembly of Social Movements - Athens ESF**

the WSFs, have remained talking shops. Why? Because they are hamstrung by the reformist politics of their unelected leaders. In Heiligendamm, just as in Edinburgh in 2005, they want to persuade the G8 to put on a human face, do the right thing by the poor, rather than fighting to break up this thieves’ kitchen and the system it stands for.

In the face of persistent calls for action, the right wing have often tried scare tactics: “if you want the WSF to evolve beyond a space into a movement and to take political initiatives, then, before you know it, you will have a fifth International”.

Naturally those of us fighting for just this a goal are not frightened by the prospect. But if that is not a step others are willing to take yet they can help break the paralysis and create bodies where action can be agreed and policies debated and adopted. This would be a giant step towards realising the full potential of the struggles of the 1999 - 2003 period.

The servants of big capital in the movement, based in the NGOs the bureaucratic unions, the Reformist Parties that support social liberal governments like that of Romano Prodi, will never willingly relax their grip. They are helped in this by

their “libertarian” dupes who also do all they can to block any political decision making, because this would violate their individual autonomy. Their grip on the world anticapitalist movement must be broken.

**The Left must take the lead**

What does this mean immediately? The Anti-imperialist and anticapitalist Left, gathering in Rostock, needs to plan the way forward.

- We must unite the left who really want to fight neoliberalism and war both in the ESF/ WSF and in the workers movement at large.
- We must fight for the creation of delegate-based, elected, coordinating bodies at local national and international levels, ones that that can mobilise action on burning issues of the international class struggle.
- We must call an international conference, in which such issues can be debated out, adopted and taken into the mass movements.

During this process we in the LFI will continue to argue that a Fifth International is not only possible, it is a burning necessity if we want to defeat capitalism and imperialism.



## Anti-imperialism and workers' revolution

By Luke Cooper

The 21st century has been marked by a series of aggressive imperialist wars waged by the United States to achieve "another American century", that is, to maintain its global predominance. The resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq has delivered heavy blows to the "war on terror" on its first battlegrounds. In doing so, the insurgents are not only fighting for the liberation of their countries but, whatever their conscious goals, form part of a global struggle against imperialism.

But what is imperialism? It is not simply the domination of one state over another; it is the current stage of the capitalist world system. Huge industrial and retailing companies, banks and investment firms – Siemens, Citigroup, HSBC, Halliburton, BP, Toyota, Wal-Mart, etc. – dominate global markets. Their interests are policed by the military, diplomatic and political might of the great powers.

This creates a systematic division of the world between imperialist states and their corporations, who together dominate and exploit colonial and semi-colonial countries, whose independence is more apparent than real. It is precisely because Marxists recognise this that they support without pre-condition all those struggling against imperialist domination.

### Accommodation

Many on the left in the imperialist countries balk at such a position. For example, the Alliance for Workers Liberty in Britain refuses to even call for the troops to be pulled out of Iraq. They argue that the trade unions in Iraq would be destroyed by clerical Islamist forces in the resistance were this to happen.

Not only does this make the imperialist troops the guardians of the labour movement – when in fact they are the main threat to it – but it assumes working class and socialist forces cannot come to the head and win the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle. Ultimately, such politics are a concession to the illusions in capitalism maintained amongst the better-paid and skilled workers in the imperialist countries by the trade union and reformist leaders. They have nothing in common with the positions of Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin or Leon Trotsky.

But it would be an equal and opposite error to believe that each and every force presently obliged to fight US imperialism represents an adequate leadership for that struggle. Indeed such "anti-imperialism" has very real limits and dangers. For example, the Campo Anti-Imperialista held a conference this year where members of the Iraqi resistance – represented by the largely Sunni Iraqi Patriot Alliance – spoke in Europe for the first time. The CAI comrades argued that a global anti-imperialist front was needed, in which the leading force should be the Iraqi resistance, whatever politics it advanced.

The hopelessness of such a project became very clear when IPA delegates revealed their Iraqi patriotism was linked to anti-Iranian chauvinism, angrily rejecting calls for the defence of Iran if it was attacked by the United States. It was precisely their narrow bourgeois nationalism that stopped them taking a principled, internationalist stance. This showed the utopianism, not to mention grave practical dangers, of attempting to form an international front around the leadership of bourgeois nationalists.

Just as it is possible to accommodate to reactionary consciousness in the imperialist states, so too is it possible to make equally wrong accommodations to third world nationalism, by calling it "anti-imperialism". Such nationalists might be fighting this particular imperialist power here and now (and, as such, certainly deserve our unconditional support) but tomorrow they may support the same or another imperialist power, because it is offering them assistance against a rival semi-colonial state.

### Proletarian internationalism

In contrast, Marxists advance an independent, working class policy and leadership in the struggle against imperialism in semi-colonial and imperialist countries alike. Imperialism, like the previous stages of capitalist development, is based upon the exploitation of the toiling masses by a small, parasitic class that profits from workers' labour by owning the factories, the land and the banks. The working class is able not only to paralyse the economy by mass strike action but also to take over and run it to build a new society. That is why workers have a decisive and leading role in the struggle against imperialism.

In 1935, Trotsky, the Russian revolutionary, argued that the Communist International, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, had abandoned the fight for working class power and instead formed blocs to support the rule of "progressive" bourgeois forces:

"It is no accident that in the policy of the Comintern, as well as that of the reformists, purely negative formulations predominate, like *anti-imperialism*, *anti-fascism*, *anti-war struggle*, without any class delimitations and without a revolutionary programme of action. Such formulations are absolutely necessary for the policies of masquerade blocs (the Anti-Imperialist League, the Amsterdam-Pleyel Committee Against War and Fascism and so on). All these blocs and congresses and committees have as their task to screen the passivity, the cowardice and the incapacity to solve those tasks that compose the very essence of the class struggle of the proletariat." (*Centrist Alchemy or Marxism?*)

For Trotsky – and the League for the Fifth International – the united front, whether that of workers against their own ruling class or an anti-imperialist united front against foreign invaders, like the USA and Britain today, has to be clearly distinguished from the Stalinist policy of the popular front.

As Trotsky and the early Communist International argued, it is both legitimate and necessary for communists to strike tactical alliances for action with other political forces, even with bourgeois nationalists, in the colonies and semi-colonies. This is quite different from communists accepting an entire stage of subordination to the leadership of bourgeois forces let alone fighting for their rule.

For Leninists and Trotskyists, the struggle against imperialist domination must be absolutely continuous with the struggle against workers' exploitation and capital. Because the capitalist class in the semi-colonies can never finally liberate its people from imperialism, that which starts as struggle against imperialism must, to achieve this goal, end in the expropriation of the "national bourgeoisie". In this way communists avoid falling into the pitfall of anti-war, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist policies, which ignore both class realities and the only force that can free a country from imperialism for good: the working class.



## FRANCE

# France: Sarkozy win 'means war!'

By Marc Lasalle

In the French *banlieues* the response to Nicolas Sarkozy's election was immediate: "This means war!" The youth are right – and war not only on the young people from immigrant communities in the ghetto-like outer suburbs but on the trade unions and the social rights of workers and youth as a whole.

Sarkozy is the most right wing president since De Gaulle. He has sworn he will not back down like outgoing President Jacques Chirac, three of whose prime ministers – Alain Juppé, Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Dominique de Villepin – were forced into humiliating climb-downs on neoliberal reform packages in the face of mass strikes and demonstrations in 1995, 2003, 2005 and 2006.

Sarkozy was backed for president by a reactionary class alliance stretching from the big bosses of Medef (the employers association) to the petty bourgeois shopkeepers and small farmers. Sarkozy promised to boost their profits by neoliberal economic measures. Employees will work longer hours with slashed protection and social benefits. The *patrons* will have their taxes and social security payments cut.

On top of this, he resorted to a poisonous dose of racism and national chauvinism. He set out to court the racist voters of Jean-Marie Le Pen's *Front National* by stigmatising young people from the *banlieues* as scum to be scoured away with high-pressure hoses. No wonder the old fascist petulantly accused Sarkozy of stealing his racist programme.

However these factors alone do not explain Sarkozy's victory. His main rival, Ségolène Royal, of the Socialist Party, was from its the right wing. She openly took Tony Blair as her model thus hoping to beat Sarkozy to the job of being the "reformer" of France's welfare system. She failed. Ironically too, Blair let it be known he supported Sarkozy as the man who would "reform" France and after the election made a video in French fulsomely praising him and the historic decision that had been taken.

Sarkozy has taken two steps to prepare his assault. He has made it clear that, if as is likely, he retains the Right's parliamentary major-

ity, he as president will be fully in charge of the neoliberal reform programme. At the same time he has included in his cabinet representatives from the right, centre and left, i.e. members of the Socialist Party. He has also had several meetings with trade union leaders and visited the Airbus workers to promise them their jobs will be safe under his presidency. He is luring the trade union leaders into thinking that they can work with him. He will try to 'salami' them: The CFDT and even FO might even fall for it, leaving the CGT and SUD isolated.

### Sarko's onslaught

Sarkozy's aim is to isolate militant sections like the railworkers, the *cheminots*, who have humiliated many right-wing governments. He intends to cripple their right to effective strike action by imposing a "right to travel" in the morning and evening rush hours.

The *cheminots* are the vanguard of the French labour movement. Sarkozy hopes to make an example of them, believing other sectors will crumble fast.

He will undermine the 35-hours working week by cutting restrictions on overtime under the cynical slogan "work more to earn more." He will reform the benefits system by forcing the unemployed to accept any work no matter how poorly paid, and by scrapping the pension "privileges" of the public sector. He plans to attack young people by removing protective regulations on their jobs – a de facto re-imposition to the CPE.

He will attack immigrants by instituting tough new restrictions, and getting tough on crime and illegal immigration.

He will try to drive a wedge between private and public sector workers,



President Sarkozy gained his reputation as a hard man by calling the youth of the *banlieues* 'scum'.

an real danger because of the weakness of the unions amongst the former. The resistance must make winning over the private sector workers a number one priority.

To enforce his neo-liberal reforms, the police and the CRS will be armed with vicious new powers and given free rein in the *banlieues* and the working class quarters.

### The fightback

How can we stop this onslaught? We can only do it if we unite workers, immigrants, youth, in the factories and other workplaces, on the streets, in defence of every sector under attack. The most cowardly forces in the trade union and political wings of the labour movement will of course counsel waiting for Sarkozy to exhaust his democratic mandate, etc.

Indeed the experience of the strikes and social movements since 1995 is to place no confidence in the union leaders. Sarkozy's victory is itself a punishment for letting him off the hook last spring, when a general strike – a real possibility

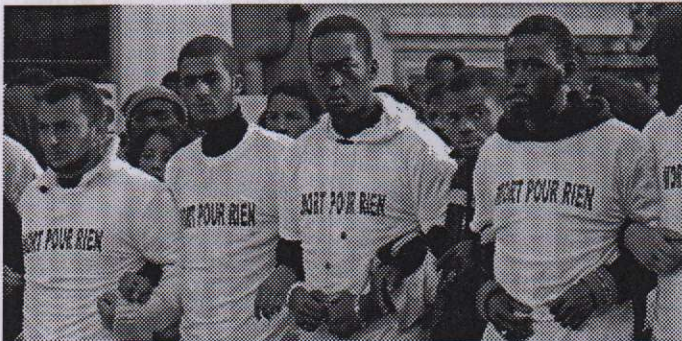
– could have driven the right from power. This time we must take control of the struggle. We must build local *coordinations* of workers and trade unionists to do this.

The LCR, whose candidate Olivier Besancenot has already called for resistance to Sarkozy, should use the parliamentary elections to summon mass meetings in every city and town and in the *banlieues* to actually launch the resistance.

These meetings should set about planing a full scale nationwide struggle, led by a national coordination, with accountable and revocable delegates from the unions from school and university students, from the youth of the *banlieues*, from the organisations of the unemployed and the *sans papiers*.

The *Banlieues* Social Forum which is planned for the 22 - 24 June in Paris is an excellent initiative that should be used to unite the youth with the militant workers.

Vital to any effective fightback is the need for an alternative to Sarkozy's neoliberalism. Without a positive alternative we cannot win a decisive victory and drive our attackers from power for good. To do that we need a new party which is both anticapitalist and revolutionary. We need to discuss and debate this with all the fighters against Sarkozy, even in the heat of the battle, because such a party must also be a mass party, one gathering in the best fighters from the working class and the oppressed. Intense class struggle that we face in the years ahead will be the crucible in which such a party can be forged.



'Death for nothing' - youth protest against police brutality



## IRAQ

# The US is losing the war

The slaughter in Iraq hangs over the leaders of the G8 - as the US occupation continues to crumble *Luke Cooper* examines the struggle against the imperialists

Since January US forces in Iraq have been implementing the new "surge" policy that was agreed by the White House towards the end of last year. 21,500 additional troops and tougher rules of engagement were, argued the Bush administration, to resolve the security crisis in Iraq, put an end to the insurgency and bolster the authority of the Iraqi government.

The White House is now over five months into its policy and final troop reinforcements were due to be in place by June. The timetable of the surge has grown from six months to over a year. The new total of US troops will be 200,000 by January 2008 - up from the current level of 168,00 and equal in size to the original invasion force.

## Civil War?

The Bush administration used the mounting sectarian conflict in Iraq last year as a chief pretext for intensifying the war effort in the name of 'bringing security' to Iraq. This was always an act of great hypocrisy given the United States had a policy of cultivating sectarian divisions in Iraq from the very outset of its occupation. The governing council it established in 2003 was Iraq's first ever sectarian government, with those taking up seats in the pro-occupation administration required to define themselves on sectarian lines - thus, not on ideological or political lines. Even the representative of the Iraqi Communist Party was only allowed to join as one of the twelve Shi'a members.

By dividing Iraqis on ethnic-religious lines the US hoped to play different factions off against one another and militate against the emergence of a unified anti-occupation movement. There were plenty of exiled Iraqi political organisations willing to play this sectarian game, while at the same time terrorist organisations, such as the Al-Qaeda cells, carried out sectarian attacks on civilians. The effect was to cement sectarian divisions as Sunni and Shi'a militias were increasingly drawn into tit for tat killings, which reached their high point at the end of last year. In short, while the US created the sectarian divisions it is

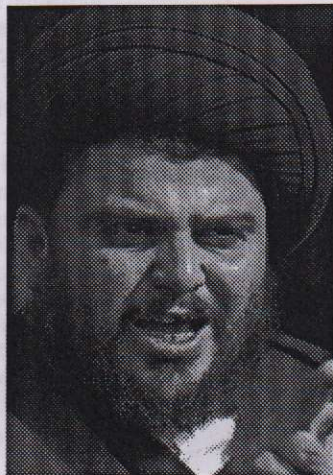


US soldier mourns the loss of a colleague

now using them to legitimise intensifying its war with the Iraqi insurgency.

The insurgency against the occupying forces has remained intense reflected in the stubbornly high levels of US military casualties - continuing the trends set towards the end of 2006. Between January and May 2007 on average 88 US soldiers were killed per month, compared to 59 per month in the same period last year. A recent BBC/USA Today poll showed that seven out of 10 Shias and almost all Sunnis say the US military presence makes security worse. More than half the population considered attacks on coalition forces "acceptable".

One of the chief targets of the American surge was Moqtada Al-Sadr and his Mahdi army. The US claimed Mahdi army death squads



Moqtada Al-Sadr

were carrying out much of the sectarian killings. It seems certain that elements the Mahdi army were indeed carrying out such attacks, given the tit-for-tat killings between Sunni and Shia militiamen, but Al-Sadr has more than once stressed the need for all Iraqis to unite. Despite his opposition to the occupation Al-Sadr has ordered his forces underground and to avoid confrontation with the US forces. On Friday 25th May Al-Sadr reappeared and claimed to have been in talks with moderate Sunni forces to unite against the American occupation and for a "democratic Iraq." This reflects Al-Sadr's on-off attitude to the resistance - he led the big uprisings against the occupation in Fallujah in 2004 only to strike a deal with the US and put his representatives into their puppet government. The problem for al-Sadr is that he wants to be in both, government and resistance, and in a sense he is. The problem for the US occupiers is that they can only preserve the facade of an Iraqi government with the support of the Shia islamists but on the other hand they want to exclude Iranian influence and above all al-Sadr and his army.

## The sick Iraqi government

The new aggressive US policy is not only intensifying the conflict with the insurgents but has also led to ruptures with the Iraqi government. With the withdrawal not only of Al-Sadr's ministers but also the smaller Al-Fadhila Party, the government

is increasingly isolated even amongst its supposed Shi'a base of support. Even Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has attempted to demonstrate his independence from the US by opposing the building of the wall in al-Adhamiya. Indeed, he "ordered" it to be stopped but this naturally only demonstrated his complete impotence and weakness. On all other aspects of the surge however - the increased troop numbers, tougher rules of engagement on the ground, etc - Maliki has shown himself to be an obedient servant of US interests.

The problem that Maliki and the government have is that they express the interests of many of the factional militias, linked to sectarian and tribal forces that have at times been in outright conflict with occupation, or at least colluding with those that are. Testament to this is the 144 members of the Iraqi parliament who signed a motion calling for the US to withdraw.

## Defeat US imperialism

The US is throwing extra troops at fighting the insurgency but has few firm allies left in Iraq. Al-Maliki may be loyal to them and his personal interests are now bound up with those of the US but the tribal, religious and ethnic groups he rests upon are fragmenting and increasingly opposed to the US occupation.

A defeat for US imperialism would be a victory for all those fighting its economic and military domination. At the same time it is clear the resistance faces an acute crisis of leadership. The rival Islamist movements demand privileges for their sects in a confessional state. Arab and Kurdish nationalists demand privileges for their minorities. Neither can unite the majority of the working people of Iraq, against the exploiting classes and imperialism. That is why Iraqi workers and the poor must build their own party - one that fights to turn the struggle for the liberation of Iraq towards a workers revolution against capital. It is only by coming to the head of the popular struggle against imperialism that socialists can win the masses to the programme of socialist revolution.



## TURKEY

# The Army or the Mosque?

Simon Hardy looks at the struggles taking place over the presidential elections in Turkey

The mass demonstrations in Turkey and the political manoeuvrings by the military and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) have exposed the contradiction that exists at the heart of Turkish politics. The battle lines are drawn around the fight for secularism against an encroaching Islamisation of society by the AKP, yet this is not the full story.

In Turkey MPs elect the president, not the people. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the AKP, who has overseen massive neoliberal reforms at the behest of the International Monetary Fund, had been priming himself for years to be the next president. But a huge demonstration on 14 April forced him to step back, and his party appointed Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül as the candidate instead.

The opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) received the signal from its masters in the military that the AKP must be stopped from taking presidential power. The CHP argued that there must be a two-thirds majority in parliament to call the elections, but then boycotted the voting session. The army posted a statement on their website firmly outlining their opposition to the AKP's choice of candidate. Another demonstration against the AKP was organised the next day and high court judges annulled the parliamentary vote.

More mass demonstrations followed across the country. In Izmir

between one and two million people marched against the AKP, raising slogans against Sharia law, the EU and USA. While sections of the intelligentsia and the middle classes called the demonstration, workers and trade union federations have supported some of the protests.

## Contradictions

But this is not simply a fight against Islamist politics. In Turkey, 99 per cent of the population is Muslim and the AKP has considerable support. The party is popular because it has presided over five years of economic growth. In another popular measure, it refused permission for the US military to use Turkey as a staging post for the invasion of Iraq. The party appeals to many workers and youth, who despise the military for its repressive actions and the traditional establishment for its pro-Western policies.

The masses hate Turkey's military because, since 1945, it has carried out four military coups to stop both the Communists and the Islamists from challenging the power of the secular capitalists. The army is also the driving force for some of the most brutal attacks on the Kurds in the east of the country.

Are the pro-secular rallies an expression of popular discontent with the government, or a stage army being used by the generals to exert political pressure on the Islamists? The protests link secularism up with nationalism, invoking the ideals of the founder of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk. The middle classes see Islamisation as a threat to their way of life, but their defence of democracy is only half-hearted. Few of them rallied to defend the left wing journalists that have been recently persecuted or killed by the army.

## The struggle for power

AKP are now pushing for an early general election towards the end of the year. They believe this will give them the democratic mandate they need to push for a new presidential candidate from their own ranks. The only force they have against a military coup is to mobilise their electoral base. This is a risky strategy because resorting to extra-parlia-

mentary actions could give the army the excuse to intervene to preserve "law and order".

They had hoped to change the constitution to allow the people, instead of the MPs, to elect the president, then they could bypass the opposition in parliament and rally the people behind a candidate through the electoral process. But the current President Necdet Sezer vetoed the bill on 25th May.

The military will no doubt resort to past practice, which can only result in bloodshed on the streets. Any military coup to defend secularism will be thoroughly reactionary.

The working class, however, must resist simply being used as pawns in the power games of the Turkish ruling classes. They need an independent strategy that can navigate the political minefield and allow them to struggle against the capitalists in the future. The mobilisation of the working class is crucial because only it can consistently defend democratic rights for all.

## The way forward

A movement, which links the fight for secularism, democracy and against the neoliberal economic policies of the government, can provide a genuine alternative. A fight against the undemocratic laws in Turkey, which prohibit "insulting" the nation, and the attacks on press freedom can rally wider progres-

sive forces.

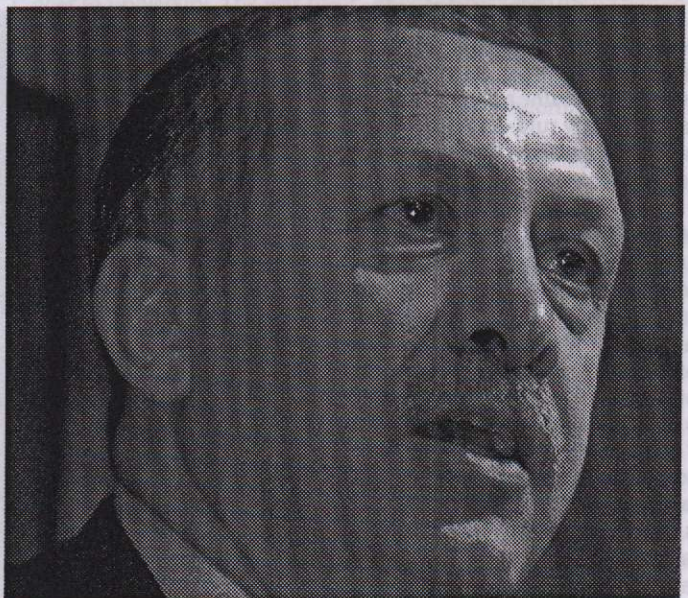
This year's May Day protests – which marked the 30th anniversary of the massacre of 34 workers by the army in 1977 – saw thousands raise slogans against both the Islamist parties and the military. The traditional site of the Mayday rallies, Taksim Square, was blocked off by thousands of police, but the workers fought their way through and entered the square. This victory was an important symbol of the combativity of the workers, despite the baton blows and mass arrests.

The AKP wants to change the constitution to ensure a victory for their party; instead we must call for a constituent assembly to decide a constitution that defends national minority rights, women's rights and workers' rights. Most importantly, the assembly must decide who owns the means of production and how society's wealth is distributed. The workers' movement must carry out strike action against any assault on democracy.

Finally, workers in Turkey must fight for an independent party of the working class to combat political Islam and the army, and link this fight to the struggle for socialism. The nationalists and Islamists have failed to combat poverty, extend democratic rights or solve the national question – only the struggle of the working class can achieve these things.



Secularist rally



Prime Minister Erdogan is in a battle of wills with the army



## SOUTH ASIA

# Pakistan: will Musharraf survive?

A mass movement in Pakistan threatens to topple the military regime. Huge demonstrations, mass strikes and armed clashes have taken place between pro-regime forces and the popular movement. *Luke Cooper* reports on a deepening pre-revolutionary crisis.

**T**owards the end of last year there was talk in Pakistan's bourgeois press that General Pervez Musharraf would face a "difficult year" in 2007. This has proved to be a gross understatement – now the question being asked is "Will Musharraf survive?"

The General came to power in 1999 in a classic military coup d'état ushering in Pakistan's third period of military rule in its 50 year history. Like the previous military juntas, he relied on the judiciary to give his regime its constitutional legitimacy; however, the Supreme Court made him hold national and provincial assembly elections in 2002.

Musharraf used the economic and political clout of the military, with its extensive patronage ties to the big landowners and tribal leaders, to put together a political party. The Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) (PML-Q) stood in the elections and the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) agency rigged them in its favour. However, Musharraf was still dependent on support from rogue PPP representatives and the Islamic fundamentalist Muttahida Majlis-e-Ammal (MMA) to be elected president for a five-year term. He also maintained his position as head of the armed forces – in clear contravention of Pakistan's constitution.

As his five-year term formally expires this year, Musharraf needed a pliant judiciary to extend his rule further – either by not calling new assembly elections or rigging them in favour of the PML-Q. This led to him to suspend the Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry in March, which sparked large protests of lawyers that became a mass movement against military rule – tapping into the discontent created by Musharraf's economic and foreign policy.

**Neoliberal offensive and war on terror**  
Musharraf launched a series of fierce neoliberal attacks on the working class at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. These included a privatisation programme selling off \$5 billion worth of state assets and attacks on workers rights. These attacks allowed Musharraf to boast about economic growth but also brought a number of workers and peasants into struggle: last year electronics and telecoms workers protested against privatisation, peasants struggled against the army control and occupation of their land, and teachers and doctors protested against privatisation in educa-

tion and health respectively.

Despite using it as a pretext for his coup in 1999, corruption has exploded under Musharraf's rule. He extended the army's influence in Pakistan's economic life – controlling hundreds of small, medium and large firms, as well as petrol pumps and toll levies on national motorways. It is this economic clout that has been used to piece together the PML-Q and win support from Pakistan's (small in number but hugely influential) landowning families.

Musharraf has openly supported the "war on terror" and has been rewarded by Washington with generous debt restructuring and aid packages, which have contributed to Pakistan's booming economy. In 2001 Richard Armitage, the US Deputy Secretary of State, is reported to have told Musharraf to support the "war on terror" or risk being "bombed back to the Stone Age". A pro-imperialist bourgeois, Musharraf had no desire for a conflict with US imperialism, which the military has historically allied with particularly since the Soviet-Afghan war.

However, Musharraf has been less successful at turning his verbal support into tackling the Islamic militants at home. He has waged two wars in Southern Waziristan against Islamic militants, but was forced to sign peace deals in 2004 and 2006. Moreover, Pakistan military has historically developed links with Islamic radicals and leaned on them to support their rule – as Musharraf also did in 2002. This

is why Musharraf has staged a series of "conflicts" with Islamic fundamentalists, proposing changes to some of Pakistan's more reactionary Islamic laws, such as the rape laws, only to capitulate in the face of opposition from the MMA and jihadist clerics.

## From a lawyers' movement to a pre-revolutionary crisis

On the 9th March President Musharraf suspended the Chief Justice on spurious charges, including unspecified "misconduct", "misuse of authority" and "actions prejudicial to the dignity of office of the chief justice of Pakistan". He decided Chaudhry was not to be relied upon, having made himself something of a maverick by overturning the steel industry privatisation deal and taking up some of the cases of those who had been "disappeared" by the ISI. The suspension prompted protests and strikes by lawyers across the country.

Chaudhry addressed mass rallies where lawyers were involved in fierce clashes with the police throughout March and April. Musharraf launched a series of raids to close down television channels sympathetic to the movement – including sending the ISI to smash up equipment at the Geo television station. Despite the repression, the movement went from strength to strength, tapping into the mass discontent with the military junta.

Mayday saw the biggest workers demonstrations for many years, with tens of thousands joining rallies and protests across Pakistan. No doubt this impressive mobilisation of the masses spurred on the lawyers' movement. At the beginning of May tens of thousands greeted the motorcade of Chaudhry as he came to Lahore to address a meeting of the Lahore Bar Association. The demonstrators again clashed with the police.

Musharraf went on the offensive. He looked to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which was set up by the ISI in the 1980s to split the working class in Sind, historically a strong-hold of the labour movement, along ethnic lines; they are highly fascistic, using violence against the working class and the left.

Huge numbers were expected to greet Chief Justice Chaudhry when he came to speak in Karachi but the MQM, with the consent of government officials, blockaded all roads into the city one day before the planned mobilisation. On 12 May, as demonstrators began to assemble, the

**The question who rules – the people or the military junta – is now being asked by the Pakistani masses.**



General Musharraf



MQM opened fire on them, sparking three days of street violence in which 42 opposition activists were murdered. The government used the violence as a pretext to send 14,000 troops onto the streets of Karachi to restore order. Musharraf's prime minister made sinister references to the calling of a "state of emergency" which would give the army martial law powers.

The working class response was as emphatic as it was heroic. On Monday 14 May, Pakistan was paralysed by a national strike called by the bourgeois parties in the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy – particularly the Pakistan Peoples

tary and bourgeois state to the negotiating table. The bourgeois parties are advancing the call for the resignation of Musharraf and a "civilian" transitional government – thus opening the way to an alliance with more moderate sections of the military. Indeed, it is a real possibility that sections of the military and establishment will now turn against Musharraf because they are well aware that the alternative is a deepening revolutionary crisis that threatens the whole system. Further national strike actions have been called by the opposition for the beginning of this week as Workers Power goes to press.



Revolution banner on Mayday

Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N). Pakistan had clearly entered a profound pre-revolutionary crisis. The question of who rules – the people or the military junta – is now being asked by the Pakistani masses. The working class, by paralysing the country with strike action, have demonstrated in practice they have a leading role to play in revolutionary struggle to overthrow the regime.

#### Where now?

The bourgeois PPP and PML-N had not predicted the movement, nor joined its original protests. The leader of the PPP Benazir Bhutto admitted to being in talks with Musharraf one month ago and is head of a slavishly pro-imperialist liberal bourgeois party. However, the talks broke down on Bhutto's insistence that Musharraf could not remain as head of state and head of army. Moreover, after the massacre in Karachi a deal with Musharraf would be suicidal for the PPP's popular support.

The PPP and PML-N will now seek to turn the struggles of the masses on and off like a tap so that they can force sections of the mili-

The critical question facing the workers and youth of Pakistan is what kind of society and state do we want to emerge out of this crisis? The bourgeois parties' alternative to Musharraf is no alternative. It is a return to the equally pro-imperialist, corrupt and neoliberal regimes of the 1990s. This would mean a continuation of the corrupt sell-offs of state industry and services. It would mean a continuation of the oppression of the landless peasants – who suffered further military attacks in Punjab which left twenty two farmers injured. In short, it would turn an unfolding revolutionary crisis into a counter-revolution and the victory of capitalism.

The masses of the working class must now be won to the need to struggle for power – to end the rule of capital and establish a working class state that gives land to the peasants.

As the Russian Revolutionary Leon Trotsky argued in 1917, the revolution must be "made permanent" – i.e. continue from the national democratic struggle to the struggle for working class power and an international socialist revolution.

## The fight for socialism in Sri Lanka

Simon Hardy reports from Sri Lanka on the political discussions with the Socialist Party

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party government headed by Mahine Rajapakse has dramatically escalated the war against the Tamil people. The civil war against the Tamil resistance movement, which is headed by the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers, has been raging since 1983. Even though there is technically a ceasefire, the fighting in the last 6 months has left 4000 dead. The government escalation of the conflict resulted in a guns instead of butter budget with inflation of around 20 per cent. The fighting has disrupted food production in the already poor regions in the north and east, and now starvation is causing extra suffering. Thousands of people are internally displaced, living in refugee camps and shanty towns with no adequate facilities.

Sri Lanka has not been able to develop itself after the end of direct colonial rule. Despite growth in the public sector, wages are low and the promises of globalisation have failed to significantly increase the living conditions of most Sri Lankans. The majority of women are unemployed; those that do work are employed in garment factories earning about £1.50 a day. Only around 1 per cent of the population goes to university. The war has allowed the government to attack civil liberties and move closer to creating a police state – the army has powers of arrest and detention over the civilian population.

The Socialist Party of Sri Lanka contacted the League for the Fifth International because they wished to enter into political discussions. The SPSL was formed in the fall of 2006 from a split in the United Socialist Party, the CWI section in Sri Lanka. The dispute centred on the USP leader Siritunga Jayasuriya's policy of joining a popular frontist anti-war coalition called the United People's Movement, which also included the bourgeois UNP. A comparison would be a socialist group joining an anti-war coalition with the Conservative Party in Britain. The UNP were the party in govern-

ment when the war started and have no real interest in defending the Tamils rights, other than to score points against the opponents in the ruling SLFP.

#### Conditions on the ground

The SPSL has a trade union in the health sector with over 2000 members and large branches in the main hospitals in Jaffna and Trincomalee, both areas affected by the civil war. Travelling around the country to meet comrades and union activists takes a lot of time, but every worker that we spoke to was eager to talk about the situation in Britain and internationally – and asked what we thought about the war in Sri Lanka.

The meetings with health workers, print workers, teachers and civil servants organised by the SPSL provided an opportunity to not only discuss the socialist solution to the war, but also the struggle for socialism around the world. Drawing on the lessons of the Russian Revolution and the previous four working class internationals, it was possible to demonstrate that the tasks of workers and socialists in the present is bound up with the necessity of creating a new international party. Since Sri Lanka had a mass party of the Fourth International, called the LSSP, the call for a fifth had real resonance amongst some workers and youth that had become disillusioned with the reformist and centrist politics of the LSSP.

The SPSL leadership agreed a draft fraternal relations document (available on the fifthinternational.org website). We will carry on political discussions with the comrades and organise visits between our two organisations with the hope of reaching political agreement on the way forward. The breakthrough in South Asia represents an important development for our international organisation. We will work over the coming period to build and strengthen our sections and create momentum for a fifth international to unite the revolutionary working class.



## CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

# Parole opportunity for Mário

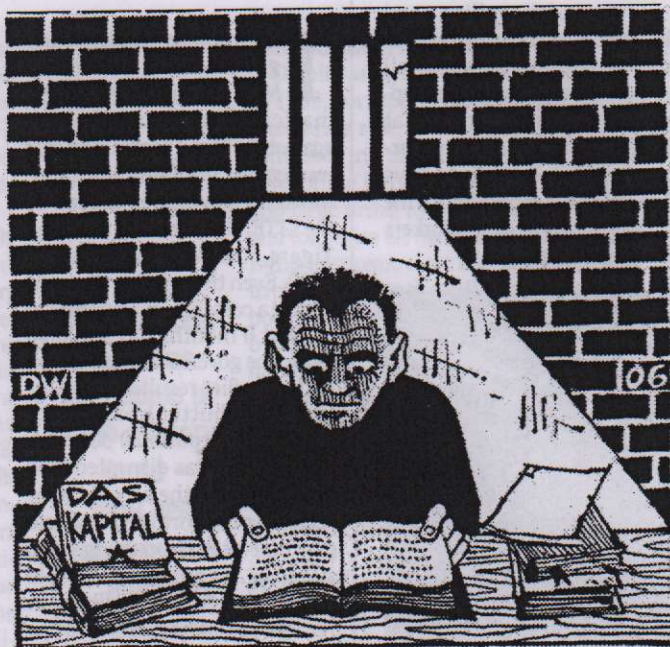
The justice system, as part of the capitalist state, is used to entrench racism and inequality.

*Kam Kumar highlights two such cases*

**M**ário Bango, a young Roma imprisoned since 2001 for defending his brother against a racist attack, will be able to apply for early release in October of this year. As he says in his latest letter from Ilava, the hardest prison in Slovakia: "I think I have a great chance because they forgave me two years and this is a lot. But we must do everything we can to take this chance - it really will be a great success if I can be free. I can't imagine it. Really freedom - incredible!!!"

Now 25 years old, Mário has been in prison for over six years. In his letter he refers to his last appeal to the Supreme Court in August 2004 where they failed to overturn his conviction for attempted murder but reduced his sentence from the maximum of 12 years to 10.

Now he has the chance of getting out of prison early on "safe control" - after six years and eight months inside. But the decision still lies in the hands of a judge - and in Slovakia Roma face institutional racism, this means they are systematically marginalised and discriminated against in employment, housing, education and in the judicial system. In Eastern Slovakia, unemployment can be as high as 93% in



Roma communities.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance concluded in 2004: "the Roma minority remains severely disadvantaged in most areas of life, particularly in the fields of housing, employment and education." Accordingly, the proclaimed goal of improving the situation of the Roma "has not been translated into adequate resources and a concerted interest and commitment on the

part of all the administrative sectors involved". The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is monitoring the serious human rights issues Roma face in the country.

Mário has been battling state racism throughout his case. The fact that he acted in self-defence, called an ambulance for his assailant and waited for the police has never been considered. The prosecuting lawyer, a racist politi-

cian who is now prime minister, called on the Slovak parliament to honour the memory of the assailant with two minutes' silence while the case was in progress. The judge even directed the jury to consider racist slurs about the Roma character.

In these circumstances, in order to win his freedom, he needs a strong lawyer. The Free Mário Bango Campaign is launching a fundraising drive to raise the necessary money - if you would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to Free Mário Bango, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX or directly to Free Mário Bango Campaign, Nationwide, sort code 070093, account number: 333.333.34, reference number 0270/703 851 924.

Mário also needs a guarantee for work in order to fulfil the conditions for early release. The Free Mário Bango Campaign is working on this by contacting trade union councils, Roma and community organisations in Slovakia.

But he also needs our support. Please send him letter of encouragement to know that there are people on the outside fighting for his release.

**Mário Bango, nar. 8. 6. 1982**  
**PS41**  
**019-17 ILAVA**  
**Slovensko/Slovakia**

# Mumia faces new threat

**M**umia Abu Jamal, an activist and journalist, is a victim of the racist American justice system, where he may be executed for the alleged murder of US cop, Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. Mumia has been incarcerated for 24 years in one of the most high security prisons in the US.

Mumia has always asserted his innocence. Free Mumia is an international campaign calling for his release. It points out that he was framed, that his trial was unfair and poorly run, and that the prosecution was influenced by his membership of the Black Panthers.

Mumia's lawyers secured his

release from death row in 2001; his sentence commuted to life imprisonment. However, they failed to get a re-trial, despite new evidence of a frame-up. Now the prosecutors have filed an appeal to re-instate the execution order. If successful, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell has pledged to sign a third warrant for Mumia's execution. The appeal started on 17 May.

At the same time, Mumia's defence team has launched an appeal for a retrial. This appeal lies in the hands of a panel of three judges - two of them Reagan appointees. If they rule in favour then Mumia will be entitled to a new trial, presenting evidence missed from his original trial.

The defence will point to the unfair elements of Mumia's original trial, which include the dismissal of black jurors. Black citizens accounted for 44 percent of the population in Philadelphia at the time of Mumia's trial in 1982, however only two out of the 14 jurors were black. The ruling will be made in the next 45-90 days.

Mumia's case highlights the systematic racist techniques used to convict and sentence blacks in the USA. It brings into question the death penalty, which is both racist and anti-working class - there are no millionaires on death row!

Approximately two million people are incarcerated in the US and

half of them are black; 48 per cent of those on death row are black. Yet blacks accounting for only 12 per cent of the population. And while half the murder victims in the US are black, 85% of those on death row are there for the killing of a white person.

The US has a long history of black oppression, starting with slavery. Today the racist persecution of black people continues through social and economic discrimination. The justice system reflects and reinforces this horrific inequality.

Mumia is one of many political prisoners victim of a racist justice system, which needs to be overthrown. **Free Mumia!**







## Migration and the working class: open the borders

By Richard Brenner

Labour MP for Barking Margaret Hodge knew exactly what she was doing on 20 May when she called for “indigenous” people to be given priority over migrants to housing and public services.

She was voicing a classic old lie – one that the bosses are eager to spread and that has fooled and divided workers time and again, one that plays directly into the hands of the BNP who are using these racist ideas to win votes in her Barking constituency.

The lie goes: there are not enough houses to go round because there are too many immigrants, so “British” workers should be put first. The same idea leads to another equally dangerous conclusion: wages are low because foreign workers work for less, so foreign workers’ access to Britain and jobs here should be restricted.

This is rubbish and Hodge should be hounded out of politics for stirring it up. The fact that a Labour MP is coming out with this stuff – and that Downing Street backs her “right” to do it – is a sign of how desperate Labour is to divert attention from the real cause of run down public services and lack of housing: Blair and Brown’s cuts and the capitalist profit system that drives them on.

Wherever these anti-migrant arguments gain a hold, they strengthen the hand of the rich employers and the government, they weaken the struggles of workers for better conditions and higher pay, and they breed prejudice and hate against the poorest part of the working class, bringing with them the prospect of persecution and violence.

Communists take the opposite stance to the scab Hodge. We campaign for equal rights for migrant workers, for full citizenship rights, for the voluntary integration of all workers into a fighting class movement, and for freedom of movement – including an end to all immigration controls.

In this way, we resist the bosses’ attempts to divide us, we fight together for better housing and pay, we stop capitalists controlling movements of labour to suit their own lust for profit, we oppose the hateful spectacle of “illegal” migrants being interned without trial in camps like Harmondsworth, and we raise awareness among the whole of the working class that the system is international, that our class is international, and that we need to fight as one if we are to be free.

The housing crisis has nothing to do with immigration. The chronic “undersupply” of housing is not caused by a lack of buildings: there has been a massive construction boom in Britain over recent years. But under capitalism buildings are commodities, created, bought and sold on the market for profit – rent paid to big landlords and interest paid to mortgage lenders are all ways of sharing profits between capitalists, large and small. Hardly any new council houses are being built – meanwhile thousands get sold off to the private sector.

**We campaign for equal rights for migrant workers, for full citizenship rights, for the voluntary integration of all workers into a fighting class movement, and for freedom of movement - including an end to all immigration controls**

That’s why swanky apartments for the rich are springing up everywhere at impossible prices, why there has been a boom in “buy-to-let” as the middle classes get second and third homes to rent out, while key workers like hospital staff, cleaners, teachers, factory workers, shop workers, firefighters, teachers, civil servants and council staff can’t afford to buy even the smallest homes and have to pay ever higher rents in the private rented sector.

Migrant workers, by the way, suffer more than most, not less. They do not get priority access to housing – they are forced to live in the worst homes.

If every single one of the migrant workers that has come to Britain in the last four years suddenly disappeared there would still be a housing crisis – it is caused by the profit system, not by immigration.

The same goes for the argument that we hear so often these days about migration and wages. As the capitalists compete with one another they try to drive down wages to boost their profits. That’s why they use workers from countries with lower living standards who will accept a lower wage. The more

workers from Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia secure access to public services, including decent housing and healthcare, in short the more they are able to integrate into the working class of this country, the harder it is to reduce their wages.

From a working class point of view - from the standpoint of the interests of all the workers, both migrants and the so-called “indigenous” workers (millions of us are the children or grandchildren of earlier migrants anyway) – winning better homes, higher pay, and protecting public services means uniting and fighting together against the bosses and the government. If we follow Hodge’s line and push migrant workers down even further, it will strengthen the bosses’ hand against us.

The most frequent “commonsense” objection to ending immigration controls is in fact a complete fantasy. It is that if we removed the border controls, so many people would flood into Britain that life would become impossible. A moment’s thought reveals what nonsense this is. The fact is that we already have a relatively open borders policy for European workers – yet we have not been “flooded” by 20 million Eastern European workers. Statistics show that most workers that do come to Britain stay for a short time, save money for families back home then usually return to their country of origin.

The real fear of workers is that there is a scarcity of resources - but this is down to capitalism and collection of wealth in the hands of the rich parasites. We must unite the poor, regardless of skin colour or nationality to combat poverty, not turn on each other.

For most, life is still one of low pay, high rent and fuel bills, longer hours, fewer rights. That is why communists turn to the mass of the working class who are suffering under this system – including in particular the migrant workers with everything to gain and nothing to lose – and fight to organise not just against the racism of Hodge, against low pay, poor housing and rundown services, but against international capitalism.

We are confident of success because the working class is the overwhelming majority of humanity, and is international.

The bosses know that and fear us. That’s why they try so desperately to divide us, and why we must not let them get away with it.